

Title: A Year of Work Ready Wednesday

What is the Purpose of the Assessment?

The purpose of this assessment is to evaluate student engagement and satisfaction with the Work Ready Wednesday program to identify areas for improvement and inform future programming.

Describe the necessity for this assessment

This assessment is essential for establishing a baseline of student engagement and satisfaction with the Work Ready Wednesday program. It will also provide a rationale for the programming while serving as a point of comparison for future evaluations to help gauge the program's growth, reach, and overall impact over time.

Describe how the practice will be implemented

A rationale for the purpose behind Work Ready Wednesday will be provided along with the framework for implementation. Student engagement data from Fall 2024 will then be compared to data from Spring 2025, with a focus on identifying which initial marketing and engagement strategies were used and what new strategies were implemented in the spring to increase participation. The overall engagement and satisfaction findings will be used as a benchmark to inform and enhance programming for the 2025–2026 academic year.

Interpret, compare, and describe the results

Background and Rationale

Leading up to the implementation of Work Ready Wednesdays, there was a clear institutional desire to expand workforce programming to better prepare students to be “Next Step Ready.” At the time, the Center for Workforce and Experiential Learning (CWEL) was not offering consistent workforce events for students. Simultaneously, national employer data from the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) repeatedly cited gaps in recent college graduates' critical thinking, communication (oral and written), problem-solving, adaptability, and teamwork skills. These concerns were echoed locally by regional partners such as WestMARC and the West Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce.

CWEL also identified recurring themes in student support interactions. Many students were unaware of available career paths, had chosen a field based on limited or secondhand information, or held narrow views of their options. This indicated a dual need: employers sought better-prepared candidates with professional competencies, and students needed greater exposure to career possibilities and skill development opportunities.

To ensure alignment with national best practices, CWEL adopted the NACE Competencies for a Career-Ready Workforce as the foundational framework for the program. Each Work Ready Wednesday session was designed to address one or more of the eight competencies: Career & Self-Development, Communication, Critical Thinking, Equity & Inclusion, Leadership, Professionalism, Teamwork, and Technology.

Recognizing the importance of consistency and visibility, Work Ready Wednesdays launched with a weekly schedule, every Wednesday from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. With the exception of Dress for Success, which was held in person due to the nature of the event, all sessions were offered in a HyFlex format to accommodate both in-person and virtual participation.

Equally important was the collaborative approach to program development and delivery. CWEL partnered with the Career and Transfer Center (CTC), Counseling Services, the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), and the ASU Blackstone LaunchPad to create a shared, campus-wide initiative. Through the ASU Blackstone LaunchPad collaboration, Work

Ready Wednesdays were also promoted across all 10 Maricopa County Community Colleges and Arizona State University via the shared events platform, WorldLabs, expanding visibility and access beyond EMCC.

Work Ready Wednesdays officially launched in August 2024 and was implemented throughout the 2024–2025 academic year. A total of 25 sessions were held across the fall and spring semesters, each focused on building essential professional skills, exploring current workforce trends, and fostering meaningful connections to industry.

Data

Session topics, participant satisfaction, and attendance was collected and is presented below.

Table 1. Topics by Semester

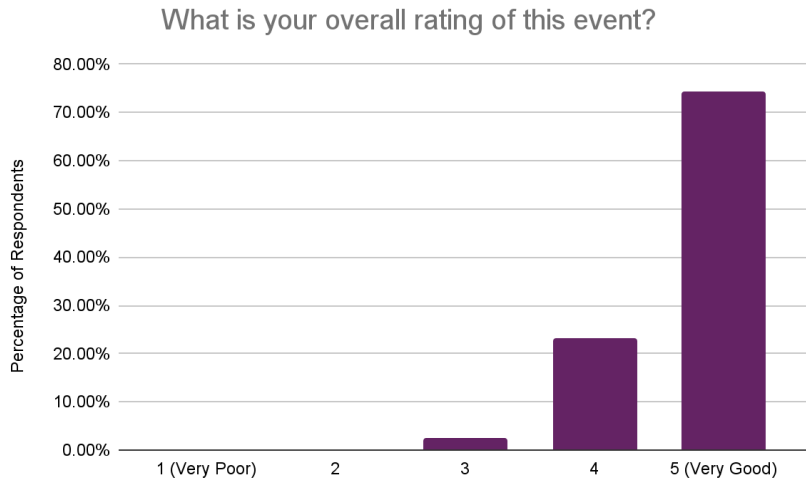
Fall 2024	Spring 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unlocking Work Based Experiences ● AI for your Next Big Opportunity ● Professional Communication ● From Molecule to Galaxies, Hispanic Women in Engineering ● Internship Prep ● Programming and Clinical Research in Medical Physics at Mayo Clinic ● Art of Networking ● AI: Photoshop and Chat GPT ● Polishing your Professional Presence ● Finding your Superpower with State Farm ● Unlocking Research Opportunities ● Level Up Your Professional Presence with LinkedIn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Career Quest Open House ● TSMC, Technician Development Program ● Discovery App, Your Guide to Landing Top Internships ● Entrepreneurial Insights, A Panel with the Founders of Straw and Wool ● Strengths and EI in the Workplace ● Banking Essentials, BoA ● Leadership Insights, A Conversation with the Mayor of Avondale ● Effective Communication with Non-Technical Audiences ● Life on the SPECTRUM ● Dress for Success (free professional attire) ● Careers in the Helping Profession ● Careers in Sustainability ● Resume Refresh

See Appendix 1. Attendance VS. Session Chart

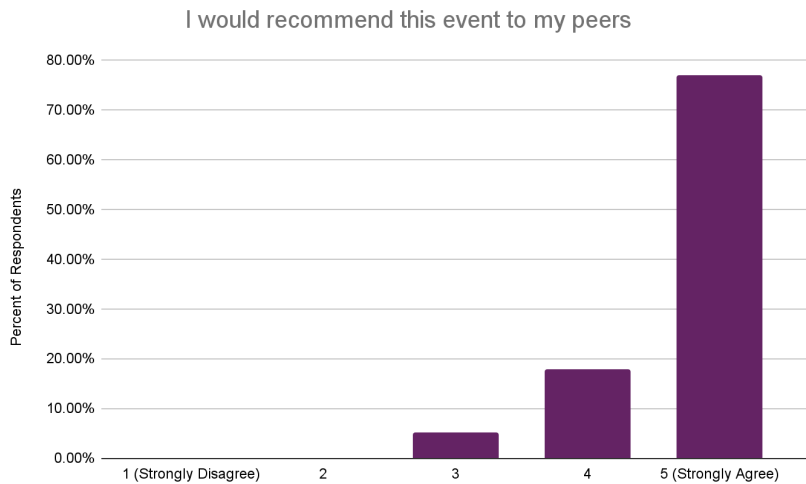
Table 2. Attendance by Audience and Semester

Audience	Fall 2024	Spring 2025	Total	Percent Increase from Fall to Spring
Students	147	221	368	50.34%
Staff/Faculty	21	39	60	85.71%
Total Attendees	168	260	428	54.76%

Graph 1. Participant satisfaction, 97% of participants rated the event as “Good” or “Very Good”.



Graph 2. Participant satisfaction, 94% of participants agree or strongly agree that they would recommend the event to peers.



Student Success Stories:

- A student shared how thankful she was for the session- it helped her recognize new possibilities in computer science, a field she was uncertain about.
- After attending, a student connected with the panelist, an ASU Biomedical Researcher, and job shadowed in her lab.
- A student interested in a 1:1 career interview was connected in real time during the event.
- Two first semester students attended, were actively engaged in the session, and stayed after to discuss their career goals. They were introduced to the Microsoft Data Center Academy Scholarship and one student has since been placed in internship and received the WIRCCS Scholarship.

Interpretation and Comparison

By the end of the 2024–2025 academic year, a total of 368 students and 60 faculty or staff members attended a Work Ready Wednesday session, averaging 17 participants per event. Participant satisfaction was notably high: 97% of attendees rated the sessions as “Good” or “Very Good,” and 94% agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the event to a peer.

There was a significant 54.76% increase in attendance from Fall 2024 to Spring 2025. We attribute this growth to a combination of expanded marketing efforts, increased campus awareness, heritage month collaboration, and compelling program content.

Initial marketing efforts included event postings on 25Live, the EMCC Events webpage, ASU WorldLabs, printed flyers, digital distribution of flyers to the MCCCCD Career Council, campus-wide emails, student newsletters, and announcements via Canvas from the Career and Transfer Center, STEM Center of Excellence, and CWEL. Faculty also supported promotion through class announcements.

In Spring 2025, additional strategies were implemented to further boost visibility:

- Three A-frame signs were placed weekly to direct students to the session location.
- A request was made for the Spring 2025 course schedule to identify faculty and classes that might benefit from or be interested in attending.
- Ongoing promotion occurred during department meetings and other internal gatherings.
- Collaborated with Heritage Month committees to align programming with Black History Month, Women’s History Month, and Autism Awareness Month celebrations.
- To increase engagement, we considered changing the session time and worked with the Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness (OPIE) to analyze campus attendance patterns. Based on this data, we ultimately chose to maintain the 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. time slot, as it aligned well with campus peak attendance times.

These combined efforts, along with the program’s consistent weekly schedule, contributed to stronger campus recognition and increased student participation.

Beyond marketing, the diversity of topics and presence of high-interest guest speakers played a critical role in attracting attendees. Notable sessions included *From Molecules to Galaxies: Hispanic Women in Engineering*, *Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC)*, *Entrepreneurial Insights: A Panel with the Founders of Straw and Wool*, *Leadership Insights: A Conversation with the Mayor of Avondale*, *Effective Communication with Non-Technical Audiences*, and *Dress for Success (free professional attire)*. Across both semesters, sessions featuring prominent or engaging guest speakers consistently drew the highest attendance, underscoring the importance of relevant and relatable content in driving student engagement.

Additionally, we found that sessions with the highest engagement were those where faculty brought their classes, offered extra credit, or integrated the events into class assignments, highlighting the impact of faculty involvement in driving student participation.

Additionally, thanks to the generous support of the ASU Blackstone LaunchPad grant, pizza was provided each week for participants. We believe this added incentive enhanced the event’s appeal. While promotion extended across all Maricopa Community Colleges and ASU through shared platforms, attendance remained primarily EMCC-based. We believe this is a reflection of intentional marketing approaches, campus collaboration, and strong community buy-in at EMCC.

After analyzing, and reflecting on the outcome, what are the next steps?

Looking ahead, CWEL will continue implementing Work Ready Wednesdays during the 2025–2026 academic year using lessons learned from the 2024–2025 academic year to hone programming. The program’s success is a direct result of intentional, cross-campus collaboration and would not have been possible without the support of the Career and Transfer Center, Counseling Services, the Center for Teaching and Learning, the STEM Center of Excellence, engaged faculty who promoted the sessions to students, and the ongoing support of EMCC administration.

Recommendations for future programming include continued and expanded collaboration, maintaining a consistent and visible schedule, curating a lineup of dynamic employers and guest speakers that spark student interest, and continuing outreach to faculty.

Abstract

Work Ready Wednesday launched in Fall 2024 hosting sessions weekly to prepare students for the workforce by building a toolkit of essential professional skills, exploring trending topics in the workforce and connecting to industry leaders. Over the 2024–2025 academic year, the program hosted 25 sessions with 368 students and 60 staff or faculty attending. A 54.76% increase in attendance from fall to spring reflected the impact of campus collaboration, consistent scheduling, engaging guest speakers, faculty support, and targeted marketing. With 97% of participants rating sessions positively, this evaluation highlights the program’s success and offers recommendations to further enhance student engagement in 2025–2026 academic year.

Resources

What is Career Readiness?. National Association of Colleges and Employers. (n.d.).
<https://www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined/>

Appendix 1. Attendance vs. Session chart.

