

# Students Occupationally and Academically Ready

Pennsylvania's Bureau of Career and Technical Education

*Students Occupationally and Academically Ready (SOAR) rises to Perkins IV challenge with pioneering solutions and expert consulting services from AcademyOne.*

"The effort is providing secondary students increased opportunity for post high school success."

- Dr. Lee Burket, Director of the Bureau of Career and Technical Education



## AcademyOne's Innovative Partnership with Pennsylvania's Bureau of Career and Technical Education Realizes the Promise of Occupational and Academic Readiness for Pennsylvania Students

### BACKGROUND

The strategic partnership between AcademyOne and Pennsylvania's Bureau of Career and Technical Education (BCTE) began in 2008. In accordance with Pennsylvania's Perkins Five Year State Plan, as mandated by the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV), Career and Technical Programs of Study (POS) aligning with statewide articulation agreements were being developed. Agreements were designed to ensure a non-duplicative, seamless transition for students from secondary level to postsecondary level based on achievement of competencies. This effort in Pennsylvania became known as Students Occupationally and Academically Ready (SOAR). Postsecondary conditions of this agreement include identification of course equivalencies to the Programs of Study and the award of at least nine articulated credits. To meet its objectives, the Bureau approached AcademyOne for support and technical assistance.

### GOALS

The goals for the Bureau's engagement with AcademyOne included making the articulation process as simple and streamlined as possible, in a cost effective way, that fulfilled the intentions of Perkins IV to create more education and career opportunities for Pennsylvania's students. "It's all about creating opportunities for students. I don't know of an easier way to state it," said David Games, Career and Technical Education Advisor, with the Bureau. One of the important goals for this project was to make the process as anxiety free as possible.

### SOLUTIONS

The Bureau sought AcademyOne's support to serve as a clearinghouse for the capturing, storing, publishing and sharing of secondary to postsecondary program articulations and supporting documentation with the Course Equivalency Management Center (CEMC) – a web-based curriculum alignment and collaboration tool. The CollegeTransfer.net web portal is used as the centralized gateway for creating, managing and publishing the program articulations to multiple audiences. Students, Bureau administrators, secondary school guidance personnel and postsecondary professionals now take advantage of online access to these information resources. Dr. Lee Burket, Director of the Bureau,

commented, "AcademyOne and CollegeTransfer.net have enabled this process to occur in a realistic period of time and was cost effective." Dr. Burket noted that with CEMC, "The postsecondary participants are able to review and identify applicable course content to allow for an identification of duplicative coursework between secondary and postsecondary courses and has led to the design of a non-duplicative program of study."

AcademyOne's expertise in delivering this information enhances the Bureau's ability to market the Programs of Study and articulation opportunities to guidance professionals, students and postsecondary institutions. Lydia Hess, Manager of the Division of Adult and Postsecondary CTE, commented, "I don't know how you would make it any easier!"

### CLIENT FOCUSED CONSULTING

AcademyOne brought many innovative ideas to the table for the Bureau's SOAR initiative. According to Games, "One of the key contributions that AcademyOne made was carrying out a pilot phase with a subset of participants. This really worked well for us." Resulting feedback from the pilot emphasized the critical features needed of the system and underscored the essential components of a successful articulation process for faculty evaluators, including collaboration and communication capabilities between those evaluating curriculum.

The pilot phase took place over a three month period in the Spring of 2009. The pilot effort helped the Bureau staff and institutional stakeholders identify and address challenges, obstacles and promising strategies to most effectively achieve the project goals. The live launch took place in July 2009. "AcademyOne brought a true partnership to our project. By advising, consulting and providing the right set of technological solutions to make our project a success, we managed challenging time and budget constraints," Hess commented.

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David Games  
Career and Technical Education Advisor  
Bureau of Career and Technical Education (BCTE)

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## RESULTS

Today the CollegeTransfer.net portal and the Course Equivalency Management Center solutions are being utilized for the SOAR project to align currently developed and approved SOAR Programs of Study between secondary career and technical education providers and postsecondary education partners.

"The training and orientation materials, on-site meetings, webinars and teleconferences that AcademyOne facilitated and developed were invaluable. AcademyOne's services and implementation team continue to provide these on-demand services to the project," Games added. The time and energy that was saved by implementing with AcademyOne is estimated to be equal to at least one full-time equivalent staff person working exclusively on this project. The ultimate return on investment will be invaluable as more students realize their educational and career aspirations.

"I can't say enough about the support we've received from AcademyOne. AcademyOne is a partner who, like us, sees the enormous opportunity advanced credit and secondary and postsecondary alignment presents to students. AcademyOne has the vision and expertise to make it happen," said Games. And, according to Dr. Burket, "The effort is providing secondary students increased opportunity for post high school success." Because of the course alignment efforts between secondary and postsecondary institutions, secondary students are able to gain college credit for their secondary coursework and enroll in any of the 34 postsecondary institutions that signed a Perkins Statewide Articulation Agreement. Dr. Burket notes that, "CollegeTransfer.net is a resource that students and parents can access and view their possibilities and guide them to the postsecondary institution that best meets their needs."

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## STUDENTS OCCUPATIONALLY AND ACADEMICALLY READY (SOAR) PROGRAM BENEFITS

### Benefits to Students, Parents and Families

Students, parents and families benefit from the SOAR Program in multiple ways including, cost savings on college tuition by reducing the amount of coursework needed, decreasing the time required to complete a degree or credential and accelerating entry into the workforce. A more direct career path is provided to students and they are prepared with marketable skills, competencies and training that ensure job readiness by matching the needs of the workforce.



### Benefits to Secondary and Postsecondary Education Providers

Today's secondary and postsecondary educators must prepare students for academic and career success with limited resources. Participation in the SOAR Program benefits education providers by coordinating their education efforts more seamlessly with secondary to postsecondary alignment and articulation allowing them to serve more students more efficiently. SOAR benefits education providers with a coordinated Program of Study curriculum that incorporates competencies, standards, end of program assessment and alignment with industry certifications.

## LOOKING AHEAD

AcademyOne's partnership with the Bureau of Career and Technical Education will continue with additional solutions, strategies and enhancements to offer more educational opportunities for Pennsylvania learners and make this information more widely available. One future strategy includes:

### Marketing with Transfer Center3 (Cubed)

Transfer Center3 is a new innovation from AcademyOne that filters the valuable program and equivalency data on our national portal for a specific audience at a specific website. A portable, customizable guidance and transfer center will reside on a high school, college or university website and will show learners the pathways to the programs, degrees and credentials that are most relevant to them.

The Bureau has shared the SOAR success story at a variety of statewide meetings and conferences to promote these new opportunities and share best practices with Pennsylvania's education community. Presentations to stakeholders have included: the Pennsylvania School Boards Association, Pennsylvania State Board of Education, Pennsylvania Association of Career and Technical Administrators, Pennsylvania Association of Career and Technical Education Special Populations and statewide associations for guidance counselors. These events will continue to occur as the project progresses.

## ABOUT ACADEMYONE

AcademyOne's mission is to foster student success by transforming how institutions and academic communities align curriculum, improve guidance and implement stronger assessment practices. The company's solutions address how state agencies and educational providers can create virtual bridges across institutional structures and policies. Through improved visibility, students can prepare transition and succeed as they navigate educational decisions and paths.

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## ABOUT STUDENTS OCCUPATIONALLY AND ACADEMICALLY READY (SOAR) PROGRAMS

SOAR's mission is to prepare students for college and careers in a diverse, high performing workforce for high priority occupations - tomorrow's high demand and high wage careers. SOAR is the career and technical Program of Study educational plan that articulates the secondary career and technical programs to the postsecondary degree or diploma certificate programs.

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