

November 2022

## Bridging the Gap between Academia and Industry: A Program Evaluation on University-Industry Collaboration

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Bridging the Gap between Academia and Industry: A Program Evaluation on University-  
Industry Collaboration

by

Lan Reneé Amboy-Biller

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education  
Department of Language, Literacy, Ed.D., Exceptional Education and Physical Education  
College of Education  
University of South Florida

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Date of Approval:  
November 1, 2022

Keywords: partnerships, CIPP model, workforce, corporate

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I am incredibly grateful to my co-major professors, Dr. Veselina Lambrev and Dr. Elizabeth Shaunessy-Dedrick, for their invaluable advice, endless support, and patience throughout this journey. Second, I want to thank Dr. Kyna Betancourt for entertaining my craziness, talking me through my decision to apply to the doctoral program, and allowing me the opportunity to conduct this program evaluation on the BGS program. Kyna, I appreciate your willingness to serve on my committee. I am honored that Dr. Krista Singleton, a graduate of my program, provided her knowledge, memories, and advice throughout this journey. And to Dr. Bárbara Cruz for joining as my outside chair, supporting me when I needed it the most. Their immense knowledge and plentiful experience continued to encourage me throughout my program. My gratitude extends to the industry stakeholder, Bruce none of this could have happened without your support and encouragement. I am proud to have met you and honored to call you a friend.

I could not have done it without my village... Cohort 19! All of you are rockstars and true inspirations, and I am in awe of what you (we) have accomplished. From the bottom of my heart, I would like to say a big thank you to my academic brother, Dr. Wayne N. Taylor, who I followed down the proverbial rabbit hole, never to return, and enjoyed the ride. As I say, it takes a village; you were not picked last, my friend.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to my most significant cheering section, my parents Ginette (late-stepfather John), Domingo, and Gail, my children Alyssa and Cody, my nephew-son Nico, Jenny, and my beautiful grandbaby Abigail. To my extended family, thank

you for always believing in me – you know who you are. Without their tremendous understanding and encouragement over the past few years, it would be impossible for me to complete my study.

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## **ABSTRACT**

A significant amount of money is spent on professionalizing the workforce. At the same time, there is limited research on the effectiveness of academic-to-industry corporate partnerships as an innovative solution for meeting workforce development objectives. This exploratory study evaluates an existing University of South Florida industry partnership to identify characteristics of a sustainable university-to-industry model. The program has operated over the last nine years, providing degree completion programs for industry employees. This program evaluation includes an analysis of stakeholders, advisors, mentors, and participants' perceptions. The evaluation findings identified key factors of consideration required when establishing and operating a University-Industry partnership. In addition, participants' perspectives presented key findings and recommendations impacting the program evaluated and influencing the needs of consideration when aiming to establish a sustainable U-I partnership.

## **CHAPTER ONE:**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Twenty-first-century workforce projections support the need for a well-educated workforce. As of 2020, 65% of jobs will require education beyond a high school diploma; hence, employers require specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for job advancement beyond even an Associate of Arts (AA) or Associate of Science (AS) degree (Ross, 2018). While companies provide employees with training and professional development opportunities, the workforce is experiencing rapid changes with the professional landscape due to the global Covid-19 pandemic. The knowledge, skills, and abilities required to conduct business within our current environment have dramatically changed even in the last few months. Higher education and industry partners need to work together to support building a more knowledgeable workforce to close the skills gap. Consistent interaction between university and local industry partners will ensure education remains relevant in the workplace.

The University of South Florida's (USF) seventh President, Dr. Steven Currall's inauguration speech affirmed that "USF and the Tampa Bay region have an upward trajectory with a focus on innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship" (Office of University Communications and Marketing, 2019). This strategic plan shapes a new kind of knowledge-based economy that will thrive on human capital and nurture opportunity. Moreover, Dr. Currall stated that USF could become to Tampa Bay what Stanford has been to Silicon Valley (Office of University Communications and Marketing , 2019). In supporting the vision for the future,

there is an immediate need to sustain our local industry and community partners through creating a well-educated student.

The addition of industry partners can significantly influence the overall success of a program at USF. There is a need for universities and industry partners to work together on curriculum to enhance the diffusion of knowledge and talent through innovative collaborations. These new academic partnerships can be beneficial to the USF's Office of Undergraduate Studies, as they can provide new opportunities, financial support for education. The partnerships further enhance USF's strategic planning goals (Chisolm & Mukherjee, 2021).

Moreover, industry partners can have access to education, expertise, and access to USF's best and brightest students as potential recruitment opportunities, leverage to research, and innovation. Therefore, I conducted a program evaluation of a single academic university-industry (U-I) partnership within the Tampa Bay community in this study. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine the essential characteristics of an educational partnership and inform university leadership from the Office of Undergraduate Studies (UGS) of an established framework for a sustainable U-I partnership model that can be transferable to other industries and colleges.

USF's Office of Undergraduate Studies has an industry partnership with a large energy company called EnGaCo within the southeast region of the United States, which has designed a special degree concentration unique to the work performed within the energy industry. Once EnGaCo employees are chosen for the program, they are required to apply to USF. Upon acceptance, employees complete their degree program with courses selected by EnGaCo, which supports the work done by their employees. All personnel admitted into the degree program have had some college credits before enrolling in courses within this business model (email

communication, November 17, 2020). The name of the company is substituted with a pseudonym to ensure the anonymity of the participants.



Figure 1. USF Strategic Goals

## **Context of the Study**

Some probable causes as to why USF's UGS unit has not increased their number of corporate partnerships might be:

- Cultural differences between industry and university
- Lack of alignment between industry and university goals
- Legal agreements between industry and university
- Lacks the vision by University of Industry needs in current environment
- Lack of industry recognition of the value of partnering with university
- Absence of dedicated employee to focus on increasing the number of industry partnerships
- Differences in expectations between university and industry
- Lack of trust between industry and university stakeholders

## **Program Description**

I performed a program evaluation of the Bachelor of General Studies (BGS) program because I am an alumnus of the program and believe that disruptive innovation can enhance the current partnership model to expand its reach into the local Tampa Bay community. The USF Bachelor of General Studies degree program established in 2012 serves the non-traditional student population who have experienced a gap in their education (Laymon, 2019). This degree program was specifically designed to support the needs of adult working professionals who balance a busy lifestyle between family obligations and employment. Students are encouraged to take an active role in creating their degree program, which allows them to choose from several concentrations that best fit their personal or professional needs. The Bachelor of General Studies degree is unique in that students may choose a concentration focus rather than declare a major as

the traditional pathway students choose. Currently, the Bachelor of General Studies program offers 13 concentrations. In 2015, an industry partnership with the energy company was developed with USF's Office of Undergraduate Studies unit to support the educational needs of employees working within the energy industry. As a result, USF offered special concentration courses that were specific to this industry. Once the EnGaCo employees were identified for this educational program, they would apply to USF to complete their degree with courses chosen by the energy company.

In 2016, another partnership was formed through a legislative initiative. It was decided that the Bachelor of General Studies program would become the sole major for the Complete Florida program, a degree completion initiative supported by Florida Legislature (Laymon, 2019). The 2013 Florida Statute 1006.735 was established with the intent of assisting adult learners in the state of Florida who wanted to return to college to complete an associate or baccalaureate degree referred to as Complete Florida (Online Sunshine, 2021). The legislatively funded program allowed Florida higher education institutions to join the efforts for working adults to return to college who earned some college credits. During this partnership, USF was able to help a non-traditional population of adult learners complete their degrees while supporting the university's objective of increasing enrollments. Unfortunately, the Complete Florida initiative was discontinued in July 2020 due to a lack of funding. However, the program results justify new initiatives in higher education to attract adult learners and increase a well-trained workforce.

USF's Bachelor of General Studies degree program is designed to support the non-traditional adult student population who have an extended college time gap and earned some college credits. The merge of these two partnerships has strengthened the educational degree



completion program available for the partner organization. Today, 44 EnGaCo students have successfully graduated from the Bachelor of General Studies degree program at USF. The students of Cohort Four completed their program in Spring of 2021, while Cohort Five, comprised of 18 new EnGaCo students, completed registration and began their educational journey during the Spring 2021 semester.

The U-I partnership has evolved into a mutual working relationship of understood processes. Designated employees of the USF Undergraduate Studies Office interact with EnGaCo's Senior Administrator of Organizational Development, and the administrator leads to assist in supporting EnGaCo employees who are also students. The UGS Bachelor of General Studies unit is responsible for assisting with administrative duties related to the admissions process, providing an academic advisor to support the students from admission to completion, and other undefined responsibilities. EnGaCo's administrative staff is responsible for vetting students before applying to the USF program and agrees to maintain a minimum individual cohort amount for the Bachelor of General Studies program. Annually, EnGaCo hosts a graduation ceremony to celebrate the students' and their family's accomplishments. Typically, one representative from USF is in attendance for this ceremony. Graduating EnGaCo students are always welcome and are encouraged to participate in the USF Commencements as well.

### **Program Logistics**

Before the global pandemic, all face-to-face (F2F) classes were held on-site at EnGaCo's corporate campus. The core classes are 8-week sessions in the Spring and Fall terms, while the summer session is ten weeks. EnGaCo students attend classes after the workday on Thursday evenings from 5:30 pm–10 pm. An essential factor of the partnership requires EnGaCo to provide a minimum of 12 students to initiate a new cohort, permitting USF to provide live

instruction on EnGaCo's campus after working hours. Currently, USF incurs all monetary expenses associated with the instruction, such as travel for the USF staff to and from the EnGaCo campus and the instructors' time and service. With the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has caused, new guidelines from the government and the Center for Disease Control, EnGaCo has required all employees to work remotely. To accommodate EnGaCo, USF transitioned all instruction for EnGaCo employee students to learn through a virtual asynchronous or synchronous environment (See Appendix A).

### **Positioning Myself within the Narrative**

May 1, 2012, was the most significant change in my professional career. I went from being an employee of a corporation to being an employer within my organization. Leveraging my strengths against my business partners, I became responsible for the organization's logistics and the procedures of our hiring and training processes. During these years of professional transition, I identified my intrinsic desire to complete my college education. However, my reasons were not driven so much by a professional need but rather a self-motivation to support my teenage children's vision to apply to colleges and my innate desire for my father to experience his daughter finish a degree started years ago.

While searching for the right university to support my busy schedule, I realized few undergraduate degree programs were available to support non-traditional business professionals. A few online university programs support working individuals; however, I wanted a significant university experience. During this time, I began to ponder the idea of developing a business relationship with a university that focuses on the needs of returning adult professionals seeking to complete their college degrees. In my quest, I observed that most university-industry collaboration efforts concentrate on undergraduate students, first-time students attending college,

or research efforts. I discovered a growing need for a partnership framework that increases collaboration efforts between the university and industry to support non-traditional, professional returning students.

### **Scholarly Practitioner**

I selected the Doctor of Education program because I sought an education that focuses on increasing my knowledge and skills of applying research towards resolving real-world problems within my practice. As a scholarly practitioner, motivated by my values, I blend my professional experience with new knowledge of how theory can inform my approach to resolving a problem, improving an inconsistency, or interrupting a process or business model. In her book, *The EdD and the Scholarly Practitioner: The CPED Path*, Perry (2016) maintains that by improving a practitioner's working knowledge of problems and their ability to produce effective solutions, knowledge, and skills enhance the growth of their resource toolbox. In addition, employing an improvement-oriented approach to address problems and identify gaps within a process will help structure a practical plan for improvement in creating a sustainable business model.

In this program evaluation, I embraced a disruptive innovation lens of how one U-I collaboration transformed current processes while building of an active U-I partnership. Christensen et. al. (2017) describes a disruptive innovation theory and how organizations can predict success and why they struggle with certain kinds of innovation. Working as a change agent in my own practice, the first step to refining any process was to identify a problem, define what requires assessment, conduct a needs analysis, implement innovative solutions, and evaluate. Christensen (2011) state that disruption is a process and not an event. As a scholarly practitioner who values knowledge and uses theory to inform my practice, I apply that information to improve processes. To bridge the gap between academia and industry, I

considered practical solutions such as assessing available training programs for industry employees seeking career advancement through in-house training, college degree programs, or external training programs.

### **Framing the Problem of Practice**

My problem of practice has been searching for and hiring qualified, educated employees, and realizing that a college intern or graduate seeking employment with our organization does not always possess the skillsets necessary and often requires additional paid training or mentorship upon employment. As the gap continues to grow between the skills workers possess today, and the skills businesses need, more companies will most likely benefit from collaborating with academic institutions to broaden their training strategies.

### **University Problem of Practice**

Areas informing my problem of practice are like those USF has identified as issues within their practice. For example, according to the assistant director for the university's Office of Undergraduate Studies (email communication, November 17, 2020), the problem within their practice centers around university consolidation, budget cuts, and the necessity for each employee to direct their focus in multiple directions to complete the jobs to be done. In addition, the office goals are aligned with student success, and the employees must focus on other initiatives and priorities rather than focusing efforts towards building new relationship partners.

The Office of Undergraduate Studies leadership team recognizes that increasing industry partners would be advantageous for their initiatives aimed at student success and increasing student enrollments through graduation. Nonetheless, due to government funding initiatives and lack of personnel to perform the different roles and responsibilities that are required, the unit

does not have adequate staff or the resources to focus on increasing industry partnerships to target non-traditional students.

### **Industry Problem of Practice**

While doing a preliminary investigation on knowledge and skills gaps and inquiry to identify essential components of U-I partnerships, I completed a needs assessment on the current industry partner. As stated by Bruce, EnGaCo's Senior Administrator of Organizational Development (Personal communication, September 1, 2020). EnGaCo employs approximately 3,500 employees who support the urban area and its surrounding counties near the university. EnGaCo's primary focus is providing electricity and gas to their customers; however, they are also a strong partner within the community. One benefit for full-time employees is the company's tuition reimbursement program. Thirteen years ago, when the Senior Administrator of Organizational development started in his job role, he believed that all employees should have access to higher education programs that support full-time working adults with a busy lifestyle (B. Napier, personal communication, September 1, 2020). During his first year working for EnGaCo, he identified low employee satisfaction scores as a critical problem within their practice. In his investigation of these scores and his passion for lifelong learning, he sought to develop partnerships with local trade schools, community colleges, and universities.

### **Purpose of the Evaluation**

The purpose of the study is to evaluate the current U-I partnership between USF's Undergraduate Studies Bachelor of General Studies/Bachelor of Science in Applied Science unit and EnGaCo energy corporation to gain an understanding of how the program operates and supports the needs of industry employees/students who are seeking degree completion. More specifically, the evaluation is designed to identify the core components of an effective U-I

partnership by finding strengths and weaknesses that make the model sustainable. In addition to this study, the Undergraduate Studies unit wants to improve the quality of their Bachelor of General Studies and the Bachelor Science Applied Science program and broaden its reach in the community. Higher education institutions will need to change their working methods, structures, and processes to bridge the gap between university and industry, resulting in a well-educated, talented workforce.

The findings of this evaluation could establish a framework for a sustainable university-industry (U-I) partnership model that are transferable to other industries and colleges. Additionally, the evaluation results will be used with key stakeholders to inform future directions.

### **Evaluation Questions**

To determine the efficiency of the U-I partnership between USF Office of Undergraduate Studies Bachelor of General Studies / Bachelor Science in Applied Science unit and EnGaCo energy corporation, this study will utilize a CIPP evaluation model (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017), which will guide the evaluation of context, input, process, and product.

The study aims to answer the following primary evaluation question:  
How do eight individuals (i.e., students, graduates, instructor, advisors, and key stakeholders) describe their perceptions of a sustainable industry partner to university degree completion program?

Additionally, there are four related sub-questions:

1. How do participants describe the organizational structure of the U-I partnership?
2. What factors do participants perceive influence the effectiveness of the U-I partnership?
3. How do participants perceive sustainable components of the U-I partnership?

4. What are participants' perceptions of model components that could be improved?

### **Significance of the Study**

The purpose of this evaluation is to provide data for the stakeholders to utilize in making informed decisions about their existing program and relationship. The data will be used by the stakeholders to develop program improvements that benefit the Bachelor of General Studies industry partner degree program. Furthermore, the findings of this study identify the critical components of a successful academic relationship and used to create a framework for a long-term U-I partnership model that other industrial partners and institutions may replicate at USF. This study informs my practice by utilizing this partnership structure to build long-term relationships with local universities to support our employees in their career growth through a degree program. The importance of this study to USF provides the opportunity to increase the awareness of the Bachelor of General Studies/Bachelor of Science Applied Science program to other local industry partners seeking to invest in their employee's professional development. This business model may help develop and sustain industry partner relationships with USF.

### **Assumptions**

The following assumptions apply to this study:

1. The perspectives shared by the participants are honest representations of their experiences.
2. The historical data provided by the university are accurate to the best of the stakeholder's knowledge.
3. The information provided by the industry partner is honest and accurate.

## **Delimitations**

1. Sample of the study: The sample included 8 participants the key stakeholders selected from both the university and industry partners. Criteria for selecting participants was based on their ability to address important facets and perspectives related to their experiences in the degree program.
2. Logistics: Some challenges transpired related to the availability of each participant, time constraints, and the setting for interviews to occur.

## **Limitations**

1. Because I am conducting a program evaluation through the collection and analysis of data, I must acknowledge hermeneutic considerations as other evaluators or researchers might view the results differently.
2. The study will be confined to the USF UGS unit with a single industry partner for the program evaluation. The study will be limited to the participants' perspectives of a single program, learning practices of instructors from a single university. All participants are within one geographical location.
3. Due to the limited studies known to practitioners on the effectiveness of U-I collaborations that solely focus on curriculum, much of the literature used to inform this study was focused on generalizable information known of U-I partnerships.

## **Evaluation Study Design**

This evaluation included qualitative data collection and incorporated data analysis. I collected the data through stakeholder interviews, observations, and document reviews. The interviews examined the participants' perceived gaps in their experiences throughout the program. These interviews were conducted utilizing Webex platform provided by EcGaCo.



The study used Stufflebeam and Zhang’s (2017) CIPP model, which guided the inquiry. The CIPP model provides a systematic, principled evaluation of a program’s context, inputs, process, and products. The CIPP model is designed to address four fundamental questions:

1. What needs to be done?
2. How should it be done?
3. Is it being done?
4. Did it succeed? (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017)

A formative evaluation takes place during the development stages of a program to help identify areas of improvement in a program (Scriven, 1991). I conducted the assessment in four parts. First, I conducted an evaluation analysis to examine the context of the program to assess the needs, problems, assets, and opportunities of the partnership. The second step involved input from the partnership program, specifically studying the goals, mission, plans, funding, resources, any fees, faculty, and instructors who teach and/or serve the students of the U-I partnership to determine how the degree program meets the needs of university, industry, and their employee students. The third part of this evaluation focused on process, pedagogies, coursework, or practice-based learning. It explores the activities and operational plans of the partnership. Fourth, I emphasize the product of the collaboration and assess outcomes and any possible side effects (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007).

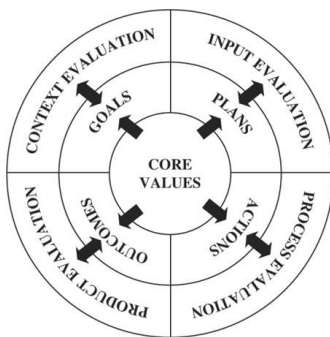


Figure 2. CIPP Model

## **Definition of Key Terms**

This section provides a brief synopsis of key terms used throughout this study; a more thorough glossary is provided in Appendix B.

**Asynchronous Learning** - Instructional delivery does not happen at the same time for students. The instructor may record their lecture or post video content for the student to view on their own time.

**Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** - A document that outlines an agreement between two or more companies. The document is designed to communicate expectations mutually accepted between all parties involved. MOU is not considered a legally binding contract (Kenton, 2021).

**Non-Traditional Students** - Students who have returned to college to pursue a degree after a gap in time. Typically, these students are working and/or have a family.

**Stakeholder** - A person or persons who have an interest or concern in the program being evaluated and are impacted by the evaluation results.

**Other Stakeholders** - Other stakeholders consulted during this evaluation will include the industry employee students past and current, academic advisor for the university who supports the industry students, advisor administrator for industry, and two lead administrators for organizational development considered subject matter experts (SME) for the industry.

**Subject Matter Experts (SME)** - An individual considered to be educated or experienced in the subject area of the employee degree and tuition program with ENGACO corporation.

**Synchronous Online Learning** - Learning will happen simultaneously in 'real time' between instructor and student. Class times will be scheduled for the instructor and class to meet virtually together in an online environment.

## **Pilot Phase**

During the Fall of 2020, I initiated conversations with the Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Studies and the Bachelor of Graduate Studies Assistant Director of Programs, having expressed my interest in exploring the existing EnGaCo partner model as the focus for my dissertation. With much excitement, they both agreed, provided me with historical documents for the Bachelor General Studies degree program. Using the Context, Input, Process, Product (CIPP) Evaluation Model for decision making towards improvement, Stufflebeam and Zhang (2017) advise employing various information sources and data collection methods as this will strengthen the outcomes. For the pilot study's purpose, I decided upon a triangulated approach of document analysis, interviews, and observations.

Having employed the CIPP evaluation model, the first step was to determine the context of the program, historical information, criteria, needs, and opportunities for the partnership. Secondly, the input of the evaluation assists in the decision-making of how the two pillars of the partnership, namely the university and the industry partner, are connected and working together along with the resources and financial obligations. Third, the process portion of the evaluation was to assess the processes of students from start to completion of the Bachelor of General Studies program, admissions processes, and interactions between the individuals who manage the various processes. Finally, product evaluation measured the outcomes of the students' experiences and completion of the degree program.

Referring to the CIPP model for program evaluation as the framework, my main goal with the pilot study was to gain insight into the inner workings of the partnership. Therefore, I interviewed critical stakeholders for both university and industry using both open-ended and semi-structured interviews, informed by the CIPP evaluation model and literature. The open-

ended questions allowed the key stakeholders to provide rich data of their experience and recall past events which led to the partnership. On the other hand, the interviews with the USF Undergraduate of General Studies Assistant Director have been more intentional, including semi-structured, informative interview meetings and document analysis. Examples of interviews questions included:

- What steps are necessary to developing a collaboration with a local community partner?
- What is required? How is it done?
- What are the benefits that university receives?
- What does the university provide to the industry partner?
- What is the ROI for doing this partnership?

The initial interviews with the industry partner, Bruce were conducted in September. Due to the protocol implemented of how to conduct business during a pandemic, the informal interviews were conducted in an online F2F meeting utilizing Webex platform per request of the industry partner. Leveraging my business background, the open-ended interview format worked well for me to guide the conversation with specific prompts such as, “Tell me why an educational partnership with USF is important to you and your organization?” and a semi-structured questioning of, “Do you believe that EnGaCo’s goals for the program partnership align with USF? Why or why not?” These types of questions allowed me to keep the interview concentrated on the primary purpose to enable the industry partner to express what they know about the academic partnership freely (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017).

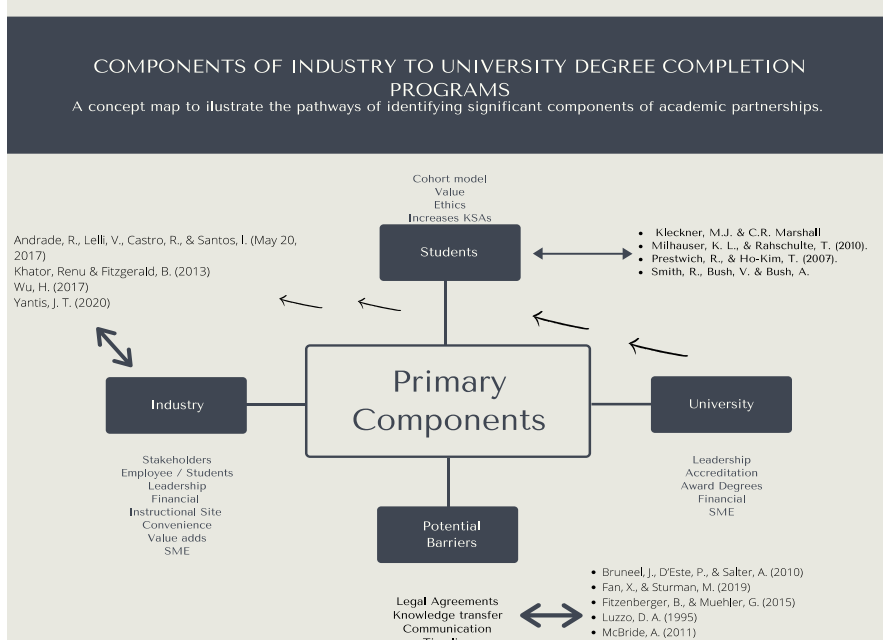


Figure 3. Concept Map

### Outcomes of the Pilot Phase

This section highlights outcomes discovered through the document analysis and informal interviews conducted throughout the pilot study. More outcomes were discovered once the completed program evaluation study occurred.

#### *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)*

The discovery phase of evaluating documents such as the Request to Offer a New Degree Program (Brigman, 2008) and archived articles regarding the partnership between EnGaCo and Hillsborough Community College (HCC) or EnGaCo and USF allowed me to apply the four principles of Stufflebeam's CIPP model. Firstly, in using Context evaluation, the documents provided the background and needs of the partnership. At the same time, assessing the Input component of the evaluation and reviewing documents provided insight into the partnership's planning and approach. Next, analyzing the partnership program activities, such as the admissions process for the EnGaCo students, helped me better understand the CIPP model's third

pillar—Process evaluation. The following steps in the study will be the product evaluation within the model designed to focus on the partnership's sustainability. Finally, the product evaluation phase will allow me to measure outcomes.

As a scholarly practitioner who reflects on and assesses the impact of my work by applying experiential knowledge, I was motivated to ask important questions while interviewing the BGS Assistant Director of Academic Programs. Early into the interview process, the following questions were posed:

1. Like the business industry, are legal agreements necessary whenever the university decides to form a partnership with an industry partner?
2. Does your unit have a written agreement with EnGaCo to provide educational degree programs to its employees?

This inquiry led to the discovery that there were no active MOU agreements in place with EnGaCo. After further analysis of the interview conducted with this EnGaCo key stakeholder, confirmed that the U–I partnership initially occurred through an attempt to solve an issue with employee satisfaction. The U-I partnership evolved between the preceding leadership for the USF BGS unit and EnGaCo. According to the interviewee, once the current BGS Assistant Director assumed the responsibility of supporting EnGaCo students, it never occurred to any individuals to search for an MOU.

#### *Written Admission Processes*

The conducted Process evaluation within the CIPP model revealed no documented admission processes between the Undergraduate Studies unit or industry partner. Currently, it is stated that the process for student admission loosely follows the university guidelines allowing for unique additional steps to be added to support the EnGaCo employee.

## **Summary of Pilot Findings**

The overall goal of the pilot study was to test the CIPP model that I used for my dissertation evaluation and gather initial insights about the problem that informs the actual study. As an outcome of the pilot study and employment of the CIPP model, the Bachelor of General Studies Assistant Director drafted an MOU between the USF Undergraduate Studies unit and EnGaCo corporation, defining the partnership's purpose and outlining the scope of the collaboration. The second outcome, the documented admission processes, has resulted in focusing efforts from the university and industry administrators working together to identify and establish the current process for EnGaCo students' admissions to USF through graduation. These two outcomes are critical components to improving the existing partnership and for developing a sustainable partnership framework. The information received during the pilot study has provided preliminary data informing the next phase of my dissertation. The pilot study proved helpful to assess the approach that will be applied, allowed to practice, and is a positive indicator that a sustainable partnership model can be developed. (See Appendix C).

## **Chapter One Summary**

Chapter One has provided an introduction, broad probable causes, problem, program description, purpose, significance, assumptions, delimitations, limitations, and highlights of the pilot study. Moreover, this chapter introduced the CIPP Evaluation Model and definitions of terms included understanding this evaluation study. Next, Chapter Two will present a review of the literature on university and industry partnerships, including benefits and challenges, the need for well-educated workers in the workforce, and barriers that prevent partnerships. Furthermore, Chapter Three will describe the proposed methods for conducting the evaluation study. Results and discussion of findings will follow.

## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Introduction and Organization of Review**

This chapter presents a review of the literature relevant to understanding the problem and background of U-I partnerships. The purpose of the literature review was to improve my understanding of the existing research surrounding my practice problem, namely university-industry academic partnerships, and to expand my knowledge of important concepts and application methods that will help construct a sustainable U-I partnership model.

Within this literature review, I have expanded on how the evidence with the reviewed studies and their framework supports this study's purpose. The research evaluated focused on constructs of employable skill sets and relationships. After extensive reading, evaluation, and synthesis, several themes were identified related to:

1. U-I partnership benefits, challenges.
2. The industry needs a well-educated worker.
3. Barriers that prevent collaborations from proceeding.

Below are the three themes to construct a context for understanding the nature of the problem and designing steps to gather empirical data for addressing it. In addition, there is a discussion on theories relevant to U-I partnerships that deliberate strategy and return on investment (ROI) for U-I partners.



## **University and Industry Partnerships: Relationship Benefits and Challenges**

Industry partners can play a significant influence in the overall success of a program at USF. There is a need for universities and industry partners to work together on a curriculum to produce a more well-educated, knowledgeable worker. In his exploration of partnerships, McQuaid (2000) argued that partnerships offer many benefits, such as the availability of resources, increasing each organization's effectiveness and efficiency, and allowing for legitimacy for a policy with other potential partners. Yantis (1979) observed much success with these types of partnerships and explained one benefit to an industry partnership is the collaboration of the two in developing a quality curriculum specifically meeting the industry partner's needs. These partnerships remain today because of the decades of successful pathways a student is guided from university to industry (Yantis, 1979). While the study was done years ago, the relationship is still active today between Central Michigan University (CMU) and large automotive companies such as Ford Motor Company (Central Michigan University Campus Editor, 2020).

Likewise, in Houston, local business partners within the energy industry assisted a university in establishing a degree program specific to the industry (Petroleum Engineering Program, 2013). This strategic partnership fostered a partnership of industry leaders and academia to strengthen the degree program offerings, increase enrollment numbers, thus creating a more well-educated workforce within the petroleum engineering industry (Petroleum Engineering Program, 2013). These new academic partnerships can benefit the Office of UGS at USF as they can provide new opportunities, financial support for education, and other missions and heighten the student experience and long-term success. Furthermore, industry partners can have access to education, expertise, access to USFs best and brightest students as potential

recruitment opportunities, leverage to research, and innovation. As Schofield (2013) mentions that partnership collaborations play a key role in knowledge transfer, it is imperative that these academic partnerships take form positively initially.

Another insight comes from a single study focused on a college student's success when placed with an industry partner to work on real-world problems while still in an educational setting. Strong evidence suggests that students are more successful when working on real-world problems with a company allowing them to apply learned knowledge than those who do not participate in such a collaboration. Wu (2017) research proves that a sustainable partnership of industry to university provides a quality learning experience for the student, meets, or exceeds learning objectives, and the transition for job placement with improved career success among graduates.

Several advantages of these relationships are successful graduates are an excellent resource for future students, not only because their stories can, directly and indirectly, attract new students to the program, but also because their support as alumni can expand the resources a university has to support student success. The local community also benefits when graduates of the program stay in the area. In their recent work, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities Task Force (AASCU, 2018) have posed several benefits to making U-I partnerships work: providing resources, outside expertise to help a university achieve its goals, creating new opportunities for research and learning experiences, and helping to build relationships leading to future employment opportunities and creating new pathways of stewardship the community.

Other studies have considered the challenges a partnership faces, its experiences, and its effects on a partnership. McQuaid (2000) found that partnerships are faced with many problems

when structuring the collaboration. For instance, ambiguous goals, resource costs, imbalanced power, impacts on mainstream services, philosophical differences, and organizational challenges and some of the aspects that can be difficult to navigate in the formation process (McQuaid, 2000). For Andrade et al. (2017), success can be found with long-term partnerships between universities and industry. There are clear differences in interests, goals, and experience between university and industry, making a fused relationship nearly impossible to navigate. The purpose of their study was to utilize past experiences to help new university-industry partnerships forge long-term relationships. Two key constructs measured are perceived attitudes of the industry to university along with the pace of decision-making. These constructs were analyzed through case study project documentation of experiences of a fifteen-year partnership (Andrade et al., 2017). Some noteworthy findings are challenges related to communication, interests, and attitudes. The benefits of resolving these challenges result in a network that provides innovation and deliverables that both parties achieve success. McQuaid (2000) explore issues and key dimensions that partnerships face when forming a coalition. In their view, unclear goals, resource costs, unequal power, cliques usurping power, impacts upon other 'mainstream' services, differences in philosophy between partners, and organizational problems (McQuaid, 2000). To remedy some of these challenges that may prevent collaboration, the authors suggest that a framework is necessary to create a proper partnership.

### **Need for Well-Educated and Knowledgeable Workers**

As the professional landscape shifts to a more global and diverse working environment, so do employers' job need. Seemingly, organizations require more knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) beyond the basics of reading spreadsheets. Working within an industry where technology is swiftly changing, my organization revisits our hiring processes, modifying the

qualifications, job duties, and responsibilities for some of our job positions. Identifying key skills required for an employee to perform successfully is critical to overall success. One study recognized communication skills as a key characteristic for college graduates. For instance, a study done by Kleckner and Marshall (2014) states that written and oral communication skills were most important to businesses who participated in the survey emphasizing that these skillsets were also lacking within their employees and recent college hires. Although this study focused on the needs of local employers to better curriculum offerings at the university, the authors recognize the need for faculty to partner with businesses to develop a qualified workforce. Accordingly, Prestwich and Ho-Kim (2007) were interested in learning how companies recruit and hire appropriately eligible college graduates. This research evaluated whether education and training received during college programs adequately prepared individuals for transition into the workforce. Results of the study indicated some of the most desired skills that an employer is building and sustaining relationships, culture management, communication skills, people skills, problem-solving, and adaptability. On the other hand, Smith et al. (2002) indicated that skillsets of recognizing and managing culture are necessary. The study concluded that higher education institutions specializing in business degree programs should consider the practical needs of businesses incorporating the objectives into the curriculum.

Similarly, Milhauser and Rahshulte (2010) discovered a breakdown between subjects being taught at universities and the skills required at international businesses. Findings of the study indicate that businesses have significant challenges when interviewing college graduates with business degrees who do not have the desired skills for employment. One recommendation might be for businesses to work alongside higher education systems to develop a curriculum that better supports the KSAs that a new hire is expected to have when a college degree is granted.

## **Barriers Preventing Partnerships**

Collaboration between two parties with similar needs yet different objectives, such as an industry partner and university, will experience some challenges. Characteristically, universities focus on education, knowledge, and student success, whereas industry tends to utilize knowledge as a competitive advantage. In my professional experience, it is imperative to openly discuss any potential barriers with all individuals involved to ensure that all parties can make an acceptable agreement. Identifying these challenges at the beginning of the partnership eliminates any friction, thus creating a long-term, sustainable working partnership. In their study on factors that reduce the barriers to university-industry collaboration, Bruneel et al. (2010) acknowledges that barriers at the beginning of the relationship are critical to achieving long-term benefits. While this study focuses on teamwork, which involves research topics, the information applies to academic-industry partnerships working together to develop a more knowledgeable workforce. Some of the barriers measured were the conflicts of attitudes, prior experience between two potential partners, and the role trust plays in the development of or working relationship between university and industry. I agree that discussions of advantages, disadvantages, and potential barriers are completed to shape an acceptable working agreement. My experience working and fostering relationships with vendors within my organization corroborates it.

While analysts examine barriers that research-related partnerships face that may threaten their collaboration, another line of research focused on obstacles regarding knowledge-transfer relationships. Schofield (2013) discovered factors pertaining to the lack of understanding of customer needs, challenges with mutual and clear direction of goals, and barriers with communicated objectives when an industry partners with the university. In my experience, when a business partner lacks customer service accountability or does not understand my

organizational needs, it hinders our business's productivity. In addition, it takes additional time to provide the business partner information. The AASCU Task Force (2018) suggests U-I partnerships have great rewards and frequently come with specific risks. AASCU's (2018) discussion of risks includes financial measures, program quality, and potential over-commitment with the university or industry partner. The outcomes of these studies indicate both parties need to invest the time at the beginning of the partnership to discuss expectations and needs to avoid obstacles and gaps in the future. The main reason why a business partnership fails is due to barriers that cannot be overcome. Other obstructions that can prevent partnership collaboration are behavioral issues with a stakeholder, mindset issues, organizational strategy, and trust (Awasthy et al., 2020). These findings are significant since they identify potential impediments that can be overcome early in forming a U-I collaboration.

### **Disruptive Innovation Theory and Game Theory**

In this study, I chose to use disruptive innovation theory as the underpinning theory for my program evaluation. Recognizing that goals, conflicts of attitudes, and lack of trust are potential barriers affecting the formation of partnerships, innovation can improve processes, efficiency, and creative resolutions. Industry partners seek innovative solutions that maximize their return on investment (ROI). Using a cost-benefit analysis, businesses can develop new strategies to protect their assets while maximizing profitability. Disruptive Innovation Theory, introduced by Clayton Christensen (Horn, 2017), is a term used to describe a process in which a product or service takes root in simple application in a less expensive market and persistently go upmarket, replacing the competition. Technology has evolved to include business model innovations and product innovations. Nevertheless, Markides (2006) argues that there are two types of disruptive innovation: product innovation and business-model innovation. The new

corporate strategy should attract new customers or grow their existing clientele to increase their business portfolio.

Simply put, any interruption to a product, service, or new business model different from the industry norm is disruptive. The disruptive innovation concept allows businesses to take a step back from their operations and evaluate their products and services, identify areas that can improve, or recognize consumer requirements that can benefit from an originaive solution. These solutions might introduce or redefine an existing product or service, deliver a differing performance, or work differently to improve the business practice through a solution-oriented approach. A key factor of this approach is how disruptive innovations are economically beneficial to the industry and do not drain additional resources but use existing resources to solve the identified problem (Horn, 2017).

From the perspective of industry and university partnerships, Christensen's (2011) disruptive innovation theory establishes a rethinking of collaborative relationships and partnerships. In this study, I explore how by disrupting the business model of an identified problem within the current process. For example, an industry that desires a well-trained workforce might create an in-house training program or seek outside third-party intervention. Milhem et al. (2014) explores the various training theories and types consistent with in-house and external third-party training programs. Through embracing disruptive innovation, industries found university partnerships have an opportunity to mitigate their problem by employing an established innovation. The university provides a well-established training curriculum and off-the-shelf education that is accredited, providing value to industry and employees.

While disruptive innovation provides a differing perspective to articulate business challenges and define solutions, the business must incorporate an intentional decision-making

process to identify, accept, and implement the change management process. Through Game Theory, a business can identify their decision-making strategy and identify the ROI associated with their various decisions. The study by Barnett & Mattox (2010) states that establishing and executing a solid strategy is key to determining the success and return on corporate training investment. The learning and business need of the enterprise dictate the measures to include their ROI. Game theory as explained by Hayes (2021) is a theoretical framework to understanding the decisions made by individuals, businesses, or competing players. In laymen's terms, game theory provides a framework for understanding choice in business decisions of various situations amongst partners and clientele. Or simply stated by Rutherford (2021) the study of strategic decision making explained as a formalized decision description of what occurs between rational decision makers. Although not often recognized game theory occurs in everyday life decisions where logic is applied from business, finance, economics, education, and politics to name a few. Since the coining of the term "game theory" in 1940 by John von Neumann and Oscar Morganstern, one protégé of von Neumann, John Nash (Portrayed in the movie *A Beautiful Mind*), created the Nash Equilibrium which is commonly referred to as the Prisoners Dilemma (Rutherford, 2021) depicted in Figure 4. In this example, neither person has an incentive to change their own strategy given what the other person might be doing. Each individual has control of their own decision-making process and makes their best decision based on the information the individual has on-hand. Simply stated, the model depicts how individuals with differing opinions can cooperate or how they might take a more significant risk to achieve the result providing greater benefit to one individual. This strategy has been used in military strategic decision making, national economic resource markets, to making a decision of what local coffee shop one should consider on their way to work.



The mechanics of game theory establish the stage for an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) to simplify the development of strategy. Schooley (2019) argues regular analysis of an organization's processes ensures that activities function smoothly to operating a successful business. My professional experience has taught me that SWOT analyses are essential in business. Deshpande (2019) argues for applying a SWOT analysis as a tool to structure the narrative and communicate the logic for crafting constructive solutions. SWOT enables you to capitalize on the strengths, correct your weaknesses, and reduce risks. In addition, theories can help understand what the participants are receiving from the partnership and understand the instruction process. Additional concepts that help inform this study are scientific methods, which are a set of techniques that focus on circumstances, events, case studies, and narratives to provide a specific setting for performance issues, shortcomings, and prescribed behaviors in specific situations (Milhem et.al., 2014). Therefore, it is vital to select the training model best suited to the nature of the work at hand.

A framework that creates optimal strategic decision-making for independent and competing partners (Hayes, 2021).		<b>PERSON B</b>	
		<b>COOPERATE</b>	<b>DEFECT</b>
<b>PERSON A</b>	<b>COOPERATE</b>	second best	worst
	<b>DEFECT</b>	second best	best
		best	third best
		worst	third best

Figure 4. Game Theory

### Chapter Two Summary

Consistent with the sustainability purpose, most evaluated research focused on constructs supporting transferable skill sets and U-I relationships within the domain of practice. The

literature review revealed that positive influence exists when industry plays a role in the educational development of a college student. The practical implications of the articles support higher education and industry partnerships, leveraging resources, economic development, and current industry training practices. Several themes emerged in the review of the literature. Firstly, collaborations occur because of the growing need for a new set of knowledge, skills, and abilities a college graduate entering the workforce must have beyond the traditional skillsets to be qualified to work in an ever-changing global environment. Secondly, identifying potential barriers in the early phases of the relationship between university and industry might significantly lessen the opportunity for failure and might further increase the chance of a long-term sustainable partnership. Thirdly, the benefits of such a relationship impact both the university and business. Benefits to the university may include additional funding for academic programs, opportunities for further research that results in scholarly papers, strengthening the alumni, improved course offerings, and direct pathways from university to industry. Some industry benefits include ease of hiring practices through the pathway connection with the university, acquisition of a more knowledgeable worker, and the positive economic impact with fewer dollars spent on training post-graduation of new hires.

A significant strength resulting from this literature review is the conceptual framework suggested, which integrates all stakeholders, including students, business, community, faculty, and administration. When all key stakeholders benefit from an academic-industry partnership program, the opportunity is excellent for the longevity of the partnership. For example, while three sets of researchers (Kleckner & Marshall, 2014; Prestwich & Ho-Kim, 2007; Smith et al., 2002) focused on the KSAs necessary to meet the needs of local industry, one research team

(Milhauser & Rahshulte, 2010) sought to understand how to support the employee knowledge needs of international business.

A weakness of this literature review is that it does not identify the perceived attitudes universities have towards the industry. The studies solely focused on the interests and perspectives of the industry over universities. However, perceived attitudes may affect the roles that universities have in their collaboration with industry partners.

Finally, this literature review reveals some insight about the idea of fostering a relationship to support both local and global working environments. Industry partners that embrace disruptiveness as a strategy are looking at new innovative ideas as a feasible solution to enhance their business model. Furthermore, Disruptive Innovation Theory (Christensen, 2017) and Game Theory (Markides, 2006) support this evaluative study. These theories are helpful to informing my study, identify gaps, and strengthening the validity of its examination.

## **CHAPTER THREE:**

### **METHODS**

#### **Introduction**

This evaluation study utilized qualitative methods to evaluate the current U-I partnership model to understand how the program operates and supports the needs of industry employees-students seeking degree completion. The evaluation was designed to identify the core characteristics of an effective U-I partnership, including its strengths and weaknesses. This chapter provides a comprehensive plan of the evaluation design.

#### **Study Design: Program Evaluation and Qualitative Methods**

After inquiring about the existing partnership between Undergraduate Studies unit and EnGaCo corporation, I discovered the initiative lacked a program evaluation. To fulfill this gap, I employed a program evaluation model with a qualitative emphasis. My decision to use qualitative methods is because it provides the opportunity to collect rich data, including examples of individuals' perceptions of their experiences, providing a more meaningful understanding of processes and issues that might arise (Leavy, 2017). My study began with collecting data to discover the context, goals, and purpose as defined by the U-I partnership (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Then, the data collection consisted of a triangulated approach using document analysis, interviewing, and observation where I gained stakeholder and participant perspectives.

In any case, Fitzpatrick et al. (2011) recognize that evaluators vary from researchers further by building rapport with their stakeholders. However, while it is essential to understand the differences between research and evaluation, there are periods when the two approaches may overlap. This juncture occurs when evaluative conclusions are based on methodical data collection and analysis. Hence, the overall purpose of the evaluation is to provide key stakeholders with information to help them make sound decisions regarding improvements for their program.

Meanwhile, in my study, I focused on discovering future actions to improve the existing U-I program and partnership and develop a long-term collaboration model; the program assessment is a formative application. Scriven (1991) defines a formative evaluation as central in developing and improving a program or process. Since this U-I program partnership will continue, the concentration of the formative evaluation provides detailed information for stakeholders to make educated decisions for improvement. Therefore, in this evaluation study, it is imperative to how I planned, managed, conducted, and communicated to the key stakeholders for the evaluation.

### **Context, Input, Process, Product Model (CIPP)**

While several evaluation methods exist, I chose the CIPP model (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017) as an improvement-oriented approach that provides the comprehensive framework for guiding a formative evaluation of this U-I partnership program. Stufflebeam (2000) states that “The most important purpose of evaluation is not to prove, but to improve” (p. 283). This aligns with the primary goal of this study to examine the current academic relationship between the local industry partner and USF undergraduate studies unit to offer a model for improvement of similar partnerships.

Considering that evaluation is a learning tool for improvement, I chose to employ the CIPP Model (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017; Stufflebeam, 2000) led by my intention to offer recommendations for improvement of the existing U-I relationship while also establishing a sustainable framework for bringing in new industrial partners in the future. The stakeholders played a prominent role in the evaluation process through offering insight, suggesting participants for the study, and providing ongoing feedback, helping to render the evaluation results actionable. A qualitative evaluation approach was conducted as the primary data collection method for this evaluation. Active engagement with the key stakeholders during the entire evaluation process was conducted to successfully complete this evaluation.

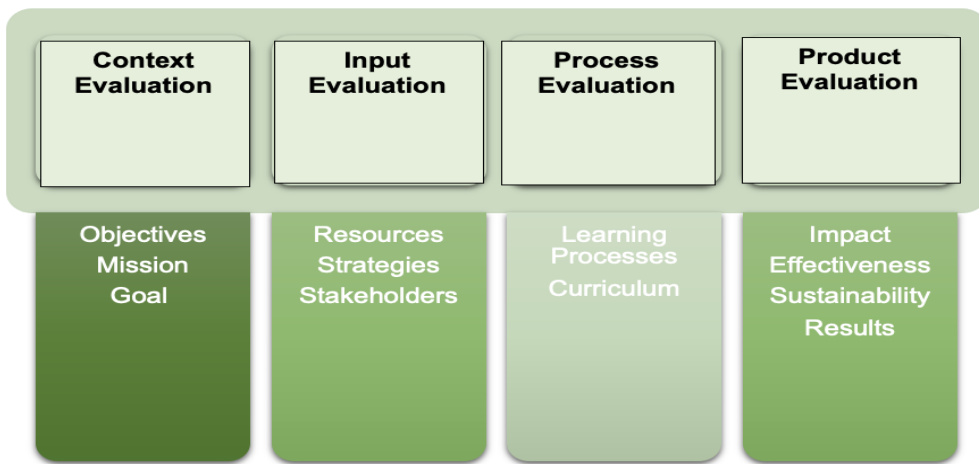


Figure 5. CIPP Model

**Context**

First, the evaluation study tested the use of the CIPP (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017) model in a distinctive setting. The Bachelor of General Studies program was established almost eight years ago to support non-traditional returning students. In 2012, the first industry energy company cohort model began with 22 enrolled students. Through the years, as the program became more widely known by industry employees, the partnership strengthened, and the energy

company's leadership team began identifying processes (see Appendix A) to the USF Undergraduate Studies unit.

A pilot study (See Appendix C) of UI partnerships occurred during the Fall of 2020 where the findings provide significant opportunities and recommendations for further evaluation and justifying the need for this study. First, an evaluation was conducted on current employees-students from the newest cohort five. Cohort five was chosen to be part of the evaluation as they have recently applied to the program and begun coursework. This data provides current insight of their perceptions and attitudes regarding their experiences just completing the admissions process to USF and the launch of their education. Similarly, it was essential to include past employee-students who have graduated from the degree program to inform the process's inner workings further. This information was critical to understanding the students' experiences in the degree program and identifying any historical events or themes. Third, other stakeholders that informed the analysis are the USF program advisor and instructors who directly work with the employee-students.

Finally, I conducted a formative program evaluation on the U-I academic partnership to discover the answers to the study's primary question, how do eight (students, graduates, instructor, advisors, and key stakeholders) describe their perceptions of a sustainable industry partner to university degree completion program? Once all the data was gathered, I analyzed and coded the data. The findings were used to establish the framework for a sustainable U-I academic partnership model that informs other industries and colleges that may want to develop a similar program. The intention was to make the partnership program model sustainable.

## **Evaluator's Positionality**

For this study, the term evaluator refers to a single, external evaluator, Lan Reneé Amboy-Biller. A pilot study was conducted in the Fall of 2020 to gather background information for this proposed study. Due to my long-term professional relationship with the key stakeholder of the university, I have unrestricted access to available documents, data, processes, program administrators, students, and program components, allowing the CIPP model (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017) to guide the evaluative process. CIPP evaluations (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007) provide information to key stakeholders making informed decisions for improvement to the program. Additionally, my 20 years of industry experience has prepared me to assess the program and partnership and understand how my experiences might influence the outcomes of this evaluation study.

## **Evaluation Questions**

To determine the efficacy of the U-I partnership between the USF Office of Undergraduate Studies BGS/BSAS unit and the energy corporation by applying the CIPP model (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017), I utilized four fundamental evaluative questions examining four levels of analysis: context, input, process, and product.

The main inquiry question that this study addresses is: How do ten individuals (i.e., students, graduates, instructor, advisors, and key stakeholders) describe their perceptions of a sustainable industry partner to university degree completion program?

The study included four related sub-questions:

1. How do participants describe the organizational structure of the U-I partnership?
2. What factors do participants perceive influence the effectiveness of the U-I partnership?
3. How do participants perceive sustainable components of the U-I partnership?



4. What are participants' perceptions of model components that could be improved?

## **Participants**

Utilizing purposeful sampling, participants were selected to provide their perspectives and experience, thus providing an information-rich evaluation. Purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) was used to acquire meaningful knowledge about problems and circumstances related to this study. Purposeful sampling was based on the researcher's understanding to ascertain, comprehend, and obtain new knowledge aligned with the stated goals of the stakeholders. Consequently, participants were selected based on who may elicit the most information (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Participants were current or recent Bachelor of General Studies program students, administrators, and instructors. Criteria for the selection of student participants were the length of time in the program, demographics, geographical location, current job position, and ethnicity. These factors were considered to ensure diverse, rich data was collected. In this study, I chose to focus on perspectives and knowledge about experiences during the process and participation within the program rather than generalizability.

Purposeful sampling provided the best opportunity to reach key participants with certain qualities who informed the study with the most in-depth and detailed information (Patton, 2002). Participants of the formative evaluation were employed with EnGaCo and are currently enrolled or have completed the BGS program. In addition, student participants from different cohorts provided varying perspectives on their lived experiences while in the degree program. Therefore, purposeful sampling was selected, and then, through inquiry, I examined each participant's perspective (Berg, 2007). The industry partner's Senior Administrator of Organizational Development (SAOD) and USF's Assistant Director of the Bachelor of General Studies (ADBGS) program were best suited to provide a list of potential participants since they

interacted with these student employees since their initial transition began during the college admission process.

The industry partner's Senior Administrator of Organizational Development was asked to provide a list of employee students from the five cohorts in different stages of their program. Additionally, the industry partner provided names of lead administrators for organizational development who served as a subject matter expert (SME). Similarly, USF's Assistant Director of the Bachelor of General Studies program provided a list of instructors and/or advisors who directly interacted with the employee students, the curriculum, and the degree program. I gathered these lists to ensure relevancy for this evaluation study.

The Senior Administrator of Organizational Development provided a list of all potential participants from the industry to solicit their interest in participating in this evaluation. The participants were selected from the total number of industry employees -students that have participated in the BGS degree program and were using the tuition reimbursement assistance program through EnGaCo. At the request of the industry key stakeholder, all participants needed to be actively employed with the company. There have been 104 total students enrolled in the degree program. Of the 104 total students, 85 are actively employed with the company. An initial email was sent to all 85 actively employed students requesting their participation in a program evaluation regarding the U-I partnership degree program. Of the 85 employee students, 25 expressed interests in participating in the study. I sent an email, as shown in Appendix J, with detail and instructions regarding the study, their voluntary participation, and the ability to withdraw from the study without any harm or risk. As shown in Appendix K, an informed consent form was emailed and required for signature via DocuSign acknowledging their consent

and participation in this program evaluation. Eight participants responded with their willingness to participate and signed the consent form.

Relatedly, the Assistant Director of the Bachelor of General Studies program provided a list of instructors and academic advisors for this formative evaluation study. There have been two academic advisors for the USF BGS program. Last year, one advisor retired from the university and is not available to be interviewed. I sent an email inviting the remaining academic advisor and instructors to participate in this study. These participants were chosen as informants who shared their viewpoints to the best of their ability. Upon their agreement to participate, an informed consent form was sent for signature via DocuSign acknowledging their consent and participation in this program evaluation as seen in Appendix K. Invariably, the question arises as to the appropriate sample size. Merriam and Tisdell (2016, p.101) expounded that purposeful sampling size is reliant on informational aspects. To ensure information-rich data is provided and to ensure credibility, 10 interviews were conducted. The sample size is fundamentally determined upon receiving adequate information to make informed recommendations for improvement (Patton, 2002).

Upon each participant's agreement, email communication was sent separately to schedule their participation (Appendix O). I endeavored for diversity within the sample selection to ensure that all genders are represented. The participants did not receive compensation for their participation in this evaluation.

Before participating in this evaluation, participants were informed of the purpose of the evaluation. To guarantee the anonymity of the industry partner, participants were provided the opportunity to select pseudonyms to identify themselves in data collection and analysis, specifically in interview recordings and transcriptions. If they did not choose a pseudonym, I

appointed one for them. Additionally, personal information was removed from transcriptions. This methodological design is consistent with the purpose of this study by selecting participants to communicate their perspectives and experiences during their time spent in the tuition assistance and degree program.

## **Data Collection Techniques**

### *Document Analysis*

Stufflebeam and Coryn (2014) suggest starting the document analysis process by analyzing collected data and identifying essential and relevant information. During the pilot study phase, I queried the industry partner and university for access to documents, data, or artifacts that would prove helpful in understanding the historical aspects of how the partnership originated. Although the industry partner did not have existing documents, the university stakeholder provided access to two documents: the Florida Board of Governors Request to Offer a New Degree Program, Bachelor of General Studies code 24.0102, and the Academic Program Review of Undergraduate Program Self-Study. These documents were selected by the stakeholder of the USF Bachelor of General Studies unit for the historical insight that they provided as I began to analyze the best methods in improving and maintaining a sustainable U-I partnership. Saldaña and Omasta (2018) emphasize that it is not essential to gather all documents for a study, rather it is key for the scholarly practitioner to consolidate the data for analysis. Additionally, exploring the university's website and other news media platforms for supplementary artifacts relating to the existing U-I partnership allowed further insights into the qualities and characteristics that contributed to the formation and success of the program partnership.

According to both Merriam and Tisdell (2016), investigators should be open-minded when determining the feasibility of a document. Most importantly, I examined data through a critical lens to identify what needs to be addressed and establish a foundation for inquiry. During that phase of the inquiry, it was vital to be prepared for any unpredicted discoveries. The qualitative analysis method initiated the gathering of information and assembling of findings that prove worthwhile (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, data analysis provided an ability to track modifications to the program and U-I partnership. The analysis of my triangulated approach applies to the American Evaluation Association's program evaluation standards as outlined in the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (2021). The categorical standards consist of utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy and provide the evaluative framework for measuring the data collection and analysis (The Program Evaluation Standards, 2021).

Since this systematic approach complements other investigation methods, it provided several benefits. First, in program evaluations, the use of qualitative methods is advantageous in telling the program's story through examination of documents and information received from interviewing its participants (Patton, 2002). Review of the documents acquired from the USF Bachelor General Studies unit is the initial phase that aided in developing quality questions that effectively engages the participants during the interview phase. Second, data triangulation allowed for the convergence of data collected, which provided a well-defined depiction of the U-I partnership and allowed for creative and innovative recommendations for improvement. Lastly, applying a triangulated approach of document analysis, interview, and observation methods for conducting this formative evaluation strengthened and increased the validity of this study.

## *Interviews*

While being one of the key approaches for collecting qualitative data, the interview method is also valuable for receiving information-rich content. Interviewing for a qualitative study benefits the evaluator to learn the participants' perceptions, attitudes, behaviors, and experiences (Fitzpatrick, et al., 2011). In this study, I employed informal, semi-structured interviews, which were advantageous in establishing rapport with the U-I key stakeholders (See Appendix D). Understanding who the participants are, I chose to take a conversational approach using semi-structured questions embedded in the conversation in hopes to negate bias by the participants. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state, semi-structured interviews allow for more flexibility in the wording of the questions or can be a mixture of structured to less structured questions. As the evaluator, I used an interview guide to lead the inquiry, most of the interviews were directed by the anticipated information and what I received from the participants. Data discovered during the pilot study phase assisted in the formation of the interview questions. I recorded and conducted initial transcription of the interviews using the Otter transcription software. After initial transcription, I reviewed the audio and the transcription ensuring completeness before sending to participants for member checking. Once member checks were completed, I began data analysis using the qualitative data analysis MAXQDA software conducting first stage and second stage coding. My first stage coding consisted of open, In Vivo, and evaluation coding, followed by my second stage of pattern coding and reflective thematic analysis (Richards, 2022) identifying themes from the interviews.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic along with the health and safety of participants, the industry partner interviews were conducted in one -hour scheduled meetings utilizing their WebEx online platform. The industry partner key stakeholder assisted in coordinating and

scheduling each participant interview on their online platform. A suitable alternative to face-to-face interviews the online platform proved challenging in developing trust and providing a safe space in which to speak. I relied on the techniques I gained working in a professional setting to guide my inquiry, employ active listening, make eye contact, observe non-verbal cues, and provide silent time for the participant to reflect and reconstruct their experience. Fitzpatrick et al. (2011) explain that interviewers encourage participants to talk and share their stories through a meaningful dialogue to learn about the evaluation questions of importance. As the evaluator, I engaged with and provided prompts of open-ended questions the interviewee answered easily. I used a romantic interview evaluation style approach to build rapport and an empathetic connection with the participants throughout the process.

### *Observations*

Comparable to the interview approach, the observation method is an effective tool for collecting qualitative data. Fitzpatrick et al. (2011) claim that observing is essential to evaluations in his discussion of observations. Observations complemented the interview process by allowing the evaluator to view the participants during active content delivery. An observational approach provided the opportunity to assess actions and behavior in a live setting, enabling the evaluator to gain further insight and understanding of the degree program. The decision to include observations in the collection process provided me, as an evaluator, the ability to offer accurate data to the stakeholders for improvement. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the industry campus closed, with 100% of employees working and attending classes remotely. After speaking with the key stakeholder for the industry, I received an opportunity to observe face-to-face advising session once the industry campus returned to in-person work schedules in Fall 2022.

In preparing to observe the current cohort in an active, instructional setting, I reviewed Merriam and Tisdell (2016) who outlined common elements to consider when conducting observations. These common elements consisted of 1) physical setting, 2) participants, 3) activities and interactions, 4) conversations, 5) subtle factors, and 6) the evaluator's behavior. Applying these common elements as my guide ensured I maximized time and effort to identify patterns, frequency of interactions, conversations, along with more indirect activity such as physical or non-verbal cues. As advantageous observations are in learning how the program operates, it was important to consider some drawbacks. This approach was time-consuming, my presence in the EnGaCo environment did not affect participants' behaviors. In sum, observations gathered information about the U-I partnership and degree program, which was effective during data collection.



Figure 6. Linear Process for Qualitative Research

### **Chapter Three Summary**

In Chapter Three, the methodology of the proposed evaluative study was described for a formative program evaluation. Stufflebeam's (2000) CIPP Evaluation Model functions as the methodological approach. The evaluation questions posed aided in informing decision-makers of necessary improvements to the existing program while crafting a partnership framework that informed other industries and colleges. Results from the evaluative study informed my recommendations for improvement and further study.



This formative program evaluation utilized Stufflebeam's (2000) CIPP model to evaluate the academic partnership between the USF Office of Undergraduate Studies Bachelor of General Studies unit and its industry partner. The findings of the pilot study conducted in the Fall of 2020 revealed that improvements exist for the U-I partnership program and a need to further the study was indicated.

## **CHAPTER FOUR:**

### **RESULTS**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to obtain information about the U-I partnership that could help evaluate the perceptions of the participants' experiences navigating a university-to-industry partnership. To achieve this goal, the overall question that broadly guided this program evaluation was:

How do ten students, graduates, instructor, advisors, and key stakeholders describe their perceptions of a sustainable industry partner for a university degree completion program?

Additional questions to further guide the overall question and aligned with the theoretical framework included:

1. How do participants describe the organizational structure of the U-I partnership?
2. What factors do participants perceive influence the effectiveness of the U-I partnership?
3. How do participants perceive sustainable components of the U-I partnership?
4. What are participants' perceptions of model components that could be improved?

The program evaluation was conducted using Stufflebeam's (2017) CIPP Model concentrating on an Input evaluation using elements of the Context, Input, Process, and Product evaluations as an examination guide through the university and industry lens as related to the U-I partnership. First, the context evaluation of the U-I partnerships included an exploration of the history of the partnership, understanding of how and why this industry partnership exists, and

how the program addresses the intended goals outlined by the stakeholders. Consequently, at the Input stage of the evaluation, I used the triangulated approach of interviews, observations, and document analysis to examine the information provided by both partners to determine how the identifiable goals are being met throughout the student lifecycle. Using then information provided during the Input evaluation, I further explored and analyzed the Process of program activities, in other words how the U-I partnerships was addressing student needs and how the information was documented in relation to student success tracking metrics and industry applicability. Finally, the Product evaluation focused on sustainable measures identified during the Input and Process evaluation stages where beneficiaries shared their perspective of what makes the U-I partnership successful, and the documents required that one might replicate to begin building this partnership. Ultimately, the final component of the CIPP model, i.e., the Product evaluation analyzed the quality of outcomes, as identified by the participants. This analysis is discussed in Chapter 5, by focusing specifically on the success of the program and suggestions for improvement and sustainability.

Data were collected from the participants through interviews conducted between June 30, 2022, and August 31, 2022. The interviews lasted between 40 and 60 minutes. are reviewed in this chapter. The key stakeholder for the industry provided the evaluator with access to and contact information for employee-students who met the criteria and expressed interest in participating in the evaluation. Below, a description of the participant selection process and basic demographic information is provided followed by a discussion of the data collection results. The findings are organized and discussed in terms of the four sub-questions and around main themes that were identified in the analysis.

## **Participants Selection and Recruitment**

For this study, the EnGaCo stakeholder requested purposeful sampling with specific criteria as follows:

- Individuals actively involved in the program in the past four years
- Demographic representation is varied by gender, ethnicity, and age
- Actively employed by the university or the industry partner

The evaluator interviewed ten participants for this study. Of the ten participants, four were employee-students of the USF BGS Industry degree program, two were industry key stakeholders who managed the program and partnership, three were university key stakeholders, and one was the instructor.

The employee-student participants were selected from the total number of industry employees -students who have participated in the USF BGS degree program using tuition reimbursement assistance through EnGaCo. At the request of the industry key stakeholder, all participants needed to be actively employed with the company. To date, 104 total students have enrolled in the degree program. Of the 104 total students, 85 are employed with the company. An initial email was sent from the industry key stakeholder to 85 actively employed students, inquiring about their interest in participating in a program evaluation regarding the U-I partnership degree program. Of the 85 employee students, 25 expressed interest in participating in the study. I sent an email, carbon copied to the 25 participants as shown in Appendices J, with details and instructions regarding the study, their voluntary participation, and the ability to withdraw from the study without any harm or risk. As shown in Appendix K, an informed consent form was emailed and required for signature via DocuSign, acknowledging their consent and participation in this program evaluation. Nine participants responded with their willingness

to participate and signed the consent form. After receiving the signed consent forms, I emailed each individual to schedule the interviews. Four participants responded by scheduling interviews. Over eight weeks, I sent three additional emails to those individuals who signed consent forms. No additional responses were received to schedule interviews keeping the participant pool of industry students at four.

The other six participants were purposefully selected based on their position and responsibilities within USF and EnGaCo. The two participants for the industry are the key stakeholder (Senior Administrator of Organizational Development), who has voluntarily managed the education program since August 2007, and their lead administrator for the tuition reimbursement program and policy, who has been in place since 2016. Four participants from USF are the Assistant Director of the Bachelor of General Studies, the BGS advisor (2021), an instructor (2015), and the Dean for Undergraduate Studies. The ten participants were assigned a unique identifier, such as P1, so their identity could remain anonymous in the data analysis and results (please see Table 1 below).

Table 1. Participant Demographical Data

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Partner</b>
P1	Female	Caucasian	55-64	Industry
P2	Male	Caucasian	55-64	Industry
P3	Male	Hispanic	45-54	Industry
P4	Female	Caucasian	35-44	Industry
P5	Female	Caucasian	35-44	Industry
P6	Male	Caucasian	55-64	Industry
P7	Female	African American	35-44	University
P8	Male	African American	35-44	University
P9	Female	Caucasian	45-54	University
P10	Female	Caucasian	35-44	University

## Data Collection Process

The primary data collection methods employed for this program evaluation included document analysis, interviews, and observations.

Table 2. Data Collection Method and Timeline

<b>Data Collection Method</b>	<b>Type / Descriptor</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
Primary Data Sources	Industry and University document analysis	Contextual details; Data triangulation	Fall 2020- August 2022
Interview Guide for Participants	Email to participants to establish an initial interview	Guide to set agenda for participants in what to expect from the interview structure	Mid-Late June 2022
Interview with participants	Interview Protocol/ Semi-structured Open-ended	Describe detailed perspectives on the evaluation. Leads on emergent themes	One hour in-person / Microsoft Teams between Late June - August 2022
Member Check of interview transcription and initial findings	Document sent via email	Obtain helpful information and identify inaccuracies. Validity and Reliability	Early July – August 2022
Field Notes / Observations	On-site for each interview and follow-up.	Contextual details; data triangulation	June 2020 & Late June 2022- September 2022
Supplemental data sources	University website	Additional detail; corroboration as applicable	Fall 2020 & June 2022- July 2022

### *Document Analysis*

As the evaluator of this study, my background in industry and experiential knowledge as a scholarly practitioner provided a more meaningful appreciation of the documentation collected during the document analysis phase of data collection. My personal experience of doing business with other entities drove the inquiry for specific documentation related to partnerships.

Understanding how a partnership is structured defines the relationship, roles, responsibilities, and

expectations between the two entities. A detailed partner agreement provides the framework that reduces the risk of uncertainty long term. In my pursuit of understanding the structure of the U-I partnership, the first document I requested to review from the key stakeholders was a written agreement. A key finding of the pilot study phase was identifying no MOU between the university and industry partners. Since the pilot study, an MOU was executed between the university and industry partner, defining the expectations and responsibilities. The request for the partnership agreement was aimed at gaining a more meaningful understanding of the framework and partnership, driving inquiry and requests for additional documentation. The MOU of the U-I partnership led to requesting an outline of university admission processes, orientation, onboarding, and curriculum structure. After the initial request, the key stakeholders of both organizations identified a lack of partnerships structure. They immediately began creating processes for each event cycle the industry student would participate, from initial application to the university to graduation.

While documents were created simultaneously for this study, more questions arose. Questions such as what are the graduation rates, persistence, and retention rates at the university, the percentage of industry employees that earned job advancement because of completing their bachelor's Degree, retention of employees due to the U-I partnership and degree program, the process for the tuition reimbursement policy with the industry, and employee satisfaction results since the U-I partnership. I reviewed these documents before and after conducting the interviews. The information from these documents and reports provided additional data to the initial background information learned during the pilot phase. The documents established validity to the information supported during coding and reflective thematic analysis of the interviews. The analysis of the documents throughout this program evaluation created background and context,

provoked reflection for additional inquiry, complemented interviews and observation, tracked changes to the partnership and program, and verified information in this triangulated study.

### *Interviews*

All interviews were conducted between June 30, 2022, and August 31, 2022. Interviews with the employee-students, industry key stakeholders, and lead administrator were conducted via a virtual meeting using the Microsoft Teams platform between the participant and evaluator. The interviews for USF staff were conducted virtually through Microsoft Teams or as in-person interviews at the request of each of the four participants. Before each interview, the evaluator requested permission from the participant to record the conversation. Upon receiving verbal consent, the interviews were recorded utilizing Otter.ai transcription software. After recording each interview, I began to transcribe the interview to document the participants' responses. As seen in Appendix P-Y. During this initial stage, I reviewed the transcriptions for accuracy and provided a copy to each participant to member check for accuracy. Once each transcription was verified, I read through each interview to comprehensively understand the participants' perspectives and responses. During this stage, I identified that NVivo coding was not applicable because words used by participants were interchangeable and not exact. Because the participants exchanged words (champion and advocate), I applied open coding. I identified and labeled critical concepts allowing the comparison of data through open coding. This method allowed me to examine each participant's responses, looking for the frequency of words and organizing similar words or phrases in broad thematic domains. I highlighted these words and named each of them depending on its subject matter or focus.

After the open coding stage of data analysis, I applied frequency distribution and word relevancy correlation to the raw data into codes. Once I identified the codes, I clustered words



into relevant categorical themes. Then, using my document reflection memos from my document analysis and observational field notes, I identified the relevant categorical themes compared to my coded interviews. Applying Richards' (2022) reflexive thematic analysis, I considered my positionality, epistemology, and ontological assumptions to ensure I was capturing the participants' perceptions into these main categories.

As I created the themes, I inspected the codes and categories in relation to the patterns I discovered and created as prescribed by Richards' reflective thematic analysis (Richards, 2022). I found reading and rereading the transcript essential to ensure the named themes correlated with the context of the topic the participant was discussing. The utility of open coding and reflective thematic analysis of the data was a continually evolving process that captured knowledge I acquired from each interview about the partnership and program.

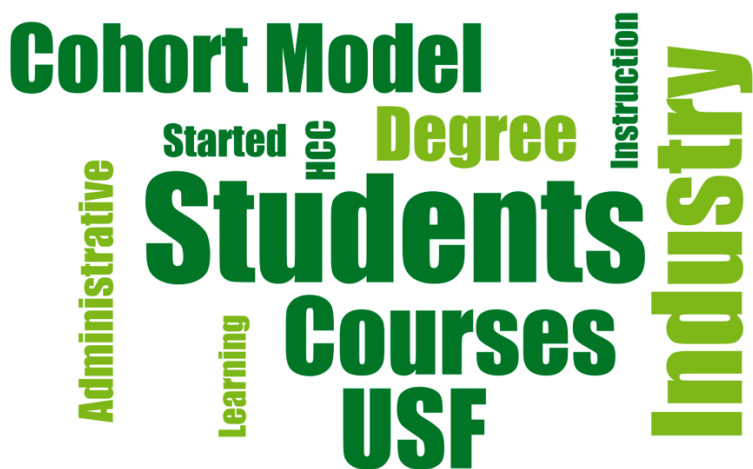


Figure 7. First-Cycle Open Coding Word Cloud

### *Observations*

To answer my a priori question, I applied observational data as the third approach providing critical information for this program evaluation. In this qualitative observation, I applied an emic approach called observer as a participant (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This type

of observation provided an opportunity to gather information while acting as a participant and engaging in conversations with stakeholders and the employee-students.

I acted as an observer during the virtual onboarding orientation for EnGaCo's Cohort 5 Class of 2023. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the event was held via the Microsoft Teams platform on Thursday, July 30, 2020, from 5:00 – 6:00 pm. This was the first onboarding orientation for the U-I partnership conducted in an online format. The onboarding event was co-hosted by USF's Assistant Director of Academic Programs and EnGaCo's Senior Administrator of Organizational Development. The orientation was facilitated by the graduate assistant assigned to the USF BGS program and began with introductions from all meeting participants. The orientation was presented using a PowerPoint presentation and reviewed the following topics: the USF admissions process, advising services, accelerated exam mechanisms, financial aid, EnGaCo's employee development plan, Performance Coach assignment, and the tuition reimbursement program.

During the 1-hour virtual onboarding event, I noticed that after the prospective student introductions were made, all cameras were turned off during the PowerPoint presentation. I could not view each participant's environment or understand if there were any distractions. Additional disadvantages observed were the lack of interactions between participants and the presenters. In the online environment, a few disadvantages were any natural, behavioral interactions that may occur in an in-person event, such as early arrivals, initial meet and greet conversations, and body language. Despite the previously mentioned disadvantages, there were some advantages noted as all the prospective students could attend, the facilitator could maintain the agenda's timeline as there were few disruptions during the meeting, and all speakers could talk directly about their subject matter.

On Wednesday, September 14, 2022, from 3:30 pm to 5:00 pm, an informational advising session between the USF advisor, USF's Assistant Director for Programs, and the industry employee-students were conducted. This was the first in-person session between USF and EnGaCo since the Covid-19 pandemic. Because of the 2020 global pandemic, all student orientations and class instruction were conducted online and virtual. The session was held at EnGaCo's main office in downtown Tampa, Florida. The direct observation allowed me to witness the interactions between USF's Assistant Director of Programs and EnGaCo's Senior Administrator of Organizational Development.

The USF staff arrived ahead of the students to have ample time to prepare their presentations and materials during the event. Some initial observations were that the conference room layout with tables and seating was positioned in a U-shaped formation with refreshments near the back of the room. A podium and screen were positioned in the front of the room for the presenter to address the audience. As the employee-students began to arrive, they were greeted by EnGaCo's key stakeholders and asked to sign the attendance list. The USF staff used this list after the information session to guide the individual advising sessions. Upon arrival, the employee-students sat next to someone whom they were familiar with, and it was evident that the majority of them have not physically been in the presence of one another as their conversations were similar to those of long-time acquaintances who are just seeing each other for the first time in years. EnGaCo's stakeholders confirmed that this in-person session was the first time the employee-students have seen one another since the Covid-19 pandemic began. The company's leadership team has most employees working remotely or on a hybrid schedule that allows for minimal contact in the office.

The 11 employee-students who attended were members of cohorts 4 and 5. The meeting began with the USF advisor, who reviewed the process for registering for classes, understanding where to locate and how to review their Degree Works online through USF's web portal. Once the informational session was complete, the employee students were called to the podium to review their degree progression plan, add the required courses to their degree plan and ask questions about elective courses available for Spring 2023. While two students were participating in the one-on-one advising meetings (one student with each USF staff member), the remaining employee-students talked in small groups about homework assignments and current classes. They sought advice from each other on class elective options for upcoming semesters. Even though I sat in the back of the room, I did engage in conversation as one employee-student asked me what the attributes displayed on his Degree Works meant. Another employee-student explained that she is on track to graduate in the Spring 2023 semester however was not planning to attend the USF graduation since her mother recently passed away from cancer and felt the occasion would be too emotional. One student spoke on behalf of the group requesting that the in-person sessions happen twice a year (spring and fall) as they believed this was more helpful than a virtual meeting. Another student stated that the virtual meetings did not feel personalized and, at times, could not resolve issues in a single meeting. All of the employee-students spoke agreeing with the statement. The 11 students expressed gratitude to the USF staff members and the industry stakeholder for coordinating the in-person information and advising session.

### **Categories**

The structure of this discussion examines the triangulated approach applied in this program evaluation study beginning with interview questions, document analysis, and

observations addressing the four categorical sub-questions of my *a priori* question. The results of the semi-structured interviews are presented in order of the questions asked to each participant.

The discussion is organized around main categories the evaluator discovered through the analysis process, specifically at the second analysis stage (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) where the evaluator read repeatedly through the codes and identified common patterns. These patterns were then clustered into four main categories showing the participants' perceptions about the impact of the partnership and suggestions for improvement, namely: partnership structure, factors that influence the effectiveness of the partnership, perceived sustainable components, and potential areas for improvement.

#### *Category 1: Partnership Structure*

Interviews: The interview guide had two questions examining participants' responses to their beliefs about the U-I partnership. While the evaluator did not specifically ask about the arrangement of the U-I partnership, some participants spoke about how the partnership originated and has developed through the years. The consensus of all participants is that the U-I partnership is a good, strong, and supportive relationship. The responses were consistent among the participants, with two themes emerging: the partnership has strengthened since inception, and the partnership works because of the people's involvement and commitment. Participants recognized the industry's encouragement, participation, and support as a strategic decision to invest in their personal and professional development. The strategic decision to invest in employee retention and development is demonstrative of the industry's applicability of game theory. The industry makes calculated decisions about their investment of time, finances, and resources to achieve the intended results of persistence, retention, and a well-educated workforce with a more significant appreciation of the industry's business practices and decisions. One

example is during P2’s interview when the participant stated that he has a greater understanding of the strategic decisions that the management team for the company makes regarding processes or policy as it pertains to the daily business needs because of earning his bachelor’s degree.

The most common comment from the participants was the importance of dedicated individuals who believe in the program. For instance, P3 and P6 discussed that the partnership and program are successful because of the collaborative efforts of the staff at the university. On the other hand, P3 also spoke about the synergy of the U-I key stakeholders: “I’ll call it a bit of a concierge service that you would get between EnGaCo and USF personnel.” At the same time, P6 shared, "I could not ask for a better, stronger relationship than what we have with the University of South Florida.” They felt that even though the Global Covid-19 pandemic stopped in-person instruction, orientation, and advising meetings transitioning all of these types of activities to virtual, online platforms, the partnership remained solid. P7 shared that her reasons for the strong partnership are largely based on the relationship between the U-I key stakeholders. She discussed that the solid partnership began with the university provost and the industry president's vision and belief that an academic partnership could be formed whose sole focus is on the employees' education and well-being could result in a strong community, and break down barriers while developing a well-form, educated individual. Seven participants shared that although the leadership of the university has changed, the collaborative partnership is a result of the continued commitment from the leadership team from both the industry and the university.

Table 3. Interview Partnership Structure

Partner	Participant	Theme	Appendices
Industry	P6	Collaboration	U
Industry	P3	Collaboration	R
University	P7	Commitment	V

Document Analysis: At the time of the pilot study, I discovered that there were no formal, written agreements defining the terms of the partnership. Based off the finding, the university and industry developed and executed a Memorandum of Understanding. Additional documents I reviewed to understand better the partner structures are the USF BGS Industry Admissions Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and the UGS BGS EnGaCo Process Chart. Although the MOU and the SOP documents were created because of the pilot study conducted in Fall 2020, each artifact describes the details, outreach, and processes between the university and industry partner.

Observations: During the virtual Onboarding Orientation session, I witnessed the dialogue between the key stakeholders of the partnership. As prospective students posed general questions, both stakeholders worked together to answer their questions as thoroughly as possible, leaving no questions unanswered. The stakeholders seem to have a professional, mutually respectful, and collaborative relationship. As an observer and a participant, I listened to the tone of the communication. I watched the interpersonal dynamics between the U-I stakeholders during the in-person advising event demonstrating an element of rapport and mutual respect.

### *Category 2: Factors that Influence Effectiveness*

Interviews: Three questions were asked during the interview process to determine the factors that impact the success of a U-I partnership. After asking the participants for factors that make the program a success, a question was asked about their experience. Likewise, a question based on their belief that the program supports their feelings of achievement was asked. While conducting a reflective thematic analysis of each participant's transcripts, I identified participant perspectives they believe influence the effectiveness of the partnership are having a dedicated advisor with the university, a dedicated education administrator with the industry, and industry

leaders who support the employees’ quest to further their education, an industry development coach, and curriculum that is relevant to the industry. P1 reported that the industry key stakeholder was essential to her success, stating that he guided the cohort through the entire process once the employee began the degree program through graduation. Three participants agreed that the curriculum was relevant and exciting to their work in the industry and discussed that having an outline of coursework was helpful for post-traditional learners. While P6 and P8 reported that the communication with and from the USF advisors and assistant director were vital for the success of employee-students, P7 remarked that the program and partnership work because of the dedication and commitment from the university stakeholders, the industry management, and leadership teams, and its employee-students. Comments about the importance of good university advisors, faculty, and staff were made by all participants. Lastly, the harmony of all participants was summed up in P9’s statement, “You must have a champion who deeply believes in the benefits and value of the partnership and program.”

Table 4. Interview Factors Influence Effectiveness

Partner	Participant	Theme	Appendices
Industry	P1	Dedicated person	P
Industry	P6	Communication	U
University	P8	Communication	W
University	P7	Support	V
University	P9	Dedicated person	X

Document Analysis: The following documents provided by the industry and university were reviewed to gain knowledge on the course schedule, degree progression, and student progress to degree completion.



- Industry Employee Degree Checklist
- Industry Course Plan IEP
- Graduation Rate Report

The Industry Course Plan and Industry Degree Checklist provide insight into the requirements for the degree completion program by semester and detail the program structure and timeline for the industry students. While reviewing the material, I identified relevant quantitative data collected throughout the program's lifecycle. The artifacts identified that the program has served a total of 104 industry employee-students spanned across five cohorts, the average GPA is 3.4, and the time to degree completion is 2.5 years. Lastly, the graduation report shows that 76% of industry employees have completed the BGS program and earned degrees.

Observations: While observing the in-person advising event, some conversations between the USF advisor and participants explored the relevancy of the coursework to their specific industry and career aspirations. The students were content with the topics taught in their core classes and expressed how they could connect their work experience to the new knowledge. One participant remarked that initially, they had anxiety about returning to college as an older, working adult. However, because of how USF structured the programs, established cohorts, and created 8-week mini-mesters, the transition is manageable and an enjoyable experience.

### *Category 3: Perceived Sustainable Components*

Interviews: With an open-ended question, participants were asked to identify factors that should be considered in developing a U-I partnership and program. Like the highlights addressed in category 2, participants implored that the program's success requires a dedicated resource of individuals from both parties of the partnership. Three participants suggested that the industry should have an assigned Development or Performance Coach who is knowledgeable of

university education programs and can mentor and support the employee's desire to return to college. These same participants agreed that a Development or Performance Coach could further assist the employee in developing the individual education plan (IEP) and connect them to the educational institution to begin the admissions process. Seven out of ten participants spoke about the importance of the employer offering a tuition reimbursement policy benefit to its employees. P8 mentioned that the U-I partnership exists because the employee students desire to earn a college degree; therefore, employees are critical to making the partnership sustainable. Half of the participants suggested that the foundation of the partnership is essential for it to be sustainable. In contrast, two participants stated that monetary sources should also be considered for the partnership to be maintainable. Other elements that surfaced during the interviews were the importance of the 8-week mini-mesters, a custom-made education program that is industry-specific, and the need for an industry-supported tuition reimbursement policy.

Table 5. Interview Sustainable Components

Partner	Participant	Theme	Appendices
Industry	P8	The students	W

Document Analysis: Noted in the participant responses, a reoccurring theme is a need for dedicated employees whose primary focus is on the partnership and program. To gain a more significant appreciation of the participant responses, I reviewed the MOU and other documents provided by the stakeholders so I might better understand the process an industry employee undergoes using the tuition assistance program as they begin their journey towards earning a college degree. I discovered that the university does not provide dedicated staff members who solely focus on the employee-students or the industry stakeholder. The U-I partnership responsibilities are secondary to the BGS advisor and assistant director of programs' primary

duties to the university. At the same time, they are considering sustainable components for a U-I partnership; the following documents were reviewed: the MOU, the Industry Degree Checklist, Industry Course Plan IEP, the BGS EnGaCo Leadership, and Change Management Concentration Spreadsheet, EnGaCo's Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) Participation Application and Policy and EnGaCo's Employee Development Plan.

During the pilot phase, documents were reviewed to gather useful historical and background information to understand the partnership's operation and organization.

Once the interviews were completed and I reflected on my *a priori* question and the evaluation sub-question 3, I re-read the MOU to determine what factors were significant at the time of the agreement. Some of the significant factors noted are defining the type of Degree to be conferred, the responsibilities of both companies to the partnership, listing the minimum count of students per cohort to be provided by the industry, and the specialized course structure. The Industry Degree Checklist and IEP provide details on the course plan, schedule, and timeline to completion, while the Leadership and Change Management Concentration Spreadsheet lists the general education and concentration requirements. My continuous review of these documents provides the essential components to develop the foundation and structure for a U-I partnership.

Observations: During the interviews and again at the in-person information session, the USF key stakeholders shared that the EnGaCo employees are post-traditional students with unique needs that differ from the traditional first-time college student. The post-traditional needs discussed are their limited time availability, personal responsibilities, and managing a work-school-family schedule. Because of these unique needs, a strength of the U-I partnership was the in-person advising session that was recently held at EnGaCo's downtown location. USF's Assistant Director of Programs and the BGS advisor provided concierge service to the industry

by hosting an advising meeting during business hours at EnGaCo. Employee students from cohorts 4 and 5 participated in the information session and were provided the opportunity to meet individually with either the USF BGS advisor or assistant director to ask specific questions about their Degree Works.

#### *Category 4: Improvement*

Interviews: A single question was posed to determine what areas participants perceived could be improved for the U-I partnership. Initially, when industry participants were asked what they believed could be done to improve the program, they lacked a response. However, when I rephrased the question suggesting that a similar program might be introduced to another company in the Tampa Bay community, the common thread amongst the industry participants was to offer a degree catalog that only displays courses pertinent to the career path and industry. P1, in her interview, stated to develop a custom catalog for the industry partner that only displays degree plans and courses relevant to the industry. Another recommendation made by P1, P3, and P5 was to provide elective courses supporting the degree plan, such as the leadership and change management concentration for EnGaCo, rather than mindlessly taking elective courses to fulfill a requirement. While industry participants enjoyed taking a music course, they did not feel it complimented their education. Lastly, all employee-student participants discussed that although the industry and university are prominent members in the Tampa Bay area, the industry students did not feel they received an experience making them feel a member of the USF Bull community.

The university participants shared they are not providing the level of service they believe the students deserve. Both P7 and P9 shared that without appropriate funding for the U-I partnership, the university staff has additional requirements outside managing the industry

partnership and program. Furthermore, P7 and P9 discussed that there is a lack of available data necessary to measure the program's objectives due to limited resources and time constraints. Finally, P6 shared that the U-I partnership arose from a relationship years ago between the provost and senior leadership with EnGaCo and was a handshake agreement. P6 thought reviewing the MOU regularly to ensure that both parties' roles, responsibilities, and timelines were clearly defined would be mutually beneficial.

Table 6. Interview Improvement

Partner	Participant	Theme	Appendices
Industry	P1	Customization	P
Industry	P1	Elective Courses Options	P
Industry	P3	Elective Courses Options	R
Industry	P5	Elective Courses Options	T
University	P7	Funding, Data Needed	V
University	P9	Funding, Data Needed	X
Industry	P6	Relationship	U

Document Analysis: Upon reflection and reviewing the interview transcripts, I developed additional questions about how the industry stakeholder measures their return on investment on the tuition reimbursement policy and the partnership. Upon requesting additional information concerning university persistence and retention numbers for EnGaCo students, employee-student, success rates from the industry, or the process for employee-students who did not complete coursework, the university stakeholder stated they do not currently track those statistics. Additionally, the industry stakeholder does not have an established process to assist employees who do not fulfill their development plan. Moreover, the industry lacks a mechanism

to track individuals who completed the program and received promotions or increased responsibilities. Although the initial agreement was loosely defined, the academic agreement and MOU should be re-evaluated to ensure both parties have mutually benefitted objectives, expectations, and responsibilities outlined.

Observations: During the in-person advising event, the common theme among the 11 employee-students was their uncertainty about how to search and register for classes. Another common question was about their course progression. Based on the interactions between the USF staff and the employee-students, one improvement is to implement an in-person event where the employee-students can connect with USF, thus creating that sense of community.

#### **Chapter Four Summary**

Chapter Four presented a description of the selection/recruitment of participants and basic demographic information. The data collection and reflective thematic analysis results were then organized and discussed in terms of the four evaluation questions. The triangulated data approach for collecting data addressed the *a priori* question regarding the participants' perceptions of a sustainable industry partner for the university degree completion program, as this program evaluation was designed to identify the core components of an effective U-I partnership and to provide the findings to the key stakeholders. Chapter five will discuss the implications of the findings for practice, recommendations for the current program, future evaluation and research, and next steps as a scholarly practitioner.

## **CHAPTER 5:**

### **SUSTAINABILITY EVALUATION: RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this formative program evaluation was to explore the current U-I partnership between USF's Undergraduate Studies Bachelor of General Studies BGS unit and a single industry partner to understand how the program is structured, supports the industry needs of developing a more well-educated worker, identify key components of an effective partnership, and provide information to the key stakeholders for program improvement. The intent of conducting this program evaluation on a U-I partnership outside my industry was to understand how developing a relationship with a public university would fulfill my company's need to develop a well-informed worker. As a subsequent action, I was able to investigate the value of providing a tuition reimbursement program for my employees.

#### **Recommendations for the Current Program**

During the study, I identified how the U-I partnership significantly impacted its participants, from earning their college degrees to creating new job opportunities. The study identified how the partnership has shown to be an effective workforce development program for EnGaCo. The evaluation interviews identified that the partnership between USF and EnGaCo is effective in meeting the needs of the employee's objectives.

The program evaluation study centered around the participants' perspectives which evoked the following recommendations to help the University of South Florida and EnGaCo

become a more meaningful program that meets their goal of developing a well-informed worker. One significant opportunity this U-I partnership must address to sustain the partnership is funding sources to support the program's longevity. The first step in identifying potential innovative strategies on the path to sustainable programming is to quantify the financial commitment needed to fund an advisor, administrator, and instructor along with programming needs to support the partnership. Once the cost to maintain a sustainable partnership and program is established, some potential solutions are to seek out grants that support workforce development, develop a funding proposal to present to potential industry partners to aid in financially supporting the program, or partner with another unit within the university such as Corporate Training and Professional Education to share in the cost of managing the partnership. A shared partnership can maximize resources and provide a well-rounded experience for the industry partner offering additional solutions beyond degree completion.

#### *University Recommendations*

1. Currently, the U-I partnership is being managed by BGS academic advisor and an assistant director of programs. The management of U-I partnerships is in addition to their daily responsibilities and does not afford the dedicated time to the partnership. Per conversations with the study participants, the recommendation to the university about providing a dedicated academic advisor who assists industry partners in navigating the university landscape. The dedicated advisor should understand the unique needs of adult learners who are post-traditional and working adults. The dedicated academic advisor for the industry can provide the concierge support required for the post-traditional students to ensure they are registered correctly and, if



additional services are needed, such as tutoring, that the special population is accommodated.

2. No additional funds are allocated to manage the U-I partnership effectively. With the appropriate funds, the university can allocate resources to a U-I partnership program that extends beyond EnGaCo and to the Tampa Bay community and who addresses the needs of industry partners on behalf of the university. Funding a U-I partnership could allow resources supporting a full-time instructor, full-time academic advisor, and a program administrator ensuring program objectives are supportive of the industry and post-traditional student population.

3. Another suggestion was that the university only provides the industry partner with course listings relevant to the degree plan and their industry. Since the Bachelor of General Studies degree is a customized, interdisciplinary degree designed to fit an individual's educational and professional goals, the curriculum could be designed to support an industry's needs and presented in a course catalog exclusive to the industry partner. Interestingly, the employee-student only wanted relevant courses for their degree concentration made available as choices for selection.

5. As the university and industry partner both use the Microsoft platform, implementing a SharePoint site provides customizable options for collaboration and informational resources the employee-student will need. During the study, participants identified how information and documents were not updated and suggested a more extensive collaboration better informing the employee-student.

Through the updated SharePoint site, a seamless collaboration for content

management and readily available resources for the employee student would exist for the employee-students on their educational journey.

6. Employee-students identified how the degree program and curriculum quality are important to their success. Therefore, the importance of the degree concentration is most significant to the industry partner. From a curriculum and development standpoint, the recommendation exists to evaluate the curriculum as it informs the premise for policy decisions, creates feedback mechanisms for curriculum adjustments, identifies strengths and weaknesses of the existing curriculum, improves student learning outcomes, and connects course objectives to industry needs.

6. The evaluator and the stakeholders recognize that tracking persistence and retention rates are necessary for identifying student success in their unique learning community. This data could identify early intervention measures needed to assist student growth and development. Additionally, evaluating these rates through a longitudinal study creates a more insightful case for determining the program's effectiveness.

7. During the study, the employee-students identified a lack of connection with the university. Building meaningful relationships with students and alumni is important for USF's strategic growth and advancement. Although EnGaCo students are not active in the alumni upon graduation, it is recommended to create an on-campus event for EnGaCo to promote USF engagement, thus creating that feeling of becoming a lifelong USF Bull.

8. During the study, the following questions arose: Is the partnership with EnGaCo being managed appropriately in its current form? Are the needs of the industry and

the post-traditional students being met? Are the employees in need of a degree program or professional certification? Is a four-year degree required for job advancement? Do they need apprenticeship programs? To answer these questions, a needs assessment is suggested examining where the U-I partnership is best managed. One suggestion was moving the U-I partnership with EnGaCo from UGS to Corporate Training and Professional Education unit while still using the BGS degree program for degree-seeking employees.

9. Upon discovering the lack of documentation outlining the agreement and objectives of the U-I partnership, a review of the current agreement is recommended to ensure the objectives and needs of both parties are met equitably. The longevity of the relationship and standing in the Tampa Bay community would necessitate an established academic agreement and MOU between both parties beyond the previously established handshake agreement.

### *Industry Recommendations*

1. The industry would be best suited to provide a dedicated advocate who acts as an advisor for the employee. The dedicated advocate could assist in providing information on the tuition reimbursement policy, institutions available, information for completing the FAFSA forms along with other financial resources while acting as a liaison to the university. Another recommendation posed was for the industry to develop a Mentor program. The mentor program, like an Employee Resource Group (ERG), consists of employees who utilized the tuition reimbursement policy and completed their college degrees. Participants believed the mentors could provide

guidance and support to new employees seeking degree completion and learning to navigate a work-life-school balance.

2. During the interviews, half of the participants agreed that a university-industry shared cloud-based platform where the employee-student could access informational resources would be helpful. Participants recommended that the industry partner and university work together to ensure the information and documents are current and correct. Participants believed the shared site could provide a seamless collaboration for content while empowering the employee-students in their educational journey.

3. Participants suggested that the degree program curriculum be evaluated bi-annually to ensure course offerings are relevant to the industry and company needs.

4. Discussion with stakeholders identified a lack of employee tracking after participating in the U-I degree completion program. The industry could increase additional support by tracking the data pertaining to promotion, retention, tuition reimbursement policy usage, and employee satisfaction.

5. Participants identified a lack of connection to the university. Besides a mentor group, EnGaCo has a unique opportunity to form an employee alumni group of individuals who completed their degrees at USF. An EnGaCo Alumni Group allows the USF graduates to maintain a relationship with each other while establishing a community network with the university. The alumni group aids in network opportunities between departments that allow for ease of sharing information, effective business practices, emerging industry trends, and understanding how the organization operates across all departments.

6. An additional recommendation to develop a sense of connection with the university is the implementing college spirit days providing the employees the opportunity to display school pride and show their support. It is a great way to raise awareness to employees that education is important to EnGaCo and is supported through the tuition reimbursement policy and collaboration with USF. Workplace education spirit is an expression of strong and positive company culture.
7. Lastly, EnGaCo should re-evaluate its agreement with the university. The MOU establishes common intention, reduces the risk of uncertainty, can help solve disputes, when or how either party may terminate the agreement, and the duration of the partnership.

### **Recommendations for Future Evaluation and Research**

The results of this evaluation are not generalizable to all U-I partnerships. The evaluation was based on participants' perspectives of a single partnership at one institution. Specific program evaluations on their effectiveness and efficiency in U-I partnerships are limited, demonstrating the need for this exploratory research. As a result, an opportunity exists to study these partnerships further and determine if they support an organization's and its workforce's needs. The evaluation of the economic effects of partnerships on the university and the industry is one area in which little research has been done. Based on interviews during this study, research on the amount of industry funding needed to manage a sustainable U-I partnership degree program is another opportunity to explore.

Another area to study is surveying the employee-students satisfaction with the tuition reimbursement program and degree completion with the university. As previously identified, the industry does not track data on the career advancement of employees who used the tuition

reimbursement program. Earning a 4-year degree and subsequent promotion or transfer, as a result, could develop a more appreciative understanding of the long-term benefits to the company and the employee. Finally, a survey of the industry's satisfaction with the "value" they receive from supporting higher education could be another important area of research. While the previous inquiry, "What do, businesses do and spend to support higher education? It is significant to universities that understanding how satisfied these organizations are with the value they receive from their investments is equally essential. Universities could use this information to improve their methods for establishing new relationships with industry and maintaining existing ones.

From the university perspective and considering that goal three of USF's strategic plan is focused on strengthening corporate and community partnerships, a significant opportunity to explore the impact of the institution's overall policy on the operation of its current industry partnership is needed to support the strategic plan further. Exploring the organization of the partnership, how funding is utilized, disbursed, and how additional funds could be brought to financially support a U-I partnership program focused on degree completion are other areas of study with a meaningful impact on the university. This would be important for the USF Undergraduate Studies unit as it lacks funding from the industry to sustain employees' ability to support the U-I partnership independently from other unit responsibilities. In addition, the university might benefit from conducting a longitudinal study to understand how change occurs over time, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the partnership and the impact on its employee-students. The study could span several cohorts identifying retention rates within the company and long-term growth, further solidifying the university partnership as they are invested in the research being conducted.

This was the first program evaluation conducted on the U-I partnership between the USF BGS unit and EnGaCo. Additional research to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how the program operates and supports the needs of industry employee-students seeking degree completion could better support the industry and university partnership. The suggestions mentioned above for additional research can significantly affect the success of partnerships between universities and industry. They can make a meaningful difference in this partnership's sustainability and future activities.

### **Next Steps as a Scholarly Practitioner**

I began this educational journey as a business owner searching for a solution to a problem. I was approached by third-party companies offering workforce training programs for years while working in the automotive industry as a potential solution to a problem. However, after completing this study, a new pathway for providing employees with educational training emerged. Now, as a scholarly practitioner, my path forward has wavered; I am still thinking of my next steps with the new knowledge I gained but from a different perspective. Earlier this year, I presented at a conference on developing a sustainable framework for higher education and industry partnerships to create better programs supporting adult learners. This experience validated a genuine need for U-I partnerships focusing on degree completion programs for the post-traditional learner beyond my company's needs. A few thoughts have emerged about how I will use the results of the formative program evaluation. First, I am considering developing the framework for a U-I partner model. This includes designing a toolkit or how-to manual with some current U-I partnership recommendations discovered during the coding and analysis process. Some items to include are a template MOU, a BGS degree concentration course catalog specific to the company or industry, value adds for the industry such as increasing employee

loyalty, reducing turnover, increasing productivity and camaraderie amongst colleagues, and providing employers with a pool of highly skilled employees. Once the framework has been developed, the next step would be implementing the model into practice. As a scholarly practitioner and now working full-time at the university, I have the opportunity to test the U-I partner model within my unit to see how it works. I want to answer the underlying question: will the U-I partner model work in other institutional settings? I believe conducting a case study will capture a range of perspectives that might provide an in-depth analysis in real-world practice. This offers the opportunity to gain a more meaningful understanding of the inner workings of the U-I partner model in other college settings and reduces the potential for any bias. Lastly, I plan to attend three or four educational conferences next year to present my conceptual framework discovered during this formative program evaluation study.

### **Chapter Five Summary**

The U-I partnership originated to fulfill a need for the industry partner to create a pathway for existing employees to complete their college degrees. The condition existed for various reasons, from internal career advancement and employee satisfaction to more intrinsic needs for its employee's self-satisfaction, role modeling to their children, or gaining new knowledge. The participants for the industry explained that the U-I partnership provided them with opportunities previously unattainable without a college degree. Throughout the degree program process, they connected their new knowledge to decisions made regarding EnGaCo company policies. In addition, the key stakeholders witnessed first-hand the unexpected benefits achieved throughout the various cohorts of more substantial collaboration and team dynamics with departments they may have never met outside their educational experience. While research is limited on U-I partnerships supporting education completion, this program evaluation found



the single collaboration with the USF Undergraduate Studies BGS unit is effective, as participants reported a positive experience, new knowledge afforded them with job advancement or changed within EnGaCo resulting from attaining their college degree, and the unexpected relationships created priceless. By allowing this program to be evaluated, stakeholders have access to the findings. They can consider implementing the recommendations to help the U-I partnership continue as a resource for this industry's employees seeking to complete their college degrees.

### **Critical Reflection**

Since the beginning of this doctoral journey, I have struggled with my problem of practice (PoP). I learned I was looking at my problem of practice through the wrong set of lenses. My experience with my problem of practice was reminiscent of entering a carnival funhouse wandering through the maze of mirrors, unsure how to arrive at the other side. Each mirror portrayed my reflection as distorted figures and shapes that kept me in a constant state of dizziness.

Maneuvering through the Summer 2020 semester, being challenged by one of my instructors, Dr. Johnston, to shop for industry, I recognized that my approach to my problem of practice needed to change, or I would continue my trip through the carnival funhouse, never finding the end because I kept looking at my short, squatty self. Since the start of this journey, I have only thought about the result: USF working together with an industry partner on curriculum to develop a more well-educated workforce. As the summer semester ended, I realized that my problem within *my own practice* has been searching for and hiring educated, qualified employees. Now that I have overturned my mindset, I could reflect on my experiences to help build scholarly research.

While reflecting upon my journey, I am filled with emotion. What a journey this has been full of highs, lows, sadness, and excitement. All these experiences (the good, the bad, the ugly), the new knowledge, practical application, along with new relationships with the cohort, faculty, and mentors, have shaped me into a scholarly practitioner. This is the first time that I identified myself as a scholarly practitioner. My heart, tears, and passion are written inside this evaluation dissertation. I am proud of how it reflects my time spent on this doctoral path. Some improvements have been learning to journal and apply reflection. I have learned that reflection is an art, it takes work and an understanding of the role it takes for research to emerge. My comprehension has expanded to a deeper understanding of qualitative and quantitative research and learning of many approaches that frame research.

### **Covid-19 and Other Life Events**

Lastly, I reflect upon the global impact that the coronavirus covid-19 has created. The reality of this nasty virus brings me to ponder how world events such as this one affect how the business will be conducted in the future. I am a first-hand witness of how this virus has affected the manner of how I conduct business and of the alternate pathway that my educational journey has also taken. Our company and the university I replaced face-to-face contact with virtual meetings. We did not board an airplane for a business meeting in more than two years. Days are filled with countless zoom calls, webinars, and team calls that all rely heavily on the internet. Life events such as being quarantined in the Philippines during a volcano eruption, my beloved late dog's cancer journey, the death of my uncle during a pandemic, my aunt's Alzheimer's diagnosis, my son's wedding, and the arrival of my first grandchild all made a significant impact on MY educational story. It is important for me in my development to allow these experiences to

be present in my work. These experiences impact my decision-making and are the WHY I continue to do this research.

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**APPENDIX A:**  
**ADMISSIONS PROCESS**

**Admissions Process for EnGaCo and USF UGS BGS Program**

*Senior Administrator of Organizational Development completes the vetting process to determine when students will/have completed their AA degree*

1. BGS Director meets with Senior Administrator of Organizational Development to discuss new cohort
  - Instructors, course layout, and dates to meet and discuss the program with prospective students
2. Students referred to BGS program
  - Senior Administrator of Organizational Development will email a list of prospective students to BGS coordinator
3. Create a EnGaCo tab for the new cohort
  - UGS-DO □ Departments □ Academic Programs □ BGS □ BGS Admissions File
  - □ Current Semester
  - Enter in contact information (*i.e.*, mirror existing cohorts on the spreadsheet)
4. Create an event and invite all students from list
  - See email for step four below
  - Including EnGaCo contacts, Academic advisor, Registrar, Admissions, and financial aid representatives to attend event
5. Edit PowerPoint found on box
  - UGS DO □ Departments □ Academic Programs □ BGS □ EnGaCo □ EnGaCo Event
  - Edit documents to contain all updated information/dates
6. Day of event
  - Email students a reminder email to attend/RSVP
  - After meeting, email their next steps (*i.e.*, apply for FASFA and apply to USF)
    - i. See email template below
7. Follow up with students to confirm they have applied to USF
  - See email template below
8. File completion date deadline
  - See email template below
9. For students graduating with AA in current term
  - Email admissions list of all students with their first and last name and UID

10. RP List from admissions is sent
  - Proceed with standard vetting process
  - Admit student via RP List
    - i. Indicate to admissions the student needs to have EnGaCo attribute added to Degree Works
  - Email students from [bgsadvise@usf.edu](mailto:bgsadvise@usf.edu)
    - i. See email template below
11. Major Declaration Form received
  - Add MDF to banner
  - Email academic advisor to code student to GLCM
12. BGS Module
  - Add student to BGS module for entering semester
  - Follow up to see the date what date they scheduled for Orientation
  - Once module is completed, assist in scheduling appointment with academic advisor
13. Completed
  - Student has met with advisor
  - On EnGaCo tab, confirm all information is up to date
14. EnGaCo Updated Course Plan with Semester Dates
  - Get with supervisor, add/edit dates to reflect new semester
15. ALL EnGaCo Grads 1-5
  - Get with supervisor, add all new students for entering EnGaCo Cohort

## **APPENDIX B:**

### **GLOSSARY**

As an effort to prevent the misinterpretation of verbiage used in this proposal, the following terms, acronyms, and definitions are ...

#### **Asynchronous Learning**

Instructional delivery does not happen at the same time for students. The instructor may record their lecture or post video content for the student to view on their own time.

#### **BGS**

Bachelor of General Studies degree program

#### **CIPP Model**

Is an evaluation model that provides systematic principled evaluation of a program's context, inputs, process, and products. The model is designed to address four fundamental questions:

1. What needs to be done?
2. How should it be done?
3. Is it being done?
4. Did it succeed? (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017)

#### **Formative evaluation**

Evaluation that takes place during the development stages of a program to help in identifying area that can be strengthened in the program.

#### **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

A document that outlines an agreement between two or more companies. The document is designed to communicate expectations mutually accepted between all parties involved. MOU is not considered a legally binding contract.

**Non-Traditional Students**

Students who have returned to college to pursue a degree after a gap in time. Typically, these students are working and / or have family.

**Stakeholder**

A person or persons who have an interest or concern in the program being evaluated and are impacted by the results of the evaluation being conducted.

**Other Stakeholders**

Other stakeholders that will be consulted during this evaluation will include the industry employee students past and current, academic advisor for the university who supports the industry students, advisor administrator for industry, and two lead administrators for organizational development considered subject matter experts (SME) for industry.

**Subject Matter Experts (SME)**

An individual considered to be educated or experienced in the subject area of the employee degree and tuition program with ENGACO corporation.

**Synchronous Online Learning**

Learning will happen at the same time in 'real time' between instructor and student. In an online environment class times will be scheduled for the instructor and class to meet virtually together.

**EnGaCo**

Energy Electric Company, industry partner

**UGS**

Undergraduate Studies Unit

**USF**

University of South Florida

**APPENDIX C:  
PILOT STUDY**

**Qualifying Exam: Pilot Study**  
**Building Sustainable Partnerships: A Program**  
**Evaluation on University-Industry Collaboration**



**Presented to:**

**Co-Major Professor: Veselina Lambrev, Ph.D.**

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**Presented by:**

**Lau Reneé Amboy-Biller**

**June 1, 2021**

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## INTRODUCTION

Evaluation is a systematic study designed and implemented to determine the value (e.g., merit and/or worth) of an evaluand, providing a basis for guiding the decision-making process (Rodríguez-Campos & Rincones-Gómez, 2013). The evaluative conclusion is what distinguishes the worthwhile from the worthless.

The following proposal and report outline a formative evaluation's specific aspects to be conducted for the University of South Florida Office of Undergraduate Studies BGS / BSAS university-industry partnership. The alternative proposal design includes five significant sections reflective of a traditional five-chapter dissertation:

1. Introduction, Rationale, Statement of the Problem
2. Review of Literature
3. Method
4. Results
5. Discussion, Conclusion, Recommendations, and Future Research

### Pilot Study Highlights

#### Highlights of Pilot Study

- **Proposes** a plan for a formative evaluation pilot study lasting until March 2021.
- **Employs** the CIPP model used to guide this evaluation.
- **Results** are used to support the Office of Undergraduate Studies BGS industry partners, will be used to improve upon and create a sustainable academic partnership framework.

## BACKGROUND

### Framing the Problem of Practice

Twenty-first century workforce projections support the need for a well-educated workforce. As of 2020, statistics quantified that 65% of jobs will require education beyond a high school diploma hence employers are requiring specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for job advancement beyond even an AA or AS degree (University of West Florida, 2019). While the companies provide their employees with opportunities for training and professional development the workforce is experiencing rapid change with the professional landscape due to the global Covid-19 pandemic. The knowledge, skills and abilities required to conduct business within our current environment has dramatically changed even in the last few months. To close the skills gap, higher education and industry partners need to work together to support building a more well-educated, well informed workforce. Consistent interaction between university and local industry partners will ensure education remains relevant in the workplace.

Additionally, some important statements from University of South Florida's (USF) seventh President, Dr. Steven Currall's inauguration speech were his declaration that USF and the Tampa Bay region have upward trajectory with a focus on innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship thus shaping a new kind of knowledge-based economy that thrives on human capital and nurtures opportunity. Moreover, Dr. Currall stated that USF can become to Tampa Bay what Stanford has been to Silicon Valley (Office of University Communications and Marketing , 2019). In supporting the vision for the future there is an immediate need to support our local industry and community partners through creating a well-educated employment degree program.

While there are many industry partners amongst the USF's Office of Undergraduate Studies (UGS) has a single industry partnership with [REDACTED] which has designed a special degree concentration unique to the work performed within the energy industry. Once [REDACTED]

employees are chosen for the program they are required to apply to USF. Upon acceptance to the program, employees will complete their degree program with courses chosen by ██████ which supports the work done by their employees. All employees admitted into the degree completion program have had some college credits prior to enrolling in courses within this business model.

The addition of industry partners can play a major influence in the overall success of a program at USF. There is a need for universities and industry partners to work together on curriculum in an effort to produce a more well-educated, knowledgeable worker. These new academic partnerships can be beneficial to the Office of Undergraduate Studies as they can provide new opportunities, financial support for education, and other missions along with heightening the student experience and long-term success. Furthermore, industry partners can have access to education, expertise, access to USFs best and brightest students as potential recruitment opportunities, leverage to research, and innovation. In this study, a single academic university-industry (U-I) partnership within the Tampa Bay community will be evaluated. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine the essential components of a successful academic partnership and inform university leadership from the Office of Undergraduate Studies of an established framework for a sustainable U-I partnership model that will be transferable to other industries and colleges.

### **Broad Probable Causes**

Some probable causes as to why USF Office of Undergraduate Studies unit has not increased their number of corporate partnerships might be:

Cultural differences between industry and university

Goals do not align between industry and university

Legal agreements are necessary such as a MOU

University lacks the vision of industry needs in today environment

Industry does not recognize the value of partnering with university

No dedicated employee to focus on increasing the number of industry partnerships

Expectations differ between university of industry

Lack of trust between stakeholders

### **Problem of Practice**

The problem within my own practice has been searching for and hiring qualified, educated employees, and realizing that a college intern or graduate seeks employment with our organization, do not always possess the necessary skillsets which may require additional paid education training or mentorship upon being hired. As the gap continues to grow between the skills workers possess today and the skills businesses say they need, more companies will most likely benefit from collaborating with academic institutions to broaden their training strategies.

### **University Problem of Practice**

According to the assistant director for the university's office of undergraduate studies (email communication, November 17, 2020), the problem within their practice centers around university consolidation, budget cuts, and the necessity for each employee to direct their focus in multiple directions to complete the jobs- to -be done. The office goals are aligned with student success and the employees must focus on other initiatives and priorities rather than focusing efforts towards building new relationship partners.

The leadership team of the office of undergraduate's studies recognize that increasing industry partners would be advantageous for their initiatives aimed at student success and increasing student enrollments through graduation. Nonetheless, due to government funding initiatives and lack of personnel to perform the different roles and responsibilities that are required; the unit simply does not have adequate staff or the resources to focus on increasing industry partnerships to target non-traditional students.

### Industry Problem of Practice

While doing preliminary investigation on knowledge and skills gaps along with inquiry to identifying essential components of U-I partnerships, a needs assessment on the current industry partner was completed. As stated by B. Napier (personal communication, September 1, 2020) [REDACTED] [REDACTED] employs approximately 3,500 employees who support the area of Tampa and its surrounding counties near the university. [REDACTED] primary focus is providing electricity and gas to their customers however they are also strong partner within the community. One benefit for full time employees is the company's tuition reimbursement program. Thirteen years ago, when the Senior Administrator of Organizational development started in his job role, he believed that all employees should have access to higher education programs that support full-time working adults with a busy lifestyle (B. Napier, personal communication, September 1, 2020). During his first year working for [REDACTED] he identified low employee satisfaction scores as a key problem within their practice. In his investigation of these scores along with his passion for lifelong learning he sought to develop partnerships with local trade schools, community colleges, and universities.

### Positioning Myself within the Narrative

May 1, 2012 was the biggest change in my professional career. I went from an employee of a corporation to being an employer within my own organization. Leveraging my strengths against my business partners, I became responsible for the logistics of the organization along with the procedures of our hiring and training processes. During these years of professional transition, I identified my intrinsic desire to complete my college education. My reasons were not driven so much by a professional need rather a self- motivation to support my teenage children's vision to apply to colleges and my innate desire for my own father to experience his daughter finish a degree that was started years ago.

While searching for the right university to support my busy schedule, I realized there were few undergraduate degree programs available to support non-traditional business professionals. A few

online university programs are available to support working individuals however I wanted the large university experience. It was during this time that I began to ponder the idea of developing a business relationship with a university that focus on the needs of returning adult professionals who are seeking to complete their college degree. In my quest, I observe that most university-industry collaboration efforts are concentrated towards undergraduate students, first-time students attending college or research efforts. My discovery was that there is a growing need for a partnership framework that can be utilized to increase collaboration efforts between university-industry that supports the non-traditional, professional returning student.

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

### Introduction

The USF Bachelor of General Studies (BGS) degree program was established in 2012 to serve the non-traditional student population who have experienced a gap in their education (Laymon, 2019). This degree program was specifically designed to support the needs of adult working professionals who balance a busy lifestyle between family obligations and employment. Students enrolled in the BGS program are encouraged to take an active role in the design of their degree program which allows them to choose from several concentrations that best fits their personal or professional needs. The BGS degree is unique that students may choose a concentration focus rather than declare a major as traditional pathway students choose. Currently, the BGS program offers thirteen concentrations. In 2015, an industry partnership with ██████ was developed with USF's Office of UGS unit to support the educational needs of employees working within the energy industry. USF offered special concentration courses that were specific to this industry. Once the ██████ employees were identified for this educational program, they would apply to USF to complete their degree with courses chosen by ██████.

By 2016, another partnership was formed through a legislative initiative, it was decided that the BGS degree program would become the sole major for the Complete Florida program. The Complete Florida Program is a degree completion initiative supported by Florida Legislature (Laymon, 2019). The BGS degree completion program is designed to support the non-traditional adult student population who have an extended gap of time in college and earned some college credits. The merge of these two partnerships have led to strengthen the educational degree completion program available for the ██████ organization.

As of today, forty-four ██████ students have successfully graduated the BGS degree program from USF. The students of Cohort Four are on schedule to complete their program Spring of 2021

while Cohort Five comprised of eighteen new [REDACTED] students have concluded their registration requirements and have begun their educational journey during Spring 2021 semester.

### Context

The purpose of the current pilot study and evaluation proposal is to test the use of the CIPP model in a distinctive setting. The pilot study and dissertation will focus on the existing partnership between USF Office of Undergraduate Studies BGS and [REDACTED] corporation. The BGS program was established almost 8 years ago to support non-traditional returning students. Bruce Napier, Senior Administrator of Organizational Development, [REDACTED] corporation, identifies as a lifelong learner and is passionate in his desire to create educational pathways for his 3500+ employees. Upon the start of his employment with [REDACTED] he began forming community partners with local businesses and higher education institutions (B. Napier, personal communication, September 1, 2020). In 2012, the first TECO cohort model began with twenty-two enrolled students. Through the years as the program became more widely known by the [REDACTED] employees; the partnership strengthened, and the leadership teams began to lightly outline processes from [REDACTED] to USF UGS unit.

### Program Logistics

Prior to the global pandemic, all face-to-face (F2F) classes were held on sight at [REDACTED] corporate campus. The core classes are 8-week sessions in the spring and fall terms while the summer session are 10-weeks. [REDACTED] students attend classes after the workday on Thursday evenings after from 5:30pm-10pm. An important factor of the partnership requires to provide a minimum of twelve students to initiate a new cohort which will permit USF the ability to provide live instruction on sight of [REDACTED] campus after working hours. Currently, USF incurs all monetary expenses associated to the institution such as travel for the USF staff to and from [REDACTED] campus as well as the instructors time and service. With the impact that the covid-19 pandemic has caused, new guidelines from our government and the Center for Disease Control [REDACTED] has required all their employees to work



remotely as USF has also transitioned all instruction for [REDACTED] employee students to learn through virtual asynchronous or synchronous environment.

### **Description of the Program**

The U-I partnership has evolved into a mutual working relationship of understood processes. Designated employees of USF UGS Office interact with [REDACTED]'s Senior Administrator of Organizational Development, and the administrator leads to assist in efforts for supporting [REDACTED] employee who are also students. UGS BGS unit is responsible for the assisting with the administrative duties related to the admissions process, providing an academic advisor to support the students from admission to completion, and other undefined responsibilities related to students. [REDACTED] administrative staff is responsible for the vetting of students prior to students applying to USF program and agrees to maintain a minimum individual cohort amount for the BGS program. Annually, [REDACTED] hosts a graduation ceremony to celebrate the students and their family's accomplishments. Typically, one representative from USF is in attendance for this ceremony. Graduating [REDACTED] students are always welcome and are encouraged to participate in the USF Commencements as well.

The figure following outlines the admissions process as defined by [REDACTED] and USF UGS.

Figure 1.0 BGS Admissions Process

## SIPOC BGS Admissions Process for TECO admissions

Contacts	Title	Email	Phone number
Bruce Napier	Assessment and Organizational Development	benapier@██████████	813 716-2234
Vanessa DelGatto		vmdelgatto@██████████.m	

Bruce completes the vetting process to determine when students will/have completed their AA degree

1. Meet with Bruce to discuss new cohort
  - o Instructors, course layout, and dates to meet and discuss the program with prospective students
2. Students referred
  - o Bruce Napier will email a list of prospective students
3. Create a ██████ tab for the new cohort
  - o UGS-DO → Departments → Academic Programs → BGS → BGS Admissions File → Current Semester
  - o Enter in contact information (i.e., mirror existing cohorts on the spreadsheet)
4. Create an event and invite all students from list
  - o See email for step four below
  - o Including ██████ contacts, Academic advisor, Registrar, Admissions, and Financial aid representatives to attend event
5. Edit PowerPoint found on box
  - o UGS DO → Departments → Academic Programs → BGS → ██████ Event
  - o Edit documents to contain all updated information/dates
6. Day of event
  - o Email students a reminder email to attend/RSVP
  - o After meeting, email their next steps (i.e., apply for FASFA and apply to USF)
    - i. See email template below
7. Follow up with students to confirm they have applied to USF
  - o See email template below
8. File completion date deadline
  - o See email template below
9. For students graduating with AA in current term
  - o Email admissions list of all students with their first and last name and UID
10. RP List from admissions is sent
  - o Proceed with standard vetting process
  - o Admit student via RP List
    - i. Indicate to admissions the student needs to have ██████ ttribute added to Degree Works
  - o Email students from [bgsadvise@usf.edu](mailto:bgsadvise@usf.edu)
    - i. See email template below
11. Major Declaration Form received
  - o Add MDF to banner
  - o Email academic advisor to code student to GLCM
12. BGS Module
  - o Add student to BGS module for entering semester
  - o Follow up to see the date what date they scheduled for Orientation

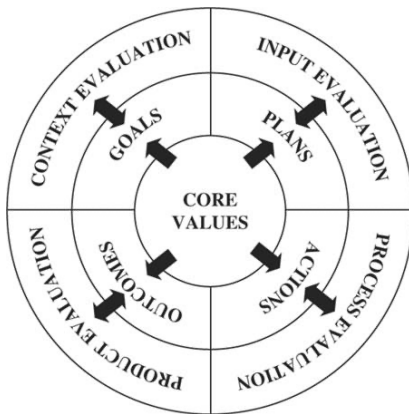
## OVERVIEW OF THE EVALUATION APPROACH

Whilst there are several evaluation methods; I chose the CIPP evaluation model as it provides the comprehensive framework for guiding an evaluation of a program. The CIPP model is an improvement-oriented approach. “The most important purpose of evaluation is not to prove, but to improve” (Stufflebeam, 2000, p.283). The primary interest is to explore the current academic relationship between the local industry partner and USF undergraduate studies unit.

### Program Evaluation Model

This evaluation study will examine the partnership between USF, Office of Undergraduate Studies unit BGS / BSAS program and █████ energy corporation using the CIPP model of program evaluation by Daniel Stufflebeam.

The CIPP model consists of four parts. The first part of the evaluation analysis is the context of the program. This part will assess the needs, problems, assets, and opportunities of the partnership by qualitative analysis of data collection, stakeholder interviews, and document reviews. The second part of the evaluation is the input of the partnership program. This will involve studying the goals, mission, plans, funding, resources, any fees, faculty, and instructors who teach and / or serve the students of the U-I partnership to determine how will the degree program meets the needs of university, industry, and their employee students. The third part of this evaluation will focus on process, the pedagogies, coursework, or practice-based learning. It will explore the activities and operational plans of the partnership. The fourth part of the evaluation model is the product of the partnership. It will involve assessing outcomes and any possible side effects of the partnership (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007).



**Figure 2.0 CIPP Model**

### **Purpose of the Evaluation**

The evaluation will focus on the current U-I partnership model to gain an understanding how the program operates and supports the needs of industry employees / students who are seeking degree completion. The evaluation is designed to identify the core components of an effective U-I partnership including its strengths and weaknesses.

Once the evaluation has been completed, the findings will be used to establish framework for a sustainable university-industry (U-I) partnership model that will be transferable to other industries and colleges. The intention is to make the partnership program model sustainable.

Additionally, the final evaluation results will be used to share findings among key stakeholders and inform future directions.

### **Participants**

The participants for this pilot study evaluation will be the Assistant Director of Bachelor of General Studies (BGS) and Bachelor of Science in Applied Science (BSAS) programs and Senior Administrator of Organizational Development for █████ corporation. Future evaluation study participants will include two lead administrators for organizational development employed by █████

to serve as subject matter experts (SME), current employee students, [REDACTED] graduates of the USF BGS / BSAS degree program, instructors, and advisor for the program.

### Evaluation Questions

To determine the efficiency of the U-I partnership between USF Office of Undergraduate Studies BGS / BSAS unit and [REDACTED] energy corporation, the CIPP model, four fundamental questions will be utilized to align with the evaluation of context, input, process, and product.

For the purpose of this evaluation the primary question this study is interested in answering is what are the components of a sustainable industry partner to university degree completion program?

1. Context: How are the objectives of the program fitted with the needs of USF and [REDACTED]?
  - a. What barriers exist preventing the goals and objectives to be achieved?
  - b. What elements facilitate the achievement of these goals?
  - c. Do you have a written agreement? If so, have there been any addendums or enhancements since inception? If not, why not?
2. Input: What structures created by the program help [REDACTED] employee students initiate the process to completion of their degree program?
3. Process: Does the partnership collaboration meet the [REDACTED] students' educational needs?
4. Product: What are the outcomes in meeting the academic partnerships initial plan?

### Definition of Key Terms

#### Asynchronous Learning

Instructional delivery does not happen at the same time for students. The instructor may record their lecture or post video content for the student to view on their own time.

#### CIPP Model

Is an evaluation model that provides systematic principled evaluation of a program's context, inputs, process, and products. The model is designed to address four fundamental questions:

1. What needs to be done?
2. How should it be done?

3. Is it being done?
4. Did it succeed? (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017)

**Formative evaluation**

Evaluation that takes place during the development stages of a program to help in identifying area that can be strengthened in the program (Scriven, 1991).

**Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

A document that outlines an agreement between two or more companies. The document is designed to communicate expectations mutually accepted between all parties involved. MOU is not considered a legally binding contract (Kenton, 2021).

**Non-Traditional Students**

Students who have returned to college to pursue a degree after a gap in time. Typically, these students are working and / or have family.

**Stakeholder**

A person or persons who have an interest or concern in the program being evaluated and are impacted by the results of the evaluation being conducted.

**Other Stakeholders**

Other stakeholders that will be consulted during this evaluation will include the industry employee students past and current, academic advisor for the university who supports the industry students, advisor administrator for industry, and two lead administrators for organizational development considered subject matter experts (SME) for industry.

**Subject Matter Experts (SME)**

An individual considered to be educated or experienced in the subject area of the employee degree and tuition program with TECO corporation.

**Synchronous Online Learning**

Learning will happen at the same time in 'real time' between instructor and student. In an online environment class times will be scheduled for the instructor and class to meet virtually together.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### University and Industry Partnerships: Relationship Benefits and Challenges

Industry partners can play a major influence in the overall success of a program at USF. There is a need for universities and industry partners to work together on curriculum to produce a more well-educated, knowledgeable worker. Yantis in his article, *The University and Industry as Partners in Education*, observed much success with these types of partnerships. Yantis (1979) explained one benefit to an industry partnership is the collaboration of the two in developing quality curriculum specifically meeting the needs of the industry partner. These partnerships remain today because of the decades of successful pathways a student is guided from university to industry (Yantis, 1979). While this article was written years ago the relationship is still active today between Central Michigan University (CMU) and large automotive companies such as Ford Motor Company (Central Michigan University Campus Editor, 2020).

Likewise, in Houston local business partners within the energy industry assisted with a university to establish a degree program specific to the industry. This strategic partnership fostered a partnership of industry leaders and academia to strengthen the degree program offerings, increase enrollment numbers thus creating a more well-educated workforce within the petroleum engineering industry (Petroleum Engineering Program, 2013). These new academic partnerships can be beneficial to the Office of Undergraduate Studies (USF) as they can provide new opportunities, financial support for education, and other missions along with heightening the student experience and long-term success. Furthermore, industry partners can have access to education, expertise, access to USFs best and brightest students as potential recruitment opportunities, leverage to research, and innovation. As Schofield (2013) mentions that partnership collaborations play a key role in the knowledge-transfer it is imperative that these academic partnerships take form positively in the beginning.

A single study focused on the success a college student has when placed with an industry partner to work on real world problems while still in an educational setting. Strong evidence suggests

that students are more successful when assigned to work on real world problems with a company allowing to application of learned knowledge than those that do not participate in such a collaboration. Wu (2017) research proves that a sustainable partnership of industry to university provides a quality learning experience for the student, meets or exceeds learning objectives, and the transition for job placement with improved career success among graduates.

Several advantages of these relationships are successful graduates are an excellent resource for future students, not only because their stories can directly and indirectly attract new students to the program, but also because their support as alumni can expand the resources a university has to support student success. The local community also benefits when graduates of the program stay in the area. Other studies have considered the challenges a partnership faces, their experiences, and its effects on a partnership? For Andrade, Lelli, Castro, and Santos (2017) success can be found with long-term partnerships between university and industry. Generally speaking, there are clear differences in interests, goals, and experience between university and industry that can make a fused relationship nearly impossible to navigate. The purpose was to utilize past experiences to help new university - industry partnerships forge long-term relationships. Two key constructs measured are perceived attitudes of industry to university along with the pace of decision-making. These constructs were analyzed through case study project documentation of experiences of a fifteen- year partnership (Andrade, Lelli, Castro, & Santos, May 20, 2017). Some noteworthy findings are challenges related to communication, interests, and attitudes. The benefits of resolving these challenges result in a network that provides innovation and deliverables that both parties achieve success.

### **Need for well-educated and knowledgeable workers**

Knowledge is key, can never be taken away. The basic impression that my parents instilled to me as a little girl. But I ask, what is knowledge? Who determines if an individual possesses knowledge essential for today's needs? As the professional landscape shifts to a more global and diverse working environment, so do the job needs of employers. Seemingly, organizations are requiring more



knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) beyond the basics of reading spreadsheets. Working within an industry where technology is swiftly changing my organization continues to revisit our hiring processes modifying the qualifications, job duties, and responsibilities for some of our job positions. Identifying keys skills required for an employee to perform successfully is critical to the overall success of a business. One study recognized communication skills as a key characteristic for college graduates. For instance, a study done by Kleckner and Marshall (2014) states that written and oral communication skills were most important to businesses who participated in the survey emphasizing that these skillsets were also lacking within their employees and recent college hires. Although this study focused on the needs of local employers to better curriculum offerings at the university; Kleckner and Marshall recognize the need for faculty to partner with businesses to develop a qualified workforce. Accordingly, Prestwich and Ho-Kim (2007) were interested in learning how companies recruit and hire appropriately qualified college graduates. This research evaluated whether education and training received during college programs adequately prepared individuals for transition into the workforce. Results of the study indicated some of the most desired skills that an employer is looking for as denoted by Prestwich and Ho-Kim (2007) are build and sustain relationships, culture management, communication skills, people skills, problem solving, and adaptability. On the other hand, Smith, Bush, and Bush (2002) research indicated skillsets of recognizing and managing culture are necessary along with problem solving skills. The evidence suggests that higher education institutions that specializes in business degree programs should consider the realistic needs of businesses incorporating the objectives into curriculum.

In similar fashion, Milhauser and Rahshulte (2010) discovered a breakdown between subjects being taught at universities and the skills required at international businesses. Results of the study indicate that businesses have significant challenges when interviewing college graduates with business degrees who do not have the desired skills for employment. One explanation might be for businesses to

work alongside higher education systems to develop curriculum that better supports the KSAs that a new hire is expected to have when a college degree is granted.

### **Barriers Preventing Partnerships**

Collaboration between two parties having similar needs yet different objectives such as an industry partner and university are bound to experience some challenges. Characteristically, universities focus on education, knowledge, and student success whereas industry tends to utilize knowledge as a competitive advantage. In my professional experience it is imperative to openly discuss any potential barriers with all individuals involved to ensure an acceptable agreement can be made by all parties. Identifying these challenges in the beginning of the partnership will eliminate any friction that might occur thus creating a long term, sustainable working partnership. Bruneel, Este, and Salter (2010) acknowledge barriers in the beginning of the relationship is critical to achieve long term benefits. I agree that discussions of advantages, disadvantages, and potential barriers are completed so that an acceptable working agreement can be shaped because of my experience working and fostering relationships with vendors within my own organization corroborates it. While this study focuses on teamwork which involves research topics, the information contained in their study is applicable to academic industry partnerships working together to develop a more knowledgeable workforce. Some of the barriers measured in the article, *Investigating the factors that diminish the barriers to university-industry collaboration* (Bruneel, D'Este, and Salter, 2010), were the conflicts of attitudes, past experience between two potential partners, and the role trust plays in the development of or working relationship between university and industry.

While studies examine barriers that research related partnerships face that may pose a threat to their collaboration another study focused on obstacles regarding knowledge- transfer relationships. Schofield (2013) research discovered the following factors of the lack to understand customer needs, mutual and clear direction of goals, and communicated objectives as significant barriers when partnering with university. In my own practice when a business partner lacks customer service

accountability or does not understand my organizational needs it hinders the productivity of our business along with additional time it takes to provide the business partner information. The outcomes of these studies indicate that both parties need to invest the time in the beginning of the partnership discussing expectations and needs to avoid obstacles and gaps in the future. The main reason why a business partnership fails is due to barriers that cannot be overcome.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this literature review was to expand my general knowledge on the subject matter that helps guide me through more research thus helping to shape the framework necessary to construct a sustainable business model for industry-university partnerships. Research suggests that positive influence exists when industry plays a role in the educational development of a college student. Success does prevail when all key stakeholders benefit from an academic collaboration. Within this literature review I have expanded on how the evidence with these studies along with their framework support the purpose of this paper. The practical implications of the articles further the need for future research on the involvement of industry in partnering with university, leveraging resources, economic development, and current industry training practices. Most of the research evaluated focused on constructs of employable skillsets and relationship.

A few themes emerged from this review of literature on university industry collaborations. Firstly, collaborations occur because of the growing need for a new set of knowledge, skills, and abilities a college graduate entering the workforce is required to have beyond the traditional skillsets to be qualified to work in an everchanging global environment. Secondly, identifying potential barriers in the early phases of the relationship between university and industry will significantly lessen the opportunity for failure thus creating a long-term sustainable partnership. Thirdly, benefits of such a relationship will impact both the university and business. Benefits to the university can include additional funding for programs, opportunities for further research that results in scholarly papers, strengthen the alumni, improved course offerings, and direct pathways from university to industry.

Some industry benefits include ease of hiring practices through the pathway connection with the university, acquiring a more knowledgeable worker, and the positive economic impact with less dollars spent on training post-graduation of new hires.

One significant strength of this literature review is the theoretical framework suggested to develop an action plan which fully integrates all stakeholders such as the students, business, community, faculty, and administration. When all key stakeholders benefit from the process the opportunity is great for a longevity of the partnership. While three studies focused on the KSAs necessary to meet the needs of local industry one study sought to understand how to support the employee knowledge needs of international business.

Some limitations that can be applied to the concentration of this literature review include a more comprehensive study of the perceived attitudes university has towards industry. The majority of the studies solely focused on interests and attitudes of industry over university. However, there are perceived attitudes that may affect the roles that university has in its collaboration with an industry partner.

As I start the next stage of inquiry, literary review reveals some insight towards the idea of fostering a relationship to support both local and global working environments. Furthermore, I will need to ponder the ideas of how theory can inform my exploration. Examining such theories as self-determination theory or to explore further the visionary greats such as Steve Jobs idea to think differently and asking myself if the ideals of Christensen's (2017) jobs-to-be done model might be essential to identifying key elements of a great collaboration. Some considerations for my own problem of practices are the political pitfalls exposed when creating the partnership, appropriate methods of conducting business discussions between academia and industry and receiving accurate information regarding the industry needs are for well- educated workforce. These findings are important so that as my problem of practice takes hold, I may have some framework to help resolve partnership barriers.

## Overview of Pilot Study

In the Fall of 2019, I initiated conversations with the Assistant Dean for UGS and the BGS Assistant Director expressing my interest in exploring the existing [REDACTED] partner model as the focus for my dissertation. With much excitement they both agreed, providing to me with historical documents for the BGS degree program. Ensuing the CIPP evaluation model for decision making towards improvement, Stufflebeam and Zhang (2017) advises employing various information sources and data collection methods as this will strengthen the outcomes. For the purpose of the pilot study, which is included within this evaluation proposal, I decided upon a blended approach of document analysis and interviews.

As I considered various approaches for getting started, I relied heavily on my years of experience in business to guide the inquiry. Considering the CIPP evaluation model, the first step is to determine the context of the program, historical information, criteria, needs and opportunities for the partnership. Next, the input of the evaluation assists in the decision-making of how the two pillars of the partnership are connected and working together along with the resources and financial obligations. The two pillars are referred to the university and the industry partner. The process portion of the evaluation will assess the processes of student from start to completion of the BGS program, admissions process and interactions between the individuals who manage the various processes. Product evaluation will measure the outcomes of the students experiences and completion of the degree program.

The interviews with the USF UGS Assistant Director have been more intentional including semi- structured informative interview meetings and document analysis. The semi-structured interviews employed questions such as:

What steps are necessary to developing a collaboration with a local community partner?

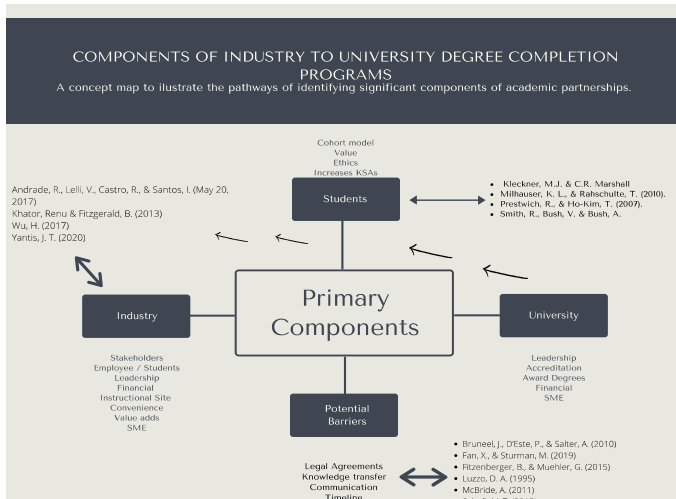
What is required? How is it done?

What are the benefits that university receives?

What does the university provide to the industry partner?

What is the ROI for doing this partnership?

Utilizing the CIPP model for program evaluation as the framework for, the focus was gaining insight into the innerworkings of the partnership. The next part of the study involved interviewing key stakeholders for both university and industry. Open-ended questions informed by the CIPP evaluation model and literature were used to develop these questions. This allowed the key stakeholders to provide rich data of their experience and recall past events which led to the partnership. The initial interviews with industry partner were conducted in September. Whilst the protocol of conducting business during a pandemic, the informal interviews were conducted in an online F2F meeting utilizing the Zoom platform at the request of the industry partner. Leveraging my business background, the informal interview format worked well for me to guide the conversation with specific prompts such as, “Tell me why an educational partnership with USF is important to you and your organization?” and “Do you believe that [REDACTED] goals for the program partnership align with USF?” “Why or why not?” These types of questions allowed me to keep the interview focused on the main purpose of the informal interview through enabling the industry partner to freely express what they know about the academic partnership (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017).



**Figure 3.0 Concept Map**

## METHODS

### Evaluation Approaches

Considering that evaluation is a learning tool for improvement, this evaluation will employ the CIPP Model (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017). The rationale for conducting a CIPP focus evaluation is for the purpose of improvement of the existing U-I partnership and to create a sustainable framework to introduce new industry partners in the future. The stakeholders will play a main role in the evaluation process thus helping to uncover the findings, those affected by the outcome of the evaluation, and will actively contribute. A qualitative evaluation approach is proposed as the primary data collection method for this evaluation. The evaluation aims to determine key components of an effective academic partnership. The aim is to actively engage the key stakeholders during the entire evaluation process.



### Evaluation Questions

For the purpose of this evaluation, three (3) general evaluation questions are defined below. The following questions focus on each pillar of the collaboration partnership that need to be addressed by the evaluation.

#### Question 1- Industry partner

What are the required components for industry partner? Leadership (driving force)

*Sub questions*

What actions does the leadership team take to demonstrate the importance of this program?

What is the ROI?

#### Question 2 – Student population

(Intrinsic vs. extrinsic benefits professional motivation)

The value- Does the employee feel that is invested in their interests?



### Sub questions

How does a cohort model support sustainability?

Does cohort model help or hinder?

### **Question 3 - University**

What are the benefits that university receives?

What is required? How is it done?

What does the university need to do to create a corporate partner?

What does the university bring to the partnership? (need corporate studies)

What is the ROI for doing this partnership?

Is it relevant to a higher education to participate in this partnership?

### **Data Collection & Analysis Methods**

#### *Document Analysis*

During the pilot study phase, document analysis has been useful for gathering information. Stufflebeam and Coryn (2014) suggest starting the research process by analyzing data to help identify important and relevant information. Since this systematic approach complements other research methods it will provide several benefits. The information discovered will identify what needs to be addressed and postulate the foundation for the focus of further research needing to be conducted. Analyzing documents provided by the undergraduate studies BGS unit provides the historical data along with the ability to track modifications. Lastly, utilizing this approach will be a resource for each pillar of the CIPP model.

#### *Interviews*

The interview method is a valuable technique for collecting data. During the pilot study, informal interviews have been helpful for establishing rapport with the U-I key stakeholders. My prior experience as a business professional afforded the easy facilitation of interviews with both the university and industry stakeholders. My years of professional experience guides my inquiry and has

developed the skillset of active listening. As the interviewer, I can engage with and provide prompts for leading the interviewee to freely answer open-ended questions. Due to covid-19, all interviews will be conducted through scheduled meetings utilizing an online format such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom.

### *Surveys*

The researcher evaluator will work with stakeholders from both university and industry partner to ensure that survey questions adequately address the overall goals of this evaluation. These surveys will be adapted as a means of collecting information. It is anticipated that the surveys measuring student perceptions of the degree program effectiveness will take approximately 10 minutes (15 minutes maximum) to complete. The evaluator will collect, organize, analyze, and report findings from the data gathered. The findings from the survey will be included within the final dissertation and presentation. Surveys may be a form of data collection during active evaluation process this Fall 2021 and will be developed employing the CIPP model.



### *Evaluator*

For the purpose of this study the term evaluator refers to a single, external evaluator, Lan René Amboy-Biller. A pilot study has been conducted as part of an evaluation that occurred between Fall 2020 to April 2021.

### *Key Stakeholders*

The key stakeholder / client for the university is identified as the Assistant Director of Bachelor of General Studies (BGS) and Bachelor of Science in Applied Science (BSAS). The industry partner key stakeholder for industry is identified as the Senior Administrator of Organizational Development.

### *Other Stakeholders*

Other stakeholders that will be consulted during the evaluation study will include the industry employee students past and current, academic advisor for the university who supports the industry

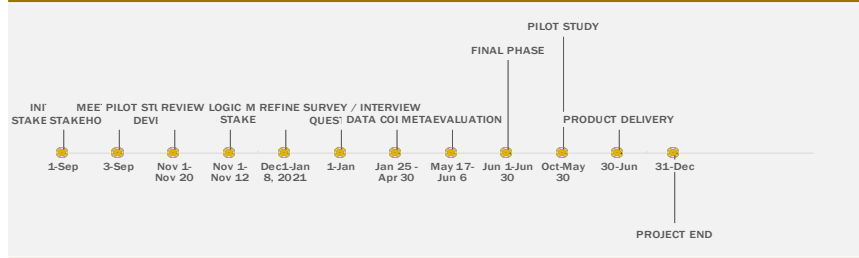
students, advisor administrator for industry, and two lead administrators for organizational development considered subject matter experts (SME) for industry.

*Audience*

The audience includes only those that are affected by this evaluation and receive a copy of the results. While this may include some members identified as stakeholders, it means that others will not be part of the results. The audience for this project includes the Office of Undergraduate Studies Assistant Dean, the Assistant Director of BGS / BSAS degree programs, and the Senior Administrator of Organizational Development for industry.

# TIMELINE

## PROJECT TIMELINE



### PROJECT DETAILS

DATE	MILESTONE	POSITION
1-Sep	Initial Industry Stakeholder Meeting	25
3-Sep	Meeting with Stakeholder -USF BGS	
Nov 1-Nov 20	Pilot Study Proposal Development	10
Nov 1-Nov 12	Review Logic Model & CIPP	-10
Dec 1-Jan 8, 20	Stakeholder Review	15
1-Jan	Refine Survey / Interview Questions	-15
Jan 25 -Apr 30	Data Collection	15
May 17-Jun 6	Metaevaluation	-15
Jun 1-Jun 30	Final Phase	15
Oct-May 30	Pilot Study	-20
30-Jun	Product Delivery	20
31-Dec	Project End	15

### Description of Main Timeline Activities

**Initial Industry Partner Meeting (September 2020):** Conducted with the Senior Administrator of Organizational Development to gather background information regarding the initiation of the partnership with USF, the process of employees becoming students, graduation, and his perceptions of the program partnership.

**Initial University Partner Meeting (September 2020):** Conducted with the BGS Assistant Director to gather statistical data, history of the BGS degree program and the current relationship with the industry partner. To provide stakeholder the program proposal identifying the areas of inquiry before data collection. I was also provided BGS documents for review and analysis at this meeting.

**Pilot Study Evaluation Proposal development (November 2020):** Collaborate with the professor for evaluation and critical friend to develop a framework for an evaluation proposal to be completed as my pilot study. The intent is to continue the development of this pilot evaluation proposal as a potential alternative product use as an alternative five-chapter dissertation format.

## OUTCOMES

This section will highlight outcomes discovered through the document analysis and informal interviews conducted throughout the pilot study. More outcomes are expected once research has been completed. This is all structured for a program evaluation that will be conducted in Fall 2021.

### **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

During this discovery phase of evaluating all documents such as the document titled, Request to Offer a New Degree Program (Brigman, 2008) and archived articles regarding the partnership between ██████ and Hillsborough Community College (HCC) or ██████ and USF allowed me the opportunity to apply the principles of Stufflebeam's CIPP model. Firstly, in applying Context evaluation, these documents provide the background and needs of the partnership. The Input evaluation of the model for reviewing documents provides me the insight of the planning and approach to the partnership. Analyzing the partnership program activities such as the admissions process for the ██████ students helps me to better understand the third pillar to the CIPP model- Process evaluation. The intent of the product evaluation within the model is designed to focus on the sustainability of the partnership. The product evaluation will allow me to measure outcomes.

As a scholarly practitioner, informed by experiential knowledge and professional wisdom motivated me to ask important questions during my time interviewing the BGS Assistant Director. Early into the interview process, the following questions were posed:

1. Similar to the business industry, are legal agreements necessary whenever the university decides to form a partnership with an industry partner?
2. Does your unit have a written agreement with ██████ to provide educational degree programs to ██████ employees?

This inquiry led to discover that there are no active MOU agreements in place with ██████. After further analysis with the ██████ key stakeholder, it was confirmed that the informal partnership initially occurred during his attempt to solve an issue with employee satisfaction. The U-I partnership evolved over time with previous leadership for USF BGS unit. Once the current BGS Assistant Director assumed the responsibility of supporting ██████ students, it never occurred to any individuals to search for a MOU.

### Written Admission Processes

The Process evaluation of the CIPP model provided me the vision to ascertain that there are no documented processes between the UGS unit or industry partner. Currently, it is stated that the process for student admission loosely follows the university guidelines allowing for unique additional steps to be added to support the [REDACTED] employee.

### Program Evaluation Proposal & Report

Prior to applying to the EdD program, I considered the various pathways for furthering my education. I believed the EdD program was the best fit as it provides crossover opportunities for new knowledge and practical application while working in a professional setting. The growth opportunity to learn how to become a scholarly practitioner while undertaking research within the workplace in an effort to improve processes or implement innovative ideas seem to be most beneficial. Upon completing my first year of this doctoral journey, it became evident that the evaluation approach was the best fit for my problem of practice. As I continue in my scholarly work, I will continue to develop the framework of a program evaluation report as a possible alternative dissertation format in conjunction with the EdD program.

### Summary of Findings

In the course of my scholarly research, I was conflicted between two evaluation models. After conversations with two professors, my critical friends, and studying both frameworks, the CIPP model proposed the greatest opportunity to evaluate for improvement. The overall goal of this study is to offer suggestions for improvements to the existing U-I partnership with [REDACTED] along with developing a sustainable framework to be transferable to other colleges and industries. As an outcome of this pilot study and employment of the CIPP model, the BGS Assistant Director is actively writing the MOU between USF UGS unit and [REDACTED] corporation. The MOU will define the purpose of the partnership and outline the scope of the collaboration. The second outcome has resulted in focusing efforts from both the university and industry administrators working together to identify and document the current process for [REDACTED] students' admissions to USF through graduation. These two outcomes are critical components to improving the existing partnership and for developing a sustainable partnership framework.

**Dissemination**

The evaluator has the right to release its report, with permission from the USF and [REDACTED] key stakeholders, following the completion of the report. Should the evaluator desire to release the report outside of USF, the evaluator may use a pseudonym or adjust the report to prevent specificity of the key stakeholders and the university. The release of the report will imply no endorsement from USF.

**Access to Data**

It is necessary and understood that USF and [REDACTED] will make available to the evaluator any and all data and reports required to complete the program evaluation.



## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

### Discussion of Findings

This formative program evaluation pilot study focused on utilizing Stufflebeam's CIPP model for evaluating the academic partnership between USF Office of Undergraduate Studies BGS unit and █████ corporation. The primary intent of the pilot study was to gain an understanding of the program, processes, historical content, how it operates and supports the needs of industry employee-students who are seeking degree completion. Through the initial findings of the pilot study, I identified two outcomes as a result of the employment of the CIPP model. First, the lack of written MOU agreement which outlines the understanding between organizations. The second outcome resulted in focusing efforts from the U-I partnership to pinpoint and document the existing processes for █████ students' admissions to USF through graduation.

### Implications for Practice

Based on the information of the study reveals, improvements to the existing partnership are suggested as part of the process improvements to the existing framework. This section will continue to evolve in following chapters of the dissertation to be written in Fall 2021.

### Summary

The information in this initial pilot study establishes the introduction to a program evaluation of the U-I academic partnership between USF Office of Undergraduate Studies BGS / BSAS degree program unit and █████ energy corporation. It further provides the framework for an alternative dissertation in practice using program evaluation as the methodology. This original paper can be further expounded upon and applied for the evaluation dissertation proposal defense.

### Next Steps for Future Research

Now that the pilot study has been completed; the findings provide important opportunities and recommendations for further evaluation. First, evaluation should be conducted on current employee-

students from the newest cohort five. This data will help to inform their perceptions and attitudes regarding their experiences having just completed the admissions process to USF and in the launch of their education. Similarly, it is important to include past employee-students who have graduated the degree program to further inform the innerworkings of the process. This information will be critical to understand the students' experiences during their time in the degree program and to identify any historical events or themes that exist. Third, other stakeholders that will inform the analysis are the USF program advisor and instructors who have been on the forefront directly working with the employee-students.

Finally, it is recommended to conduct a formative program evaluation on the U-I academic partnership to discover the answers to the study's primary question, what are the components of a sustainable industry partner to university degree completion program? Once all the data is gathered, I will analyze and code the data; the findings will be used to establish framework for a sustainable U-I academic partnership model that will be transferable to other industries and colleges. The intention is to make the partnership program model sustainable.

## CRITICAL REFLECTION

### Self- Assessment

Since the beginning of this doctoral journey, I have struggled with my problem of practice (PoP). What I have learned is that I was looking at my problem of practice through the wrong set of lenses. My experience with my problem of practice has been reminiscent of entering a carnival fun house wandering through the maze of mirrors unsure how to arrive at the other side meanwhile each mirror portraying my reflection as distorted figures and shapes. Keeping me in a constant state of feeling dizzy.

Maneuvering through Summer 2020 semester having been challenged by Dr. Johnston to shop for an industry, I recognize that my approach to my problem of practice needs to change, or I will

continue my trip through the carnival fun house never finding the end because I keep looking at my short, squatty self. Since the start of this journey, I have only been thinking about the result which is USF working together with an industry partner on curriculum to develop a more well- educated workforce. As the summer semester ended, I realized that that my *problem within my own practice* has been searching for and hiring educated, qualified employees which has refined my problem of practice. Now that I have overturned my mindset, I can now freely reflect on my experiences to help build scholarly research.

While reflecting upon my journey, I am filled with emotion. What a journey this has been full of highs, lows, sadness, and excitement. All these experiences (the good, the bad, the ugly), the new knowledge, practical application along with new relationships with the cohort, faculty, and mentors has shaped me into a scholarly practitioner. This is the first time that I am identifying myself as a scholarly practitioner. My heart, tears, and passion are written inside this evaluation report and am proud of how it is reflective of my time spent on this doctoral path. Some improvements have been learning to journal and apply reflection. I have learned that reflection is an art, it takes work, and an understanding of the role it takes for research to emerge. My comprehension has expanded to a deeper understanding of qualitative and quantitative research along with learning of many approaches that frame research.

### **Covid-19 and other Life Events**

Lastly, I reflect upon the global impact that the coronavirus covid-19 has created. The reality of this wicked virus brings me to ponder how world events such as this one effect how business will be conducted in the future. I am a first- hand witness of how this virus has affected the manner of how I conduct business and of the alternate pathway that my educational journey has also taken. Our company and the university I attend have replaced face-to-face contact with virtual meetings. We have not boarded an airplane for a business meeting in at least 18 months. Days are filled with countless numbers of zoom calls, webinars, and teams calls that all rely heavily on the internet. Life events such as being quarantined in the Philippines during a volcano eruption, my beloved late dog's cancer

journey, the death of my uncle during a pandemic, my aunt's Alzheimer's diagnosis, my son's wedding, and the arrival of our first grandbaby all make a significant impact on MY educational story. It is important for me in my development to allow these experiences to be present in my work. These experiences impact my decision making and are the WHY I continue to do this research.

What's my next? More inquiries...

What happens when there is a fault with the internet or phone systems crash?

How does this new reality affect the way that I will conduct research, meet with key stakeholders, observe stakeholders, conduct interviews, and even facilitate a proposal or a defense?

As I prepare to submit this pilot study evaluation for my qualifying exams June 1, 2021, I begin to pivot my views to how the defense proposal might look and feel. What additions or changes will need to be made to this report to conduct my proposal defense to my committee members.

### Lessons Learned

#### Timeline

- a. What went right – Creating a graphical representation of events was helpful for organizing the work and activities that need to be prioritized while holding myself accountable for completing each task.
- b. What can be improved upon – In my timeline on page 31 of this pilot study report, I only included major milestones. In the future, I may want to include other tasks such as coursework assignments and life events that might affect the outcomes of other activities.
- c. What takeaways exist- To plan for unexpected events that occur such as covid-19 pandemic or stakeholder availability when scheduling interviews.

#### Stakeholders

- a. What went right – I am privileged to interact with two key stakeholders who have vested interest in my study. They are both engaging and willing to provide information, perspectives, assist with timeline, and providing historical data regarding the U-I partnership, BGS degree program, and tuition assistance program for industry employees.
- b. What can be improved upon – My follow up communication can be timelier with both key stakeholders. At times, I would allow distractions to prevent me from sending timely communication to each of them.

- c. What takeaways exist – One takeaway while communicating with key stakeholders from both the university and industry are their perspectives provide insight on key components of an effective academic collaboration. Understanding both key stakeholders’ expectations for their participation in this pilot study and future inquiry is essential to the outcomes of the program evaluation.

#### Individual interviews

- a. What went right – Conducting semi-structured interviews helped to better understand the stakeholder’s experiences, learn the history of the U-I partnership, and inform my study.
- b. What can be improved upon – For upcoming interviews, I will ask participants about recording video while conducting the interviews with the other stakeholders. Secondly, when interviewing participants, I need to avoid my bias or leading questions that might trigger an unintended response.
- c. What takeaways exist – When preparing to interview other stakeholders for my study, I need to consider the biases of the participants and my own bias. Considering personal bias will assist me when developing questions for interviews with current students, instructors, and advisors of the program.

#### Stakeholder absenteeism

- a. What went right – Since the beginning of my doctoral journey, the university key stakeholder has met with me regularly to ensure I have all the data and information needed to inform my study. She included me in the admissions and orientation process for Cohort 5 along with the development of processes and MOU.
- b. What can be improved upon – When the key stakeholder had to take extended leave from USF, this slowed the process of my pilot study leaving me with unanswered questions. In the future, establishing a secondary contact early in the process will be helpful.
- c. What takeaways exist –Again, planning for the unexpected.

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## APPENDIX A:

### **Glossary**

As an effort to prevent the misinterpretation of verbiage used in this proposal, the following terms, acronyms, and definitions are ...

### **Asynchronous Learning**

Instructional delivery does not happen at the same time for students. The instructor may record their lecture or post video content for the student to view on their own time.

### **BGS**

Bachelor of General Studies degree program

### **CIPP Model**

Is an evaluation model that provides systematic principled evaluation of a program's context, inputs, process, and products. The model is designed to address four fundamental questions:

1. What needs to be done?
2. How should it be done?
3. Is it being done?
4. Did it succeed? (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017)

### **Formative evaluation**

Evaluation that takes place during the development stages of a program to help in identifying area that can be strengthened in the program.

### **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

A document that outlines an agreement between two or more companies. The document is designed to communicate expectations mutually accepted between all parties involved. MOU is not considered a legally binding contract.

### **Non-Traditional Students**

Students who have returned to college to pursue a degree after a gap in time. Typically, these students are working and / or have family.

**Stakeholder**

A person or persons who have an interest or concern in the program being evaluated and are impacted by the results of the evaluation being conducted.

**Other Stakeholders**

Other stakeholders that will be consulted during this evaluation will include the industry employee students past and current, academic advisor for the university who supports the industry students, advisor administrator for industry, and two lead administrators for organizational development considered subject matter experts (SME) for industry.

**Subject Matter Experts (SME)**

An individual considered to be educated or experienced in the subject area of the employee degree and tuition program with [REDACTED] corporation.

**Synchronous Online Learning**

Learning will happen at the same time in 'real time' between instructor and student. In an online environment class times will be scheduled for the instructor and class to meet virtually together.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED], industry partner

**UGS**

Undergraduate Studies Unit

**USF**

University of South Florida

## APPENDIX B:

### Letter of Agreement:

The signing of this letter of agreement confirms [REDACTED] understanding and acceptance of the evaluation proposal from the University of South Florida's Ed.D. Program Development student Lan Renee Amboy-Biller dated December, \_\_\_\_\_ 2020.

*Confidentiality.* All written and verbal communications between [REDACTED] and the evaluator are considered confidential. Except for the evaluation report and findings, all information received during this evaluation is deemed confidential.

*Standards.* The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the "Guiding Principles for Evaluators" issued by the American Evaluation Association (2004 & 2011).

*Indemnification.* [REDACTED] will indemnify and hold the evaluator harmless from any loss and expense, including reasonable attorney's fees and any other costs for defense, arising from any claim, suit or proceeding made or brought against the evaluator based upon any assertions made for any of [REDACTED] products, services, personnel, or operations. The evaluation proposal does not include any guarantees, promises, or other warranties unless expressly stated.

*Acceptance.* By signing this document, I, \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge receipt of the evaluation proposal dated January \_\_\_\_\_, and agree to engage the evaluation services of the evaluators as outlined in the aforementioned proposal.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C:

### Field Notes Journal

Field Notes / Meeting Notes

#### TECO Meeting #1 –Beth Taylor & Renee Amboy-Biller

Friday, June 26, 2020 2pm-3pm

#### Background:

██████ students first cohort started 2014

44 Graduates for ██████ since 2014

Cohort 4 –finish Spring term 2021

Cohort 5-starts Spring 2021

#### Cohort Model

Ideal cohort 20 students –minimum 12 students

#### **Who touches ██████ Students**

Professors –approx 6-8 Professors

Academic Advisor: Cathy Marquez (25 years -USF) On boarding

Potential new position -Academic Program Specialist-bachelor's degree –course scheduling, certifying degrees, managing orientation

BGS GA –admissions person -contacting students

#### **Responsibilities**

Schedule, write out contracts, administrative duties

Concierge service –advising service 1 x per semester

#### When

1 Day per week / Thursday 5:30pm -10pm gather on ██████ campus

Spring / Fall 2 courses in a semester –8- week sessions

Summer –10 weeks

Learning: Leadership & Change Management

39 credit hours

#### Graduation

██████ sponsors event at Tampa Theatre big event –in November –

1 person from USF-NEED to increase USF attendance at ██████ sponsor event

USF Commencement

Participants

Primarily office staff -administrative office managers, office staff, supervisors 1 lineman

Student Requirements

Prefer AA Students have AS degree has 18 gen ed BSAS

Has work experience and non-traditional

Students work 8-5 attend class 1 night a week after workday

BSAS –those with AS –concentration Leadership & Change Management

18 gen ed total 60 credit hours and finish other ½ in concentration

Creative ways [REDACTED] students to finish degree sooner

different methods to finish degree –

transient status so might take language or other course at HCC (cost or schedule permitting)

CLEP exams

Taking tests to meet USF requirements, transient taking courses at HCC Potential

Potential Interviews:

1.SuperStar –Cohort 4 student-Amber Alonso might be good personal interview

2.Jerry Collins –dissertation 2009 2+2 Pipeline Dissertation creation of BSAS pathway

3.Student recommendations for program improvement

NO AGREEMENTS

My Thoughts Post Interview Discussion

Dissertation Thoughts Improvement Plan:

- Create MOU –what day of week / hours course
- Professor costs paid by [REDACTED] for future plans
- More advising support –need 1 dedicated partnership advisor
- Buy-In for [REDACTED] graduation
- Data will help from Provost
- Creating USF community –cheerleaders, Rocky the Bull–bring the USF campus experience to [REDACTED]
- ADD: email box for [REDACTED]
- Onboarding Adds: Invite instructors to or do secondary advising session -expectations
- Past [REDACTED] Graduate, NON-traditional graduate student perspective
- Enhance student experience

MOU needs:

List

Owners  
 Collaborators  
 Kyna, Beth, Renee, Bruce  
 Event Planning –logistics  
 Next meeting–July 9<sup>th</sup>  
 Work on MOU –  
 Logistics: Microsoft Teams  
 Onboarding process -who to invite  
 Admissions  
 Financial aid  
 Non-traditional  
 Introductions to program  
 BGS staff  
 Pre-orientation  
 How to apply  
 How to Fill out FAFSA  
 Cashier- tuition reimbursement process

**July 30<sup>th</sup> 5p-6p Virtual Onboarding [REDACTED] Event – Cohort 5**

Beth spoke to Bruce last week regarding Cohort 5 – waiting information on new students

Agenda –

All students will apply to USF at same time

[REDACTED] – tuition reimbursement process cycle –Bruce [REDACTED] & Cathy (Advisor)

Next steps – get names from Bruce for cohort 5

BGS Student Experience – overall time, administration, USF resources available, library,

Aging Sciences

MOU DRAFT – who what where why how

**TASKs:** Look at past MOU's write notes

Research: FSU and UFL

Reinventing this wheel – outside lense

Identified MOU ---

Notes Onboarding Event Cohort 5 July 30, 2020 Virtual

Online Orientation Cohort 5 Class of 2023  
Leadership & Change Mgmt Degree concentration

Megan Diaz - GA

Beth Taylor - Asst. Director of Academic Programs

Bruce Napier, Senior Administrator of Organizational Development

Student Introductions: Valerie Altman - Credit Collections, Operations, SVC Area Coordinator,

Supervisor Operations, DSO System Service, Sub station operations,

Supervisor of Credit Operations,

Cathy Marquez, academic advisor UGS

Malcolm Randolph & Creah Demps, Office of Admissions

Cathy speaking- 1 advisor

Tentative Schedule

2- 8 week sessions each semester

Thursday evenings

Advising Services - 3 rd Cohort assisting time at USF

Degree works audit - show requirements

Keeps on track -

Phone appts - meet

DSST / CLEP - accelerated exam mechanisms

National exams, pay for and earn credit

Show - actual degree requirements

Explaining gen ed requirements

Admissions application process - Creah speaking

Explain admissions process

?? Is the process the same or different then general students??

Need high school transcripts

ACT or SAT not required with AA or 60 credit hours

??? How long does the admissions process take??

Fused pathway advisors

Bruce speaking - Tuition Reimbursement / Vanessa responsible for [REDACTED] reimbursement

What is [REDACTED] TAP?? Need to be approved

Development plan - tuition assistance

Beth speaking financial aid

### Interview Discussion, Bruce [REDACTED]

September 1, 2020

[REDACTED]-3500 employees

Bruce [REDACTED] team building, training

Working remotely through end of year

Strengthen community, families

More informed person

### **Historical Background**

Education passion long long time

Been with [REDACTED] 13 years

Left air force 23 years finished bachelor's degree than masters at Troy University

25 years Air Force - Community College of the air force - AAS degree

Technical, OJT, college credits received AAS Degree

Working in military

Went to [REDACTED] forming partnerships with college and business

Arrived at [REDACTED] in July HCC had partnership for 10 years college credit



Started quickly - grew 3 months - HCC on site in evening for employees - craft / trade  
Gen Ed- 10 classes for technical workers and apprenticeship  
1 gen ed was psychology - someone  
11 wk terms / adult friendly 1 night a week to [REDACTED] campus  
2007 started with about 40 ppl  
1000 ppl on roster  
70-80 ppl a year on roster  
Vast majority not technical focused  
AA degree not AS degree  
Background  
Education world makes them complicated  
Building pizza start with dough sauce and cheese it's the ingredients that makes it different  
Cohort some went to St. Leo  
1<sup>st</sup> Cohort 2012 BSAS offer 6 classes and rest of courses on own  
Theory of Leadership after 3-4 classes to  
2<sup>nd</sup> cohort about 18 months after first -  
Moved from BSAS to BGS - internal conflict public admin supporting or not supporting  
program  
30% of time focused on education with college - transcripts, paperwork, application,  
counselors

HCC - 1 night a week with 1 group  
Offer everything for AA degree  
4-5 classes - 8- week terms  
Professors Monday night 8 weeks

First class wants graduation ceremony  
Tampa theatre - graduation ceremony  
Tuition program - covers [REDACTED]  
Caps & Gowns  
Judy Genshaft  
Beth Taylor

Before Beth - \_\_\_\_ Hernandez

Cohort 4 -

Administrative support

Dr. Atwater HCC - asked Bruce to go to Texas - presented in forum

**Questions:**

**Issue with ppl BGS degree - real degree?** Opens opportunities for you, transferable skills

What is the push back from the community regarding the college program? Not sure

Tuition reimbursement program?

Graduation ceremony- only [REDACTED] not USF or HCC

Advocate

Tuition program - averaging 200,000 yearly now 500,000-600,00 yearly

300 associated degree awarded

200-250 Bachelor's degree awarded

Some master's degree

Policy - reimburse 5250 standard a year beyond that taxed at 16%

Benchmark other company

\$30,000 lifetime limit for tuition reimbursement

Perception - never expected residual side effects

Breaks down barriers

People here about 15-20 years - forms partnerships, study groups, helps them do business better

Bruce

80-90% say would never have been able to finish degree classes without [REDACTED]

Logistics

No guarantee for promotion or job

Due to degree completion

Oldest finished degree 63 years

Family members are welcome to attend - helps alleviate stress - navigating is hard

Statistics of adults who have college credits but not finished -  
Credits transfer 1986

Tito Martinez - all-star Yankees went to University of Tampa did not finish  
Made a promise to someone  
1 -year ceremony - pomp and circumstance celebration

### **Challenges**

Need for Day care  
Family push back  
BGS degree

### **Hurdle with USF**

Have individuals who are 40 + finished at HCC -  
Academically out of shape students expecting them to navigate through the university  
Every cohort - learning curve between HCC to USF -  
Academically  
Adult learners - transferable skills, desire to do it, perform, appreciate the education,  
Classroom management he taught 30 + years in training  
Adapting learning to adult learners

Failure rate - low  
Enrollments - 6-7000  
213 people to storm in Louisiana - take incomplete

HCC / USF students - can take online, F2F classes

12 classes plus capstone - up to 7 electives  
CLEP exams -  
Promote filling out FAFSA - for scholarships, grants -  
VA Benefits -

Originally started with HCC - only 3 people had taken program  
Articulated [REDACTED] line apprenticeship program

Potential Partners

[REDACTED]

USAA

Raymond James

Bruce - Real job - performance management, annual review process,

**Follow up interview discussion, Bruce [REDACTED]  
November 9, 2020**

What is the process for employees to learn of the educational opportunities to further their education?

Ha, no process. I fly by seat of pants.

Basically, anticipate questions

Example:

Apprentice lineman wants a degree—

What do you have? BS in lineman

Degree plan?

What can we do to support

Student process for

H.S. diploma when?

10 years ago? Foreign language? Yes or No

Jan -Feb 2020 A focus group of graduates - individual of graduates to answer questions

SME -2 individuals lead admins - HCC & USF

Handled tuition program

---

SMEs [REDACTED]

2 lead - Senior administrative of organizational development

Both went to USF one to HCC

## APPENDIX D:

DRAFT: MOU

**Memorandum of Understanding  
Between**

*Undergraduate Studies – Bachelor of General Studies and Applied Sciences Majors*

And

██████████\*

## PURPOSE

This Memorandum of Understanding is entered into between the UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA (hereinafter referred to as USF), the UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES Academic Unit (hereinafter referred to as UGS) and [REDACTED] (hereinafter referred to as [REDACTED]). The Bachelor of General Studies (BGS) and Bachelor of Science in Applied Sciences (BSAS) majors were selected by the Dean of Undergraduate Studies to participate in this unique industry partnership with a major job producer in the Tampa Bay Area. This unique partnership is designed to ensure the progression of students employed with [REDACTED] to earn a Bachelors of General Studies or a Bachelors of Science in Applied Sciences through a specialized set of courses specific to the energy industry. Students will earn a bachelor's degree with a concentration in Leadership and Change Management.

### Scope of Collaboration

The goal of this framework agreement is to maintain consistency with University standards and to ensure academic excellence and consistent standards with regards to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

1. The Memorandum of Understanding between USF UGS, Bruce [REDACTED] student employees.
2. This Agreement is to facilitate degree progression for [REDACTED] employees who are also BGS/BSAS students according to the University degree progression policy.
3. Students' personal and academic information is protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The student is required to grant permission to the University to release any academic information to third party entities, including [REDACTED].
4. The University of South Florida endeavors to make academic excellence inclusive by sustaining a community of free inquiry in which people of diverse race, ethnicity, veteran status, marital status, socio-economic level, national origin, religious belief, physical ability, sexual orientation, age, class, political ideology, gender identity and expression participate in, contribute to, and benefit equally, from the academic community.
5. UGS will assign a dedicated Academic Advisor to provide concierge services to all [REDACTED] students.
6. UGS is responsible for developing curriculum, in consultation with [REDACTED] leadership to include course work designed for leadership positions with the energy industry.

7. UGS is responsible for identifying instructors to teach courses within the [REDACTED] curriculum from various academic disciplines: UGS (LDR courses), College of Arts and Sciences (POS, COM, PAD), Public Health (PHC) and Muma College of Business (MAN).
8. UGS is responsible for hiring, verifying degree credentials and compensation of adjunct faculty. In the event of budget constraints, USF may require funding from Tampa Electric [REDACTED] to support instruction and continuity of the [REDACTED] industrial partnership with the University of South Florida.
9. Adjunct faculty will be compensated at \$3,500 per course for a period of 8 weeks. This compensation includes funding for travel and course design.
10. Adjunct faculty and [REDACTED] students will report to the [REDACTED] Campus, every Thursday from 5:30pm to 10:30pm [REDACTED] Services, INC located at [REDACTED] unless otherwise noted.
11. Only current [REDACTED] employees are approved participants in this program.
12. UGS is responsible for certifying degrees for [REDACTED] students enrolled in the General Studies or Applied Sciences with a concentration in Leadership and Change Management.
  - a. Students that have earned an AA degree (or those in progress of completing their AA degree prior to spring semester) will be restricted to BGS.
  - b. Students that have earned an AS degree will be restricted to BSAS. Participants must be AS degree holders and cannot have courses in progress toward completion of the AS degree.
13. [REDACTED] agrees to provide a minimum of 15 students per cohort in order to support the program.
14. UGS, in conjunction with other USF departments (orientation, admissions, financial aid, Cashiers office), will provide detailed onboarding sessions for incoming [REDACTED] transfer students.
15. UGS will identify key stakeholders to support [REDACTED] students (UGS Academic Advising, orientation, admissions, financial aid, Cashiers office, Office of Immunization, University Registrar's office-URO)
16. The USF Office of Orientation will provide all incoming students an online orientation as part of our partnership with [REDACTED].
17. URO departments will provide information related to transfer credit articulation and unofficial transcript evaluation for Complete Florida students.
18. Transient enrollment: in special cases, current USF [REDACTED] will be permitted to take courses at a Florida Public College or State University, if and only if, the course is not currently offered in a given semester or if the course in question would impede the USF degree progression policy. Approval is based on the discretion of the Academic Advisor.
19. Alternate ways to earn college credit: in conjunction with the [REDACTED] student's Academic Advisors, some College Level Examination Program (CLEP) and DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST) exams are encouraged to ensure non-traditional education support and degree progression.



20. UGS Academic Advising will be responsible for processing concentration course registration for students. █████ students are responsible for enrolling in remaining general education and elective coursework. Advisor will train students to use schedule planner and OASIS. It is the student's responsibility to register early and within the scheduled registration period.
21. UGS shall work with Academic Colleges and department to provide acceptable course substitutions when core concentration courses are not available or when an appropriate faculty member is not available to teach.
22. █████ students and instructors forfeit the spring break holiday to accommodate an accelerated schedule if taking an alternate calendar course.
23. Courses will not take place on observed USF and national holidays.
24. For crisis events or natural disasters, courses will be converted to 100% online offerings. Faculty should be prepared to convert face-to-face courses to online courses.
25. This special program, its courses, and instructors are subject to change based on budgetary constraints, faculty participation and the mission of the University.
26. This MOU can be terminated by either party and any termination by either party must be submitted writing.

█████ Course Schedule:

CRN	SUBJ	CRS#	SEC	TITLE	INSTRUCTOR
<b>Spring</b>					
	LDR	3331		Leading in the Workplace	<b>(Gabriella Harmon)</b>
				DATES	
	PHC	4250		Crisis Leadership in Disasters	<b>(Emilio Salabarría)</b>
				DATES	
<b>Summer (10 weeks)</b>					
	PAD	3003		Intro to Public Administration	<b>(Chandra Davis)</b>
				DATES	
<b>Fall</b>					
	MAN	3025		Principles of Management	<b>(Louis Gray) (First 8 weeks)</b>
				DATES	
	COM	3120		Organizational Communication	<b>(Leslie Tod) (Second 8 weeks)</b>
				DATES	

**Spring**

POS 3182 Florida Politics & Government (**Patricia Weeks**) (**First 8 weeks**)  
DATES

LDR 3216 Leadership and Social Change (**Arthur McCrory**) (**Second 8 weeks**):  
DATES

**Summer (10 weeks)**

LDR 4104 Theories of Leadership (**Gabriella Harmon**)  
DATES

**Fall**

COM 4124 Communication & Organizational Change (**Leslie Tod**)  
DATES

POS 3931 Selected Topics: Government and Utility Regulation (**Patricia Weeks**)  
DATES

**Spring 2021**

MAN 3301 Human Resource Management (**Louis Gray**)  
DATES

MAN 4063 Management Ethics (**Louis Gray**)  
DATES

Undergraduate Program Contacts:

Academic Depts contacts for [REDACTED] Courses	Advisor	Role	Email	Undergraduate Program Director/Coordi nator/Chair
Business (COB)	Monica Herman	Advisor, College of Business	[REDACTED]	Jackie Nelson, Senior Director

<b>Business (COB)</b>	Michelle Jenkins	Dir. of Academic Advising	<a href="mailto:mjenkins@usf.edu">mjenkins@usf.edu</a>	
<b>Public Administration (CAS)</b>	Dr. Stephen Neely	Faculty and BGS contact	<a href="mailto:srneely@usf.edu">srneely@usf.edu</a>	Dr. Stephen Neely, School of Public Affairs
<b>Public Health (CPH)</b>	Annette Strzelecki	Director of Advising for Public Health	<a href="mailto:amanson@health.usf.edu">amanson@health.usf.edu</a>	Dr. Thomas Unnasch
<b>Public Health (CPH)</b>	Thanh Le	Advisor	<a href="mailto:tle12@health.usf.edu">tle12@health.usf.edu</a>	Dr. Thomas Unnasch
<b>Leadership and Change Management (UGS)</b>	Cathy Marquez	Advises students for [REDACTED] cohort 1-5	<a href="mailto:Cjewel@usf.edu">Cjewel@usf.edu</a>	Dr. Kyna Betancourt
			<a href="mailto:Kbetancourt@usf.edu">Kbetancourt@usf.edu</a>	Beth Taylor, Assistant Director
			<a href="http://energy.com">energy.com</a>	Bruce [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Education Coordinator

**APPENDIX D:**  
**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**R1: describe partnership structure** – Bruce & Beth interviews (supported by students discussing process)

Advisor: How do you perceive the relationship between ENGACO and USF for this degree program?

Students: Can you share with me the process you went through to become a member of this degree program?

**R2: factors influence effectiveness of U-I – important to them**

Advisor/ Students: What do you see that makes this program work?

Advisor: What do you believe has made this program successful?

Students: What are your experiences that have made this successful for you?

Factors: Location, Tuition reimbursement program, computers,

**R3: perceive sustainable components**

Advisor / Students: If I were to take this to Port Authority, USAA, or MetLife to implement a similar program, what factors are important to you that should be considered?

– ie classes on campus, tuition reimbursement, time, support

**R4: Improvement**

Advisor/ Students: So, thinking about bringing this to USAA or MetLife, what do you believe can be done differently or help to improve upon to make this program better?

Sub-questions: Is the curriculum applicable to your current job role?

Did they feel like the online courses were as effective as f2f?

Are there other resources that might be helpful ie: tutoring  
Online

Potential recommendations:

**APPENDIX E:**  
**LETTER OF AGREEMENT**

The signing of this letter of agreement confirms EnGaCo’s understanding and acceptance of the evaluation proposal from the University of South Florida’s Ed.D. Program Development student Lan Renee Amboy-Biller dated December, \_\_\_\_\_2020.

*Confidentiality.* All written and verbal communications between EnGaCo and the evaluator are considered confidential. Except for the evaluation report and findings, all information received during this evaluation is deemed confidential.

*Standards.* The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the “Guiding Principles for Evaluators” issued by the American Evaluation Association (2004 & 2011).

*Indemnification.* EnGaCo will indemnify and hold the evaluator harmless from any loss and expense, including reasonable attorney’s fees and any other costs for defense, arising from any claim, suit or proceeding made or brought against the evaluator based upon any assertions made for any of ENGACO’s products, services, personnel, or operations. The evaluation proposal does not include any guarantees, promises, or other warranties unless expressly stated.

*Acceptance.* By signing this document, I, \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge receipt of the evaluation proposal dated January \_\_\_\_\_, and agree to engage the evaluation services of the evaluators as outlined in the aforementioned proposal.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX F:**  
**FIELD NOTES JOURNAL**

Field Notes / Meeting Notes

**EnGaCo Meeting #1 –Beth Taylor & Renee Amboy-Biller  
Friday, June 26, 2020 2pm-3pm**

**Background:**

EnGaCo students first cohort started 2014  
44 Graduates for EnGaCo since 2014  
Cohort 4 –finish Spring term 2021  
Cohort 5-starts Spring 2021  
Cohort Model  
Ideal cohort 20 students –minimum 12 students

**Who Supports EnGaCo Students**

Professors –approx 6-8 Professors  
Academic Advisor: Cathy Marquez (25 years -USF) On boarding  
Potential new position -Academic Program Specialist-bachelor's degree –course scheduling,  
certifying degrees, managing orientation  
BGS GA –admissions person -contacting students

**Responsibilities**

Schedule, write out contracts, administrative duties  
Concierge service –advising service 1 x per semester

When

1 Day per week / Thursday 5:30pm -10pm gather on EnGaCo campus  
Spring / Fall 2 courses in a semester –8- week sessions  
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1 person from USF-NEED to increase USF attendance at EnGaCo sponsor event  
USF Commencement

## Participants

Primarily office staff -administrative office managers, office staff, supervisors 1 lineman

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Has work experience and non-traditional

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18 gen ed total 60 credit hours and finish other ½ in concentration

## Creative ways EnGaCo students to finish degree sooner

different methods to finish degree –

transient status so might take language or other course at HCC (cost or schedule permitting)

CLEP exams

Taking tests to meet USF requirements, transient taking courses at HCC Potential

## Potential Interviews:

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2.Jerry Collins –dissertation 2009 2+2 Pipeline Dissertation creation of BSAS pathway

3.Student recommendations for program improvement

NO AGREEMENTS

## My Thoughts Post Interview Discussion

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- More advising support –need 1 dedicated partnership advisor
- Buy-In for EnGaCo graduation
- Data will help from Provost
- Creating USF community –cheerleaders, Rocky the Bull–bring the USF campus experience to EnGaCo
- ADD: email box for EnGaCo
- Onboarding Adds: Invite instructors to or do secondary advising session -expectations
- Past EnGaCo Graduate, NON-traditional graduate student perspective
- Enhance student experience

MOU needs:

List

Owners

Collaborators

Kyna, Beth, Renee, Bruce

Event Planning –logistics

Next meeting–July 9<sup>th</sup>

Work on MOU –

Logistics: Microsoft Teams

Onboarding process -who to invite

Admissions

Financial aid  
Non-traditional  
Introductions to program  
BGS staff  
Pre-orientation  
How to apply  
How to Fill out FAFSA  
Cashier- tuition reimbursement process

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MOU DRAFT – who what where why how

**TASKs:** Look at past MOU's write notes

Research: FSU and UFL

Reinventing this wheel – outside lense

Identified MOU ---

Notes Onboarding Event Cohort 5 July 30, 2020 Virtual

EnGaCo Online Orientation EnGaCo Cohort 5 Class of 2023

Leadership & Change Mgmt Degree concentration

Megan Diaz – GA

Beth Taylor – Asst. Director of Academic Programs

Bruce, Senior Administrator of Organizational Development

Student Introductions: Valerie Altman – Credit Collections, Operations, SVC Area Coordinator,

Supervisor Operations, DSO System Service, Sub station operations,

Supervisor of Credit Operations,

Cathy Marquez, academic advisor UGS

Malcolm Randolph & Creah Demps, Office of Admissions

Cathy speaking- 1 advisor

Tentative Schedule

2- 8 week sessions each semester

Thursday evenings



Advising Services – 3 rd EnGaCo Cohort assisting time at USF  
Degree works audit – show requirements  
Keeps on track –  
Phone appts – meet

DSST / CLEP – accelerated exam mechanisms  
National exams, pay for and earn credit

Show – actual degree requirements  
Explaining gen ed requirements

Admissions application process – Creah speaking  
Explain admissions process

?? Is the process the same or different then general students??  
Need high school transcripts  
ACT or SAT not required with AA or 60 credit hours

??? How long does the admissions process take??  
Fused pathway advisors

Bruce speaking – Tuition Reimbursement / Vanessa responsible for EnGaCo reimbursement  
What is EnGaCo TAP?? Need to be approved  
Development plan – tuition assistance

Beth speaking financial aid

### **Interview Discussion, Bruce EnGaCo September 1, 2020**

EnGaCo -3500 employees  
Bruce -team building, training  
Working remotely through end of year

Strengthen community, families  
More informed person

### **Historical Background**

Education passion long long time  
Been with EnGaCo 13 years  
Left air force 23 years finished bachelor's degree than masters at Troy University  
25 years Air Force – Community College of the air force – AAS degree  
Technical, OJT, college credits received AAS Degree  
Working in military  
Went to EnGaCo forming partnerships with college and business  
Arrived at EnGaCo in July HCC had partnership for 10 years college credit

Started quickly – grew 3 months – HCC on site in evening for employees – craft / trade  
Gen Ed- 10 classes for technical workers and apprenticeship  
1 gen ed was psychology – someone  
11 wk terms / adult friendly 1 night a week to EnGaCo campus  
2007 started with about 40 ppl  
1000 ppl on roster  
70-80 ppl a year on roster  
Vast majority not technical focused  
AA degree not AS degree  
Background  
Education world makes them complicated  
Building pizza start with dough sauce and cheese it's the ingredients that makes it different  
Cohort some went to St. Leo  
1<sup>st</sup> Cohort 2012 BSAS offer 6 classes and rest of courses on own  
Theory of Leadership after 3-4 classes to  
2<sup>nd</sup> cohort about 18 months after first –  
Moved from BSAS to BGS - internal conflict public admin supporting or not supporting program  
30% of time focused on education with college – transcripts, paperwork, application, counselors

HCC – 1 night a week with 1 group  
Offer everything for AA degree  
4-5 classes – 8- week terms  
Professors Monday night 8 weeks

First class wants graduation ceremony  
Tampa theatre – graduation ceremony  
Tuition program – covers EnGaCo  
Caps & Gowns  
Judy Genshaft  
Beth Taylor

Before Beth - \_\_\_\_\_ Hernandez  
Cohort 4 –  
Administrative support  
Dr. Atwater HCC – asked Bruce to go to Texas – presented in forum

### **Questions:**

**Issue with ppl BGS degree – real degree?** Opens opportunities for you, transferable skills

What is the push back from the community regarding the college program? Not sure  
Tuition reimbursement program?  
Graduation ceremony- only EnGaCo not USF or HCC  
Advocate  
Tuition program – averaging 200,000 yearly now 500,000-600,00 yearly  
300 associated degree awarded

200-250 Bachelor's degree awarded  
Some master's degree  
Policy – reimburse 5250 standard a year beyond that taxed at 16%  
Benchmark other company

\$30,000 lifetime limit for tuition reimbursement

Perception – never expected residual side effects  
Breaks down barriers  
People here about 15-20 years – forms partnerships, study groups, helps them do business better  
Bruce  
80-90% say would never have been able to finish degree classes without EnGaCo  
Logistics

No guarantee for promotion or job  
Due to degree completion  
Oldest finished degree 63 years

Family members are welcome to attend – helps alleviate stress – navigating is hard

Statistics of adults who have college credits but not finished –  
Credits transfer 1986

Tito Martinez – all-star Yankees went to University of Tampa did not finish  
Made a promise to someone  
1 -year ceremony – pomp and circumstance celebration

### **Challenges**

Need for Day care  
Family push back  
BGS degree

### **Hurdle with USF**

Have individuals who are 40 + finished at HCC –  
Academically out of shape students expecting them to navigate through the university  
Every cohort – learning curve between HCC to USF –  
Academically  
Adult learners – transferable skills, desire to do it, perform, appreciate the education,  
Classroom management he taught 30 + years in training  
Adapting learning to adult learners

Failure rate – low  
Enrollments – 6-7000  
213 people to storm in Louisiana – take incomplete

HCC / USF students – can take online, F2F classes

12 classes plus capstone – up to 7 electives  
CLEP exams –  
Promote filling out FAFSA – for scholarships, grants –  
VA Benefits –

Originally started with HCC – only 3 people had taken program  
Articulated EnGaCo line apprenticeship program

Potential Partners  
Gas Company  
USAA  
Raymond James

Bruce - Real job – performance management, annual review process,

**Follow up interview discussion, Bruce EnGaCo  
November 9, 2020**

What is the process for employees to learn of the educational opportunities to further their education?

Ha, no process. I fly by seat of pants.  
Basically, anticipate questions

Example:

Apprentice lineman wants a degree—  
What do you have? BS in lineman  
Degree plan?  
What can we do to support

Student process for

H.S. diploma when?  
10 years ago? Foreign language? Yes or No

Jan -Feb 2020 A focus group of graduates – individual of graduates to answer questions  
SME –2 individuals lead admins – HCC & USF  
Handled tuition program

SMEs EnGaCo

2 lead - Senior administrative of organizational development  
Both went to USF one to HCC

## **APPENDIX G:**

### **DRAFT MOU**

#### **Memorandum of Understanding Between**

*Undergraduate Studies – Bachelor of General Studies and Applied Sciences Majors*

And

*EnGaCo*

#### *Purpose*

This Memorandum of Understanding is entered into between the UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA (hereinafter referred to as USF), the UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES Academic Unit (hereinafter referred to as UGS) and EnGaCo. The Bachelor of General Studies (BGS) and Bachelor of Science in Applied Sciences (BSAS) majors were selected by the Dean of Undergraduate Studies to participate in this unique industry partnership with a major job producer in the Tampa Bay Area. This unique partnership is designed to ensure the progression of students employed with ENGACO to earn a Bachelors of General Studies or a Bachelors of Science in Applied Sciences through a specialized set of courses specific to the energy industry. Students will earn a bachelor's degree with a concentration in Leadership and Change Management.

#### Scope of Collaboration

The goal of this framework agreement is to maintain consistency with university standards and to ensure academic excellence and consistent standards with regards to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

1. The Memorandum of Understanding between USF UGS, (ENGACO), ENGACO student employees.
2. This Agreement is to facilitate degree progression for ENGACO employees who are also BGS/BSAS students according to the University degree progression policy.
3. Students' personal and academic information is protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The student is required to grant permission to the University to release any academic information to third party entities, including ENGACO.
4. The University of South Florida endeavors to make academic excellence inclusive by sustaining a community of free inquiry in which people of diverse race, ethnicity,

veteran status, marital status, socio-economic level, national origin, religious belief, physical ability, sexual orientation, age, class, political ideology, gender identity and expression participate in, contribute to, and benefit equally, from the academic community.

5. UGS will assign a dedicated Academic Advisor to provide concierge services to all ENGACO students.
6. UGS is responsible for developing curriculum, in consultation with ENGACO leadership to include course work designed for leadership positions with the energy industry.
7. UGS is responsible for identifying instructors to teach courses within the ENGACO curriculum from various academic disciplines: UGS (LDR courses), College of Arts and Sciences (POS, COM, PAD), Public Health (PHC) and Muma College of Business (MAN).
8. UGS is responsible for hiring, verifying degree credentials and compensation of adjunct faculty. In the event of budget constraints, USF may require funding from ENGACO to support instruction and continuity of the ENGACO industrial partnership with the University of South Florida.
9. Adjunct faculty will be compensated at \$3,500 per course for a period of 8 weeks. This compensation includes funding for travel and course design.
10. Adjunct faculty and ENGACO students will report to the ENGACO Campus, every Thursday from 5:30pm to 10:30pm ENGACO Services, INC located at Tampa, FL unless otherwise noted.
11. Only current ENGACO employees are approved participants in this program.
12. UGS is responsible for certifying degrees for ENGACO students enrolled in the General Studies or Applied Sciences with a concentration in Leadership and Change Management.
  - a. Students that have earned an AA degree (or those in progress of completing their AA degree prior to spring semester) will be restricted to BGS.
  - b. Students that have earned an AS degree will be restricted to BSAS. Participants must be AS degree holders and cannot have courses in progress toward completion of the AS degree.
13. ENGACO agrees to provide a minimum of 15 students per cohort in order to support the program.
14. UGS, in conjunction with other USF departments (orientation, admissions, financial aid, Cashiers office), will provide detailed onboarding sessions for incoming ENGACO transfer students.
15. UGS will identify key stakeholders to support ENGACO students (UGS Academic Advising, orientation, admissions, financial aid, Cashiers office, Office of Immunization, University Registrar's office-URO)
16. The USF Office of Orientation will provide all incoming students an online orientation as part of our partnership with ENGACO.
17. URO departments will provide information related to transfer credit articulation and unofficial transcript evaluation for Complete Florida students.
18. Transient enrollment: in special cases, current USF ENGACO will be permitted to take courses at a Florida Public College or State University, if and only if, the course is not

- currently offered in a given semester or if the course in question would impede the USF degree progression policy. Approval is based on the discretion of the Academic Advisor.
19. Alternate ways to earn college credit: in conjunction with the ENGACO student's Academic Advisors, some College Level Examination Program (CLEP) and DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST) exams are encouraged to ensure non-traditional education support and degree progression.
  20. UGS Academic Advising will be responsible for processing concentration course registration for students. ENGACO students are responsible for enrolling in remaining general education and elective coursework. Advisor will train students to use schedule planner and OASIS. It is the student's responsibility to register early and within the scheduled registration period.
  21. UGS shall work with Academic Colleges and department to provide acceptable course substitutions when core concentration courses are not available or when an appropriate faculty member is not available to teach.
  22. ENGACO students and instructors forfeit the spring break holiday to accommodate an accelerated schedule if taking an alternate calendar course.
  23. Courses will not take place on observed USF and national holidays.
  24. For crisis events or natural disasters, courses will be converted to 100% online offerings. Faculty should be prepared to convert face-to-face courses to online courses.
  25. This special program, its courses, and instructors are subject to change based on budgetary constraints, faculty participation and the mission of the University.
  26. This MOU can be terminated by either party and any termination by either party must be submitted writing.

ENGACO Course Schedule:

CRN	SUBJ	CRS#	SEC	TITLE	INSTRUCTOR
<b>Spring</b>					
	LDR	3331		Leading in the Workplace	( <b>Gabriella Harmon</b> )
				DATES	
	PHC	4250		Crisis Leadership in Disasters	( <b>Emilio Salabarría</b> )
				DATES	
<b>Summer (10 weeks)</b>					
	PAD	3003		Intro to Public Administration	( <b>Chandra Davis</b> )
				DATES	
<b>Fall</b>					
	MAN	3025		Principles of Management	( <b>Louis Gray</b> ) ( <b>First 8 weeks</b> )
				DATES	
	COM	3120		Organizational Communication	( <b>Leslie Tod</b> ) ( <b>Second 8 weeks</b> )
				DATES	
<b>Spring</b>					
	POS	3182		Florida Politics & Government	( <b>Patricia Weeks</b> ) ( <b>First 8 weeks</b> )
				DATES	

LDR 3216

Leadership and Social Change (**Arthur McCrory**) (Second 8 weeks):  
DATES

**Summer (10 weeks)**

LDR 4104

Theories of Leadership (**Gabriella Harmon**)  
DATES

**Fall**

COM 4124

Communication & Organizational Change (**Leslie Tod**)  
DATES

POS 3931

Selected Topics: Government and Utility Regulation (**Patricia Weeks**)  
DATES

**Spring 2021**

MAN 3301

Human Resource Management (**Louis Gray**)  
DATES

MAN 4063

Management Ethics (**Louis Gray**)  
DATES

Undergraduate Program Contacts:

<b>Academic Depts contacts for ENGACO Courses</b>	<b>Advisor</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Email</b>	<b>Undergraduate Program Director/Coordin ator/Chair</b>
<b>Business (COB)</b>	Monica Herman	Advisor, College of Business	<a href="mailto:Mehermann@usf.edu">Mehermann@usf.edu</a>	Jackie Nelson, Senior Director
<b>Business (COB)</b>	Michelle Jenkins	Dir. of Academic Advising	<a href="mailto:mjenkins@usf.edu">mjenkins@usf.edu</a>	
<b>Public Administration (CAS)</b>	Dr. Stephen Neely	Faculty and BGS contact	<a href="mailto:srneely@usf.edu">srneely@usf.edu</a>	Dr. Stephen Neely, School of Public Affairs
<b>Public Health (CPH)</b>	Annette Strzelecki	Director of Advising for Public Health	<a href="mailto:amanson@health.usf.edu">amanson@health.usf.edu</a>	Dr. Thomas Unnasch
<b>Public Health (CPH) (ENGACO)</b>	Thanh Le	Advisor	<a href="mailto:tle12@health.usf.edu">tle12@health.usf.edu</a>	Dr. Thomas Unnasch
<b>Leadership and Change Management (UGS)</b>	Cathy Marquez	Advises students for ENGACO cohort 1-5	<a href="mailto:Cjewel@usf.edu">Cjewel@usf.edu</a> <a href="mailto:Kbetancourt@usf.edu">Kbetancourt@usf.edu</a> <a href="mailto:benapier@EnGaCoenergy.com">benapier@EnGaCoenergy.com</a>	Dr. Kyna Betancourt Beth Taylor, Assistant Director Bruce, ENGACO Education Coordinator



## **APPENDIX H:**

### **IRB EMAIL**

From: Larsen, Gina glarsen@usf.edu  
Subject: Re: IRB inquiry  
Date: June 30, 2021 at 11:08 AM  
To: Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee lanrenee@usf.edu

Good Morning,

Thank you for your email.

If the purpose of your dissertation to improve certain processes or is a type of program evaluation/quality improvement project, and the results will not lead to generalizable knowledge (only improvements, insights, or new processes within an organization or among a group of individuals being served), then you would not need to submit the project to the USF IRB for review, as this would be considered “Not Human Subjects Research” (NHRSR). In this case, you are free to publish your results as quality improvement/program evaluation/needs assessment, but you would not be able to call the project "research" in discussions or written form.

However, if you are going to present the results as research, contribute to generalizable knowledge within your field, etc. then you would go ahead and submit a research application in the BullsIRB system.

Please let me know if you have any additional questions.

Thank you!  
Gina

Gina Larsen, M.A., CIP  
IRB Manager - Social Behavioral  
USF Research Integrity & Compliance  
University of South Florida  
Tampa campus  
+1-813-974-8360 (office)  
glarsen@usf.edu

To let us know how we are doing, please complete this SURVEY.

From: Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee <lanrenee@usf.edu>  
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 10:31 AM  
To: RSCH ARC <RSCH-arc@usf.edu>  
Subject: IRB inquiry

Good morning,

I wanted to present an inquiry about the need for IRB approval for my Dissertation  
I wanted to present an inquiry about the need for IRB approval for my Dissertation  
in Practice as part of the fulfillment towards my EdD.

My plan is to conduct a program evaluation of USF's Office of Undergraduate  
Studies Bachelor of General Studies( BGS) program to identify if the intended  
university-industry (U-I) program partnership objectives are met.  
The study will employ qualitative approach comprised of interviews to understand  
participants' perspectives of the organizational structure and factors that influence  
the U-I partnership,

The intent of the project is to improve the BGS program delivered at USF by the  
Office of Undergraduate Studies.

Thank you for your time!

Best~

L. Renee Amboy-Biller, M.A.Ed  
Graduate Assistant, Office of Undergraduate Research  
Instructor, Office of Undergraduate Studies  
University of South Florida  
4202 East Fowler Avenue, LIB 210  
Tampa FL 33620  
(813) 974-1745  
lanrenee@usf.edu

Graduate Assistant, Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR)  
<https://www.usf.edu/undergrad/undergraduate-research/>

Due to Florida's broad open records law, email to or from university employees is  
public record, available to the public and the media upon request.

**APPENDIX I:**  
**IRB DETERMINATION LETTER**



NOT HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH DETERMINATION

June 16, 2022

Lan Renee Amboy-Biller  
[REDACTED]

Dear Ms. Lan Renee Amboy-Biller:

On 6/16/2022, the IRB reviewed the following protocol:

IRB ID:	STUDY004228
Title:	Bridging the Gap between Academia and Industry: A Program Evaluation on University-Industry Collaboration

The IRB determined that the proposed activity does not constitute research involving human subjects as defined by DHHS and FDA regulations.

IRB review and approval is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities constitute human subjects research, please submit a new application to the IRB for a determination.

While not requiring IRB approval and oversight, your project activities should be conducted in a manner that is consistent with the ethical principles of your profession. If this project is program evaluation or quality improvement, do not refer to the project as research and do not include the assigned IRB ID or IRB contact information in the consent document or any resulting publications or presentations.

Sincerely,

Vanessa Ellis  
IRB Manager

---

**Institutional Review Boards / Research Integrity & Compliance**

FWA No. 00001669

University of South Florida / 3702 Spectrum Blvd., Suite 165 / Tampa, FL 33612 / 813-974-5638

Page 1 of 1

## APPENDIX J:

### PARTICIPANT SELECTION EMAIL



My name is Reneé Amboy-Biller, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Ed.D. Program Development with an emphasis in Educational Program Innovation at the University of South Florida. I am evaluating the current university-industry program and partnership for improvements to the current program while identifying key components of a sustainable U-I partnership. More specifically, I am seeking to understand how industry employees learn about the tuition reimbursement program, motivations and results for continuing their education, perceptions and interactions with participants and stakeholders as they participate in the program and partnership.

You are invited to take part in the program evaluation because 1) you are an employee-student of the industry partner pursuing an undergraduate degree, or 2) you have an active role in the U-I partnership or degree program. Approximately 10 participants will be selected to participate in this program evaluation.

If you agree to participate in the program evaluation, your involvement will include the following activity:

1. An interview that will take approximately 45-60 minutes that aims to collect general information, perceptions, and experiences as a participant in the degree program and / or partnership.
2. The interview will be audio-recorded utilizing Webex interview. The name of the company and participants will be substituted with a pseudonym to ensure the anonymity per the industry key stakeholder's request.

All selected participants completing activities as outlined above will not be receiving any monetary compensation or benefits for agreeing to participate in the program evaluation. Participants may opt out at any time.

If you have any questions about this research program evaluation, you can contact me, Reneé Amboy-Biller, at [lanrenee@usf.edu](mailto:lanrenee@usf.edu).

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Lan Reneé Amboy-Biller  
Ed.D. Doctoral Candidate, University of South Florida  
[lanrenee@usf.edu](mailto:lanrenee@usf.edu)

## APPENDIX K:

### INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM EMAIL



#### Interview Consent

Please consider this information carefully before deciding whether to participate in this program evaluation.

**Purpose of the study:** The purpose of the program evaluation is to evaluate the current U-I partnership between USF's Undergraduate Studies Bachelor of General Studies / Bachelor of Science in Applied Science unit and a single industry energy corporation to gain an understanding of how the program operates and supports the needs of industry employees/students who are seeking degree completion. Additionally, the evaluation results will be used with key stakeholders to inform future directions.

**What you will do in this study:** If you decide to volunteer, you will be asked to participate in one interview. You will be asked several questions. Some of them will be about your perspectives, and others will be about your experiences utilizing the tuition reimbursement program, admissions into the university, and time spent within the program. With your permission, as the evaluator for the program evaluation, I will conduct the interview and record the interview, so that I will not have to make so many notes. You will not be asked to state your name on the recording. Per the request of the industry stakeholder, pseudonyms will be used to protect the anonymity of all participants and the identity of the industry company.

**Time required:** The interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes. You will also have an opportunity to provide additional information via email.

**Risks:** No risks are anticipated.

**Benefits:** This is a chance for you to assist in the continuous improvement of the university-industry partnership and degree program.

**Confidentiality:** Your contact information will be shared with the impartial facilitator conducting the interview and focus group for coordination purposes only. Your responses to interview questions will be kept confidential. At no time will your actual identity be revealed. You will be assigned a random numerical code. Anyone who helps me transcribe responses will only know you by this code. The recording will be erased when my dissertation has been accepted. The transcript, without your name, will be kept until the research is complete.

The key code linking your name with your number will be kept on a biometric encrypted hard drive in a secured office space, and no one else will have access to it. The file will be destroyed when my dissertation is accepted. The data you give me will be used for a dissertation in partial fulfillment of my Ed.D (doctoral) studies and may be used as the basis for articles or presentations in the future. I won't use your name or information that would identify you in any publications or presentations.

**Anonymity:** Your anonymity will be maintained at all times throughout the course of this program evaluation. No information that is obtained as a result of your participation will be disclosed or attributed directly to you without your prior written consent, and final reports will provide aggregated data or data that are not attributable to a single source. All data files will be stored will be stored on a password-protected laptop and maintained in a secure location. All files will be destroyed once the final analysis is completed.



USF RESEARCH & INNOVATION

**Participation and withdrawal:** Your participation in this program evaluation is entirely voluntary, and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the program evaluation without penalty at any time. You may skip any question during the interview but continue to participate in the rest of the program evaluation.

**To Contact the Evaluator:** If you have questions or concerns about this program evaluation, don't hesitate to get in touch with me at [lanrenee@usf.edu](mailto:lanrenee@usf.edu). Once consent is signed, I will contact you to schedule the interview.

**Agreement:** The nature and purpose of this evaluation have been sufficiently explained, and I agree to participate in this program evaluation. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without incurring any penalty.

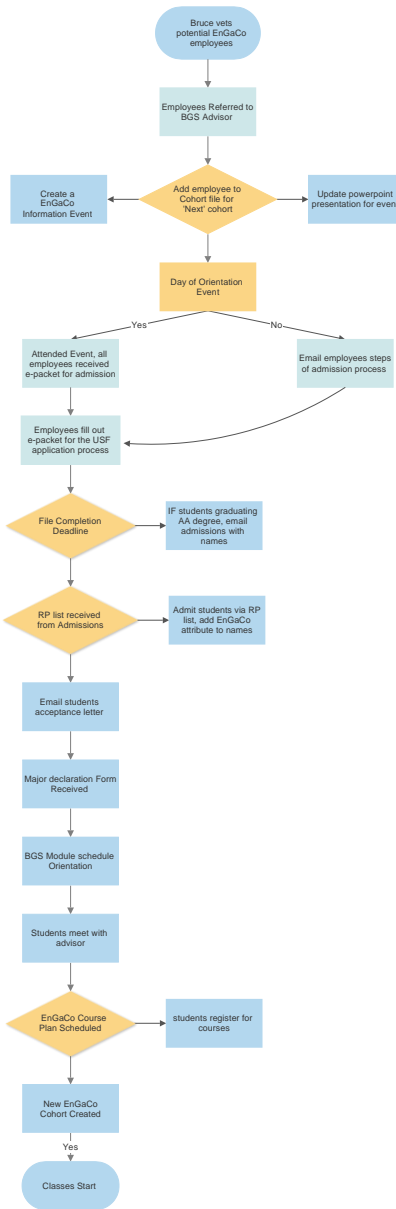
Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (print): \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX L:

### BGS ADMISSIONS PROCESS ENGACO EMPLOYEES

BGS Admissions Process EnGaCo Employees



## APPENDIX M:

### INDUSTRY EMPLOYEE DEGREE CHECKLIST

#### **So, you want a college degree?**

*We have the experience and expertise to help guide you through the collegiate process. Additionally, we have helped dozens of family members too; EnGaCo does not pay their tuition, but we can advise and counsel on an as-needed basis—regardless of what college they choose to attend.*

1. What are your immediate, short term, and long term educational goals? Initially, do you want an Associate's (2-year), Bachelor's (4-year), Masters' (graduate) or terminal (PhD, JD, etc.) degree?
2. Did you finish high school or complete your GED? If so, when and where?
3. Have you attended other colleges?
4. What are your immediate, short term, & long term career goals? Do you have a current IDP?
5. How much discretionary time do you generally have per week? Every college and degree is unique, but plan to allocate 3 to 12 hours weekly, per college class/course, to succeed.
6. How would you rate your computer literacy...would you say beginner, acceptable, or advanced? Your proficiency level will play a significant part in how many hours per week you will spend on assignments.
7. What other major responsibilities are you committed to, such as family, community, religious, etc.?
8. What type of family support do you have?
9. Do you prefer on-line or on-site classes?
10. What are your typical work hours? Classes at Skills Training Center typically begin at 5:30 or 6:00 and are held one night each week.
11. In what area of ENGACO do you work and in what geographic area do you live? Is Skills Training Center out of the way for you to attend evening classes?
12. We allow immediate family members—children and spouses of ENGACO team members—to attend the classes as well. Again, ENGACO does not cover any of the costs associated, but the benefits are many:
  - a. Smaller class sizes—typically 10 – 25 students
  - b. Adult student peers, serious about their education. Professors respond very well to this!
  - c. More options for lower-cost books for many classes
  - d. For HCC, we have 11-week terms instead of the traditional 16-week term
  - e. For USF we have 8-week terms instead of the traditional 16-week term
  - f. Safety and security: whether classes are at Skills Training Center or the ENGACO Ybor Data Center, parking is safer and guards are prominent. Helps when you are leaving class at 9 PM or later

#### **So, how do you get started?**

*Sure, there are a lot of steps listed below but you can do all the initial paperwork in less than two hours. Don't let all these steps discourage you from finishing the degree you want!*

1. First, for those that need to complete their GED, here is the website: <https://ged.fl.doe.org/default.asp>
  - a. Hillsborough County, POC is Ms. Deborah Sass, at 5410 North 20th Street, Tampa, FL 33610. Phone # is (813) 813-231-1654 and e-mail is [deborah.sass@sdhc.k12.fl.us](mailto:deborah.sass@sdhc.k12.fl.us). A general e-mail for help with GED questions is: [flgedhelp@fldoe.org](mailto:flgedhelp@fldoe.org)



2. Request high school or GED transcripts (if applying for an undergraduate degree).
  - a. Florida GED: <https://ged.fldoe.org/>
  - b. If it's been more than 10 years, your county of record maintains the transcripts.
  - c. Hillsborough County High Schools: <http://studentrecords.mysdhc.org/>
  - d. Polk County High Schools: <https://polkfl.scriborder.com/>
  - e. Pinellas County High Schools: [https://www.pcsb.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=259&Itemid=570](https://www.pcsb.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=259&Itemid=570)
  - f. Albuquerque High Schools: <http://www.aps.edu/students-parents/transcripts>
  - g. You will need sealed, official transcripts from the high school you attended.
  - h. Have them sent (if possible) to your home, don't open them, and we'll provide them to the college.
  - i. You generally do not need high school and/or GED transcripts if you already have an Associates or Bachelor's degree. Some exceptions apply.
3. Request transcripts from every college you attended. Paper copy to your home is best – do NOT open.
  - a. If so, did you graduate from there?
  - b. You will need sealed, official transcripts from every college you attended.
    - i. HCC: <http://www.hccfl.edu/ssem/transcripts.aspx>
    - ii. USF: <http://www.usf.edu/registrar/resources/transcript.aspx>
    - iii. Saint Leo University: <http://www.saintleo.edu/resources/registrar.aspx>
    - iv. Eckerd College: <http://www.eckerd.edu/registrar/alumni/transcripts.php>
    - v. CNM Community College: <http://www.cnm.edu/student-resources/academicrecords/indexed/requestingtranscripts.html>
    - vi. University of New Mexico: <http://registrar.unm.edu/Transcripts/transcript-request-information.html>
    - vii. If you attended another college, go to their website and search for "Transcripts"
  - c. Have them mailed (if possible) to your home, do NOT open them, and we'll provide them to the college.
4. Complete ENGACO TAP application: <http://EnGaCoedge.EnGaCoenergy.com/>
5. Complete college application. Most fees are reimbursable. Ensure you prove state residency.
  - a. HCC: <http://www.hccfl.edu/ssem/admissions/apply-online.aspx>
  - b. USF: <http://www.usf.edu/admission/apply.aspx>
  - c. Saint Leo: <http://www.saintleo.edu/admissions/apply-online.aspx>
  - d. CNM Community College: <http://www.cnm.edu/registration/registration-application-at-cnm>
  - e. University of New Mexico: <http://www.unm.edu/apply/>
  - f. We can assist with other colleges as necessary
6. Schedule and attend orientation if necessary. We have the details.
7. Schedule and attend placement testing if necessary. We have the details.
8. If taking classes at Ybor Data Center and/or STC, contact Security Office to ensure you have gate access.
9. Ensure you have completed required direct deposit form from Accounts payable, P-6
10. If you are an undergraduate, have you taken English I and a basic math class? Are there any prerequisite classes?
11. If you are seeking a graduate degree, have you already taken the GMAT, GRE, or MAT?
12. Contact the college to see if there are any holds on your account

**So, how do you continue?**

*Once you get the ball rolling and begin taking classes, you can normally register and pay tuition in less than 5 minutes, and order books if needed in less than 5 minutes too. If you take at least one class every 12 months, you will remain current in the ENGACO TAP System and the collegiate system and never need to reapply to either of them as long as you are in the same degree program.*

1. Learn how to access your college degree plan from the applicable college website.
2. Follow the degree plan from your college and the classes being offered.
3. Learn about CLEP and DSST exams and research how to accelerate your degree completion.
4. **Register, Pay, File for Reimbursement, and Repeat.** You have to complete roughly 10 – 20 classes for your associate’s degree and another 20 classes for your bachelor’s degree. You would normally complete roughly 12 classes for your graduate degree. Term lengths vary – from 4 – 16 weeks, but allow for an industry “standard” of 15 contact hours per semester hour. So, a 1-SH course will meet for 15 hours, a 3 semester (most typical) course will meet for 45 hours. These are fairly standard numbers.
5. Register and pay tuition by deadline. Maintain proof of tuition paid. We’ll not reimburse for late fees.
6. Know the add/drop and withdraw dates and procedures.
7. Know how and where and when to buy books. Maintain book receipts (ENGACO reimburses 50% of all required books). Here are some websites: STILL TO BE ADDED
8. Know how and where and when to apply for grants and scholarships, thus minimizing the overall expenses to ENGACO. Here are some websites: STILL TO BE ADDED
9. Complete all assignments and stay in contact with professor at all times.
10. If you will miss a class or assignment, due to work or any other reason, keep the professor informed. Over the past seven years we have established a reputation of having dedicated students, serious about their education. Excessive absences or haphazard attendance would tarnish that reputation and negatively affect our relationship with the colleges and professors.
11. Roughly halfway through the term, you will begin thinking about what class(es) to take next.
12. Each TM is responsible for keeping track of expenses; notify the TAP Coordinator when you are close to reaching the tuition cap.
13. **Once class is over, allow 1-3 days, then access official proof of grade (on line), and submit for reimbursement. Provide and submit to TAP Coordinator:**
  - a. **Proof of tuition paid, less any scholarships or grants**
  - b. **Proof of payment for books and any other reimbursable expense(es).**
  - c. **Completed TAP Reimbursement form**
14. You should receive your allowable reimbursement(s) within 7-10 days of filing.

### **So, how do you finish?**

*You persevere. Consider this: only 36 percent of American adults have an Associate’s Degree, about 20 percent have a Bachelor’s Degree, and only 10 percent have a Master’s and/or a professional Degree. In Florida alone, more than **2 million adults** have **some college but no degree**. Overall in the United States, over 22 percent of American adults have some college but no degree. For those concerned that you took classes years ago—you won’t lose them, except*

*perhaps a computer class prior to 1986. So, those classes you took years and years ago...they still count. Let's finish this thing!*

1. Follow the degree plan and take the courses necessary to complete your applicable degree.
2. As you near degree completion, the classes/courses you need may be more challenging to find. Ensure you are taking only those classes that fit into your degree plan.
3. Apply for graduation whether you plan to participate in that college commencement or not. Without an official graduation application, you will not receive a diploma.
4. Another benefit is the commencement ceremony. All graduates can attend their respective college graduation, but at ENGACO we also have a commencement ceremony—have had five with HCC, one with Saint Leo University, and planning one for our USF graduates. These are held annually, in the evening, and attended by ENGACO officers, coworkers, family members, and dignitaries and staff/faculty from the respective colleges.
5. Send a copy of your diploma to the TAP Coordinator to update your education record.
6. Now, enjoy the benefits of an advanced degree, and the free time that you've given up these many years!

**Figure 1: Educational attainment for working-aged adults in Florida and U.S.:**

	Florida		United States	
	# of residents	% working aged adults	# of residents	% working aged adults
<b>Working aged adults (25-64):</b>	9,803,980	66.05%	163,855,408	69.67%
Less than 9th grade	436,359	4.45%	7,972,497	4.87%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	817,557	8.34%	12,539,457	7.65%
High school graduate, GED, or alternative	2,835,384	28.92%	44,350,497	27.07%
<b>Some college, no degree</b>	<b>2,136,681</b>	<b>21.79%</b>	<b>36,209,776</b>	<b>22.10%</b>
Associate's degree	960,424	9.80%	13,832,109	8.44%
Bachelor's degree	1,739,410	17.74%	31,423,077	19.18%
Graduate or professional degree	878,165	8.96%	17,527,995	10.70%
<b>Has a 2-year degree or higher</b>	<b>3,577,999</b>	<b>36.50%</b>	<b>62,783,181</b>	<b>38.32%</b>

**APPENDIX N:  
INDUSTRY COURSE PLAN IEP**

## Development Plan for xxxxxx

### Current Role

Development Goal	Start Date	Due Date	Status	Notes
<b>Community Involvement</b>	01/01/2019	12/31/2025	<b>On Track</b>	
<b>Learning Activities</b>				
<b>Learning Activity</b>			<b>Status</b>	<b>Start Date</b> <b>D</b>
Habitat for Humanity			<b>On Track</b>	03/04/2019 0
<b>Description:</b> Women Build				
Sullivan Partnership School			<b>On Track</b>	03/04/2019 0
<b>Description:</b> Mentors and Activities				
Tampa Chamber of Commerce			<b>On Track</b>	03/04/2019 0
<b>Description:</b> Military Affairs Council				
Bay Life Church			<b>On Track</b>	06/01/2007 0
<b>Description:</b> Prayer team and other				

Knowledge Transfer  
Plan

(KTP)

Every PC in EnGaCo  
with a thorough KTP

01/01/2019 12/31/2024

On Track

Learning Activities

---

Who to call

\_\_\_\_\_ Can  
SAP auto populate

a

list when people move so 01/01/2019 12/31/2023

On Track everyone knows the POC for

\_\_\_\_\_

Learning Activities

Work with USF Cohorts to  
facilitate success

01/01/2020 12/31/2023 **On Track**

Learning Activities

---

### Future Role

Development Goal	Start Date	Due Date	Status	Notes
------------------	------------	----------	--------	-------

Develop Successor

01/01/2019 12/31/2023 **On Track**

Learning Activities

xxxxx

Learning Activity	Status	Start Date	Due Date
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Sketch of Procedure Guide

**Planned** 04/02/2019

09/30/2019

**Description:**

For Facilitating Courses: For Community Involvement: For Team Builds: For Mentoring:

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### General Skillset

Development Goal	Start Date	Due Date	Status	Notes
------------------	------------	----------	--------	-------

Improve facilitation skills

01/01/2019

12/31/2024

On Track

**Learning Activities**

Learning Activity	Status	Start Date
-------------------	--------	------------

Take LIFT Training

Planned

08/01/2019

**Description:**

Presentation Class

Completed

Development Goal	Start Date	Due Date	Status	Notes
------------------	------------	----------	--------	-------

New Leader Checklist:

Work with what PGS is

01/01/2019

12/31/2020

Completed doing, mirror for TEC

**Learning Activities**





**APPENDIX P:**  
**PARTICIPANT SCHEDULE INTERVIEW EMAIL**

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**From:** Lan Amboy- Biller <lanrenee@usf.edu>  
**Sent:** Monday, June 13, 2022 7:38 AM  
**To:** Lan Amboy- Biller <lanrenee@usf.edu>  
**Cc:**  
**Subject:** Scheduling: Program Evaluation Interviews EnGaCo-USF

**CAUTION - External Email**

\*\*\*\*\* **Don't be quick to click! We're counting on you!** This email is from an external sender! Don't click links or open attachments from unknown sources. To report a suspicious email, click the Forward to Phishing button within Outlook for analysis by our cyber security team. If the button is unavailable, forward the email as an attachment to [phishing@engaco.com](mailto:phishing@engaco.com) \*\*\*\*\*

Hello and Good Morning!

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this project, Bridging the Gap between Academia and Industry: A Program Evaluation on University-Industry Collaboration. I have received your signed consent form and the approval to proceed with the interviews. The consent form outlined the purpose of the study, your volunteer participation, what to expect, and the confidentiality of your identity. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time.

The interview process will begin on June 30, 2022 - July 15, 2022. If you have any questions, please contact me at [lanrenee@usf.edu](mailto:lanrenee@usf.edu) or XXXXXXX

Please access the link below to schedule a time with me to conduct the 45–60-minute interview regarding your perspectives and experiences utilizing the tuition reimbursement program, admission to the university, and time spent in the program.

<https://outlook.office365.com/owa/calendar/BridgingtheGapUIPartnershipProgramEvaluation@usfedu.onmicrosoft.com/bookings/>

**Kind regards,**

**L. Renee Amboy, M.A.Ed**  
Ed.D. Doctoral Candidate | College of Education

## APPENDIX Q:

### P1 INTERVIEW

#### P1 Interview U-I

Thu, 6/30 11:02AM • 1:00:35

##### SPEAKERS

P1, Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 00:00

it's important for me to record across a couple of devices just because I don't I don't trust anyone device. There we go. Okay good morning P1. How are you today?

**P1** 00:22

Fine, thank you.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 00:23

Wonderful. Thank you so much for agreeing to be part of this project for the university and for ENGACO. A couple of things I would like to a couple of housekeeping rules, I guess I will call them for you. First of all. This is a program evaluation on University and the industry as a partnership and program offerings that they offer and the interview that you've agreed to today will be utilized to help provide maybe areas of improvement to strengthen the program and to strengthen the partnership. Does that make sense?

**P1** 01:05

Yes.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 01:06

And I'm also going to ask if it's okay for you. If we go ahead and record this conversation, this interview today, again, the industry has asked for me to remove any identifiable marks on ENGACO's name, so none of those will be in the official program evaluation which is my dissertation as you know, P6 has kind of shared. I am a doctoral candidate here at University of South Florida slated to graduate in December of 2022. My area of focus is university and industry partnerships. I come from the corporate side of things not from higher education. And one of my areas was always wanting to build a program such as what ENGACO and the university has to support employees, with academics furthering their career, whatever their motivation is, lifelong learning. So very appreciative that ENGACO and the university have agreed to allow me to do this program evaluation. program evaluations are a little bit different. Not typically done as a dissertation. So I had to get some approval for that which is reason why these interviews took a little longer to begin. As I worked with the university to say, my audience for my dissertation may not be higher education people, they they're going to be the industry that you know, may take a look at this if P6 and myself we're going to take this similar program and introduce it to another company, which I'll get into later. You know, we're looking at the sustainable components and why this program works for the industries, employees that have turned students and our post

traditional students. So so that took me a little longer to get to this point than I would have liked, but it is what it is. So thank you very much for agreeing to help us out today.

**P1** 03:00

Yes, I'm excited about it.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 03:03

we're very appreciative and I know P6 is extremely appreciative of your willingness to help. So I'm going to ask you a few basic questions here in the beginning. You I believe you're in cohort three. Does that sound correct? Have you graduated from the program? Wonderful, and

**P1** 03:24

Yes.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 03:25

Do you recall when you graduated from the program,

**P1** 03:28

I graduated 2016.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 03:30

Okay, do you recall we should go ahead I should

**P1** 03:33

have walked in May. But I deferred until the summer because my daughter was also graduating in May. She was getting her master's degree and I chose to go to her graduation. So I waited

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 03:48

I understand. Okay, so you but you did walk

**P1** 03:51

I did I did in the summer.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 03:54

Wonderful. And you did walk here at USF. Did you participate in the graduation program graduation that taiko does off site?

**P1** 04:03

Yes, I did that too.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 04:05

Okay, good. Okay, great. All right. Do you recall when you started in the program, here,

**P1** 04:13

yes.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 04:14  
Okay.

**P1** 04:14

I started in 2009. Well, no, I take that back. That's what I went to, to HCC. So I would have started at USF. Let's see. 2012

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 04:34

Okay. That just gives me a roundabout idea of when you started you were part of cohort three. So that is where you're on your journey. Have you done classes? Since?

**P1** 04:47

No, not not after I graduated. Okay.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 04:50

And what was your motivation for taking part in this program?

**P1** 04:57

I had two actually so my daughter I had recently left her off at college in Michigan. And my son who was a little bit younger, wasn't really motivated to go to college because he knew I had a good job. And but my daughter, I always been upset with myself for not going to college. So when my daughter when I was very happy, but then when my son was hedging on not going I thought, I've got to change, you know, the role model here. And so I said, you know, why not do it now? And that's what got me started. And to be honest with you my entire career with EnGaCo, I have lost out on several jobs because I did not have a degree. I was qualified for the job. But I did not meet the matrix have a degree. Not yet. At least that one. That's the first hurdle. And you couldn't even apply for jobs unless you had a four year degree in some places.

05:59

Wow.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 06:03

Okay, it's, I'll share my story in a little bit. But you and I are very similar, with what our motivation for going back to college to seek out a degree was so very interesting. Post traditional journeys, for sure, and life happenings that maybe deter us from those things. So I'll share in a little while my my journey. So I've got today I've got four questions ish. However, depending on what you recall and share I may have follow up questions to that. For that, so the first question is really going to revolve kind of around the partnership structure. So the partnership between university and ENGACO. So can you share with me the process that you went through to become a student of this degree program at USF? Oh, I know one last question too is what is the degree

**P1** 07:09

My degree is they call it general studies. Yes. So the concentration in leadership,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 07:14  
leadership and change, okay.

**P1** 07:16  
Yeah.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 07:17  
Got it. Okay, so you were in the leadership degree program. So can you share with me the process that you went through to become a student of this degree program here between USF and ENGACO?

**P1** 07:29  
Oh, yes. And it all starts with actually attending HCC in the beginning to get my two year and then applying because of the cohort was available, then applying to USF for the Cohort program. And, and I'll be honest with you, I did not even start let me think how old was I was old.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 07:58  
I'm old. It's okay.

**P1** 08:00  
Well, in most people would never think about going back to school at that age. You know, like 50 or past 50. Yeah.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 08:08  
Can I ask you and I'm not writing that down. But how old were you? I'm just because I tried

**P1** 08:13  
to I'm uh, I'm gonna try to remember when I when I started USF or when I started HCC or doesn't matter.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 08:20  
Doesn't matter either. Let me see HCC or USF. I have to use fingers to count back. So

**P1** 08:27  
I've used a calculator. I was 48 when I started HCC, okay. And that was like 55 When I graduated, and you know, this the phrase is a true phrase, it's, it's hard to teach an old dog new tricks. However, I will say this what I learned as an older learner is the older you are the more mature you are, therefore, we took all in my cohorts, we took serious our grades like I mean you would have thought we were not like we were not going to sleep until we finish something or if we got an A in a class where that is not defined set of an 18 or 19 year old. So it actually I think your older students are more serious or they wouldn't need to be there. They were not going to waste their nights and their holidays to do papers. And and you know, if you're older, you're serious about this.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 09:24

Yes. You know, and that goes back to the motivation, right. So in thinking about post traditional students, I guess, you know, here technically they call them non traditional but I don't like the negative connotation that goes with the word non. So, post traditional students kind of offer a different perspective, a different degree. And for myself being a post traditional student, because I also started later in life. I appreciate the education where I don't know that I would have appreciated it if I finished when I was 18 to 21.

**P1** 09:57

Absolutely! Absolutely.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 10:00

So I you know so that's where I think my different my personal experience with education when I look back, you know, at my experiences and thinking about back when I because I was 17 Turning 18 When I started college, and then I stopped college. I did that I you know, and then I started again, you know, in my 40s but I appreciated it now whereas back then it was what you were supposed to do and I didn't know what I was doing at the time. So So yeah, so I found I'm very appreciative now older, I also am more resourceful and I think my experiences in life and in work helped with my coursework in my experience.

**P1** 10:46

Agreed

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 10:46

where I don't know that I would have I wouldn't have I wouldn't I know I wouldn't have had the same experiences back then. Because I couldn't relate to anything. There was no way to relate stuff at 18 that I can now now you tell an 18 year old man they're like I know.

**P1** 11:01

Right? But I know it all

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 11:03

yeah I can say that because I have three so yeah, but no anyway, so just thinking about what you had said. So okay, so back to process of you becoming a student here at USF and this degree this cohort program what was that process like?

**P1** 11:25

Because we had P6 who helped us immensely and guided us through that process. It was daunting until you know we tried it on our own and then we we couldn't do something he would help us out. It was essential to have an assigned what's the word?

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 11:46

Like an advisor or counselor?

**P1** 11:47

Yes, yes, yes. Yes. Because we're navigating in students. You know, all students are like that. It's new. It's different. They don't know what to do, but I think we were a little bit different in our quest to get this done. And so having a dedicated advisor was essential. Who knew the rules of our Cohort or of our program?

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 12:25

Got it. Okay. Did you experience any challenges in the initial process of joining the USF cohort?

**P1** 12:36

No now can I really can remember it was some things happen smoother than I expected. And the reason I say that is it wasn't that smooth with HCC, as it was with USF. There's a whole level difference in in processing and ability to get a student up and running.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 13:00

Yes. Okay. So next question really talks about factors that influence the effectiveness of this partnership between the University and ENGACO and the program for the students. So in what's important, so what do you see that really makes this program work for you for your colleagues that were also maneuvering through the program with you at that time?

**P1** 13:36

I believe that the choices of degrees was essential because of what you know, like you said, you're in luck. You're learning later in life. So there's certain degrees that just aren't going to be necessary or helpful, you know, but general business degrees, leadership, things like that is really where because think about if you're already been working for 10 or 15 years, so leadership would be key in you learning skills like that and having a degree to fall back on because now you've used your work experience slash education to better yourself. And you need those you need those together.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 14:15

Okay. Okay, so you felt that the curriculum and the coursework are essential?

**P1** 14:24

Yes. For for like you said, your like non traditional, would you go post traditional

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 14:31

post tradition?

**P1** 14:32

Yeah. Yeah. I would not think everything all your degree. Offerings would be adequate in a cohort.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 14:50

Okay. What, what are your experiences? Or what are resources that made this successful for you while you were maneuvering through this degree program?

**P1** 15:14

We were given a lot of good information on our books that we needed to obtain for the classes, okay. And help with any issues. Like Like I said, the adviser would help us if we had a question about a syllabus or a professor or something that came up and we were able to call and contact them, whether it be email or in person, it didn't matter, to answer our questions. But I think trying to get your books for the classes was really a big deal.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 15:49

Okay. So that was something that made it successful. For you. Were there other pieces of this program that helped in your success? Could be

**P1** 16:03

Yes,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 16:03

go ahead.

**P1** 16:04

I think it would be the fact that these classes were offered on site where we worked and at night and during the times that we had enough time to get off work, get there, do our classes. That was that was very good for us.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 16:22

So location,

**P1** 16:23

yes, the location.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 16:31

Anything else that attributed to the success for you?

**P1** 16:36

I have talked to other people and they all agree with me. It helped us as the older learner to not be rejected. Like of course I'm sure USF has night classes but I did not want to walk into a classroom with 18 and 19 year olds.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 16:51

Okay.

**P1** 16:52

And so it was everyone in our class one, were generally the same age or at least we work together, you know, so it was not we didn't have a problem. You know,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 17:09



you could all relate. You can all relate you all support each other. Okay.

**P1** 17:12

Yes, yes. That's very important because to be honest with you, and you've got 18 year olds who are just worried about party and the next day, I worried about getting up go to work the next day. Totally different, you know,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 17:24

okay, so different experience, being able to have classes on site versus having to come to USF campus. So you don't feel that you were slighted at all, and having that university feel or experience. You felt like you've got it having you had the experience you wanted being able to stay on location for your classes. Okay.

**P1** 17:44

Yes. It's because we get always go to the library. If we did it, you know, to go find something or look up something or to be on campus. We had the ability we had our IDs so we had full access to the university if we chose to go there for whatever reason,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 18:00

okay. Okay, so IDs that was something that has not been brought up to me. So let me go back because of the structure of this in the process, at what point in time did you how did you obtain a student ID,

**P1** 18:18

which you were you applied and you got accepted? They would literally give you an email and tell you to go to the bursar's office and go ahead and get your picture taken and get your ID because you needed your ID to purchase something at the store. Or I'm trying to remember what other however else we used it.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 18:42

Yeah, there are areas here that you needed on campus, whether you're going to use a study room, you'd have to swipe it or something or use the library to check stuff out.

**P1** 18:50

Which made you feel if you will, is a regular student, I mean, you got an ID just like everybody else, right?

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 19:01

You were a regular student, you just were catered to a little differently. Okay, so that's great to know that was not brought up to me before in the process and that's probably important. In understanding Did you feel like it was difficult for you to come to campus to do things like that, and did you have classes here?

**P1** 19:19

I, I didn't go to classes, but I went to one of my professors was in the music industry and he had a concert and he gave us extra credit if we came to his concert. So that was Yeah, and that was exciting to be able to go on campus and experience that at night. So we did it.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 19:41  
Okay.

**P1** 19:42  
And then you said something about, oh, it was not difficult at all. In fact, we found it very easy to go at lunch hour and get whatever we needed. Like if I go ahead to go talk to the office about anything or meet with an advisor or even when I got my initial ID or whatever, or even for graduation, you had to go to the bookstore. And pick up your tassel and your gown and all that. And again, it was very easy to go park walk over there. It was not a problem.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 20:15  
Okay. Do you feel that your company supported you when you needed to come to campus if you went during the lunch hour and it took longer? than than the lunch hour? Or if you needed? I don't know any kind of support while you were in this program? Did you feel so? Okay.

**P1** 20:31  
Yeah, absolutely. The company backs anyone who, who wants to do education.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 20:39  
Okay. And when you say they back you what does that mean?

**P1** 20:44  
They offer information and I'm and I actually help P6. Talk to people about filling out their FAFSA forms. And I hold classes here at EnGaCoand in he has my name on our website about tuition reimbursement and things like that. So that some people are hesitant to go back to school because they can't afford it. And usually you're trying to better educate yourself because you need to make more money. Well, that means you don't have a lot of extra money to pay for classes. So he usually has them contact me and I tried to help them set up their FASFA.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 21:22  
Okay, so you helped you so you help them with their FAFSA and things like that. Do you help with anything in reference to the tuition reimbursement program?

**P1** 21:33  
No. That's handled through the entire department that P6 handles and okay, it's group handles that part of it.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 21:43  
Okay, cuz I thought there was somebody that that did that, too.

**P1** 21:48

Yeah. They do it for the reimbursement, right?

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 21:50

Yep. Okay, so that's managed by somebody else and then you assist with people with their FAFSA?

**P1** 21:56

Correct.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 21:56

Got it and Okay, that's great.

**P1** 22:01

There's not a lot of people that are in there very, P6 bright it's our attention when we first started cohorts, about FASFA, I was not really aware of it too much. And, and when I started looking into it, I found out the state of Florida actually ranked 46 And, you know, 50 states. We don't ask for the money, though, are not aware of the ability to fill out that form.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 22:28

Right. Well, and it can be very daunting to fill out. It can be a big scary form.

**P1** 22:33

Yes, exactly. And I made it unscary for them to call me all the time, and I walk them through it. But I had to fill it out. My daughter got a full scholarship to Michigan State University. And even though she had a scholarship I still had to fill out the FAFSA form so that they could stick the money in the big bucket or whatever you call it for her to get her money. She had to have it. So I was very I was if you will forced into doing it, and then found out it was kind of easy, and then you know offered my services because if I could help anyone go to school, I am right there for you because nobody was there for me. And finally when P6 was there for me that I wanted to kind of play it forward and help anybody else I could.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 23:22

That's nice. That's That's fantastic. And I know P6 is extremely passionate about education and about his employees, you know, seeking the the education utilizing the tuition reimbursement program.

**P1** 23:37

Yes.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 23:38

So, okay. Any other factors that you can think of that made this successful transition for you successful experience? You mentioned you alluded to the location and the timing of classes. Were good for you. The fact that you were in class with folks like yourself that were with the company were very helpful for you. How about the tuition program that the company provides?

**P1** 24:13

Yes, so twofold on that. So if you're if your audience is going to big corporations, I think it's important that they instruct their people to say, okay, you know, we'll pay for part of it, blah, blah, blah, but then again, help them with this FASFA forms, and you'd be surprised who all can qualify for that. And I think they could get more students applying for school if they knew there was that safety net, if you will, to help them pay for these classes.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 24:43

Okay. You're kind of answering a lower question too. So I'm bouncing back and forth on my notes screen with you as we're chatting. Okay, next question I've got for you is about sustainable components of the university industry partnership. And the program itself, the degree program itself. So if we were and when I say we, myself and P6, were to take this to another company like the Port Authority or USAA MetLife. AT&T to implement a similar partnership and a similar program. What factors are important to you, that should be considered. You said a dedicated advisor from the university side who knew the nuances of you as as an employee's turning student, and knew the components of the program. So you mentioned that what else are you thinking would be important? Important factors if we were to build this framework that we can take to another industry to say you really need to partner with USF and here's why.

**P1** 26:05

Well, I think that education is power and to help someone get that education to just maneuver this the school system is so if someone knew they had someone to help them maneuver it, they probably do it in so when you're talking about older people, they don't, they don't they aren't as risk takers, you know, as the younger kids because the Ark is just don't know. Yeah. And I think if you were to present to them that we have a comprehensive plan that would walk through your employees on how to obtain you know how to get registered in school, how to keep the classes in, you know, schedule and how to help them create their schedule, and then on top of that, help them with the if the company will reimburse part of it, and then the FASFA on top of that and then say, I would say that the program ENGACO is smart in the fact that the program is twofold. It helps the person the individual gain confidence, gain education on top of it, then now the cup the company has a more educated, successful employee, so everyone wins in this and and then this is the one side of it which ENGACO had to put a rule on it though. If you get a degree, and you leave the company within two years, you have to pay back some of the tuition reimbursement because they did find that once people were getting a degree that they felt so confident that they were going out and doing other things.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 27:46

Okay.

**P1** 27:47

So, I don't know who's told you about that. But they had to put that rule in there because they didn't want us to be paying for all these degrees and then losing their degree person,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 27:59

right, that makes sense. Do you feel like the offering of the tuition reimbursement program and those of you that have gone through it thus far have stayed how it helped with retention?

**P1** 28:14

Oh, yes. Oh, yes, definitely. Because like I said before, they may have wanted a job desperately and were unable to obtain that job until they got a degree.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 28:25

Okay.

**P1** 28:25

And now that they have a degree, they've got the job that they've wanted. For years, and they're just not going anywhere.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 28:32

Okay, got it. Okay, so you believe some of the factors that are important to you or important to your colleagues, would be a dedicated advisor on USF side of the house. And that the employees have to figure out how to do that to maneuver the university so somebody probably on the industry side, so the company side and somebody on So a key stakeholder from the university because like in your case, you have P6. I'm gonna take her side of the house and then over here on this side, you have Beth Taylor, who's the Director for the program, but then you've got

**P1** 29:15

it was XXXX, who was the adviser I think for USF at the time to help kind of maneuver on on this side of things. Yes.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 29:23

So you see it as you need to dedicated people to help

**P1** 29:28

Yes,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 29:28

maneuver the nuances of an employee.

**P1** 29:33

Yes. Who's because it helped on both sides for us with P6 being the point person at ENGACO. I'm sure I had the same situation or problem, whatever you want to say is like maybe to other people. And once he heard it once, he knew the solution. He knew how to maneuver it and how to cut the red tape and get it done. Okay. Otherwise, it's like starting over new every time you know,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 29:57

got it. Yeah, no, that totally makes sense. And then if the company provides a tuition reimbursement program, making sure that the employees know how it works, what, what the conditions are of it, if there is and then the FAFSA is important to have in that plan.

**P1** 30:15

Definitely go hand in hand and the company P6 would like once we found out it was successful and people were getting money. He was kind of pushing that a lot, especially with me because it's helping the company not have to put out as much money so so if I could get someone to get FAFSA money, why they didn't have to put out the money upfront and wait for reimbursement in to the company didn't have to put out the money. But there is there are rules about a certain grade level for a certain percentage. And then they they didn't have books when I first started it then they started reimbursing for books. So you need to really look at the whole program because it does it makes a difference when you got a family you're trying to support already. Right? And you know, you you can't afford a couple \$100 in books, you know

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 31:08

no, well, I mean it like look at your kids. trying, you know, trying to afford college in itself is extremely expensive. Yeah, between books and fees and the tuition and you know, you want them to go full time but my goodness, it's expensive to do that. And then if there's additional resources that are needed, online programs, you know, that that they may need depending on what their degree is, is an additional expense. So for sure everything is incredible. For sure. It's interesting to me about like what you're saying with the caps and stuff. I in my conversations that I've had, we haven't really talked about the tuition reimbursement program other than it's there, so I think I need to go back and revisit that conversation.

**P1** 31:55

Yeah, cuz there's, if you get I think it's a you get 100% but if you get a B or C, it might go down to 80 or 75%. reimbursement, okay. And they instituted that after I left I think ours was all or all or nothing. Is so but that made me didn't if I got to see I think I still would have gotten but I didn't get one. But I think you would have still gotten your reimbursement but I think they kind of honed in on that. And P6 will have that whole rundown of what the percentages are. It was a really nice thing to have the books reimburse because we didn't have that before.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 32:37

Isn't it incredible? How much they can charge for a book just off topic?

**P1** 32:42

Yeah, no, no. used book. One time that I went to look for was like over \$100 So I said you gotta be kidding for used.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 32:54

Sometimes it doesn't make sense to go used. You know, when you look at that, you're like, Oh, yes, I might as well. Just get the new one that isn't tainted with germs.

**P1** 33:03

True. And I ended up renting a lot of books. Yeah. Which which was kind of neat because some of the books I really didn't care to keep now several of them if I thought I wanted it. Like my sign language

books. I definitely bought them and kept them because you'll be you know, teaching yourself that from now on. Yeah. So some of them are worth keeping some I could care less.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee 33:27**

Yeah. So I did. I did ASL. Did you? I did I did. I did a minor with my daughter and we both have a minor in it. Yeah, from here.

**P1 33:38**

So that that to me is essential for any business to even push that for their employees, especially if they deal with people in public, you know, one on one face to face. Because there are so many deaf people. They do have challenges and if you just have one person has shift or one person in the house or whatever, it knew how to speak to them. It means the world to them it does it and I think it gets people don't think of it you know and but you see they're happy face when you all of a sudden you're talking to

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee 34:11**

them. They're so excited, you know, and so yeah, I mean the other day, like my Uber Eats driver dropped food off, you know, and he was deaf. And so I was able to thank him you know, and it means a lot when they realize you know, sign they're super excited, you know, then they want to know if you're hearing or deaf and you know and until I'm hearing, you know in my ASL was not great, but I mean I do have a minor in it. But it's nice to be able to communicate, you know, and I don't know the numerous times I've been at a coffee shop and they need help ordering or you know, because the person behind the counter doesn't know, you know, so to be able to walk up and say I can help, you know, is great and they do they're very appreciative of it. So it is a great, a great thing to have and I've always the Deaf community has always been near and dear to me. I went to a school elementary school that was half deaf blind, half mainstream. So oh, so they taught the mainstream kids basic sign so that when we were in communal types of areas, lunch room library, recess, we could communicate.

**P1 35:24**

I've tried to teach my daughter when she has her baby to to start sign language. Yeah, no, the baby's not deaf. Because I have seen studies where they because you know they're sponges at that age. Oh, their pickup, if you can, if you can learn it as a natural just like you're learning English or whatever. Yes. It had that for the rest of your life. Yes, that is that is just wonderful.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee 35:46**

It is wonderful. My dog knows sign language. Yes, you could teach Yes. So my dog knows I can you know, I can tell him you know, go drink water. He'll go drink water and I can tell him to sit I can you know I can tell him things in sign language and people are like what are you doing? Like I'm communicating with my dog. He knows he knows you know, you want to go for a walk. He knows. He knows things he's ready to eat. So we can you can communicate. He doesn't bark. He communicates we have different different signs and so it's extremely helpful and my grandbaby is now learning sign. So she's nine months and so you know, now that she's she's paying attention more you know, we're trying to teach her water or food. You know, it's it is I think it's so much better for them as a result. All right. So, next question, dealing with improvements. So, thinking about taking this to other companies, and using ENGACO and you USF as an example. So taking this to companies like USAA MetLife other

Tampa community partners out here AT&T, what do you believe could be done differently? Maybe to help or to improve this program make it better?

**P1** 37:18

I think the only thing that would really help is the thing you went to USAA you would you would look through your catalogue of degrees and find out what kind of jobs are currently in that company and then target some of your offerings to that specific career path or whatever. That might help your business partners to want to engage in this because if you just you know, because people believe that they did it like someday somebody will say, Well, I want to go for dentistry. Well, that has nothing to do with the company. Well, that's true, but it's you know, it's in the book and I'm gonna do it, you know. So I think that would be helpful and I think that your your business partners would love it, because then they're just getting in their industry interest. You know, they're, just the degrees that these people will have.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 38:21

Okay, that's, yeah.

**P1** 38:25

We'll, we'll like you might even have like, there's a lot of degrees that would go into like our company, I'm sure there's gonna be a lot to the USAAs or whoever else you go to, you know, whether whether it be budgeting accounting you know, all the different jobs.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 38:43

Yeah, that's, that is a great idea, not one that I actually thought of when I was thinking about, and P6 and I've had a lot of different conversations about developing this framework that we can bring to other companies or to the Tampa chamber. You know, instead says look at the partnership that Tico has with USF, and this is what it does and trying to create. What does that partnership, what would that partnership look like? And then because it's twofold, really it's it's the partnership between the company and USF and then it's the students. It's the degree programs that support best support those individuals and the needs of the industry. So I love the idea of creating a catalog specific for the company that only has the degree programs related there because within that's the wonderful thing about the BGS degree is it can be tailored to fit the needs of the industry. So but creating catalog specific would be that's a great idea. Love Love that.

**P1** 39:45

Good. I think this program is is I'm grateful so grateful for the program, because I don't know if I would have done it on my own by myself to navigate USF by myself is you know, daunting and, and like I said, older people are big risk takers, young 18 year olds can conquer the world, you know, they have no problem.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 40:09

Yep. Yep. And so and you had the support of that you had the support of your company. You had the support of P6.

**P1** 40:17



Yes, yes. And that that was very key, because there was people like and I tried to encourage a couple of people I think I stopped to like, you know, it's hard to do this at night after you worked all day. You've got a family and you got to decide, do I this weekend I got a paper due Monday, do I go to that party? Do I do this or do I do my paper, you know, and some people would get almost like, within a year of graduating and they go I'm gonna quit I'm like, No, they're not gonna quit. You've gone too far. I'll pick it back up. No, you won't you and I both know you're not going to pick it back up. In P6 was a big encourager, and you gotta have someone who encourages in it. The best part was once he had a couple classes in his belt he could say, Look, I'll tell you from experience, you know, there's a lot of people that wanted to quit, but I encouraged him to stay and they're so happy that they stayed.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 41:16

That's great. Any other areas you think would be helpful or or improvements to the existing program? Between University and ENGACO that you can think of?

**P1** 41:27

I think once you get more partners on board, I think it would be helpful to let those business partners see how many other businesses have this program and sometimes you still want to be left behind you know, we need to have that too for our people. But I think it helps you realize you've made the right decision when you know, big companies like ENGACO or Verizon or somebody has has this offering. You as a company want to retain good employees, so you're going to work better, you know, I'm better off with that too.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 42:06

Okay. And yeah, so like creating a portfolio perhaps of other of businesses that are doing the same thing that ENGACO is doing.

**P1** 42:15

Yes.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 42:16

Okay.

**P1** 42:16

Yes.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 42:17

Okay. Okay, and I think that's been because P6 has tried, P6 has shared with me that he's tried a couple of times to talk to some of his counterparts and other businesses and they just they haven't really bought into it. And so that's kind of what led me down this road of doing this program evaluation. You know, as I was, you know, business owner myself, when I started this program, you know, in my area was, you know, how do I how do I find these well educated workers, how do I retain them? You know, or when college students come out of class looking for jobs, and they come to me for a job and they have a business degree, but they didn't really have the coursework that supported what my need was kind of brought, brought me here, and then brought me to P6 and brought me to USF. You know,

and that's kind of how this whole thing has evolved into doing a program evaluation because I'm business oriented. So program evaluation made sense to me, versus doing you know, research per se, which this is research. It's just different. more qualitative research. But it suited who I was as a person and then wanting to make wanting education to support company needs was important to me coming from that arena. You know, and how do we do how do we do that? Is it important, what is the benefit? What is the benefit to you, as a student? What is the benefit to the company? You know, for that, which I think you mentioned, the benefits, you know, for the company,

**P1** 43:55

it's both Yeah, it's both sides. Definitely. I think what's really good about our program is we have been successful and now there is a guideline if you will see that I think if you were to present it to another company, and say, you know, we currently have a large corporate company that does use it, and I don't know if you could use her name or not, but and then say, they found it so successful that, you know, they partnered with us to even share it, you know, once a was already a guideline, and people don't have to create it from scratch because that's the fear they will have, where would I start? What would they do? You know, I need to I need to make sure I've covered all my bases. I don't want to get caught in the lurch, blah, blah, blah. And we've already got a pretty good pattern going.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 44:43

Absolutely. And so I think, you know, to be able to come back and show you know, create this business plan, if you will, that says here, here are all the things that all the components that are required to form a partnership and make it long lasting, make it sustainable, and and here's the degrees that are offered that are company specific. And here's the benefits of it. Yeah, you know, the benefits for the company that benefits for the employee, you know, as well. So, in that is, you know, absolutely what, what we're seeking to do in this process with P6 is to develop that guideline to develop the framework to be able to take this out to other companies and show the benefits that you all have experienced and that ENGACO has experienced, that USF experienced, you know, for that upon graduation of your degree, so I understand the motivations of why you did it. You had said that you lost several promotions because you didn't have the degree. You've already kind of answered the curriculum was very applicable to your job at the time. As a result of the degree did you have you gone for a promotion or a different job within ENGACO? Did you stay on

**P1** 46:19

like I was able to we call bid on a job. I was able to bid for a job in receive that that job and it's a big promotion. I'm the senior pricing analyst and I could not have even bid on the job without my four year degree. So I actually got the job in October of 16. I graduated in the summer of 16. And then this job came open I was able to apply for it and got it

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 46:50

Wow.

**P1** 46:51

And my my boss did tell me he said I wanted you bad but until you got your degree I couldn't I couldn't entertain it.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 46:58

That's exciting

**P1** 46:59

yeah, there was other people who were going to bid on the job that already had a degree but they were not. They didn't have the same background. I did. But because I didn't even have the paper. I don't even meet the first. The first hurdle, if you will.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 47:15

Yep.

**P1** 47:15

In the matrix.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 47:17

I understand completely so then that was your reward for having graduated you have just months before. That's exciting. Congratulations. That's super exciting.

**P1** 47:27

Yeah. Oh, yeah.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 47:29

So your core classes for cohort three would have been all face to face I believe. Did you have any online courses

**P1** 47:38

I don't think I Yes, yes. Yes, yes. The online was a music class. That was online. Okay. Sex, drugs and rock and roll was online. Okay. I only remember like a couple of them my jazz class was online. Okay. Yes, that's the one that the professor played an instrument that we went to the tutorial listen to.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 48:11

Yeah, that's cool.

**P1** 48:15

But most of my classes were physical. Okay, classes. Okay.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 48:20

Um, do you feel that online courses are as effective as face to face learning? Now years were a little different, most of your electives,

**P1** 48:29

but yes. There is more work in some of my online classes. Oh, I remember I took a film class and we had to create a film. Okay. We had to answer a lot of questions every week. And do a lot of reading. I thought more reading and more assignments were due on the online.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 48:56

Okay. All right. Are there any resources that might have been helpful for you or were helpful for you? In this program? So more online offerings, resources on campus resources at ENGACO. Were there are there any resources or are there resources that you wish you had?

**P1** 49:25

It was very difficult to depending on the professor is to what style of writing he wanted his papers APA or whatever you wanted to, to get information about that. There are a lot of stuff online but they contradict each other.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 49:45

Okay.

**P1** 49:46

And so that was difficult to know which one was the right one to go with?

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 49:51

Okay.

**P1** 49:53

And to me, I think the only fix on that would be the professor in his syllabus to offer the resources you know, and say if you have trouble with this, you know, go here go here, because each professor had their own style. Yeah, what they wanted, and then that's their prerogative, right, right. They just they just need to be more informational on that sometimes.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 50:17

Okay. Are there any other recommendations that you have that would make this program better for other colleagues of yours that are going to go through this degree program, or anything that you can think of in reference to a company partnering with the university or that would make the partnership better between ENGACO and the university?

**P1** 50:49

I think it's important to let older learners realize that if you have the desire to learn to to get a degree, it'll happen that's all you need is the desire. You don't you don't need to be already know it everything and have all the answers to everything. Just the desire to learn. Because it was and then once you get going, then it becomes fun to actually learn. And it gets excited like I would have never thought I'd pick up a book and want to read right yeah, wasn't a reading person wasn't a book person. But then taking these classes has turned me into one. It's funny because you know, I was, if you will, just a TV person, you know, I'll watch it on TV. But now the more it really opened my eyes, it opened my eyes to telling

myself Wow, wish I had this a long time ago. I wish I learned this a long time ago it would have helped in a lot of other life situations.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 51:55

Okay, the things that school teaches that it's the skills that they don't tell you you're going to learn.

**P1** 52:01

Correct? Correct. And it's not going to college to me isn't learning as much as it's teaching you how to learn. It teaches you how to solve a problem. It just, you know, it's not really it will I had to back up if you were a doctor or lawyer or an engineer. Yes, you're learning that. That but in general to go to school, it teaches you how to maneuver life. It really does. Just like if you had a paper due you get it? Okay, well, I've got these resources. I've got to go to the library or I can check with this. I can see it just teaches you how to step that through it get that done.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 52:47

That's great. That is the last of my questions. So is there anything else you can think of that you would want to share with me that we haven't discussed or I haven't asked.

**P1** 53:00

I think if you asked anyone who has been through these programs, yes, it was hard. But you formed an incredible team, camaraderie in your company. Look like I got to talk to people and work with people I don't normally work with. And I created I created the key element and doing it in a workplace. I created relationships that I never would have done before that have been now grown into working relationships because I went to school with them. And now I'm working with them is you know how you when you struggle two people struggle with something you form a bond. Yeah. And we struggled with school that shows I'm not denying that. Yeah, when we were successful, and we finished it. We felt accomplished. We fell in in friendships. I'm telling you, we literally have what we call school reunions on our own and we meet for dinners and lunches with our with our people that we went to school with just as if we had gone to college together and don't need a you know, dorm things or whatever, but we do it. That's great. And I think that's a benefit. If you wanted to tell a corporation then you know you have all these team buildings, blah, blah, blah, it's all fun and everything. But when you go through 2-3-4 years of school together at night, and the challenges of life and you finish the relationships that are formed are incredible. It just helps them with their job.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 54:42

That's a powerful statement.

**P1** 54:44

Right. So that's why I say when I say it helped the company, and it helped the person. I'm not kidding you. It's both okay. I don't know who I don't know how to gain more. I really don't yeah.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 55:01

That's a great, that's a great benefit. And I can tell you that quote, I will most likely make it in you know, when we're talking about benefits. For that that's a huge benefit. You know, what, what better team building can you have than

**P1** 55:21

you can't so just to give you an example of what I'm talking about, so I work at the main office, right? I would go to school with people who work at the power plant

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 55:29

whom you never would have run into.

**P1** 55:32

Never in a million years would I run into an hour each group of departments has their own idea of how that other department works or thinks it's not always positive for example, for example, they call us in our office, it's downtown, it's called the plaza, they call it the glass house, because because we are perfect and we you know, make that perfect, right? Correct. Right, right. So when I was able to talk to them, work with them, help them with their papers, or, you know, we all struggle during the same day. And then all of a sudden now they're like, you know, you're not the Glass Palace or you were like, No, we're not like you, you know, and they're like, you know, I'm going to have to rethink that. Literally, a guy told me, I'm going to start getting onto people in the break. Room, and they started saying that, and I said, Well, I would appreciate that. And it and then later they like call me for a question because they always had this burning question, but they didn't know anybody. They didn't. Where would you start to ask the question? Well, now they know somebody and then somebody knows somebody else. And then we tell you what, to me. I would I call it a joke of some of our team building exercises because they're really not. But I told P6 and you could ask him, I said this is the absolute incredible team building exercise we could ever do. He looked at me smiled and said, I think you're right.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 57:02

That's That's great. I mean, that's a huge testament to the program itself and to the partnership that P6 created with Yeah, USF

**P1** 57:13

for sure. Absolutely. Absolutely. So it I'm serious when I tell you like we just had an email the other day that four or five of us are gonna get together for for lunch, because we hadn't seen each other in a while. And one guy already retired. And he's like, I'm in, I'm in I'll meet you all anywhere, you know,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 57:32

that's great. That's exciting. That's great is

**P1** 57:36

Yeah,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 57:36

and and that's the strength of your cohort. Do you know if any of the other cohorts do anything similar to that and getting together?

**P1** 57:47

I'm not sure because each cohort is different.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 57:52

Yes. It's about your cohort. Yes. Yeah.

**P1** 57:55

And we, some of them, I don't know. Because I do know, I do know people in other ones.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 58:04

Okay. So that's great. And P1 this has been wonderful. All of the all of the things that you've shared if there's things after we finish with this today, our time is done. And I've asked all the questions, which is wonderful. If you think of anything else that you feel might be helpful, as I'm working through this process and thinking about building what does this partnership structure look like? And what does the degree program you know, the degree programs look like that another company would want to offer? You know, if you've got anything else and could share, I would appreciate that I am happy to also send you my cell phone number which I don't think I supplied. But I can email you that as well. But you're welcome to email me. You can call me or text if there's something that you're like, Hey, I was thinking about this at two in the morning and thought this might be helpful, because that's how my brain works.

**P1** 59:08

Yep,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 59:08

I would appreciate that. P6 would appreciate that as I start to write up the improvement report for them. Once I'm done with all of the interviews, and you know, that would be helpful so

**P1** 59:23

I welcome any questions you might have later or verifications or anything just email me okay. I'd be so happy to help because like I said, I am so this program appreciative of this program. And I think that if you could grow this program with other companies that would be awesome. Because I just, I just am so grateful that we did this program that we had this program.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 59:49

I appreciate that. Thank you so much for offering and I'm probably going to take you up on that as I start to transcribe what we've talked about today and then I have more questions already know I need to go back to P6 and get a better understanding of the tuition reimbursement program. You know, so getting getting some of those questions, and I'm sure as I go through this, I'm going to have more questions. So thank you for offering to do follow up with me. That would be very helpful. Here, so if there's nothing else I'm going to stop the recording.

## APPENDIX R:

### P2 INTERVIEW

## P2 Interview U-I

Thu, 6/30 9:40AM • 53:44

### SPEAKERS

Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee, P2

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 00:01

Okay, good morning. P2, how are you today?

**P2** 00:07

I'm doing well. Thank you.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 00:08

Wonderful. I wanted to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. Thank you for also signing the consent form that you had received an email and we've done that through DocuSign. So all of that is good to go. Before we get started a couple of housekeeping things for us is I would like to know you know, this is an interview for the purposes of my program evaluation dissertation. For University of South Florida. I am a doctoral candidate here. graduation date is December of 2022. I have been working with one of your key stakeholders and the key stakeholder here at USF for the Bachelor of General Studies Program and the cohesive partnership that your organization and USF has in supporting the academics with the tuition reimbursement program that you take, I believe you take part of with your organization. With that said, I would like to have your verbal consent that it is okay to record this interview today, this conversation that we're going to have

**P2** 01:14

right consent to the record. Wonderful. Thank

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 01:18

you so much before we get started, do you have any questions for me that I can answer?

**P2** 01:26

No, not at the moment. All right,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 01:28

perfect. So I'm going to ask you for a couple of questions before it minor questions that I just made from you. Do you recall when you started in the program?

**P2** 01:43

Oh no. I still had the guess. That probably say around 2002 Maybe. Okay. And well, let me let me rephrase that specifically with the USF program. That might have been 2015. I graduated in 2018.



**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 02:11

Okay, so specifically with

**P2** 02:14

2014 2015

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 02:16

Okay, and I made me and I can probably find that for sure. In records at USF. You believe you graduated in 2015.

**P2** 02:29

I graduated in 2018. The USF cohorts program

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 02:34

2015 2014 or 15 2014 or 2015. Okay, perfect and I believe that you were in cohort three. Does that sound right?

**P2** 02:45

Yes. Okay. And are you doing any continuing education now? No.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 02:51

Okay, so you are finished. And if you don't mind me asking what was what is the degree specifically

**P2** 02:58

it's a bachelor's in General Studies.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 03:00

Okay with the concentration,

**P2** 03:03

leadership and change management.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 03:11

Okay, perfect. All right. Good. And then I'm gonna get to that more later. So, with your permission, like go ahead and start with the first question, and feel free to you know, if you need some time to think through it, I realize it's been a little bit of time since you've been through the program, but can you share with me the process you went through to becoming a member of this degree program

**P2** 03:42

had the first term by a degree and after successfully earning that, then I applied for the tuition reimbursement through my employer, and they approved it. I was accepted into the USF cohorts three, class.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 04:05

Do you recall how long that program that process took?

**P2** 04:10

To earn my eighth degree? Believe it or not, I started putting the pursuit of my aid a degree in 98 and then didn't pick it back up. Probably until about 2005. Maybe. If I had to guess, then immediately upon completion of my AAA degree, a transition into cohorts three program and USF so there was no time lapse, other than maybe waiting for the next semester. So

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 04:48

got it. So thinking about your time thinking about the process when you came from USF was HCC where you where you start where you finished your AA degree?

**P2** 05:06

Yes. When I finished, I finished it through the HCC ENGACO program,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 05:17

okay. Okay, and you use the tuition reimbursement program at HCC as well

**P2** 05:30

through my employer, Tampa Electric,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 05:32

okay. And then you initiated the process to transition over to USF to finish your leadership and change management degree. And that would have been around to 2014 or 2015.

**P2** 05:50

Yeah, that's my best guess.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 05:54

To the best of your recollection. Do you recall when you started applying for USF, was that all done online? Or did you have an in person did you come to the campus

**P2** 06:05

did come to the campus. First we had someone come to ENGACO to assist with our curriculum planning.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 06:16

Okay.

**P2** 06:18

That was very helpful. And then ultimately, I would go visit the campus and meet with for the lack of better terms, that counselor and found that to be very helpful.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 06:34

Okay, did you have to schedule an appointment with that counselor here at USF?

**P2** 06:41

Yes, I did. And which worked well for me as a full time employee, that was important.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 06:57

Okay, when you came onto campus, and you were going through that process, were you. Were you offered an orientation piece or a tour of USF? Do you recall?

**P2** 07:12

I don't think so. But I can't recall with complete certainty.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 07:18

That's okay. Do you recall having an onboarding process whether it was virtual or in person once you were admitted into University of South Florida, and we're going to start classes? Was there any onboarding that took place at that time, whether it was at ENGACO campus? Virtually, or here?

**P2** 07:43

I think the only thing that I recall recall was watching a video or having to attend something that was more geared towards the the the institution of USF you know a little bit about its its beginning. Its focus you know, all those sorts of things, just basically a general background.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 08:10

Got it. Okay, okay, so watching a video and then you began classes and were the majority of your core classes then on ENGACO campus?

**P2** 08:32

Yes, they were I attended campus as my option. For three classes to accelerate my graduation. Okay. I really enjoyed it. It was a blast. I enjoyed the dialogue with with the students and I think that they enjoyed you know, me being older and having a perspective that very different than there

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 09:15

anything else you can think of in that process. As you began the program here at USF whether it was taking courses at ENGACO or coming here

**P2** 09:29

No, I think you know what I could say is, I was very much engaged. I look forward to the learning. I look forward to you know, the success I was having as I would take exams, the affirmation that okay, I can do this and it's going in the right direction, in those sorts of things, and then I think probably having the benefit of having some colleagues from my work, you know, in involved in the same classes oftentimes served as motivation and maybe not so much for me, because I was pretty much dedicated that there were times when some of my classmates were think contemplating you know, quitting because of the home life and then you know, it is time consuming to be a part time student. And so, it was helpful to try

to, you know, stress the importance of hanging in there. You know, I think in most cases, we as a group in that cohort, were able to, to convince some folks to hang in there. We'll all get through this together, you know, not all some moved away when passed away. But, but for the most part, I think that synergy was very helpful to know that there were other people like me, who had a heavy workload from their careers, and that had to balance that with the demands of the Higher Education pursuits.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 11:28

Think you could be a good testimony to post traditional students in general. I'll share my I'll share my experience with you a little bit later. As the as as that goes, because a lot of what you've said is kind of triggered me in conversations that I've had with some colleagues of mine in this program as well. Sure,

**P2** 11:55

I would also you know, having P6 in our corner. If I could, if I could continue with that analogy. You think of a boxer right and he goes into the ring for three minutes. And you know, he's either getting pummeled or he's doing the punching, and the bell rings, he goes to his corner and he's exhausted and the guy in the corner says, Alright, man, you can do this. You're gonna be okay, trust me, go back in there, do the following thing. And I think that that was, you know, P6 was so much an advocate and cheerleader for the cause, you for the cause for each and every one of us. And I think oftentimes, he invested himself personally into, you know, wanting to make sure that that we were doing all we can to to succeed and making sure that he was doing all that he could for us. So, so I would say having P6 involved, especially to help mitigate some of the enrollment struggles that we would have. And, you know, some of our folks are coming from a power plant environment or from what I would call the craft side. And I think if it was left solely upon the individual to navigate online registration, and all those sorts of things, many would have thrown up their hands instead of throwing in the towel. But rather than do that when someone would reach the end of their resolve. You know, they would pick up the phone and call P6 and P6 would either assist or get the contact that USF involved to help, you know, get through that issue, whatever that issue might have been got it.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 13:58

I'm going to ask you to elaborate on the enrollment struggles for a moment that you just brought up. What sort of enrollment struggles, would you recall that you or their colleagues of yours would have with that with that system? It sounds like everything is online. As far as enrollment goes, so

**P2** 14:18

yeah, if I had to say I'd have to say probably the the thing that I recall the most was the payment link. Getting the payment accomplished. Sometimes making sure you were signing up for the right course. I guess it has the prefix if it's English, and then it has a number to call. I think I think for the most part, it was more more so related of processing payment, and then afterwards obtaining proof that you can ask the court so you could submit the tuition reimbursement. I had to say where the hiccups were say that's where but in terms of access to a counselor, always very accommodating. And I wish I could take the lady who was involved at some point because she was so essential to me, accelerating my my ability to graduate early and I had a vested interest in trying to graduate as early as I possibly could, because I was I was the likely successor to someone who was retiring from a director position in my ability to attain that role required me having a college degree. And so me finishing my education needed to

coincide with that person's retirement. I couldn't be too long behind that retired I needed to have that degree in place. Which is why with the creative help of my counselor whose name is slipping away now

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 16:14

I was looking it up for you trying to look it up because I think I might have

**P2** 16:18

said her name I'll let you know and she's the one that encouraged me Hey, get to campus take you know a couple of classes in they were electives. And I was able to do it and just really enjoyed my time on campus. And when I retire I'm very likely find myself back at school.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 16:42

Lifelong Learner, are you?

**P2** 16:45

Yeah, yeah. Absolutely.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 16:47

That's great. I am looking real quick. So bear with me for one second and see if I can find I have to go through all these different notes that I have. So Beth Taylor is the director of the program here at USF

**P2** 17:08

what was her name maybe before she got married,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 17:11

um, Kathy. I don't have that but she did get married while here but she was a longtime advisor for this program. So it might have been XXXXX,

**P2** 17:24

who was who might be

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 17:26

looking. So I've got Beth and I've got XXXX

**P2** 17:42

No. Okay, not not XXXXX. She was not that helpful.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 17:57

To XXXXX person,

**P2** 17:59

it's not helpful. XXXXXX.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 18:02

Okay, so XXXXX, so it was before her XXXXXX I think is her married name. Okay, so XXXXX was the advisor. She was and was she the one that would help you with curriculum planning? Okay. Did you Was there anybody else?

**P2 18:23**

So XXXXXX told me Yeah, you know, you're gonna have to go this path. You're not gonna meet that timeframe that XXXXXXXX? was no longer with USF. And a different capacity perhaps. Okay, so then I was introduced to XXXXXXXX, was her replacement

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee 18:44**

Okay.

**P2 18:44**

That was the one that I think we can make this happen. And so I went into visit with her and we sat at her computer for a while. She did the hunting and pecking and said, Well, what about this? What about that? And finally, we settled on some courses that would work that I can attend on campus. And so I'm very grateful to her.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee 19:12**

Okay, what do you see? What are some things that you see that makes this program work?

**P2 19:23**

I think the curriculum was tremendously interesting. Leadership and change management. There's never been a we the complement of classes, that there's never been a better opportunity to be involved in those complement of classes. While being a member of an energy company. The energy company is changing and even back in 2014 20 in the year in the year 2000. The energy industry has been evolving from the clean air emissions to the onset of solar to the competitive industry, the competitive environment. And so, you know, when you think about leadership meeting in a steady state of change having the essentials taught and better understood, really enabled me to become a more effective leader. And so, so again, you know, the timing of that curriculum and even today, the energy industry is, is still changing. You know, if you think about it being a coal fire traditional power plant operation, today, its natural gas with the onset of solar. We have been going through changes like never before. utility industry has always been pretty steady and consistent in terms of how it operates. That's no longer the case. So to me, that was the biggest benefit and curriculum was so relevant to what my industry was going through.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee 21:15**

Okay, what what do you believe are your experiences that have made this successful for you?

**P2 21:25**

I think again, you know, the timing of the education and the exposure to you know, effective leadership you know, becoming a change agent. You know, all those things just really tied Well, kept my enthusiasm at a very high level kept me very much engaged. You know, there were a few courses there that I really didn't care too much for, but for the most part, I embraced every one.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 22:00

Okay, that's great. Are there any other factors that you can think of? that are important that were important to you with this program, so that you that you can think of so let me factors of location factors of the tuition reimbursement program, factors of tools or resources that might be necessary anything like that, that makes this program work?

**P2** 22:32

I think I think the location where, where the instructor would come to a ENGACO facility, is that ENGACO facility being somewhat Central and accessible by way of example, one of my classmates was coming from the very east end of Lakeland, another was coming from Sarasota and if you're familiar with those areas, those are easily 40 minutes to an hour drive depending on traffic. So avoiding the need to go all the way to a USF campus for some was, was really important. I think the time of day that the classes were offered, you know, starting right after work, and kept everyone you know, in the mindset of leaving work, grabbing something to eat quickly. And then, you know, getting getting to, to, you know, our education location, which was that our skills training center again, very centrally located. And I think that, you know, the two day per week attendance requirement was manageable. I really appreciated that I think the amount of for lack of better terms, homework that was given, for the most part was adequate. Sometimes it was a tough road to hoe depending on work and those sorts of things. But for the most part, I thought it was laid out very, very well in terms of commitment to be at a location and then the obligation to meet post class assignments.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 24:36

Okay,

**P2** 24:37

I found every instructor which is super knowledgeable, willing to passionately I guess is the way to say it passionately. You know, subject matter experts and and, you know, I'm 62 years old, right? So so I've been around the block. You know, I can, I can tell when someone's disingenuous when someone's maybe not as abreast as they should be, perhaps and they're trying to fake it. I never felt that way with any of our instructors.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 25:32

Does that go? That's great. That's great. Thank you for that. So, I'm kind of going off a little bit on what you said about it being at the skills training. Center. And that being easy for your, your, your members of the cohort and colleagues. Were classes. What were the class schedules? Was it like a six to 10 or a five to nine? Was it something like that?

**P2** 26:03

Yeah, I think it was, for the most part. I think it was like a 530 or six till 10 or 539 30. Okay. And you know, sometimes you know, I would, I would stop on my way in because I can leave my office a little earlier. I had some of that latitude. And I would stop at a little caesars and buy, you know, three or four pizzas and bring them to class. You know, that sort of thing.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 26:32

So you were the favorite. Yeah, I was. Now that that's great because it is the dinner hour, and it is a long day because I'm gathering that all of the members in your cohort are going coming straight from one ENGACO to the central location. So So dinner is a challenge. Do you recall how many people were in your cohort by chance? Approximately?

**P2** 27:01

Yeah, let me let me go around the room real quick and just quickly touch on the table. So maybe 16 to 18

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 27:14

Okay, I just that's quite a number for the for this program, I think. And then we're, we're computers necessary, or did you to do were they are they supplied in your I would like to come and be able to take a tour of that facility so I can get a better visual for this project. But are they supplied or you have to bring your own?

**P2** 27:50

Most team members or have a company supplied computer? I would think maybe someone from the craft side did not one of our team members was from a XXXX locations and more than likely he did not have a computer but did have one at his home. And so seldom did we use the computer in class. Yes, it was more you know, Professor or educator led discussion,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 28:21

okay.

**P2** 28:23

Because certainly needed to accomplish the work assignments.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 28:28

Okay. So in thinking about sustainable components of this program, program and the partnership because I'm looking at both I'm looking at how to improve the program, how to improve the partnership between university and ENGACO. So get right into industry and take it to the Port Authority or USAA MetLife AT&T to implement a similar program as as this what factors are important to you that should be considered when when building this out?

**P2** 29:08

I would correct me if I'm going down the wrong path here but I would stress the the structure of the program being for lack of better terms do in other words

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 29:25

for the student, for the employee,

**P2** 29:27



or for for the students. Because the two day a week, attendance requirements was manageable. It allowed for that home, work and school life balance to exist in some fashion. And maybe in some weeks one was more deficient than the other or, but for the most part, it worked. I would think the same would could be said for the benefit to to the company. Never did I feel like I needed to burn a sick day so that I could get my assignments done. I think the workload was again sometimes more of a challenge. Pretty much every Saturday. I resigned myself to schoolwork. And so being a single guy, I would wake up at five in the morning and I would get boom right to it. And sometimes I was done at one o'clock and sometimes I wasn't done till 6,7,8 o'clock that night. But But I was afforded the ability to have no external focuses check children, spouse significant other, you know, that sort of thing to distract me from and then what it did it it freed up my Sunday for me to do something, you know, not work related and non school related. So So I think I think it worked well for the student. I think it worked well for the for the company. And I think that the tuition reimbursement is an absolute must. We would not have had the number of students in the class without the tuition reimbursement and our requirements is a C or better allows you to be eligible. I think a C gave you 75% reimbursement, and a and a b gave you 100% Some some some balance or some metrics such as that.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 30:29

Okay,

**P2** 30:49

no, there were there were some students in you know, I have a friend in the company that couldn't afford the tuition. So I loaned her the money and said, You know, when you graduate at the end of all this, then pay me back. And sure enough, she did. You know, but again, you know, in terms of if you are taking this to others, I would say that it's doable. I would stress that to the students. I would stress to the students that the curriculum is extremely engaging and interesting. I would also stress to the employer that the tuition reimbursement is essential. And I would also stress to the employer that you are going to have a better employee at the end. Because we no matter to what degree we were able to time manage. Having this additional load on your for studies and attendance. You really had to become a better manager of your time. And so time management, prioritization collaboration, all of those things that companies want in their organization, they want to foster those kinds of environments. The students whether they had great exposure to it, prior to the cohort program like I had, or if they had not, nonetheless it was either learned or it was enhanced. And so to me, that is where I would say the biggest benefits were you know, I took some some I'll call them Governmental Affairs sort of classes. Right. And, you know, you heard me say earlier that I have been around the block, I really never understood what the legislature was all about, you know, what the House did? How's the Senate factor in all this? You know, and then I took those courses and man that all came crystal clear. I heard things about, you know, a bill, this this, this representative is sponsoring this bill. And now I really understand what that means. You know, I understand how government works. And I would not have had that benefit had I not been in does it does it materially helped me in my job today? Maybe no, but but just having an awareness of it is is comforting, and certainly doesn't hurt.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 34:48

No, that's great. So you talked about the structure of the program you talked about necessity of a tuition reimbursement program being available from the company, the curriculum being relevant to that

industry, specifically the curriculum for you was very relevant to your industry. So and that's the benefit of the BGS program is to be able to have kind of built that niche degree program to support industry. And that a benefit to the company is that they'll have a better employee at the end of this program. With some of the skill sets that you talked about are there any other components? If you were to go talk to somebody at USAA or MetLife, and try to sell them on? Why they should create a partnership with the University? Is there anything else that you can think of that would be important? Either to the company or for the employee? Like why should they partner with USF?

**P2 35:46**

I would say to the company that the USF cohort program is has proven success. It has graduated a number of students and number of students who have been able to move on and advance their career. So so the success of the program, not only in terms of its accommodations, to schedules and lifestyles and those sorts of things. But it accommodates those aspirations of people who, like myself, who are desirous of, you know, advancing in their career, though I'm at the latter end of my career, and certainly for some, some team members, and I'll speak specifically to the younger ones who may not have had the ability to attend higher education. An employer offering it I would think would go would serve well to attract employees to retain employees and also advance employees. And so I think the the company's investment into the team member, when I look at my class, I don't think anyone in cohorts, three has left our organization.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee 37:12**

And that's impressive. That's an impressive benefit for the company and for the employee. Yeah, absolutely. For sure. So thinking about bringing this to those types of companies, USAA. MetLife whomever here in the Tampa Bay area or surrounding areas, what do you believe can be done differently to this program or to the partnership to help that would help or improve to make the program better?

**P2 37:44**

Or were we so appreciative of the program and so willing to be a participant? I really can't think of anything right off the cuff that could be done to make it better.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee 38:03**

Okay. You felt supported through it from USF side or ENGACO. Okay. So I guess going back to sustainable components, the support that you've received from P6 that you spoke about earlier, so support from the company, to the employee, student that turns student is important, important.

**P2 38:33**

Absolutely, absolutely. P6 P6. P6 was a tremendous resource, a tremendous cheerleader. To me that sum of those two things summarizes P6's role you know, the never the never ending or I should say the, the always president you can do this. I know you can do this. Even when when some had doubt. And when you think about it, there are a lot of folks. As I'm as my career advanced in the company, I grew. Some people in our cohorts program had had had been in in a role most of their career. And so so the confidence level, that hey, though, it's been 5,10, 15 years since I've been in high school. Many of them lack the confidence to say, Man, I can do this. Having someone like P6 saying, I believe in you

and I know you can do it. If you're working at ENGACO and you're doing this level of work, you can get through this. This curriculum now, it required, you know, some people becoming better organized that manage the the three components of work home and school. But I think having a company resource like P6 is critical that I think having someone at the university like Kathy jewel, is absolutely critical. I don't know how you could do it. That successfully with either of those two components missing?

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 40:50

Okay, so having a dedicated advisor or contact person here at USF would be helpful for new partnership and new programs as well as having a dedicated resource supporter on the company side.

**P2** 41:15

To the extent that you guys pitch this to other companies and you need someone to serve as a testimonial, I'd be very willing to do that the you know, shot on video or me address a group.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 41:34

Okay,

**P2** 41:35

you know, in person so,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 41:36

that would be wonderful. Some conversations P6 and I've had early on and even now are, you know, being able to take this to the chamber, being able to take this to other organizations because this is something that P6 is very passionate about is education for all. You know, he wants to he really wants to share this partnership that ENGACO has with USF with HCC with St. Leo to other other businesses and things out there. He wants to share all the all the positivity out of out there and it's been hard for him to get others on board. So he's hoping that through this program about valuation, through identifying folks like yourself that have had great experiences, even those that have had challenging experiences, but made it through, you know, to be able to help do that. So I'm very appreciative and I'll make note of that. So that once that does come to fruition, that would be very helpful and we could probably do it through a video, you know, montage of sorts or something. So thank you for offering that.

**P2** 42:44

If I could say one other thing you know, I'm also really for the strong positive feelings of admiration that I had for my company, you know, here I am when dad was a janitor, and never thought I graduated from college. In the day I sat in that sun dome ready to walk

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 43:16

Yeah,

**P2** 43:17

that was powerful.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 43:19

Yeah, I understand now got chills, and now you're gonna make me tear up. I do understand. For sure. I have 80 yr. So I'm going to break for just a moment here. My daddy is my why my daddy is a 30 year Navy veteran. I am the first to graduate from college, in my family and so that first time that I graduated with my bachelor's degree graduated similar program as you did here at USF I had again my story similar to yours. I started way back in the late 80s With my AA degree and then walked away from it. You know, ran a company did some things and was all fine came back to college to do my bachelor's degree. And my number one reason for that was for my father, to see me earn that four year degree. And I had children at the time that we had started visiting colleges. And I wanted them to see how important education was. So I can I can remember going back there going, this is so silly that I'm going to walk the stage at the age that I was at the time 40 Something you know, felt silly doing it but then when I did it all I could see in that huge dome was my father. Have every of my my kids that were there. The only person that mattered to me, was my daddy. I wanted him to he had been through it with me. He was hard on me when I when I chose to stop years ago and so I get the feelings that you feel for that and so once again my motivation to finish my now doctorate is my father will be 88 in December. So I want to graduate on his birthday for him. So but ya know, so I want to understand that when you talked about your post traditional experiences, I do believe us coming back as post traditional students and I use POST traditional rather than non traditional because I feel like non has a a negative connotation to it. So we're post traditional students but we bring a different perspective but as much as I feel that we're able to speak from experiences in these classes that we take, we also learn from these younger folks on things too. You know, and we're be able to have that different dialogue, you know, with it. So I believe there's a lot of benefits to the post traditional students coming into play. There's some things that I would like to see differently done with post traditional students than the first time in college students that come out of high school. That's my opinion. We so you know, but so I just wanted to share with you for a moment so I just broke from interview to share with you what my why is with my father, because you were similar in our in our experiences, so yeah. But so thank you for, for sharing that piece of you with me. I appreciate that. Back to the question. We're almost done here because I think we're almost out of time and I don't want to keep him because you have another meeting is so you are already alluded to. My question is Is the curriculum applicable to your current job role? And you've already alluded to Yes, it is

**P2** 46:44

yeah, absolutely.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 46:47

Did you have other Was there another degree program available to you at the time through this program that you could have chosen?

**P2** 46:57

Not that I was aware of

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 46:58

this was the only one supportive Okay. When you were taking classes were you any of the classes were they online classes?

**P2** 47:08

Yeah. Several of them

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 47:14

were those your those weren't your core classes, right? Because all your core classes would have been on campus or or were some of your core classes virtual.

**P2** 47:24

No, I think they were all all my core classes were on campus. Okay. Or you know, at ENGACO? Yes, yes,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 47:35

yes, yes. Yeah. Yes. Okay. And but you did have some online classes for your electives.

**P2** 47:44

I can't remember what they were. And then I took a some electives. Took a golf and tennis class. And it was it was a blast. The students were were just, you know, so inviting and so enjoyable. And they kept wanting to introduce me to their aunt or their mother. You know, stuff like that.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 48:12

That's funny,

**P2** 48:13

you know, when when I told them, you know, they would look at me Oh, man, why are you here? You know, and so I would share with you know, was basically a lifelong goal and, you know, to further advance my career.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 48:25

Yeah.

**P2** 48:26

So mobile, we're using this late your life, you're trying to advance your career and I said, Well, you know, yeah, believe it or not, you know, the income difference is significant, and that's meaningful. I think it's shared with them a perspective that, you know, they they, they had not really ever concern themselves with, you know.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 48:52

Yeah, so give them a different way to think about things. Thinking about your online classes. Do you feel those are as effective as face to face?

**P2** 49:11

Probably not, but they were effective. I just, and maybe I'm answering it that way because I just so enjoyed the, you know, Professor led the Teach instructor led kind of approach. And, yeah, that just worked better for me. Maybe by age. I'm leaning in that direction.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 49:41

Okay. I understand. Any other Did you use any resources here on through USF? That helped you get through the degree program like tutoring or anything like that? Or the resources that would have been helpful to you or your your colleagues?

**P2** 50:02

No, I never I never felt that I had the need without sounding braggadocious right, so that I know I've got probably slightly better than average intelligence. And so a lot of things were came to me somewhat naturally.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 50:33

Yeah.

**P2** 50:34

And then, you know, some of my colleagues in my cohorts they probably could have used some tutoring from time to time.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 50:46

Okay. Any other recommendations that you can think of that as we've finished up now? Any recommendations that you can think of that might strengthen or do differently for either the program or the partnership?

**P2** 51:07

I really can't.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 51:08

Okay.

**P2** 51:10

For all the reasons I insummated earlier

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 51:12

Yes. All right. That was actually my final question. So if there's anything else you can think of, that might be beneficial to myself as I compile all of this information?

**P2** 51:30

No, the only thing I would say is that I would hope that USF would see the value in this and continue to invest. And I use that term, not knowing what I what that really means to the institution. But what if it means investing resources and dollars to continue to have these sorts of programs offered or I should maybe I should say proliferate the offering of these kinds of programs. I just think there's so much to be gained from from the University's perspective to tapping folks who are looking at post traditional education who might otherwise not even have it on their radar.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 52:30

That is one of the questions is, if we were to build this, this framework, this model of a university industry partnership that focuses on academics rather than research, you know, or funding funding sorts, but if there was a partnership between the university and industry on academics such as ENGACO has with them, you know, what's the value for both both the University and the industry and how then how, how can they support it going forward? You know, in its current model, USF, you know, sends the instructors out that's a benefit to the company, and a benefit to you all that take advantage of the program. You know, so the question arises if the core classes had to be on USF, would you all come here to do it? Or would you say no, it's not I don't have that kind of time.

**P2** 53:22

I don't think I don't think we could have made it. I don't think we could have gotten to USF from our various work locations

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 53:29

at the time.

**P2** 53:31

Yeah,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 53:31

yeah. Nope. So that that makes sense. Okay, I am. I believe that we are done so I'm going to stop recording

**APPENDIX S:**  
**P3 INTERVIEW**

## P3\_19Aug22

Fri, 8/19 9:13AM • 37:27

### **SPEAKERS**

Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee, P3

**P3** 00:00

Internal liaison, if you would, P6 is very instrumental in just getting the word out there creating the awareness of the program and, and really bringing in others who had gone through it, that if we had like any reservations about the time that the complexity of it or you know, we're we're all you know, we all have our regular lives if you would, so, those of us who are older who didn't finish school, we see it as a challenge. Just from a from a time standpoint, that just having having that internal support to say, look, we've done it. Here's kind of what it's about and how painless it can be. Was was super helpful just in in starting, that that journey, if you would.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 00:50

I'm gonna back up just a moment. And ask you a couple of preliminary questions. When did you start the program? Do you recall?

**P3** 00:59

I do not. I do not recall because I originally went through it to finish with HCC. I don't remember what that was.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 01:11

Okay. That's okay. So you would have finished your a degree HCC and then transferred over? Yes. Okay. Do you recall when you graduated?

**P3** 01:24

No, because I still have a few classes left before I do.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 01:28

So you're still in. So you're still in progress?

**P3** 01:32

Yes.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 01:33

Okay. Do you know about how many how many classes you have left?

**P3** 01:38



Four classes left,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 01:40

your close And are you in the leadership and change management? Concentration?

**P3** 01:46

Yes.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 01:47

Okay.

**P3** 01:48

Yes.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 01:56

Okay, and which cohort Are you in? Are you in four

**P3** 02:01

four

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 02:02

you are in four Okay. And may I ask what your motivation was for going back?

**P3** 02:12

Really, it was, it really started as more of just like a having that sense of self accomplishment. And in really, in the midst of that, I think I started drawing the connections as to how it would truly benefit me from a career standpoint. But the Yeah, the motivation was definitely my own self motivation.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 02:42

Alright, so back to the question on partnership structure. So, so for you it really started with P6 and and hearing from other folks that have kind of gone through the program is is where you were at, in becoming a becoming a partner in that or a student in that. Was there anything else that was kind of a factor in getting you started in the degree program besides self motivation, and word of mouth with others?

**P3** 03:17

I think, you know, at the time, my, my daughter was close to she was in high school. And so she had gotten to a point where we started thinking about, you know, what she was going to do after high school. And, and I think that that's where some of that, that internal, like I shifted some of that perspective internally, and said, Well, here I am encouraging her and what we're going to do and go to her universities and all of that and seems like something I wish that I would have had at the time, but I was like, yeah, it seems like this is something that I should pursue. And it all happened to be that that was around the same time that some of those discussions were taking place with P6 and or maybe I

was just more aware of it back at ENGACO and I didn't realize it but that Yeah, I think it was I think it was that, that in my whole life kind of helped with some of that motivation.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 04:17

Once you decided to take advantage of the tuition reimbursement program and become a college student, can you tell me what the process was like once you transferred from HCC and you were going through the process application process into USF? What was that process like for you?

**P3** 04:38

It really seemed like a smooth, smooth transition like I don't remember like really any major hiccups at all with the process either internally or actually through the registration process with USF. Everything seemed to be a fairly easy process, but I will say this I think that part of what made it an easy process is that it just felt like there was that level of of hand holding back at ENGACO to really get me like, get us through that. You know, what was like bringing the folks in from USF to explain to us like, what the cohort is all about, like what the process is going to be like who your points of contact are going to be. It was a very it was a very catered experience, I guess. I would say. So I don't I would say this. If I compared my experience in enrolling at USF through through ENGACO and enrolling my daughter at USF separately, worlds world of difference. It was yeah, it was a much smoother process. But I think it was kind of like that. I guess what I'll call it a bit of a concierge service that you would get between pika personnel and USF personnel.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 06:03

Is your daughter here now? Did she go to usf?

**P3** 06:06

No. Okay. No, actually, she's actually moved, moved, moved on and we're still working through that. I think she's kind of taken after that a little bit, but we're, but she's she's much more focused. It 23 than I was. So

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 06:21

everybody's path. Everybody's pathways are different. Everyone's pathways are different. So Okay, the next question I have for you are factors that influence the effectiveness of the university industry partnership. So what's important? First part of that is what do you see that makes the program work?

**P3** 06:54

One is convenience of it to to have the opportunity to be able to take the required courses at least the majority of them at EnGaCo is that alone is was was super helpful for me. You're already there. You don't have to go anywhere else. It's like it just becomes part of your day. But then beyond that, it's the because of the fact that we work together. A lot of us know each other already. We're at least familiar with each other. Like you automatically have like this support group that you didn't realize you had. So when you're trying to work on deadline items or group projects, there's already this cohesiveness there that just made things easier to work through.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 07:58

So you'd like the cohort model?

**P3** 08:01

I do. I do.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 08:09

So your required courses prior to COVID. Were all in person on the ENGACO campus. But your electives are of your choosing. So how did you go about choosing those electives? And where did you take those?

**P3** 08:27

So a lot of that I relied on folks that had been through the cohort. So again, having that network to say, hey, here, here's what I need. Does anyone have any thoughts that they could share on courses that would satisfy those requirements? You know, you'd hear some of the pros and cons and workloads and that kind of thing. So I was able to lean on them. And then interestingly enough, while while we had what while I had just completed some of these courses, I was able to do the same for others and let them know like look here's here's the you know, condensed you know, semester. Yes, technically an easy class but don't think that you can slack off. There's a lot of work that you're going to have to put into it the short amount of time. And I think that because going back to the fact that we know what our workloads are during the day, because we're we're both at ENGACO. There's already this level of understanding as to say look like realistically these are some things that you're going to need to deal with from a timing standpoint. That might be a challenge for you just because again we can relate to work life at work as much as life at school

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 09:49

were you're Have you taken any classes on campus here at USF or have they been online?

**P3** 10:00

Online, nothing on campus, although it may come to that.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 10:06

Okay. How do you deal with online classes are you enjoying those? Do you feel like you're missing a certain aspect that you would get from a face to face environment?

**P3** 10:21

I think that I like them. Well, here's what I would say. I don't like them as much as the cohort classes. ENGACO. But I think that I liked them more than I would classes on campus.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 10:35

Okay. Is that from a convenience perspective? Or is it from who might be in the class? What?

**P3** 10:42

Yeah, I think it's a little bit about how you certainly the convenience of it is one, but the it's just like it would be like, like a like just another environment that I've had to be in to try to accomplish this. You

know, it's from so it's you know, I guess it's a little little little selfish, you know, maybe but it's just like, I'm used to online meetings and zoom and, you know, whatever else and I'm, I'm used to being a Tico like, at this point in my life. I'm not used to being on USF campus, you know, unless I go there for a meeting or something. So it's just I guess there's a comfort level that that I guess I just can't explain it because I can't tell you the last time that I was in a classroom on a college campus so I I don't have I don't have a whole lot to base that on today. But it just feels better. I guess I would say sure.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 11:46

No, I mean, it's funny. Everybody's a little different in their comfort level of classes. And folks that I've spoke to at ENGACO like the in person environment with their cohorts on the ENGACO campus. Some of them enjoyed coming here for their electives. Some of them said I prefer the online environment, you know, because they don't want to be in class with 18, 19, 20 year olds. Others have said I don't mind the 18, 19, 20 year olds because different perspectives are they become like this mentor, you know, so I think it's just really depends, I think online has become very convenient, because we can do it like you said, you know, in the comfort of our home or wherever you're at. So I think it's just it's really just dependent on the comfort level. I think COVID has helped a lot of people become very comfortable in an online environment. That previously probably were not, you know, so.

**P3** 12:47

Yeah, I would I would agree with that. I think it's helped me as well. But yeah, I mean, I've got it distractions are aren't helpful. And I think that if I would, if I were to think of it if I were in a in an auditorium full of, you know, how many company students there'd be an awful lot of distraction there. So it's probably better for me to stick to online.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 13:13

Well, I think two I think, I mean, this is kind of off topic, but I think you are more likely to call into class and not miss a class because it's online versus driving to campus. You know, I think you could end up with an excuse or something that could prevent some people from not yourself, but just in general, there could be obstacles to get into class every week, or twice a week. Yeah, sure. So, so I mean, there's definitely

**P3** 13:46

and I probably would be one of those people.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 13:50

I had a meeting run late. Oh, no. Yeah, we have to get dressed today to go see people I don't know.

**P3** 13:58

Yeah, exactly.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 14:00

So okay, um, all right. So you think the main important main factors that influence the effectiveness of this really is convenience and having the cohort model?

**P3** 14:16

Yes,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 14:17

okay. What have been your experiences that have made this successful for you?

**P3** 14:25

Well, you know what one thing is actually something you touched on here a second ago as far as that mentoring is that we're even though we're in this cohort at at ENGACO like one of the things is, has like been a bit of a motivator for me is that I mean, I've been a ENGACO for 32 years. And I've, I've got like the the folks that are in our in the cohorts like cover the range, you know, brand new employee to not even an employee, you know, family member or something, you know, just folks that have been there, you know, similar length of time as me but being able to like, like, share some of those experiences like I didn't realize, like some of the benefit that I would be giving other students in the cohort, just by being able to share my experiences. You know, even from the standpoint of having to present in front of a group of people or you know, how to relate to you talking about a topic that that leads to some discussion about, you know, management and leadership and current leadership and maybe some of the challenges that employees have with with leadership. And some of the things that they do from from a from a business perspective. And some of those things like I've lived they're cyclical, they're there's there's good reasoning behind it that a lot of folks don't make may not understand but it it seemed like it was just created an environment to be able to like, share a lot of personal experiences, personal at work. And, and I think that that one is benefited others. And it you know, because they would tell me directly, that it just quickly became rewarding. So it was almost like it felt it felt even better going, going to class. So unlike having to get dressed and finding the excuse not to go on campus, it really did feel it really did become a rewarding experience. To be able to sit in a classroom with with other ENGACO team members. Let's see. Was is the tuition reimbursement program a factor for you in deciding to seek out your degree? Yes, Absolutely.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 17:11

And how's that process been in utilizing the tuition reimbursement program?

**P3** 17:18

It's been it's been great. I mean, there hasn't been like I haven't had any challenges with with like working through through that from it from from a firmer reimbursement standpoint, and they got us to the biggest challenge that I have is just, we we changed our our software system. You know, during so I had to figure out the new way and all that stuff and all of all of the required documentation I mean, was easy to get from from USS and easy to provide the the company for for reimbursement. So it was very timely, okay.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 18:03

And then my understanding is, I believe a benefit to ENGACO employees is that all of your core classes are on an accelerated program correct. So you do you do a core class in eight weeks rather than the traditional 16?

**P3** 18:21

Yes,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 18:22

so you're able to finish your core, at least your core coursework quicker. Okay, and how do you feel about having your classes and in an eight week segment Do you feel like you're getting all of the new knowledge that you would have got if you were in a 16 week course Do you feel like anything's would be different?

**P3** 18:47

No, there's a part of me that wonders whether or not I get less out of the 16 week that it would take like some of the information they get lost over over that 16 week period. Okay, versus the need to condense it. I think throughout the course, that leaves you retain more of the information and still things that I can refer back to today. With with some of the courses that we had taken. So, you know, for me, it's nothing that I would say that's really lost. You know, because of the condensed schedule.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 19:33

Next,

**P3** 19:34

I didn't realize it,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 19:35

what's that? Well, it's a benefit. So that's something that USF and ENGACO created when they created this partnership was to do the eight week take if they could take the courses, condensed them into eight weeks for you. So you're essentially in 16 weeks, covering two core classes versus a traditional 16 week semester. No, obviously nobody else. All the traditional students that come here it's a 16 week term. So you all are the only ones that that do that which is a nice, nice that they're able to do it. I don't know how difficult that is on the faculty that have to create the course.

**P3** 20:16

Right,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 20:16

you know, to keep the same because all the benchmarks are the same. I mean, you're at you. You're at r1, a research one university with all that, you know, normal outcomes and objectives that a 16 week course has to and they have to stick it into 18 weeks and make sure you're all still meeting the writing requirement and all of that. So kudos to the faculty for being able to, to figure it out time and time again, for sure. So yeah, otherwise they wouldn't be able to do it. Next question has to do with the perception of the Sustainable components. So as we talked about before, if P6 and I were to take this on the road, if you will to other industry, partners or it out in the community, like Port Authority USAA MetLife other companies to implement a similar program, what factors are important to you, that should be considered and that can be from an employee standpoint from you know, having worked, you've stated you work there for 32 years. So what would what's important to the employee or to the company?

**P3** 21:36

Yeah, I think, Well, I think for the employee you know, certainly the level of convenience that that the ENGACO has has created is like what I would point to I mean, having having the tuition reimbursement program, having the internal champion having support from leadership is going to be it's going to be important from from the company perspective, and maybe this isn't just from a company perspective, but you know, one of the things that I would, I would say my biggest challenge for replicating this program, particularly here locally, is back to one thing that you just mentioned is having the right amount of faculty to be able to support that because I can't imagine and I did see, you know, times where we're, we know that it was it was challenging for for for faculty to be able to put together you know, that condensed curriculum and and and be able to support the program, they did an excellent job that you just knew that there were challenges maybe that was because of COVID. And that's why maybe it seemed like more of a challenge than anything else because of that shift that happened. But those are the kinds of things that I would think like you'd have to have pretty good bench strength from a faculty perspective to the support that.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 23:15

I believe the faculty that teach the core courses for ENGACO I don't do you recall if you've had a lot of different faculty members, or have they been the same professor,

**P3** 23:29

we had like a group like we had, like one one instructor that would would teach more than than one course. But it was it was but I think that we had pretty good pretty good mix you know, so yeah, but if it seemed like there was like a like, folks that we had talked to from the cohort, cohort prior that, you know, we're referencing the same instructor, you know, for for the new course. And, you know, folks that that P6 was very familiar with along the way because they had been doing it for a while. So it seemed to be a kind of a go to Tiger team, if you will. structures for the EnGaCo cohort

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 24:34

so moving on and thinking about improvement of this. And thinking about taking this out to some of the industry partners, community partners that we talked about, what do you believe, could be done differently? That would help or improve the existing program. So to improve your own degree program, what would make it better? Is there anything Do you have a wish list?

**P3** 25:08

Yeah, I guess I really I mean, maybe the only thing would be if there was if there was a way to model the elective courses you know, along the same lines as those core that we could take, you know, at the office, and I kind of did it. It's something that yes, well, I wish for I completely understand why that's not like necessarily an easy thing to accomplish. You know, so that might be it. But even that, I mean, that's, that just seems like I'm asking for a lot at that point. To be honest with you.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 25:57

Okay. The curriculum, is it applicable to your current job role or have you switched job roles while in the degree program?

**P3** 26:09

Yeah, so definitely, definitely applicable. I changed roles slightly, that everything's still applies. It hasn't hasn't. It hasn't changed. You know, the benefit or the effectiveness of going through the cohort. The ad that I would just say that I would anyone who's considering recommend it all day long. It doesn't matter. What path they're considering to take at ENGACO

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 26:44

you kind of talked on this before, but I'm going to ask it anyway. Do you feel like the online courses are as effective as if you were in person

**P3** 27:00

Yeah, I will. I like the in person at ENGACO better the the I personally get what I need to get out of the online courses. So So from so from from an effectiveness standpoint, I think they sit there they can be as as effective but it's but I do like the the in person to do better

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 27:33

and that's because you can have dialogue. share perspectives a little easier. Probably.

**P3** 27:37

Yeah, it's, you know, I mentioned before about it's rewarding for me. I mean, the part of that that I didn't leave leave out is it's not just you know, kind of that mentoring, you know, that I can give to newer employees. Not necessarily younger, just just newer, but for for the, the younger employees. I get to relate to them in a in a different way to like, like, I think if I was in a classroom with just that same student that doesn't have that pico connection, like there would just be something missing. And, and, and, you know, we do a lot of like, diversity training, generational training and all those things and Pico and being in that cohort, like allowed me to refer back to some of that training it's probably been five years 10 years you know, for some of it since I've since I've taken some of them, but like I, I could apply it like refer back to some of those concepts like being in the class with a younger fellow ENGACO employee that also happens to be a student going through the USF cohort. So the environment overall was, I would say, healthy from from a learning perspective.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 29:03

Are there other resources that you feel would be helpful for you as a student or employee

**P3** 29:16

none that I can think of offhand I mean, we probably had one or two folks go through the cohort that probably to benefit from childcare. But I think the challenge that they just have to say but now nothing really comes to mind.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 29:40

Okay. Do you feel like you've missed? Do you feel like you miss out any aspect of being a USF Bull? Because you're not involved in campus events?



**P3** 30:02

Yes. Yes. And I think and I think I realized that because of my daughter, and and and and some of the things that I was able to experience because of her being on campus and a sorority and you know, all those things. So I think that that probably highlighted it for me a little bit. You know, but the I would say that there is there is a little bit of a have a disconnect here, I guess from the USF community, if you would.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 30:46

Would there be How could you see yourself or the ENGACO cohorts connecting with USF to make you make you feel like you're a USF ball, a student and alumni because all of you are and you will be soon an alum of USF.

**P3** 31:03

I guess I don't I don't know. off of here and yeah, like oh, yeah, I don't know. Maybe like even even things like coordinating. Coordinating time to where we wouldn't be on campus as as a cohort. You know, maybe it could be, I guess, a specific event or something like that, where we would we would do something like that on campus or maybe it's even meeting on campus. A time or two for, for for some of the classes. I mean, I know that that kind of takes away from the purpose behind the cohort. But, you know, I guess just thinking through something along those lines where we might be able to leverage being on campus. As as a cohort without really knowing what that would look like, but

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 32:09

okay. Challenges. Any challenges with the program with partnership that you you've seen or experienced or know other folks have had?

**P3** 32:30

No, I mean, really, other than, you know, which, which advice typically here, it's just the time management side of it, you know, we a lot of us, at least, you know, we don't have eight to five jobs, by no means. So, just being able to manage that, that time, it just becomes more critical, the lifework balance and that that's the only thing I would probably point to

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 32:56

Okay. Any, do you have any recommendations

**P3** 33:06

just to keep it going. I guess that would be my one, my one recommendation. I really it really, really is a good program. Something that I've even tried to, you know, pitch to my daughter to see if that might be something that she may want to do is like try to supplement some of some of some of or her other courses or whatever. So yeah, I would, I would just say let's, let's just not let it go away.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 33:36

How many employees do you think are at ENGACO?

**P3** 33:42

Like reason 3000 comes to mind.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 33:45

Okay, think I had asked P6 a long time ago and I don't I've got to go back and sift through and find it. How many employees were at? T co pays. I know you have people's gas as well. Yeah. It's just for some reason that just popped into my brain had nothing to do.

**P3** 34:09

Like it seems like a question I should know the answer to so

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 34:12

I was thinking while you've been there 32 years, maybe you know do you here's another question. It's probably a P6 question. How many different you you guys have offices all over? Do you know how many different sites you have?

**P3** 34:33

Oh, gosh.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 34:36

Set a good trivia question.

**P3** 34:39

Well, I could tell you something that we may have 10 or so different sites across our service territory. Probably more than that, because we started this this offices in like out in Plant City and Winterhaven. Yes, we probably have maybe even closer to 15.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 35:11

Okay, I was just curious and I didn't really I hadn't really thought about it, I guess. Until a few of these interviews with folks like you, when they started talking about the skills training center and everybody would drive there when they got off work. So would come from Lakeland or what have you. Then I started realizing I never thought about how many different sites ENGACO has you know, and how large the organization truly is. And because a benefit that somebody else had brought up was the opportunity to meet linemen or other people from other departments and to build that community that they never would have had if they didn't go through the program. You know, now they're now they're lifelong friends, because, you know, but they would never have known each other. Right, otherwise, so I've heard that as like a benefit. And you alluded to as well being in in the cohort and having the opportunity to meet with other people. Those are all of my questions that I had for you. Is there anything else you can think of that you wanted to share with me or something that had come to mind?

**P3** 36:29

No, I mean, I'll just reiterate the fact that, you know, really, the partners like you could tell that it is it truly has been like a partnership between ENGACO and USF and and I think that that that shows both from from the folks at ENGACO as well as the folks at USF and it just really seems to be like just a

great working relationship that I know that at least P6 has has for many years, fostered and I'm sure all the folks on your side as well. Now it's just a great partnership. That's it We're thankful for. So

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 37:21

with that, I'm going to stop my recordings everywhere.

## APPENDIX T:

### P4 INTERVIEW

Participant: P4

Wed, 8/3 4:18PM • 29:18

#### SUMMSPEAKERS

P4, Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee

**P4** 00:00

In fact, it was pretty spaced out over two years. So I think it was in the fall of 2019.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 00:05

Okay. Okay. For the purposes of me being able to record, I'm going to start the recording and I'm also going to ask you if it is if I have your permission to record our conversation today. For the purposes of me being able to recall, transcribe, and code it, no one else will have access to the information it'll stay on a password protected device. Is it okay if I record this conversation?

**P4** 00:39

Absolutely.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 00:40

Thank you, ma'am. Alright, so we are, we are recording. So I have we have been kind of chatting about a couple of clarifying questions that I needed, jogging your memory so that we can go ahead I have about five questions for you. So and these are going to be really in reference to your experiences having gone through the program as a student. I'm aware that you also helped manage the tuition reimbursement program but if you can think about this in a viewpoint of you as being a student migrating through the process, you know, then if you have any other thoughts on it as well. That would be helpful. So my first question has to do with partnerships, structure. So and both P6 and Miss Taylor from USF has kind of provided their insight on what their perspective is. of the partnership. So but my question for you is, if you could share with me the process you went through to become a member of this cohort in this degree program here at USF.

02:02

Okay. So it was a little bit challenging, I'm going to be honest with you just because in the beginning, we we switched, having who was helping us so we started out having one USF and I forget what they call them. It was our point of contact like an

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 02:22

advisor or something.

02:24

Yes, correct. Sorry, advisor. So we had a little bit of a delay in getting actually accepted into the program, because the way that we were supposed to roll with it. I think it wasn't clear so a lot of us including myself, we enrolled but we got like a rejection letter. So we had to enroll twice. I guess like

reenroll just because it wasn't like I said it wasn't very clear. But once we were in and I think my our advisor may have been very busy. So the communication personally, and just in the beginning was a little bit challenging. But once we got the ball rolling, we were in everything went smooth. And we did change advisors and XXXXX XXXXX ended up being our advisor. And she was housed with XXXXX when he was 50 I can't remember her last name.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 03:16

Okay.

03:17

But so, anyway, so once we had a change of advisors, everything just went really smooth.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 03:23

Okay. Okay, so it sounds like there's like a series of hiccups perhaps , not just you, but with your cohort as well in reference to receiving that rejection letter. And then getting your proper enrollment into place.

P4 03:39

Correct. And I think honestly, it was just the person was helpful. I think he was just new to so I don't think that he was entirely familiar with the process as well. So we were all kind of learning along with him. But again, once we got through it, and I have to plug it in real fast. I apologize, my computer's about to die. But once we got through that part, everything went smooth.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 04:04

Okay. Okay, so it was really the process of getting accepted and then enrolling that in that first semester. Okay. My next question has to do with factors that influence the effectiveness of university industry partnerships, what's important to them, so my, my first part of the question is, what do you see that makes this program work this program specifically between ENGACO and USF and this degree program for you as a student?

P4 04:45

I think what helped make this work is that everything was outlined for you pretty much with the exception of your electives. So there was no guessing which courses you had to take. You knew which courses that you had to take. They're already pre scheduled. You had the outline of when you're going to take these courses. And it really worked around somebody who works full time their schedule.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 05:10

Okay. With that said, so all of your core classes were were predetermined for you. The electives with the content with the electives, did you have a list of electives that you could take? Did an advisor work with you on that? How did you choose your electives?

05:34

No, not really. We I we did have an advisor give suggestions on you know, some courses that we could take through the what are they called mini mesters?

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 05:47

Yes.

05:48

So during mini masters, especially like in between, and I did take one of them and it was like a jazz like a jazz course. A jazz appreciation and the other ones I thought out on my own personally, I don't know what the other students did. I clipped a class and then I took a couple of art classes.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 06:08

Oh, okay. So you took your electives really were more based off of interest versus something that would go towards the concentration itself?

**P4** 06:19

Correct. Correct.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 06:20

Okay.

06:23

So I did I did a couple of business and I clept on myself I clept like principles of supervision. Or actually that was a Dante I believe I did. Principles of supervision. And then I took one art class and then I took a film art appreciation class, which is probably the longest class that I took out of all of them and was writing. But yeah, so it was pretty much up to the student I guess what you wanted to do so I wanted to finish my degree sooner rather than later. So I just took the courses that I could have never open. So you gotta think to that was during kind of a challenging time because that was like right in the midst of COVID. So we weren't allowed on campus. At first and then so classes filled up really quickly for a lot of those online classes. So even the classes that were recommended, there weren't really spots, and then if you didn't join them, like months earlier,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 07:17

okay, got it. Yeah, that's true because you came in fall of 2019. And then 2020 would have gone we would have gotten locked down. So that makes that makes sense. Okay,

07:26

so I think our experience with our cohort is probably a lot different than the ones that were, you know, in person ours for I would say 98% of ours was online because it was really during the midst of COVID.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 07:51

What What are your experiences that have made this successful for you?

08:00

I think what helped make it successful for me again, is just having the outline of what to expect all the professor's were amazing at giving you the expectations at the start of the class. So we knew how many hours we were expected to be online. We knew how much dedication we would need for

homework and that sort of thing. And that kind of led us or me personally decide how many other classes I could tackle with that one because they were the hybrid classes so they were pretty quick. So just having that having everything outlined and what to expect in time management on my part, I think is what made it successful. Being an adult learner, this age of having a family and kids and a full time job, you know, I live and die by my calendars what I always say

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 08:52

yes, I understand that. Hybrid, your core classes they are on shorter, or they are on shorter terms, not 16 weeks.

**P4** 09:00

Yes, they were shorter. Okay.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 09:02

Do you recall how long they were? Were they 10 week courses? I'm trying to remember.

**P4** 09:08

I want to say eight weeks.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 09:10

They're eight weeks. You're right. I think that was in our conversation from last year with P6. Okay, anything else? Any other factors that you can think of that would have made this successful for you location of courses, I guess everything was online. So location wouldn't have been a factor per se, because I believe prior to COVID and then maybe going forward now I don't know if classes have resumed in your training center.

09:41

They have not but I will tell you personally, I know every learner is different. I love the online classes. I think that that helps. You know when you're working until 6pm and you're at a different location and you got to drive to wherever you're going. Sometimes you would be rushing to get there. So being online even if I was stuck at work, I could just start my computer and stay at my desk and take my class and then leave after so I really liked having the online courses or having the options of being online.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 10:15

Okay. Um, was so follow on questions and that based off factors, the tuition reimbursement program, was that a factor for you? And your decision to move forward with your degree?

10:36

For me, yes and no. And the reason that I'll say that is because during the time when I started my P4 degree, I was a single mom, so I got Pell grants that covered most of mine. But the help of P6 at this time, I was not in the department yet, but P6 really encouraged me and guided me so having this department as a whole but I was out of school for so long and it felt intimidating, but being able to meet with with the counselor from the school and being able to see the outline and see that it was doable and kind of having somebody that else that has been through that program. That's what encouraged me to

start because I started I'm 42 now. So I started in my late 30s So it has been like a long time since I've been in school. So without that encouragement, I don't know that I would have because it seemed very intimidating and daunting until you kind of get through it. And so now I tried to do that to other you know, to people that I can relate to so like the single mothers or you know, the mothers and fathers in general. I can tell them I know it seems really scary. Take one class, see how you handle this one class, then you sign up for the second and the third. It's doable. So and this makes it more doable than having to attend campus and take a 16 week course in person. It's with a full time schedule. It's really hard to do that.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 12:06

May I ask what your motivation was for going back to school and HCC and then he

12:14

wanted to set a good example for my kids because I had two of my kids were close to graduation. And I was the first person in my family to graduate from college on both sides.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 12:26

Wow, congratulations. That just gave me chills.

12:30

So it's kind of like the way for my kids and you know, set an example for them that like if mom could do it. You could do it too.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 12:37

That's great. Congratulations. Thank you. I'm sure the kids are proud of you.

**P4** 12:42

Yeah.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 12:47

Okay, the next question has to do with your perception of the Sustainable components of the programs. So, if I were If P6 and I were to take this to other companies like Port Authority USP4 MetLife. at&t to implement a similar program as what ENGACO and USF have created, what factors are important to you, that should be considered

**P4** 13:20

what factors for the employee,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 13:23

for the employee or for the company?

13:27

I think you know, we're doing a survey later this year for tuition reimbursement, and I kind of want to see what the impact and value has been on others. But I can tell you just from being a witness is what's



happened. I see a lot of people in leadership roles that weren't before. So the just the advancement from a career perspective is having your employees advance to those leadership levels. In retaining that talent, you already have the talent there, so retaining that that's saving a lot of money than having to outsource and look outside of the company. Growing your people. Also, again, that's going to anytime that you invest in your employees, they feel that it gives them a sense of appreciation. And when you boost that morale, then you don't have that overturn like you do. I'll say from a team member perspective and going through the course is having that flexibility, the flexibility from your employer. The conversations with your performance coach. So one of the things that we have here is in order to join the tuition assistance program is you have to meet with your performance coach and discuss what your development plan is and what your development goals are. So having that relationship with your performance coach and kind of opening the doors saying this is what this is where I want to go, this is where I am now what do I need to do to get there, so it kind of builds on more than just the tuition assistance program. It builds on developing that employee even just from an internal level. So I think that relationship is is a you know, a big thing to a big factor. So building those relationships, having those conversations having the flexibility retaining talent, there's a lot of benefits, personally, is what I think, you know, a lot of our leadership has gone through the tuition assistance program at some level. Some of them right now we have directors, we have a vice president going through it to get a his second master's, so that I mean it's been utilized by all levels of a team members throughout our company.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 15:46

And that definitely speaks volumes to the company and the investment that they're making in each of you. Next question has to do with improvement. So thinking about bringing this to those companies that I mentioned before, like USAA or MetLife? What do you believe can be done differently or help to improve upon the current program to make it better?

16:18

I would suggest I think having the adviser to student advisor come and actually speak to each student enrolling and then giving them a process and this is the steps that you need to take to enroll. So they don't run into those issues that we kind of had. Okay, because I want to say that there were several team members that were very frustrated, like right off the start, so we kind of had to talk them down off that ledge. It because, you know, we had a lot we just I don't know what happened. Our whole class had a lot of issues even being we went through the first round where we had to enroll as non Florida residents. And there was a whole bunch of us there was like something that was like, there was like some kind of hiccup in the system. I don't know what happened there. But I think just having the advisor come out, speak to them. Understand that. Not everyone has it's been a while since some people have been in school, and they may need extra help and guidance. Of just enrolling and getting through that. Several people in our cohorts are a little bit older and not so tech savvy. So. Seems a little daunting sometimes.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 17:35

When you say come out, do you are you thinking that it would be more helpful for for to be an in person kind of orientation or versus an online format? Because I think you're doing and you've you've historically done an online format with USF.

17:51

I think online is fine to just having that connection. So we kind of missed that with our cohort and I can't speak on the others. But like I said, we had a newer gentleman, I think he was just swamped, and he really didn't know the process himself. So it was a lot of let me get back to you on that kind of thing. Okay. Yeah. So I think it was kind of scrambling to put our core together. I don't think the others have had the issues that we had. Even with this last one. I don't think that they had the issues that we had, so maybe it was just like a one off situation. Experience.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 18:24

You don't remember who that was.

18:27

Joe? I remember is I think it was his name was Joe. He was a younger gentleman.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 18:33

Okay.

18:35

It's been so

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 18:35

long but he didn't stick with you the whole time. You got XXXXX kind of

18:41

Yeah, like so. There was a another lady that I can't remember her name was. I mean, look at her emails. She was kind of like an interim before XXXXX came in, but I think she was just like the lead over this whole project. And I want to say her name is XXXXX. Does that sound familiar?

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 19:02

Not off the top.

19:04

Nevermind Beth Taylor.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 19:06

Okay. Yeah.

19:07

So So Beth Beth Taylor was kind of in the interim before XXXXX took over. So then she was amazing. I love Beth.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 19:17

Beth. Yeah. And then I believe, Mark, I believe XXXXX has now retired.

19:24

Yes, she did. So retire towards the end. of our, our cohort.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 19:29

Okay. Yeah. Okay, so having that kind of dedicated person that knows the nuances with adult learners coming back to school knows your program specifically. would be helpful.

**P4** 19:45

Yes.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 19:45

Okay. Anything else you can think of on either Tico side or USF side?

19:54

No, I don't think so. Okay.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 19:58

Next question. Still under kind of that improvement umbrella is the curriculum applicable to your current job role?

**P4** 20:08

Yes.

20:11

And actually, the curriculum is applicable to where our company is going. So our company is actually starting a whole change management department.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 20:23

Okay. Wow,

20:30

it's interesting and I actually applied for one of their positions. Oh, that's so because it's geared right towards what the degree is.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 20:37

So okay, perfect. Well, fingers crossed. That's exciting. Yeah. Is that is that a position that required you to have a bachelor's degree? I'm just curious.

**P4** 20:47

It is

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 20:48

okay. Okay. So without the bachelor's degree, then you would not have been able to apply?

**P4** 20:53

Correct.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 20:54

Got it.

20:57

So even the position that I'm in now requires a bachelor's degree they we had a whole reorg two years ago, where in human resources now everyone has to have a bachelor's degree,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 21:11

okay. And what is your current role? I know you said it.

21:18

I am. I'm looking at that because they just recently so I'm the Human Resources coordinator of assessment and organizational development. So the tuition assistance program coordinator, okay.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 21:42

Oh, and you kind of alluded to it already. Did you feel like the online courses were as effective as face to face however, you only had one semester of face to face.

21:55

I love the online so I think some, I mean, it has its advantages and disadvantages. Being in person, I think you're kind of forced to engage a little bit more online. You may lose that intimacy, but I work well and like so they've worked well for me.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 22:17

Okay. Are there any other resources that you feel might be helpful for this program or for the partnership so resources as a student

22:36

not for USF that I can recommend you if USF for the most part went pretty smoothly. The only and this I guess wouldn't even apply is that with our HCC, they have to go on site to take their like per exams. It would be helpful if they had something dedicated if it's for the cohort that I think have those testing that they just like set aside one day of testing for students going in, because I think they struggle with getting into some of those testings.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 23:08

Were those like testing to get into certain courses or

23:14

to get into the college? The college? Yeah, got it. But that I mean, and that wasn't through USF. That's just for HCC, HCC.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 23:22

Okay? No but that's helpful. You know, thinking about this program was USF or any other institution, so that's helpful to know that that was a challenge. Any resources from the ENGACO side that you think?

23:40

No, I don't think so. I think P6 does a really good job. Like I said, before I even met P6. He came in and he talked to my new hire class, and we got hired here and he really helps take that fear away. So I think it's good to have somebody with the other companies. It's very knowledgeable in what they're doing. Okay. And willing to have those one on one kind of like mini counseling sessions with people for advancing their education. Okay. Because P6 does take the time to do that. And so he's never really a one man show at one point it was him and XXXXX, now it's XXXXX. So it always kind of has a backup to some degree. But for the most, for the most part, it is his manpower behind everything. So and he really does. Always takes that one on one time. He'll set up appointments, meetings, walk them through whatever he can do to help. Okay, and I think that support is key, because I can tell you how he just came into our class and just told us about the tuition program and not really sought out people. I don't know that some of us would have actually went through it. Okay, so he does like active free. I don't want to say recruiting but active promoting of the program.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 25:07

Okay. And then any other potential recommendations that you can think of as you think about USF, partnering with other institutions to duplicate this type of program that partners directly with an industry to support academics? Given the fact that your company has a tuition reimbursement program, not all companies have that. So is there value with the company offering a tuition reimbursement off offering?

25:52

Thanks. So definitely, I think there. Again, the value just from the employee feeling like the company is investing in them from the employee side there. There are plenty of people in this program that are that don't qualify for grants or, you know, financial aid, financial aid Exactly. So they wouldn't be able to afford to do it otherwise.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 26:17

Okay.

26:19

So I think just feeling like your company's invested in you and we also, we haven't since COVID, but we also do our big graduation ceremonies annually, and they think that that makes the employees feel valued, because usually their whole team will show up. Their supervisor shows up, we post the poster a poster board like in the main building when you walk in that says congratulations, and it has all the graduates names on there and we send out little like, company wide memos about it. And I think that that helps build morale, too. So

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 26:57

yeah, that's exciting. Well, you return to graduate ceremonies.

27:02

I believe we're in the process of seeing what it looks like now. So our company still, it's kind of hybrid. We all don't go in the office full time anymore. We're two days on three days off most of the company so we're trying to work with our officers now to see what that looks like and if we're going to be returning or if it'll be virtually or how we're going to start doing that moving forward.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 27:26

Okay. So then courses, okay, so that means that the classes the, your core classes are still online to you. They haven't returned to the training center either.

**P4** 27:43

No, our training center doesn't exist anymore.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 27:48

Oh, okay.

27:50

We have a little portable there now, but it's we are department hasn't really used it in a very long time.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 27:57

Okay. But that's where the courses were taking place prior to is that correct?

28:04

We used to actually have a training center setup and then we use the portable very briefly because COVID started like, I think we had two classes in the portables before COVID shut everything down.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 28:18

Okay, so it sounds like Tico is doing business differently now post pandemic.

**P4** 28:24

Yes, very differently.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 28:26

Okay. Is there anything else that you can think of missing? Amber, those were all of my questions?

**P4** 28:37

No, I don't have anything. Do you have anything else?

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 28:39

I'm just quickly looking through to see if there's anything else. What I will ask if there are other questions that I have pertaining to the program like that. Any clarification as I'm going through that course gonna reach back out to P6. But I'm gathering that you're also a resource for me in reference to the tuition reimbursement program since you're you're managing that. Right?

**P4** 29:04

Yes.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 29:05

Okay. Good. And then yeah, I don't have I don't have any other questions, and I'm gonna go ahead and stop the recording. Okay, if that's okay with you, and then I'll finish so one minute

**APPENDIX U:**  
**P5 INTERVIEW**

## P5 Interview

Mon, 8/8 12:32PM • 36:47

### **SPEAKERS**

Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee, P5

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 00:02

All right. Good morning, Miss Tiffany, or afternoon. It's afternoon, it's afternoon. So I appreciate you taking the time to meet with me today. As you know, I am a doctoral candidate with USF conducting a program evaluation on the university industry partnership between USF BGS program and your company ENGACO. And you have agreed to be a participant in this study and we're very appreciative that that I do want to ask if it's your permission if it's okay, if I record this conversation today.

**P5** 00:38

Yes, of course.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 00:39

Perfect. Thank you. All right. So follow up questions from the last time that we met, we didn't meet then I have the wrong date. Today's August, not July. I don't even know. August 8. Okay, there we go. Now I have the right time. Just a couple of real quick questions. The cohort that you were in. Do you recall if it was cohort 123.

**P5** 01:09

I manage the program. I was not a part of the cohort

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 01:12

not a part of the cohort. Yeah. Perfect. Not the one with USF if I remember you were did you do HCC and then St. Leo?

**P5** 01:23

Yeah,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 01:24

perfect. When did you graduate? Do you recall when you graduated from HCC

**P5** 01:44

2013 and St. Leo 2017.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 01:49

See, we're doing good.



**P5** 01:53

I Remember those days

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 01:55

Your degree is in what

**P5** 01:58

my Bachelor's of human resource management

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 02:06

Okay, and do you recall when you started so although you weren't in the any of the cohorts here at USF, you did take advantage of the tuition reimbursement program.

**P5** 02:24

Yeah, I manage the program and I took participate in them.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 02:28

Okay, so you can still speak from a student perspective as well as someone who managed the program. When would you have started and your when when did you start utilizing the tuition reimbursement program?

**P5** 02:41

2011.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 02:45

Okay, and then you follow that through St. Leo?

**P5** 02:47

Yes.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 02:48

Perfect. May I ask what your motivation was for going back to school as a post traditional student?

**P5** 02:57

Yep. I just got married. And my husband was working on modified DuPont shift. So I was alone all the time. So he was like working swing shifts, nights and days. I was alone all the time. And I have lots of friends that were just starting and I was like, I'll go with them. I never thought I would want a degree or anything but that's why I started.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 03:17

Okay.

**P5** 03:18

I'd be busy.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 03:18

Okay. Perfect. Did your motivation change as you went through the program?

**P5** 03:27

Yeah, for sure. Once I was in it, and you know, almost finishing it. I kind of saw like, I can't believe I did this. my Associate's degree. And then I was really motivated to keep going because I wanted that next step.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 03:41

Okay. So you manage the tuition, pro, did you manage the program? How long did you manage the program? Are you still managing the program?

**P5** 03:56

I started managing the program in 2016 and called it quits basically in 2020 is when I am completely hands off now.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 04:08

Are you in a new job role?

**P5** 04:10

Yeah.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 04:23

You are graduated. Okay. All right. So as we move forward with this discussion today, I have four questions for you in reference to it and a lot of it will be you as a member you as may having managed the program, so and the first one really has to do with the structure of the partnership between ENGACO and University of South Florida. So can you can you share with me the process, the processes that the students have gone through to enroll in the program here at USF and then the second part to that would be you as someone managing it from the industry side, your experience on that side?

**P5** 05:15

Okay, so really, it's a lot of just one on one counseling, I would do it and P6 doesn't and as well as myself, someone just says, hey, I'm interested in going to school. And it's very unofficial at first, we'll just meet and talk and talk about the options talk about USF. Kind of just say what's out there. And then if they want to go the USF route, he adds, I believe he has his own process. So he would be the best to get that information on his process that usually referred them to P6. Tell them to apply online. And he keeps like, I know he keeps a master spreadsheet. So he really is the one person that handles that part. It would really just be unofficial like meetings and just kind of encouraging the team members and showing them their options.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 06:04

Okay. How do you perceive the relationship between ENGACO and USF?

**P5 06:12.**

Really good. I myself have P6 and I used to go to meetings all the time with the variety of people that we would work with there, because it changed over the years, but we would go and just brainstorm things and I always felt like a pretty strong relationship with the professors as well.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee 06:28**

Okay.

**P5 06:29**

I think they enjoyed working with us. I got that good vibe from them. Okay. As for managing the program, I would handle the tuition applications for the tuition reimbursement program. So like I advise the student this is what you need to get approved for the program. I don't know if you wanted to know that but no, of course what you need is what you need. I refer them to our website, which is the master of like Master of Information, and then even like printout the tuition assistance program for that I always keep handy. So they get them I tell them everything they need to be successful. And then I would get the paperwork and I would approve make sure they got the approval from their upper management goes all the way up to their vice president sometimes. And then sometimes just the director and then I would just go from there.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee 07:28**

Okay. Is there a separate going based off what you just said, as you manage the the tuition assistance program? Is there an application process for the employees to be able to utilize that separate from applying to the University?

**P5 07:51**

Yes, there is. They have to have a what we call, oh my gosh, not an IDP, a development plan, which is basically an independent independent development plan, basically stating hopefully on their that they want to pursue this. They need to get supervisory approval. They also have to attach their degree outline, which comes from the college. It's all the list of classes that they need to complete the degree. They put it all together in a packet and send it for approvals. And then once they get all the signatures I'm the final I was the final approval. I'm just signed up.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee 08:27**

Okay. How long did that process take typically about

**P5 08:31**

it was back here with paper back then. So depends. But sometimes it's a little ridiculous now it's pretty quick because we just scan and dock everything's on one line.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee 08:44**

Okay. Okay. And would they do that? So they would apply for that after they've been admitted to the university.

**P5** 08:56

Depends if they've been here six months as a as a employee, then they'd be able to eligible for the program. So usually at the same time, we're coaching them and talk if they wanted, they reached out they want to talk about getting a degree at the same time. We'll talk about that. Just so they can get it done. Try to keep the momentum and motivation going.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 09:17

Got it. So at the time, it was kind of like you and P6 as as counsel unofficial counselors of these guys and gals that were going through the program.

**P5** 09:29

It seems like it's always been that way. Yeah. Okay. I don't mind it's fun.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 09:35

Well, and you can speak from experience okay. Did you have I'm thinking about your your perceptions of the relationship between USF antiguo specifically, and you said it was really strong working relationship at the time. Were most of your meetings virtual are they ever in person?

10:05

Now most of them were in person and that was back in the day. Yeah, before life stopped. We will go to usf a few times a year.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 10:13

Okay, so you would meet in person here

**P5** 10:16

and then they would sometimes come to to Skills Training Center when we had it as well and have like the coaching and the guidance counselor. I don't remember her name, but she would come.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 10:30

Okay. Do you remember who your main point of contact was at the time?

**P5** 10:35

It changed a few times. P6 probably knows that. On the right there you have it, probably. He probably

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 10:43

does. And I think we've talked about it a year ago. So I'll go back in those notes as well. But from what I understand the for this program, specifically the advisor. You didn't have a regular advisor until you got Kathy Marquez. I think

**P5** 11:01

that name sounds familiar.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 11:03

is what I understand. Okay.

**P5** 11:07

I'm horrible at names versus Awesome. That's why we even each other out.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 11:12

That's okay. Okay, the next question I have for you really are about the factors that influence the effectiveness of the university. Industry. Partnerships. So what and what's important to them is is really what this next question is. So when thinking about, let's see. I'm working off of two screens because my my questions for you managing the program versus like a student are different. So what do you see that makes this program work?

**P5** 11:53

Just being in the community, I know we used to have leadership on the board and everything. So there was like a very firm relationship with USF and in ENGACO. So I think that this stems from it, but the personal relationship too, that we had, I think that was that's what makes it a success, for sure. Just being open to the fact that we're kind of a gray area. I feel like we are because we're something not, to my knowledge. It's different. Like it's not just here's your degree plan. These are the classes you need. It's just a little different. Maybe a little more hand holding, but I'm both in like between from ENGACO and from USF, but I think it makes it work. Being a little more flexible and making sure just understanding that we're or the group is, you know, working adults. I think that's always been a plus, that we that was like pretty known between the two.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 12:51

Okay

**P5** 13:00

don't know if I answered that, right.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 13:03

There's no right or wrong. That's the beauty of it all. So you think that largely works because the group of people from USF that were partnering with yourself with P6 understood industry needs and under

**P5** 13:18

I think, so

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 13:19

okay,

**P5** 13:20

yeah, I definitely think so. I think that they were open to understanding it was a gray area. Anytime we hit like a hiccup or whatever we would talk through it and try to figure out where in the gray area we can land because it's definitely not just a normal, normal program. So

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 13:40

Right. And you felt you feel like the university has met the needs of industry of adult learners?

**P5** 13:56

I think so. Yes.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 13:58

Okay.

**P5** 14:01

For the cohort, yes, yes, yes, yes. Yes.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 14:05

For the for the students, for the employees that are becoming students. You feel like it meets their needs. Do you feel like USF meets the needs of you as a partner, as as an industry partner?

**P5** 14:19

Yeah, I think so. I have been out of the loop since 2020. P6 and I talk all the time, but so like, I haven't heard a lot about what's going on and COVID really messed up a lot. So I don't I'm a little out of the loop with it, but it still seems like a very solid relationship. I mean, I know we didn't get to start one this year like we had planned but that was that note, I think we'll stop blaming COVID for that. But I think I think it's good.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 14:48

Okay. What, what do you and you've already said it but I'm gonna ask it anyway. What do you believe is made this program successful?

**P5** 15:01

Just the relationships that's the biggest thing is talking through the issues relationships are key in the communication open kind of like open to new ideas open to things that are in that gray area.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 15:14

Okay,

**P5** 15:14

while still maintaining like this is a degree this is the bachelor's degree this is like, still like keeping that bar high but understanding there's different ways to get there.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 15:43

In your experience, sort of an add on to what you just said, in your experience working with employees who are considering going back to school. What factor do you think is most important to them? Or what factors would you say are important to them and their decision to go back?

**P5** 16:03

Keeping things like keeping things streamlined and as easy as possible to get them registered? To have a one on one person that they can reach out to? Because we're a gray area. Just like having that somebody is when they try to call the school it could get complicated and messy. That would be the most important for sure. Otherwise, they can get very unmotivated. And it sucks like to hear like they're so excited and they're into it and then something happens like a riff in the plan and it couldn't turn and that's on them like but we try to you know, guide them through it and try to try to keep things like we try to understand the process so that we can tell them exactly what they need to do. So then, hopefully, if that goes well, then they stay motivated and they just get it done.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 16:59

Okay so I think last year when we talked we talked about if P6 and I were to take this on the road right and take it to other companies in the community. Port Authority USAA MetLife to implement a similar program including the tuition assistance program that you all offer, you know, then the partnership directly with the university such as USF or St. Leo, what factors are important to you, that you think should be considered?

**P5** 17:42

Making sure we have a dedicated resource resource? Yeah, it's really important to have somebody that understands the core program and understands it runs in that gray area a little differently. But maybe even if it's not a full time job, but it sounds like it could be especially with all those different organizations just making sure that you know, there that we have somebody that we have a consistent person. I don't know if you've talked to P6 yet, but I did just hear that HCC is we didn't meet our numbers. It sounds like for our HCC cohort, and they reached out and they're combining us with other businesses.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 18:22

Oh, okay.

**P5** 18:23

Yeah. So P6 has all the information on that I just got we had a quick meeting so he can throw it at me. I thought that was very cool. Because we've been pushing that for years. Yeah, we personally went to USAA and told them about tuition, everything. And I mean, we we want to promote this and I think it would be successful because maybe if we would have combined with USAA and other I think they have TIA on there, Coca Cola, a few other big big parties. Maybe we would have been able to start that USF cohort, meeting like adding all those people together. And I think it's a great networking opportunity. Just like we would look at as a master's degree. We encourage the students to go in there in the classroom so they can network with other people in the business.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 19:06

Yeah,

**P5** 19:07

this is like a bachelors version. of that to me. Opportunity wise.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 19:12

Yeah. That's, that's interesting. You're the first one to bring up that if there was other industries to come through the program and build a larger cohort.

**P5** 19:25

Yeah, especially if it's online now.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 19:28

Right,

**P5** 19:28

which is kind of the vibe I'm getting is it's mostly online now.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 19:32

I think it's staying online, a like you don't have a Skills Training Center anymore, and it doesn't sound like that's going to come back.

**P5** 19:40

It doesn't look at it that way either. Gills is basically just a bunch of trailers.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 19:45

That's what I heard.

**P5** 19:48

Yeah, I don't see. I haven't seen any plans for that to be rebuilt.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 19:52

Okay, so then it sounds like it's possible that you're the this program, at least with USF. Is it that way with St. Leo as well. Everything's primarily online for them over there that you

**P5** 20:03

we don't have a we don't have a cohort with them. anymore. So we just if they want that route, I just kind of give them my appearance and yeah, and then they have online and class classes.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 20:14

Okay, but they don't do the cohort model anymore.

**P5** 20:16

Not anymore. That we used to have home with them. Yeah, leave I can't remember the years but P6 probably knows, he knows all the numbers that whenever they open their Tampa office, it was right next to our downtown office downtown Tampa. Right when you get on the cross town. It was too close. They're like there was too much so that we just quit the cohort. Send people there.



**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 20:40

Okay. No, I didn't. I didn't know that. Because, well, when we spoke last I think it was still sort of I think there's still people migrating through the program.

**P5** 20:50

It's been a couple of years for St. Leo. We do encourage it. Like when we have that we don't just push USF we talk about all the options

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 20:58

right? So that they can make the decision.

**P5** 21:01

Yes. And we explained failure was nice enough to give us a 10% discount, which now that they've upped their rates, you guys are cheaper still, but it's nice that they get you know, it's just a nice thing if they choose St. Leo and they get a 10% discount.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 21:19

How do they do that discount is it off of their tuition? So like if their tuition is to 211.19 a credit hour. So they take said there they're gonna take one course so it's roughly 650 We'll just say so they get 10% off of the tuition.

**P5** 21:36

Yep

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 21:37

okay.

**P5** 21:38

Yeah, it's just I mean, in back in the day when I was at St. Leo, it was cheaper because of that, but then they increased their rates since then. So it does make it a little more per class. But it's just nice. We just explained like if you do pick that make sure you're telling me you're an employee and they give us a discount,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 21:56

okay.

**P5** 21:58

And they're very good at keeping in contact with us too. Even though we don't have a core we have a great relationship with them. Heck, we even planned their one of their graduations a few years ago. It was fun. But I mean they reached out they use us as resources, you know, we have a good relationship with them too. So

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 22:24

the next question has to do with improvement. So, so thinking about if we're going to bring this to other companies USAA MetLife. What do you believe could be done differently or help to improve the program to make it better? So the partnership the degree program, tuition program,

**P5** 22:46

getting a reliable like piece of information, I would see it as like a team site or a SharePoint site that has USF cohort. Here's all of the information that you need, like including the degree plan, and that could be on ENGACO work together okay, to get that correct information, make sure it stays up to date, having a dedicated resource really would be the key there to make it improve. I don't know if you guys ever give tuition discounts but now that I said the st Leo thing I mean, it's a motivation right. So making sure. We if we need if somebody if a student really wants we have a lot of older students, right, adult student working students who some of them get in their head, they're like, oh, no, like, Can I do this? And they want to talk to somebody right now. I don't feel like they have anyone to talk to other than us. And sometimes P6 and I can't really fulfill that, you know, the guidance counselor piece. So just having that would be great.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 23:50

So okay, so in thinking about what you just said with those people. Do you see that as like a mentor program? within the industry within EnGaCo? Like so, folks, like yourself or a couple of others that I spoke to that have graduated out of the program, but then come back and be mentors? You do that?

**P5** 24:10

Yeah, we already do it. We actually used it. We tried to formalize the group but COVID really kind of through that. They know who to call basically, they'll call person i and I'll be like, where do you work and then I'll point them in a direction of a person or I'll help them myself but I didn't go to usf. So usually, they'll be like, hey, this person's on the floor right under neath you go talk to them, and everyone that he goes eager to help people especially when it comes to school.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 24:37

And then you're thinking a dedicated person on the university side. You've said that over and over again.

**P5** 24:43

Yeah, sorry.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 24:44

No, no, no,

**P5** 24:44

wouldn't be great. Like I know even at HCC, like we I don't feel like we have that dedicated resource. And so like when a student comes to me and they have this transcript, they're like, How does my transcript fall into line with this core? I want to get in that that part's hard for me. I'm not a guidance counselor. I know that piece of the pie like P6 was taught me, but you guys are the law, right? You're

gonna tell them we need that person to be able to tell them if it's going to be accepted and what the best bet is.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 25:17

Yep. So sounds like someone to navigate the university side from the university. Okay. Do you believe that the curriculum is applicable to?

**P5** 25:31

Oh, yeah, okay. Sorry. Yeah, for sure. The class list I've always I didn't go but I still looked at the class list. I'm pretty fluent in it. Yeah, I think it's super cool. That you guys created basically a roster of classes. That I mean, it's just it speaks ENGACO like there were I believe I saw safety one one that incorporated safety emergency preparedness, like I've seen versions of some of these classes that are just perfect for us.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 25:59

Okay.

**P5** 26:00

And like some of the like, I love I think you guys have some psychology, like some people skills. I don't remember which classes they were but having those people skills, some of the people here that's great for them to learn.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 26:13

Okay. Do you feel like the online coursework is as as effective as face to face learning for them?

**P5** 26:27

This is just my personal opinion you want right?

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 26:29

Yes, ma'am.

**P5** 26:30

Okay. Online classes,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 26:32

okay.

**P5** 26:33

Hate them with a passion. And I will tell people this in my unofficial guidance counseling that you're going to do online you better get that checklist. You're doing every single thing on that syllabus.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 26:44

Yeah,

**P5** 26:45

you're doing everything you will go in class. Professor might say, Oh, you guys, you've had this already. We're not going to do that quiz. We're just going to keep moving on and then you do some of something else and maybe learn have a conversation about new things that weren't really on the syllabus.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 26:57

Yeah.

**P5** 26:58

So I just think there's a lot of value. I like I'm a human person. I like being around the humans. I love working with other humans. So like there's so much value to me, and I always encourage people that are seemed that they're like me, it's like, do a few online classes. That's great, but I like in class.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 27:16

And that's a struggle. Because all of the core classes now

**P5** 27:19

I can't hear you anymore.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 27:20

Oh

**P5** 27:26

You're back.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 27:26

Okay. Interesting.

**P5** 27:28

Team has weird

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 27:29

teams is weird. And and I think all of the core classes now for the degree program are all online now because you don't have the skills training center. So they all have to move online.

**P5** 27:42

And that really deters some of the adult workers that maybe have tried it before. Maybe they're a little more nervous. Maybe they're like me and don't like don't they want to go sit in the classroom. Some people don't like I see a mix. But a lot of the adult learners that are like can I really do this? They don't want online classes. The ones I talked to

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 28:03

Yeah, no, and I know I am and some folks that I've spoke to that have been in like early cohorts or whatever. They they liked the interaction of face to face. And I think that's more so on ENGACO side because there's no skills learning center anymore, and you guys have gone largely you have what do you work a hybrid week now?

**P5** 28:28

Yeah, a lot of them do. Yeah,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 28:29

yeah. So that's what I've heard is that the Skills Training Center won't won't happen anymore, and

**P5** 28:35

we can make it there's so many locations though at ENGACO like if we really wanted to bring it back live one class a night or whatever we can find a location I know location on my central service area of Sligh and 22nd We have a building and we have a room here. I mean, there's rooms, especially if it's limited to you know, one night a week. You know, a couple out after hours there are it's there's a way to bring it back. I just don't know if we have that approval.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 29:04

Right Yeah, cuz I've heard that. I don't think it has the approval to come back. As what I've heard, but I talked to P6 later this week, so I'll get clarification from him as well. Because I wanted to come to campus, you know, and kind of tour the site and see and but I guess there's not much to see.

**P5** 29:24

No, not there and even there, we could make it work. We're working with the new management over there. I know that they would support this. I'm just not as involved. So I don't know, P6's fight so we'll probably have some fight with our HR VP or something.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 29:42

Oh, probably. Are there any?

**P5** 29:50

Yeah, sorry. Yeah, there was one other thing about the in class thing. One of the main reasons that I stayed in the program and stayed motivated was how many people I got to meet from all over the company. The professor's were nice. Like I didn't mind the faculty. But I got to meet so many people from a variety of different departments within tiga that I didn't even know existed. So when I talked to students about that, and maybe they just started EnGaCo and they they know this little department I tried to explain like you go to school with people and regulatory and you know, business law classes like all these different like realms of ENGACO you learn a little bit because they talk about it. They naturally write about their work, and stuff like that or things that they've dealt with and you know, conflict management at work. Or something. It just comes out so I think that that's an important factor in the cohort.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 30:41

Right I do think that that's important because you can meet everybody you know, that you know, the most unlikely person you're now friends with and

**P5** 30:53

and I relate to any people. Yeah, I met so many people, and I'm still friends with them now. And now it's like I'm completely uprooted my job in HR and came over to a completely different group. And now I'm working with someone I've worked with two people I went to school with, so it's kind of just nice, like we're back again.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 31:08

It's nice. That is nice. One of the cohorts I don't remember now they get together like they bring their cohort together. Do you ever do that with anybody that you've gone to school with? Not really No,

**P5** 31:22

I mean, I have like long standing for trips at this. I've been here 15 years. So like if I run into people I'm just usually just a geek and excited to see them and busy, life's busy but we used to do stuff like that. And my favorite time of year was always the graduation. I think we talked about last time that graduation celebration was huge. I talked to P6 trying to bring it back this year and it's not going to work. So we're gonna try for next year, and I'm happy to be a part of that. And that's where everyone just comes and celebrate

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 31:56

everybody. What other resources do you think would be helpful if developing a university industry partnership things for the employee? Are there other resources that you think

**P5** 32:11

I'm just beating that dead horse that dedicated person? Yeah. As you can see, that's where we've been burned, I think in the past where we just can't get answers. And I love the idea of working with other schools. I think that's a huge benefit to not only you guys because you're gonna get more tuition. Yeah, but it's a huge thing for just being in a community. I think that's a huge class that you can even like promote that you do that. And that's a huge thing. I mean, maybe even if it gets bigger, offering more than one degree option, that would be like way future, but I think that'd be cool. Because I know, myself I got scared away from the USF degree. So I sat through it I was like I don't know, like, Is this a real degree? Yes, it's a real degree. I've just never heard of it before. Right. So it was hard to find information on it. So I think that maybe having multiple, especially if it's online now, like multiple little avenues of maybe take the core classes as a core and then you can spread into this degree plan. But that would be like future state for sure.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 33:22

What were some challenges that you had working with the University early on so you you spoke about like, hard to get answers when you when you needed them. So what what were some of those challenges?

**P5** 33:36

I know the brute so I pulled all negative out of my brain. So I probably am forgetting some significant road bumps that we went through, but we got through them, but I know just like P6 would try so hard to meet his numbers and we would try to meet those numbers. And the deal with the deadline provided from the university and it it gets challenging. People are working and they can't stop it. I know that deadlines have to be have to be set right and that we need to meet them. Maybe a little more flexibility. If it's possible with that dedicated resource. There might be a possibility to have the flexibility to be like, Hey, I have you know, someone who just started can they get in they jump in. And I know that's like the courts was to stay together and be together from start to finish. Yeah, he see we started that way. And then it kind of migrated and blew up into this huge thing where it's kind of like we have plenty of people come and go as you please. But it worked. And we had so many classes going we had, you know, just a huge COVID killed that too. But just a huge like, student base that we didn't have to be like Sorry, you have to wait till the next one starts in two years. That's not ideal for the student.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 34:53

Yeah, cuz if they want to start they want to start now. And I mean, we're on they're

**P5** 34:56

motivated. Yeah, they're motivated and we want to get them registered as soon as possible.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 35:00

Yeah, because you think about it. So like I was in my early 40s I guess when I started, I don't know how old you were when you started but

**P5** 35:09

I was 25 or 26.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 35:13

Yeah, so you know, but getting started as an older student, I mean, yeah, you can be apprehensive getting started even you at 26 going I'm gonna sit in a class with an 18 year old what? You know, they're still thoughts of I'm married, you know, how do I react or if you're going to have that group work? So

**P5** 35:32

I actually that was the another perk of going with the EnGaCo students and the working adults is it wasn't as as intimidating though, wasn't going back with 18 year olds. Yeah, there were some because we allowed family and friends to come. But most of it were people, you know, that work with me. Some of them were in their 60s. And that always made me feel so cool, because it's like, it's a smorgasbord of

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 35:56

adults when you're learning from each other. So and you all bring different experiences to the table that create healthy conversations about different topics. So So Okay. Those are all the questions I have for you. Is there anything else you would like to add or that you you think have?

**P5** 36:19

Not yet.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 36:20

Okay. No, I appreciate it. extremely helpful. I appreciate all of your help and willingness to answer the questions and think through things last time and now you know, and then getting getting this scheduled. So thank you so much.

**P5** 36:37

Yeah, no problem. Thanks for letting me be a part of it. Oh, yeah. No, of course,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 36:41

and I wish you the best. P6 is really appreciative. I know. So we tend to talk highly of you guys.



**APPENDIX V:**  
**P6 INTERVIEW**

## P6 U-I Interview RA

Thu, 8/11 10:31AM • 54:13

### **SPEAKERS**

Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee, P6

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 00:09

Okay, recording

**P6** 00:14

just recording audio and visual.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 00:16

It's recording audio and visual.

**P6** 00:21

I didn't do my hair.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 00:22

You know, the beauty of it is no one's going to look at it but me. So you didn't do your hair. Sir With your permission, is it okay for me to record this conversation? For the purposes of me being able to go back and do some data analytics.

**P6** 00:36

And by Grant, I hereby grant approval.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 00:40

Thank you. Appreciate that. Okay, so I've got, you know, I've had a number of conversations. Now that I'm finalizing. These are very similar questions that I've asked the employees who are students, but I'm going to put a little bit of spin on it from a different perspective for you and they're there for questions. With that, though, I may have some sub questions based off of your answers. So we will go ahead and get started. First of all, just some housekeeping pieces, titles the same as it has been sir. Yes, your same title. Okay. And how long have you been managing the program? Or you initiated the program so roughly?

**P6** 01:29

Are we just talking the USF programs?

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 01:32

The tuition reimbursement program for for for you? ENGACO

**P6** 01:37

really says let's go August of 2007.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 01:43

Okay. And you've been at ENGACO for people's gas,

**P6** 01:49

Pico tap electric since July of 2007. So 15 years.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 01:56

That's good because I hadn't

**P6** 01:58

been managing the program. We've always had a tap coordinator, the tuition assistance program coordinator. And I think we've had probably six different tuition coordinators. The reason we say you I manage it. I've always worked with a tap coordinators. I had a background with colleges as an advisor and director so I understood the collegiate process so I sort of trained and worked with the tuition coordinators and multiple directors on it so

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 02:30

maybe, maybe not managed, but oversee it.

**P6** 02:32

oversee it.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 02:33

Yeah. Okay. Just so I can get some background. And then I know now to you or not, well, you're directly involved, but it's not your your primary role. What is your primary motivation for remaining active in this and helping your employees seek out their education?

**P6** 02:59

Well, it's funny, Tiffany may have shared this with you. I will tell everybody it took me 23 years to finish my bachelor's degree Don't be me. If individuals wanted I was on active duty military, life happened and moved around everywhere. People want to finish a college degree but they just couldn't seem to connect the dots. In the 25 years in the military, I work with colleges all the time. The programs that I was in the military education were actually sacs accredited, so I worked with Saks we actually had Saks inspections, just like they would come in any other college. So from there, I went to Troy University as an advisor director, so I understood the collegiate policy, application grad degrees, et cetera. So when I got to EnGaCo, and realize we've got an A pool of working adults that didn't know how to connect the dots of getting into college and completing college, so I became their de facto unofficial adviser and guide. So I will tell them, you know, I know the numbers have changed, but at one point there were 2.4 million Floridians with some college and no degree. So I wanted to whittle away at that 2.4 million

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 04:20

Okay. All right, sir. Into the four questions. The first question really has to do with describing the partnership structure between EnGaCo and University of South Florida specifically. And we've talked about it some in prior conversations. Now it's going to really be based off of your perception. So how do you perceive the relationship between EnGaCo and USF for this degree program?

**P6** 04:52

relationship is strong for that relationship to happen. Number one, I might find the students but without the professors, then it's not going to happen. And that's why I realized, you've got to find the pool of students in the pool of professors. So USF has done and is doing a magnificent job of lining up the professor's lining up the curriculum. Now, it's probably five six years ago when we looked at the curriculum again for this BGS program. And actually worked with our CEO, it's time to design because when we started this program in 2012, it was only six classes, and they were going to do the rest of you know, just any electives. So we added another six classes to that, like utility regulation and public administration, so other classes, and that was USF doing, you know, with us? The Advising couldn't happen without USF advising, whether it's in person or virtual registrations, applications USF has allowed for online orientations. So USF has done a magnificent job of IP than the students names and information. They will work with them on getting applications transcripts, holds removed. USF registers them typically for the classes that actually go in and pay for them. Of course, like any student, USF will provide proof of payment and grades that are team members and students can file for reimbursement. But without a cadre of individuals who are dedicated advisors and I realized that whether it was Walter XXXXX or XXXXX or Beth, you know, it's not just ENGACO that they advise but being available for advising. You've got working adults who may have classes from multiple colleges over multiple years and just scooping all under one basket. That takes time and patience and have their own passion to help these students finish their degree. So I could not at this point, I could not ask for a better stronger relationship than what we have with University of South Florida. Does that help?

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 07:13

Yes, that helps.

**P6** 07:19

minor things like you know, there might be a medical hole because students are supposed to, you know, show proof of vaccinations if we show that the students are not actually going to go on USF campus, they can remove the holes and other things. They have allowed the weather it's clever DSST exams, so they will advise them on what possible CLEP and DSST exams, because they're going to walk in typically with their AAA degree. So they've got their 20 classes. They've got their Gen Ed's done so they need another 20 classes to finish their bachelor's, pretty much. They've got 13 classes as part of the cohort 12 classes and the curriculum in the 13th is the capstone which has always been online. So they've got seven other classes that they need to do to be able to finish this degree. And this is where they can either pull from additional HCC classes CLEP DSST, or take some additional classes with the University of South Florida.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 08:14

What is their capstone project? Do you know?

**P6** 08:16

I don't know what their capstone project is.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 08:20

Okay.

**P6** 08:23

It has I want to say always, it's always been one of the professors that has taught them. And normally out of the 13 classes. We probably have. We'd say six professors. They'll normally do two classes each I don't think it's been much more than two, sometimes just one. Okay. And it might be too much information. But again, when we started the first cohort, it was just six public administration classes. After the first two classes we realized this is working, and we can begin adding classes. So it grew into Cohort Two, little bit more into three by the time we got the cohorts, three, four and five, it was a pretty solidified, set up 12 classes plus the capstone.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 09:12

How are you evaluating the curriculum because you said that about five or six years ago, you reviewed the program, worked with the CEO and developed this adding adding the additional classes into the program? How do you go about evaluating that?

**P6** 09:28

Asking the student what their feedback is asking them, you know, are these classes and actually apply to what your job is? And what we're doing here at EnGaCo and there could have been best may be able to help with this because she's done this for a number of years or could have been one or two subs. classes that we did but they just seem to work. Okay, the grades have been good. A's and B's I don't know that we've had very many C's but so ever out of everybody who went through the professors you know, they will some will try to tailor it more to an energy world. Some are more aware of the energy world so they can tailor that but simply by feedback from the professors and from the students. Most of our professors have been doing this for quite some for most of the cohorts. So they have a feeling of what our people need. We have a pretty wide range and EnGaCo have jobs. So you have people in operations who are in the line department at the power plants, regulatory legal human resources, customer experience all over the board

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 10:54

Okay, anything else you want to add in reference to the partnership structure? That you can think of?

**P6** 11:07

Again, it starts with getting them on boarding. It starts with the orientation with the application which USF home runs, the initial advising virtual or in person. Students can always go to USF campus if they wanted to. They already normal regular USF students and registering the students and staying in contact with the students. USF has done again a magnificent job and staying in contact. Now, up until 2019. We also had of course, the commencement ceremony, right. So the first one with USF one I think was probably 2014. And we actually had a separate USF graduation at Tampa theater where the USF

president came our CEO went. So then in 1516 1718, and 19, we would have an all progress graduation so we would actually they would get the their green cap and gowns and we would have graduation ceremony.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 12:16

Are you going to be resuming those?

**P6** 12:19

Perhaps we're not doing it for 22 Because time just got away. We are looking at we have recently provided it to all of our executives. And list of all the graduates in 2021 and 22. So that they could individually recognize them. But we are looking at reconvening this and 23 And again, this was a one hour ceremony amphitheater. Friends, family, professors would go again Dr. Judy Genshaft went more than once to this in our leadership.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 13:08

The second question I have for you really is in reference to factors that influence the effectiveness of the UI partnership. So what's important to be included in this So from your perspective, what do you see that makes this program work and you've you've kind of talked about it before but in reference to the effective pneus of this partnership? What is it?

**P6** 13:33

Well, it's twofold from the USFS back versus the staff. Again, that does all the advising and help and help move the hurdles the faculty themselves has been very strong. So that has been a continuing force. Of course, you know, the price is reasonable. So the from the USF part, it's been their staff and faculty from T goes part number one, we have a tuition assistance policy that allows for really 100% If they get A's and B's in their classes, which most of them do. While these classes are either in the evenings or online, it takes their leadership, their supervisors, managers, directors officers to be able to support this and allow this. So without their support, it probably would not have happened or wouldn't have been as successful as why we had the graduation ceremony so that we can have individuals recognize it. So it's gotta take it has to have a success of their leaders get his continued again every 18 to 24 months one cohort after another. He went on about successful if it wasn't succeeding, then word of mouth would have killed it. But word of mouth didn't kill it. Word of mouth kept going. I didn't even have to advertise. Normally would have to have some people in a waiting area in a holding area. Okay, well, we're going to start in six months. We're gonna start in 12 months just wait, right? By the way, sometimes when they are in this waiting period of six to 12 month waiting for the cohort to start. USF has worked with them and allow them to go ahead and take some other classes that would be outside of the cohort. So they could remember I said 13 classes would be in the cohort seven would be outside so some of our members were able to do that. USF staff has also allowed them to double up sometimes to take classes outside of the cohort simultaneously with the cohort get seven classes outside. So that's another thing that completely outside of anything Kiko has been doing with USF has worked with them, and gives them the guidance so that they can take the classes and it's got it I'm sorry. I just got it has to have a tuition coordinator. And that's advising individuals. I don't want to say how you say you need a me there, or you need somebody who who is passionate about it. Because it is time consuming. No, this was never part of my job is not what I was hired to do. But it was in my you

know, that's what you're passionate about. Yeah, I was very passionate about it. So and actually right, and the question was asked about two years ago, what percentage of my time do I spend on education and this is not just with USF, but with HCC and other colleges. And it's more than 25% of my time. That was what I told senior leadership. And so the question was even asked, you know, is this worth it? And the answer came back yes, it's worth it. So, again, never part of what I was hired to do, because I had the background is time consuming that I would do that. When we were taking classes I would normally try to be there at the beginning of each class. So classes started at either 530 or six o'clock. So there were always long days. I didn't have to be there. People always said you don't have to be and maybe I didn't, but you know, I could talk to the students encourage them. I love doing

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 17:23

so in your mind. It's intrinsically motivating for you to be able to support each one of them individually and collectively as a group and then to be able to also then celebrate their wins. Whether it's finishing a class finishing a test getting on to the next minute and then ultimately walking the stage. What do you think the benefit is to the company for these folks?

**P6** 17:51

You'll see in our tuition policy, it says getting a degree is no guarantee that you're going to get promoted or advancement or anything else. However that has happened. I've been cautious about tracking promotions, because I don't want to tie it to that. But number one promotions have happened. We had an individual you can edit this out. Sure he was. He was in our first cohort. He passed away about a month ago. He was actually our very first HCC cohort, and after HCC finished, they wanted to start something with a four year school. That's when I tried with USF it didn't work. So I went to St. Leo that we created a st Leo cohort. He kept pushing and pushing and pushing. So finally, literally because he wouldn't shut up. I just kept pursuing it until we were able to start the USF cohort which he joined. He was able to he had to straddle a couple of cohorts but he graduated and then he retired from ENGACO about three or four years ago. And he passed away last month. And he told me he had been a lineman align worker for 30 plus years in the company. And he said, This education has made me see life in 3d. I can drive down the highway and see a billboard and I understand what it means more than just what the words are. He would actually go on campus and take classes with USF students because he said he just loved being around the energy right that'll that that that will motivate me for the next X number of years. So what has it done for the company? It has given individuals a better insight into utility regulations. We have crisis leadership. We have emergency management where they get certifications and emergency management tied in with US public administration in addition to managerial communications and organizational relationships, so it's organically it's grown because it's worked

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 20:12

How do you perceive and this is not one of the questions but how do you perceive that your employees feel and how are we doing on time because we've got two more questions. Okay, how do you perceive the employees feel about the benefits to themselves as employees or how they feel the company is viewing it having them have gone through the program?

**P6** 20:34

Well, that could be better asked to them but I like scales that was the on a scale of one to 1-10 with 10 being high. They would I think they would put it in an eight to a 10. Again, they have a better understanding of many of them say many of them are older and they have been denied positions in the past because they didn't have a piece of paper. What they have told me many times is they no longer see a college degree as a piece of paper. It is not just the education is the perseverance of dedication. And I've had more than one person of the 1000 people who have taken classes say it changed my mind about saying it's just a piece of paper. So how do they see it? They see it as an opportunity for education. And I would say seven out of ten Eight out of ten would at least say they would never have been able to do this degree. If our company did not do it. It could be nine out of ten. In fact, just going backwards, Renee, I will say HCC had a program with ENGACO for 10 years before I got here, and three people in the company had taken advantage of it. Based on my background, it was just perfect timing. It wasn't me but based on that. Three months after I got here we had 40 guys in the classroom. So

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 22:09

I hear you.

**P6** 22:12

Again, this is not about me. I just I just happen to be at the right place at the right time here

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 22:17

the drive. Yeah.

**P6** 22:20

There has to be a driver.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 22:21

You have to have a drive or you have to have somebody that has eyes on it to be able to show people

**P6** 22:27

and I do feel very disconnected from the current cohort. I know them. But I used to see the other cohorts weekly, at least twice a week or twice a month, if not more, but this group I feel very disconnected with but they they have succeeded. I still am an email touch with them and communicate with them probably once a month or every other month but they have succeeded.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 22:57

So why why do you think you're just disconnected from that cohort? Just

**P6** 23:04

everything's online. All the classes are online. So many of them aren't going in there all work. You know many of them are working from home. So I just don't have the the personal touch but again, that's why the HCC has completely dried up. Fortunately, the USF winds had their HCC experiences to fall back on. Part of the encouragement I will say Renee was in the first couple of classes at USF almost to a person they would say this is too much I can't do this. And I would say yeah, this is harder than HCC is

harder than your community college. But you had success in that you'll have success in that. So that was why I really wanted to encourage them especially at the beginning of cohorts.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 24:00

Going going along that just ask me questions because now, the core classes were in person before COVID and post COVID. Everything now is online and I understand the skills training center is no longer a thing where the classes were held. One is Do you see what are the differences that you see now that those core classes have moved online? Has that been a hindrance in new and new employees? You know, taken advantage of the tuition assistance program? And have you seen any hesitancy I guess, with everything having moved online, and

**P6** 24:50

not with not with USF so the USF cohort itself was able to stay on track and continue on. Okay. But HCC I would typically have 50 enrollments in four classes a week. Yeah. It's that has dried up to zero

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 25:10

and that's because they've gone to an online, online

**P6** 25:13

and our students especially, you know, initially going back to college. Again, they were in their mid some of their 20s 30s 40s 50s. They didn't want online classes. They needed the group to help them. They didn't want they didn't want to go online. Okay, so it just it completely dried up. There might have been a few people who I still talk to who will take some HCC online classes, but

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 25:42

do you think that starting for those that are going straight to HCC before going to transfer it into a four year institution and being able to have that in person? Classes in the very beginning helps them in their transition of going to online at the four year university because then they've had that experience?

**P6** 26:01

Absolutely.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 26:01

So you feel like for adult learners in general most of them need that in person engagement.

**P6** 26:09

Absolutely. That helps in the transition to succeed online. Some of them can, but it's easier to drop out. If you're not sitting there in class with somebody. People would talk to each other encourage each other. No, don't stop. So it was a social group as much as a collegiate group.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 26:30

And why do you think you don't you didn't have a cohort for USF this year.

**P6** 26:37



Because my feeder pool from HCC didn't exist. Okay. The last class that we had with HCC was in March 2020. They met one time then the pandemic started and we all went online. So again, we started this cohort in January 21 already had that fear pool,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 27:03

but okay. So that's why now you're kind of best case scenario could be August of 2023.

**P6** 27:12

Correct.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 27:13

Okay. Do you

**P6** 27:19

also see, you know, I can pull people from various colleges I've got lots of people who have associate's degree, but once they walked through 15 or 20 classes with a group of people at HCC, they got to know them, they got to it again. It was a social group.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 27:34

They want to move together. In a group

**P6** 27:36

is an easier transition to move straight into us up

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 27:39

yep.

**P6** 27:39

So they you know, now even if I started a new one, I'd be you know, it would be a new group of people just starting raw with USF. So I don't know. I don't know what that would look like.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 27:53

Do you do you foresee ever going being able to offer in person core classes at ENGACO campus somewhere?

**P6** 28:03

Yeah, I believe that we can. While we don't have the same facility that we have, there are places that we can hold classes.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 28:12

Okay.

**P6** 28:13

And I don't know if you want to say this or not. I've actually tried to tuck this cohort into doing that. But they have done a year and a half online and they say no, it's too convenient now. And they're, they're moving along. So I wasn't going to push it.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 28:27

Okay, so this cohort started online they were going to finish online.

**P6** 28:32

Yes.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 28:33

Okay. Next question has to do with your perception of sustainable components for this. So, and I usually talk about you and I. So if we were to take, you know, this program this partnership to other local community partners Port Authority, USAA, MetLife, any of those types of organizations to implement a similar UI partnership, a similar tuition program saying they don't have one? What factors are important to you that you think should be considered?

**P6** 29:21

Well, the first thing from the company is they need executive level support for the program. And for tuition assistance. I don't know that if the company didn't have a tuition assistance policy that reimburses students. If they would still go again. Our students can go essentially for free. They get the right grades. So this has to have executive level support. It has to have intermediate and direct level support from their leaders, that this is an important program and that we will support you. The company has to have an emphasis on learning and education and value that. So from a company aspect, the leadership support has to be there. They need somebody to meet but they need they need a driver. They need somebody who is the point person who can talk about various aspects I'm not trying to be their advisor, I will often tell them, I knew the world. So I'm your Yeah. But they need a driver who can who can see I have so many people who come and say I want to finish college but I have no idea how I know how they can do that. I know what classes are typically necessary. So I can give them a picture. Once I lay that out, then they have a better idea. Then that week, they need somebody who will help them with reimbursements, helping with applications help them with the paperwork. So that's all the company side, USF doing their job, and I believe USF would step in and do this with any of the other companies. There's got to be leadership support a culture within the company, that training and education is important and valued. And there has to be again it's taking about 25% of my time to be able to do this

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 31:25

what are the components that you perceive being the partner that USF provides to make this partnership work?

**P6** 31:35

Really from cradle to grave, again, application, help orientation help, advising help, ongoing advising because you have students non traditional students who have classes for multiple colleges over multiple years, but scoop them into a basket you need somebody who understands working adults and

are able to be flexible with that. And the professor's well officially the class is supposed to be X number of hours. I've always told the professor these are working adults, some of them are begin working in six or 7am and the classes are starting at 530. So do what you can with them and keep them engaged. If the professors were not keeping them engaged, then word would have spread and this program would have died. But the professor's worked with that. And I will say this that the professors have told me because I've asked them many times are you watering this down? Are you doing anything less for our students? That you would do traditional for traditional students and to a person they say absolutely not. In fact, they love coming here, but USF and HCC all through that because they said we actually have students who care students who show up to class. So the professors continue to come back because of the culture and quality of our students than the emphasis our company places on it. That could have killed it. Anything could have killed this program. If the leaders didn't support it, if HR didn't support it, if the faculty didn't support it, if the staff didn't score any one of those four could have killed this program, in an instance instance. So

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 33:23

yeah, the professors that you have you said you have you believe there's six that teach consistently in here about they've been doing this long term with you all

**P6** 33:36

they have we've got a gonna have to look at the list. They've got some this is cohort five, believe we've got nobody I don't believe was in cohort one because that was unique. But at least going back to cohorts, two, two, and especially three okay. So professors that were really good have moved on, we'd have added some new professors here and there, but that's got the list of all the professors.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 34:03

Speaking of professors, you at one time had offered maybe to reach out to one or two of them to see if they wanted to have a conversation with me in reference to this this is sidebar note now, but we're talking about it. Would you feel comfortable to reach out to one or two of them to see if they would have a conversation with me in reference to the program and their experiences?

**P6** 34:24

Um, you said you knew Leslie Tod right?

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 34:26

Yes.

**P6** 34:28

They reached out to us we leslie I think he's done at least three cohorts, if not four.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 34:34

Okay. I just had a meeting with her last week. So I will as a as an office, so I'll reach out to Leslie Tod so she has taught

**P6** 34:42

Yes. Okay. And I will also reach out to Dr. Gabby Harmon was at USF she's now at Moffitt. She typically teaches she just finished teaching at the summer class with the cohort. She normally teaches two classes.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 34:59

Okay. Is Lesley Tod currently well, I'll talk to her I'll reach out to her when we're done. And say, Okay, perfect. So yeah, if I could get one or two one or both. Great, but that I think that would help get a different perspective.

**P6** 35:15

Okay. So again, if you're looking at a four person four things stool that could build this program or kill it, the faculty whether they care or not, and their emphasis the USF staff in advising and help and registration. The if the leadership at the company did not support it, it would die because individuals would not be encouraged to do the classes, as I didn't have a driver within HR, the tuition policy. Those I would say those are the core critical components,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 35:51

faculty staff from USF company leadership, and a driver a person with an HR to lead to headed up

**P6** 36:00

again, is a tuition reimbursement policy and the one that we've got right now, again, while it's in some draft forms of revision, we did some benchmark with other companies and other utilities to ensure that we were in line with our policy. And we are

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 36:19

okay. I'm going to start that last question really has to do with improvement. So, thinking about the current program, how it is and thinking if we were to take this out on the road to USA MetLife. Looking at the current program, looking at the current partnership, what do you believe can be done differently or might help to improve this program this partnership, long term to make it better?

**P6** 36:59

Candidly, I've not you asked about the classes and they have worked they've continued to but I would like to go back honestly and look at the 12 classes that were offering to ensure that there's not been anything new out there that we could put in lieu of some of the current classes. I don't think we've done a deep dive on the curriculum. And I would like to do that to ensure so what works for EnGaCo may not work for USAA or Raymond James. So I think by annually the company needs to do a deep dive into the curriculum to ensure that it's meeting the company needs. That's number one, number two there were times within our students where we would we actually all went to USF. We had a social we actually had Rocky the ball calm at one point. We had a little social with it. And I think getting the students to make them feel more like a real USF students. Some of them we got ID cards of course I could go on campus and get those but certain USF events, whether it was football games or tailgating events or something, getting them more engaged so that they just don't feel like a name and a number of they're giving USF some money and getting an education. The pandemic of course has affected that and other work, but that's a joint effort between USF and the company. And I think that's something that

could that could and should be done. At least once a year. if not twice a year make the students feel more like a USF I would love to have done more of that. We did it with some of the cohorts and it really made a difference to make them feel like a real Bulll instead of just an online student. So again, a deep dive on the curriculum, and just a gut check. And then a little bit more involvement. I've always wanted to start an alumni group. And I just haven't I think you've got the numbers at for grabs. Some of them organically individually will connect with each other. But I would like to get them together more often. And have socials we've only done it once or twice honestly, in the past decade that we've had a USF that's outside of going to USF itself but just having a social because this makes them feel like they belong people don't just look people don't want to just go and get a college degree. They could do that on their own. But this was a social endeavor. So creating maybe a company alumni group. Yes. Separate from a USF alum. Who they want to be I would love for them to be part of the USF alumni and I envisioned having a college day as a company where you're where your jerseys wear your colors, you know, be proud of Florida State, UF UCF, whatever it is. And that's just never come to fruition. But that takes a company that values education. Which we do, it's just, we've just not has not been able to do it.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 40:21

Okay, I'm just talking about curriculum, so I'm not going to ask you about that. Are there any other resources that you feel would be helpful for your employees, students that are going through this program? Resources that if they were coming to campus, they would have tutoring help. Whatever success initiatives are that you think they might need?

**P6** 40:47

Yeah, so with that, we did have a modest library where the students used a book for a particular class that would bring it back in and then we could reuse that the next class and the next class that could be a savings. I think most of our online students come in life has changed. I think a lot of them are using ebooks now so but a library where they can share books. That's number one that tutoring help. HCC has offered that I think USF has offered. I don't know that we've lost anybody or anybody's dropped out because of a lack of tutoring. Would that help? Perhaps it could, and if they felt more like a USF student maybe they take more advantage of that. So that that could be beneficial.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 41:33

That I've had the

**P6** 41:35

we had a with with a library we had a modest amount of the CLEP and DSST materials because this is important. Again, we got people that are 40s and 50s. They can take and pass these DSST exams. Some of this has just been you know, if we have one person in the class who was successful then they will keep the momentum going and they will share the information so more information on testing alternatives. We've done a fair job at in some years. We did a wonderful job. We've not done a good job lately.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 42:09

Okay. So I said last question, but I'm telling stories because I want to know, what are the challenges with the partnership? Are there any challenges that you perceive with the university industry

partnership, and in this I guess it could be with USF HCC St. Leo, I don't know that we still have an active program. With St. Leo. But challenges. roadblocks.

**P6** 42:41

We would like to the student aspect is many of them before they started they just don't think they can do it. It's been too long since they've been in school. They have children they have jobs, single parents. We've taken away the financial aspect, we can provide that our that can still be a burden because they have to come up with the money up front. So that can be somewhat of a burden. But from the student aspect, they need to know that they can do this and I think when we were more full enforce word spread and people would see study groups happening at lunch, and they would know Yeah, this these individuals are doing it. I can do it too. We've not had that but just from a student aspect, that that is a hurdle has been can be somewhat of a hurdle again, it's a reimbursement so they've got to come up with the money. So we do encourage them to apply the FAFSA plan for scholarships and grants. And we've had some students who've taken the initiative to be the point person for this. We've got some students who've never paid a dime out of pocket for any class because they got scholarships and grants in addition to ENGACO monies. So that's important and that information came from financial initially going into school. If there's prereqs math has always been the biggest hurdle. I'm not good at math. I can't take math done everything else and I just I can't do that. So so that's where tutoring comes in. You're absolutely right. Okay. If leadership doesn't support it or value it, then that's going to be a hurdle and I would I guess I would guess this is just a guess. If our tuition policy changed, maybe it's not even fair to say if we were not reimbursing I don't think it exist. Okay. So that people would be able to do it. Whether it's St. Leo or already us go out and tell people there's 30 regionally accredited schools in town, well, I'm not going to, you know, where do you want to go? what degree do you want? So it's your choice. The hurdles could be within the staff and faculty, the faculty and we'd have had faculty as loss ecologist who were not amenable to adult students. They treated them like traditional students. They were dogmatic and Dantec, whatever. And word spread and people would say I'm not taking this professor. There have been some professors in many of our work again, word spreads. So if the professors again, it's not watered down. Professors to a person have said they don't water down the curriculum or anything else, but the professors have to have a feeling for adult students Okay.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 46:05

In creating partnerships like this between an industry and University, University provides at the time they were providing instructors to come out to your campus to teach so that's a that's a cost they incur one sending sending an advisor out there, it's a cost that they incur, right, so do you think if industry if in this partnership, there was a fee, per se, associated with the partnership to help offset some of those additional costs, do you think that would hinder an industry from partnering and having like an exclusive if, if, if in that fee that the industry would pay to the university to have this partnership but in turn, it also gave you greater access to other to graduates, you know, to have exclusive access to graduates to have other opportunities to have a dedicated resource here on campus that only worked with industry partners like EnGaCo What do you do perceive that industry would pay for that?

**P6** 47:26

I guess it depends on how much that fee would be. Its potential. I understand that. As far as the additional cost to the university and I don't know I know that the professors are still getting paid their regular stipend. Yes. I don't know that they are getting an additional stipend to come out.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 47:51

They do. For travel. They were they were

**P6** 47:56

they were was that just was that just for mileage? Yep. Okay, so we're talking 55 cents a mile.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 48:05

I don't know. I don't know what else would it would have been but I know that they were. They could charge mileage back.

**P6** 48:13

Okay. And that would be a nominal fee. I would counter to the university. I also have a classroom. I'm not taking up a classroom, right. I'm not using your utilities. We're not doing wear and tear at your facilities at your campus. So it could be a wash you have a free site that you're using. Whatever your agreement is with the professors with the with the professor, as far as the advisor, and that's another that can be a big hurdle. We don't I don't need a dedicated advisor who's just dealing with ENGACO. I need one person I told the other colleges. I can't deal with multiple people. I'm sorry, I need one person

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 48:54

of course.

**P6** 48:54

I'm the one person I'm your person, that teacup. I may farm it out. But I'm your initial gatekeeper. I need one person that I can point people to not multiple ones. Yep. And then that person can farm it out. So the adviser when the adviser has come out here, I think that it is much more cost effective because they can hit you know, multiple students.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 49:15

Absolutely. Absolutely.

**P6** 49:17

So if there were a fee that were associated, I think that the code that the companies would probably pay out again, I see it as a nominal fee.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 49:27

Yeah. No, I agree with you. I just started thinking in my brain so from because I largely think industry side because that's where I come from, but then thinking about but we all we always think about costs associated with whatever it is that we're doing. So then my brain says, well, there is a cost associated for the university. I don't know what that is. I don't know what all they pay for. That would be over and above what they would normally provide. So my brain was just thinking about it.

**P6** 49:56

Fair question. Now, I will say that there are some colleges that actually give us a percentage discount USF doesn't or HCC but at some other colleges do give us a percentage discount for any. Any ENGACO students regardless whether it's a cohort or not just a flat 10% discount.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 50:17

How do they apply that?

**P6** 50:20

I don't know. I just tell them or ENGACO student they prove it and they give them a 10% discount.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 50:24

So they get it off of there anything like just tuition and fees or is that books too? I wonder?

**P6** 50:31

I think it's just tuition and fees.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 50:33

Okay. So you have some universities or colleges that they do that for you?

**P6** 50:38

That's correct. Now, we do have that, in fact, it's in draft form right now. And he sent it back, both for two different colleges, USF and another where we have an MOU, a memorandum or an understanding or agreement that they will do this and I've run this through our legal department. They looked at it to send it back to the college's USF being one of those so that it can be signed by the executives on both. And what they are asking is, you know, they want to ensure USF wants to ensure that we will you know, we're working with the program. We will advertise within our company. We will put it on their web on our website. We will promote and up until 2019 We also hosted a TBEGA event every year. Are you familiar with TBEGA?

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 51:27

No, I was gonna ask you

**P6** 51:29

It is the Tampa Bay Higher Education Alliance. So there were 30 some odd schools who were part of the Tampa Bay Higher Education Alliance, who would have education fairs, okay. And we would normally post one of those annually at our downtown location where we would have 15 to 20 schools come in for four hours set up an info table and we would advertise like that. Okay, yeah, we don't necessarily promote one college over another right. It has to be regionally accredited.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 52:11

Okay, and so is that not a thing now? Posted COVID just hasn't happened?



**P6** 52:16

It hasn't happened.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 52:18

Okay,

**P6** 52:18

now they've not they've not asked for this year. Of course it didn't last for the last two. So I don't know where we're at now.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 52:25

And will this be the first time ENGACO signed an MOU with the university?

**P6** 52:30

No, this was a revision. This was just an update. It's the revision Okay.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 52:33

Got it. Anything else you can think of?

**P6** 52:42

There was something else I thought it slipped my mind again, only advising I don't want or expect a college dedicated advisor just to us. But I do want I've had many people who said they went to USF or they went to HCC and they talked to somebody and they told him such and such. Now you need to go to one person. And then again, if Beth or Walter can answer that I completely get that but they at least know our programs. Okay, gotta be a gatekeeper at the college that knows the program.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 53:28

Yeah. And you have that here with Walter and of course, Beth.

**P6** 53:34

Yes. Yes, absolutely. Okay. All right.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 53:49

Just looking over real quick to see if I've missed anything, or if there's anything else you can think of. No, this has been extremely helpful. With this, if there's nothing else I'm gonna go ahead and stop the recording.

## APPENDIX W:

### P7 INTERVIEW

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## P7 Interview

Thu, 8/18 2:01PM • 41:20

### SPEAKERS

P7, Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee

🗉

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 00:00

Okay, good morning. Good afternoon, afternoon. What is it? Evening?

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**P7** 00:04

Afternoon afternoon.

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 00:08

I wanted to ask you real quick if it's okay that I record you during this interview process for the university and industry partnership conversation.

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**P7** 00:15

Yes.

🗉

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 00:16

Great. Thanks. Thank you, ma'am. Thank you though to for agreeing to participate in agreeing to help me on this entire journey.

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**P7** 00:26

No, problem

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 00:27

I appreciate that. All right. So I've got four follow up. Questions for you. We've spoke for a long time about the university industry partnership between you and ENGACO. So today, I've got four separate questions. The first one is going to address the partnership structure. The second one we'll talk about the factors that influence the effectiveness of the partnership. Basically, what's important there, the third one's going to address sustainable components of a university industry partnership, and then the last one is really going to look at improvement and challenges.

🗉

**P7** 01:06

Okay.

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 01:11

Here we go. Okay, so the first question, having to do with the partnership structure, and we've talked about it before,

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**P7** 01:21

yeah,

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 01:21

but looking at it now. How do you perceive the relationship between ENGACO and USF for this degree program?

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**P7** 01:29

I would say it's very strong. The at the time their previous Provost who was interested in this partnership, I can't recall his name, because the Provost P6 might know him because he the he knew the president at ENGACO and then they wanted to make this happen. I don't know. Maybe it was the Provost . It might have been what Ralph Wilcox was interested in us offering the ENGACO employees an opportunity to earn their bachelor degree. So I would say it's strong. Our current Dean of Undergraduate Studies Dr. Allison Crume is really interested in continuing this kind of partnership and making it stronger. Right now, like I mentioned, you know, budgeting is is a big issue at this time and I don't know if we necessarily have like all of the necessary resources that we can to make this program as close to perfect as possible. But I would say it's a very strong commitment. Our Assistant Dean of Academic Programs is also a huge proponent of this program and continuing it on. It could have if, you know, based on the numbers that we have with ENGACO they're in the teens. And so they're not we're not generating like 60 students, but the fact that we've been I've been able to keep this going, has been like, it's tremendous. Like, you know, we have the commitment there with the leadership of the institution, so it's never going away in my opinion

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 03:06

what do you believe is the strength of the partnership? What what's creating that?

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**P7** 03:11

I think, I mean, on a more sounds like on a more personal level than like a professional level, but I think it's the relationship that I have with P6. That passion that we both share for these types of these post traditional students is definitely there the work that he does, and the work that I do are similar in nature and the passion that we have with one another is very similar. We both want are interested in just kind of like changing the world. I know it sounds cliché, but our job is to really kind of change the world by graduating students and we both have that partnership and connection. And within undergraduate studies, we do provide specialized programs like this. So this is just a compliment to the department. So I would say strong leadership and as well, like Allison knows all about ENGACO XXXXX knows all about ENGACO and its purpose and when a new dean typically comes in to undergraduate studies, they might change things they may decide. Now, we don't really need to do this, but I've had multiple Dean's in this department that really understand the importance of this and want to keep it going so that I think me being here just really emphasizing the importance. of this program is the reason why it gets to stay here because there's no financial benefit to the institution, right. But it is a benefit to the community. And so it's a even though they're a huge company. There's other institutions that they send their students too. I think one thing this might be like an improvement thing is we would prefer like if we could take all of their students because we were a public institution and tuition is much cheaper than a

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private institution like St. Leo but but before we can get there because St. Leo is very like their structure is a private institution is going to have processes and budget and money that's different than a public institution. So they can do a lot more than that probably more efficient. But I think the relationships that we build with these students in being in the university community at a public institution in their backyard, really makes the difference. So yeah, so I would just say that we want everybody to be bulls. I mean, it sounds very selfish, but it is the truth. Like I mean, to spend that amount of money as St. Leo to get the same thing that you would get here. It to me it just makes more value sense for those students that are working at EnGaCo to complete their degree with USF.

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee 06:08**

Going off the value add for the student. What do you perceive the value is to be in a Bull

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**P7 06:15**

degree from a research one pre eminent public institution I mean that is a no brainer. The the way their trajectory and the position that USF it sets it has set itself like we're top growing institution in the whole entire country, like those, you know, preeminent points. Or I don't know what to say like those cornerstones are like everything about what's happening at USF. What's happening in the Student Success movement is really making a big difference. So it really does. It really does matter where you get your degree and my opinion, and I think because we have such a prestigious institution within the Tampa Bay area, that that adds the value for our students because our name is like it's being known, like we're kind of like on the map now. And so when you say that when you say you know, I attended USF or I worked for USF people are like, Oh, really you work for USF? They think of students success. They think of graduation rates, they think of preeminence, they think a research institution so there's so much value to a bachelor degree from here now more than there ever was before.

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee 07:36**

Luck, you've got your elevator, pitch down.

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**P7 07:41**

Polish the elevator.

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee 07:45**

Anything else you want to add about? The partnership structure, how it's structured?

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**P7 07:50**

Well, you know how we how we offer the courses in that cohort model that's important just to keep that group of folks together. Were there with us for two years. We try to build a close, like relationships with them. I think we've had different advisors so it's not as close as it should be. But we're still trying to provide that concierge service. So we do have P8 going out to that population in September, to actually advise them rather than having them come here or doing something on Microsoft Teams. It's like we're gonna see you may put a name with a face. So so the first thing is going to be the concierge advising services. The cohort model, the accelerated model and a customized degree program just for ENGACO students, leadership and change management I'm taking my own notes and I you could probably like you know, reword it all to like, you know how like I've been trying to figure out like sometimes when I'm

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trying to explain like the whole eight like, Hey, you can complete two courses in one semester. It's like, well, I can complete four courses in one semester, but it's like, no, these courses are normally 16 weeks long. The first eight weeks you're completing a course that's really designed to be 16 weeks in eight weeks and then you're doing it again. So you're finished your it seems like it to me it's accelerated but

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 09:43

it is

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**P7** 09:44

yeah, it's like you can't do that anywhere else like a lot of these bachelor degree programs like at you know, the more prestigious Institute's like FSU UF, they don't have this particular type of partnership. So that's another thing unique partnership with the Tampa Bay community and area I said customized degree program or

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 10:22

customized degree model, eight week accelerated model. So in typical 16 weeks, you had to complete one course whereas in this partnership model, you can complete two courses in 16 weeks.

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**P7** 10:37

Yeah, and we said concierge services .

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 10:41

You said, Yeah, concierge advising services, the cohort model, accelerated model, then customized a great plan. Okay, perfect.

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10:49

Yep, those are that's that's the key that and that's what makes ENGACO the ENGACO partnership?

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 10:55

How often? Going based off of what you talked about with the courses within that degree plan? How often are they audited or evaluated to see if they're still relevant to the industry?

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**P7** 11:07

That's a good question. I would say we have not kind of gotten there necessarily yet. Now, those courses actually belong to the colleges, right. So we own the degree but we don't own the courses if that makes sense. So those courses are evaluated. There's every every seven years every department or degree program has to do a seven year academic program review. So those courses that are offered through ENGACO are embedded in those seven year reviews. So those courses are reviewed, we just have not seen like the data or like what the review is or what the assessment says about like how students are doing in the course. So specific to ENGACO that actually would be a good kind of stretch goal for us to really see like are the courses that are built in this concentration really relevant. One thing that why we believe it is still relevant is because these are the courses specifically ENGACO has wanted their students to have on their degree. So we like they are in partnership with us, obviously, you

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know, they're they created their own curriculum. So disasters and leadership, public service, public administration, like all of those type of courses have really been designed for them like for the work that they're doing in that industry. And so it still should be relevant. And then the thing about USF we'll and this might be XXXXX questions too. But every every year of courses have to be evaluated, reviewed, to make sure that they're still meeting their student learning outcomes. And so those evaluations are taking place. I just haven't necessarily seen the data. I'm assuming that the crisis and disaster courses still do what it's supposed to do for people that work with energy. And I think, you know, it's also a student question like, are they seeing the you know, benefit of what they learned applying that to their work? So so that's another that's a good stretch goal, though.

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 13:14

See, I'm interviewing you and you're gonna walk away with homework?

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**P7** 13:17

Yeah, I do it like Kena. We need to talk about like how we can find out how these courses are being evaluated, and they're still doing what they're supposed to be doing.

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 13:27

Well, I think too, like part of like, what you said, like, the industry also needs to evaluate the program. Yeah. And do their due diligence on the relevancy of things too, but I see it kind of as two, two separate doing your valuations and then you come together to see where you're

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**P7** 13:45

probably like if we were with a Raymond James or some other organization, they would ask us for that information, and we would need to try to scramble to get it so it's best to try to figure it out now, like XXXXX cuz she does a lot of that, you know, assessment Gen Ed stuff. So I can see like, you know, looking at the list of courses that we offer, can you find out like the evaluation courses, some of these courses could be Gen Ed's, so she does like all the stuff with Gen Ed's so so she might be able to actually pull that information. That's the benefit of hers and she has that curriculum piece. That like if we needed that information, we could get it. Yeah. Course eval info,

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 14:30

and since you've been working with the Oh, that was what I wanted to ask you way up here. How long have you been working with the ENGACO partnership?

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**P7** 14:39

seven years.

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 14:53

Okay, I'm going to move on we'll move on to the second. The next question. Okay. This question? Really what looking to see what are the factors that influence the effectiveness of the UI partnership? So basically, what's important for so in your mind, what do you see that makes this program work?

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**P7** 15:22

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Um, I guess it takes just not to give like a technical response, but to really think about it. It's it really takes the dedication of the staff at this point, because, like I said, I mean, at the end of the day, higher education is a business and we need to, you know, generate funds to fund other things. And, you know, that's not happening in this case. But you have people that are committed to seeing this industry partnership work, that are committed, committed to seeing more degree holders in the Tampa Bay area, that want that sort of connection between higher education and employers and industry. So right now, it's a what do you call that? It's like a labor of love. Right, because like any moment, like when I first took this on, and just seeing that what uh, you know, it wasn't a lot of students, but you know, it was a lot of work. But understanding that passion that I have for work with post traditional students, like I'm doing it because I want to like at any point, I could have said, You know what, this is not generating any money. It's only extra work for me. But I still see the value like if the provost obviously sees a connection like we that we can offer bachelor degrees to people like right in our backyard or people that are providing us with energy. Why not? Why not keep something like this? Going regardless of if the numbers are small. It's still a benefit, even if it affects one person if it helps one person that makes a difference to me. So dedication. I would say is very essential to keeping this going. Yeah.

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 17:28

Would you say that's also been what's made it successful? Is the people

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**P7** 17:32

Yeah, I mean, I don't want to like you know, say anything that's gonna make me look bad. I wouldn't say that it's completely successful. You know, for me, what I think of success for an industry partnership, it wouldn't be you know, more than 20 students per semester. It would be a dedicated team. of people, a dedicated department or department within a department that has the funding to really properly pay their instructors to be able to fund events to make the ENGACO students feel like Bulls. Like there's no budget associated for this. If we were going to have an event it would have to probably come out of I don't know what budget it would come out of because there's just no money for that kind of stuff. But everything that we do for our students like on campus is great. But sometimes it's important for us to bring that outside of the campus to places like ENGACO place that we have industry partnerships. I think there's a Jabil partnership Yeah, with college of business that they do, but College of Business has a great amount of funding to do all of those things whereas an undergraduate studies you know, we're not necessarily a college really, really like an academic department. So we don't have it so I will call a successful program it to future visions that I have for ENGACO would be 1. more students, which I know I don't know, how did did P6 mentioned how many employees they have? Kind of roughly

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 19:19

Yeah, he did. I mean, yeah. 1000s Okay, so yeah, so we go back and look at my numbers specifically, but yeah, so

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**P7** 19:28

we're getting like 1% of those students, you know, eventually we'd like three 2% 3% for it. We want to see that number increase, and we need to have the dedicated staff and funding to make it successful. These students really need like in depth face to face in your face, handholding accurate academic

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advising that's what they need. And I think if we did have that, you know, opportunities to follow up on students that are inactive that haven't graduated, we, we need to outreach to them. We need to like say, Hey, you were doing this thing. Do you want to go ahead and finish we want to make sure that we graduated 100% of the EnGaCo students and right now we're, I think it was 80% Yeah, so if I had the time, I would be like calling these students be like, hey, yeah, Sheikha you didn't finish like let's get this going, you know, but you know, I have another like, part of my job and I can't do that. I hate saying that. Because like, it's kind of our job. But um, yeah, it just is yes, we don't have the bandwidth to do what we want to do in a perfect world.

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee 20:46**

Okay, let's see. Perceived sustainable components of the partnership. So if we were to take this so long time ago, we talked about so if we do this evaluation, and I do this study, and then at the end of it, we we build a program that we can take out to other industry partners mentioned Raymond James, Port Authority, the USAA, MetLife, Amazon, all of those companies to implement a similar program with them. What factors are important that should be considered in that

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**P7 21:24**

money? You know, you talk about sustainability, we need the green like the money is going to be essential. And I think, um, like currently, like with Ron DeSantis, he's really into this more like vocational, you know, work and I think, some areas of ENGACO you know, they're doing that you've got like the linemen that are doing that work. And so that's vocational. Right. But when you want that supervisor of the lineman and then he asked to have that bachelor degree, so I think that's a good like sort of pathway Okay, start vocational. Get your, you know, certificate or what have you. Get your AA or your AAS degree, transition on for your Bachelor's maybe you want to be a master or a doctor of a lack of energy and you want to learn that you want to learn how to manage people, you want to learn organizational management and how to run a business. Like it's a perfect pathway for a person that is really, really passionate about the work and that wants to learn more beyond what they're doing. So um, I would say you know what, right like kind of like what's happening in like the state of Florida like this, you know, idea of you don't necessarily need a college degree like you can be vocational Okay, start with the vocational but then eventually get to your bachelor degree, get to your masters, get to your PhD in a specific area. So, remind me again, one more of the specific,

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee 23:01**

looking at what factors are important that need to be considered when we're thinking about building a program to take to other industry partners.

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**P7 23:08**

Oh, okay. Yeah, I'm definitely designing that that specific model because it has to have all of the elements it has to have all the pieces all of the key stakeholders that are required to make something like this happen. I think when USF decided to do this, a lot of things happen in undergraduate studies, like if you notice a lot of areas kind of just land here. Maybe possibly, if there's no rhyme or reason to it, they're there. They land here and, you know, we're trying to do a lot with a little bit you know, we're trying to stick a circular you know, object in a square hole or you know, I recent

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 23:46

Yeah,

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**P7** 23:47

but you just have to have like the buy in from your leadership and that's really what's going to also help fund programs like this industry partnership. I mean, it's a no brainer, like, yeah, you send your people to go to school to have a higher higher education and all of that. Why don't you start with the ones that you know, expose them to the energy industry, expose them to some of these vocations where they can, you know, realize that, you know, this is a good opportunity for me, for me to make a good living. This is a great way for me to help support my family. Like let's let's sort of keep this trajectory going. So, I would say, you know, dedicated will buy in from your leadership, you're at the higher level like President Provost, like probably like if you asked Rhea Law, she probably thinks that there's believes that there's some industry partnership, she probably doesn't know specifically about this one. Let's get her like acclimated to this exposed because once you have your president on board, then these things become easier whether you have the money, I mean, they can find the money to make these kinds of things work. So if we have their buy in and approval, then we could sort of, you know, make it like happen, make it a better program and have all the elements that you need for it to be successful.

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 25:26

I think he kind of hit the time to support Don't ya on there. I'm thinking back about classes and teaching on. Before COVID we were teaching on ENGACO campus. I recall you a conversation we had two years ago about there's certain requirements for being able to teach off campus and on site of an industry. What are those?

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**P7** 25:57

Because you know, you have your course options, right? It could be CL for class, it could be AD for 100% Online or HB for hybrid. So in order to prevent like, because we used to offer ENGACO off campus, our students in the ENGACO program weren't required to have their immunizations. So at one point we moved to like an 100% online model. Well, that didn't work because now at that point, they're getting charged that extra \$30 fee, so our goal is to really try to help them save money. So what we did is we moved the courses to sort of a hybrid model, so they don't have that online fee and they're not required to submit immunization requirements. So because I have a special special partnership with Student Health Services, every semester after classes start, I send a list to Student Health Services saying hey, these people are exempt from any immunization requirements. So in a way we kind of had to kind of well we're not breaking the rules. It just that ENGACO hasn't told us when we can go back to their campus right I don't know if he told you but

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 27:03

so I think what the August 2023 model, he was thinking to bring him back online back in person but I think because of the current model that's going through started online, he's he's from talking with them. They want to just continue now with the online model because they practice what they're used to now.

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**P7** 27:21

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Yeah, they're used to it, but they probably don't realize the difference. It is being in the classroom credit because they didn't experience it. Yeah, and with others, so those other cohorts had a benefit that they are Yeah, you I mean, online school, I'm totally for it. But you're missing a lot of conversations, a lot of connections and a lot of possible partnerships and friendships you could make. Being in that space with people because the ENGACO cohort they don't all work like in the same department for from everywhere. So you may have never interacted with this person before. Until you're like in this space of being in school and you know how it is you like lean on your your classmates for everything. So, being online, they're they're probably missing out and that's not the spirit of how we designed the program. We designed it to be cohort based because we wanted them to really connect with one another in person. So no one saw COVID coming but

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 28:21

no.

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**P7** 28:23

Yeah, but it's good for the next cohort if we could go back to what we were doing before

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 28:28

and I think they have the skills training center has changed and so they're looking at different spaces of where and how to make this work. So okay. So they they can be exempt from the immunization and and the additional fees

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**P7** 28:46

on my feed \$30 per credit hour, one line fee. So in a sense really words you know, saving them money and the headache of having to do an immunization because whatever's happening in the world. Yeah.

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 29:04

Got it as far as improvements, and you kind of talked a little bit about your wish list, but in thinking about bringing this to other industries or looking at your this current program in its current format What do you believe could be done differently, to help improve the program make it stronger, better?

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**P7** 29:29

Um, we kind of talked about those two Yeah, like that dedicated time. It takes dedicated time and dedicated staff to make it because you don't want to bring something somewhere and it like completely fall apart because you didn't have time to dedicate to it or you don't have the right folks in this space dedicated, could dedicate time to making sure that it's successful. So that piece is really important. And like, and I always say this, because we never have enough staff or whatever, we never have enough of anything, but we have to try to make it work with what we have. And you know, that's what we've been doing. But if we're going out going into different spaces like ENGACO you know, they're used to us they're like okay, well, you know, this onboarding process for the last cohort was awful. But this next one, he probably talked about the experiences if you talk with students like the cohort before this from cohorts for onboarding experience, not very good. We learned lessons. Next for cohort five, perfect onboarding experience. They had everything they wanted. We had a GA that was doing a lot of outreach coming in for this next cohort. We don't have a GA anymore, you don't have really the

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additional support staff to make it. Good. So in order for her to be successful, I would say realistically to professional full time staff, persons to work on it. And then as it grows, increasing that having an empire dedicated advisor for EnGaCo dedicated for Raymond James dedicated for Amazon that's really going to make those connections with like their leadership and their education person there P6, and really connect with the students on a different level. It has to be community based. It can't just be like, you know, you just take these classes that's why we offer concierge advising. We're trying to make the students which we've done a really poor job of making them feel like USF Bulls. With the model the way that it was designed, you're not having them to come here. One because they're working right. But what can we do as an institution to really make them feel like bowls like can we bring them some swag? Can we have shirts for them? That's a ENGACO USF BGS whatever. Like those kinds of things. So it would have to be like very program based. You know, like I'm used to the connections like has all these things for ENGACO a lot of times like, if I was going over there, I would have to like beg Student Government for pens like can you give me something so I can give to these students like so they can feel like that connection. So that could be true connection. true partnership is really going to make the difference. But let me see, did I answer that Oh, like, okay, and

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 32:29

there's no right or wrong. It's what do you think would be helpful? Or to improve the

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**P7** 32:33

question for me just to make sure.

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 32:36

So when you're thinking about the program in its current iteration and bringing on future industry partners, what do you think can be done differently to or help to improve and make this program better, stronger? Oh,

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**P7** 32:49

I think I answered, dedicated time

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 32:52

dedicated staff wanting to try to create that bull's connection for them since they're not coming to campus. But how do you how do you bring that to them?

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**P7** 33:00

Yeah.

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 33:02

You know,

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**P7** 33:03

I was possible like, right, we could get rocky to come with us at during an advising session.

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 33:08

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Thinking can P8 bring rocky

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**P7** 33:11

Oh, they would love that. Oh, my God if he could do that, like I'm

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 33:15

now Rocky is a fee. Right?

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**P7** 33:17

Yeah, you have to pay for Rocky. Rocky is not free. But it's like just give me the mascot thing I'll put it on.

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 33:29

Sure rocky like costume and get off Amazon. We could do

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**P7** 33:33

something something other than like the cut off or like it can

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 33:38

blow up Rocky I guess next best thing exactly.

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**P7** 33:41

You know things like this like you don't have there's like a USF while students their students, right. Some of them never even got an ID card right here right so like the football games could we schedule something for just like say this is EnGaCo day at USF or whatever and invite them to a football game. Like those kinds of things are gonna make you feel like you're a student and love your institution. And then when you're successful, you want to give back to your institution and that's what we're trying to see if we can find a rich alumni for from BGS who could support support us so we can name a building after them you know,

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 34:22

I wonder what that costs when you Yeah, like cut out a section so you have like, like a section of I don't know how many seats

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**P7** 34:30

might take for their families to

?

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 34:32

have ENGACO day right so I wonder what that what that fee is for you to be able to do AGS would support they would be guests of yours out the game.

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**P7** 34:43

I mean that and that's the thing is like having the time to figure that out. Like it's like yeah, I've got this assessment report to do I would love to find that information.

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 34:53

That's some of the things that a couple of them have talked about P6 has talked about is because he feels like they could be doing a better job to of bringing students over so so he sees it as not just a new thing but his thing. too. But how do you do that? Like how do you collaborate together to make do a ENGACO BGS event here so they can come to campus? And be celebrated and make them feel like yeah, so that they become proud alumni

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**P7** 35:22

Yeah, exactly. And like those football games really make a difference in all of that, you know, when you leave those games or even at basketball games, and you feel like oh, you know, I've done something with my school. Yeah, like they're they're really missing out on that. I hate that for them and I throw I tell you if I can do like, all these ideas that I have that I just am like not able to do because, you know, we don't have the money to do it. Like if I could just implement some of the thoughts and ideas that I had and they were like for me this this would be perfect like I would love to do this all day. But again, you know, we wear so many different hats. It's, you know, I think everybody is feels like they're stretched a little bit, you know, doing a lot more than what we've done in the past. Yeah, not having the extra time to really work on these projects. But you know, they get it done eventually it just not as quickly as we would like maybe for the next cohort we could probably do something. We're supposed to meet with them in September. I can try to see if I can find out who I can how I can get a rocky to come out with us or something but I have a feeling that you know, we won't be able to afford it.

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 36:40

Yeah, it's like I don't know what that costs. Are. What can do. Are you planning to go on? Is it on the 14th?

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**P7** 36:46

Yeah, that day was on me and P8. Yeah. I'm trying I'm trying I'm looking for swag for them. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Yep. Yep. Yeah. Yeah, kind of find them some swag.

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 37:01

Any other ideas on how to improve this?

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**P7** 37:05

Let's see here.

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 37:08

onboarding process

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**P7** 37:11

Yeah, that part. We have it down. Now. Even though we don't have the Graduate Assistant, we have a model.

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 37:18

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Do you still see the onboarding process being virtual? I don't want it to be you'd rather be face to face for the next go around.

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**P7** 37:25

Yeah. I mean, that's kind of what we did. When I first started. We went out there we talked about how to fill out the application. And we did all we did like the admissions talk. We did the financial aid talk. The next year, we did a virtual event and I had admissions representation there. I had financial aid representation there. So for this next one, I want that to be all in person. You know, we have the connection with admissions and financial aid, I can easily get someone to talk them through the application transcripts, like how to apply the deadlines and all of that good stuff, how to fill out the FAFSA and all of that stuff. So um, so yeah, so onboarding now isn't a problem that we've done it a couple of times. I mean, it's not perfect,

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 38:13

right, but what's perfect,

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**P7** 38:15

yeah, nothing.

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 38:18

Online.

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**P7** 38:20

What else here? We do have I mean, I would say like these faculty are dedicated, um, they do a lot. We ask them for help every year every two years and they kind of just really like jump in there paying them more, I think would be the way to improve the program. Because then we wouldn't lose any we'd have more you know, like retention of faculty in there and stuff. So.

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 38:51

Okay,

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**P7** 38:51

yeah.

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 38:55

What are challenges? What challenges have you faced or what challenges do you see with the program or the partnership?

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**P7** 39:01

Um, challenges? Um, not really, other than the stuff that I mentioned not having anything. One of the challenges, you know, like student typical student stuff, you know, sometimes like when we were onboarding, we'd have to constantly like any Sanyo transcript, can you send your transcript Can you say, like, that kind of thing. So even though we had a dedicated person, I was calling them and emailing

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them constantly to do those bare minimum things. We did have some some issues with getting them to do stuff.

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 39:30

Do you see that as post traditional student thing or across the board student thing

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**P7** 39:34

across the board? Student thing? Yeah, you, you know they're busy and you know, or they may not be comfortable with the technology or you know, that kind of Yeah, yeah.

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 39:47

Okay. Any other challenges with the partnership? Or the program?

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**P7** 39:54

Let me see challenge challenges, challenges. Actually just overcame a lot over this past few years. Um,

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 40:03

what were those

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**P7** 40:06

just kind of figuring out what we needed to do with them. That was one thing because the person that had them before, like, you know, that so it was, like, more political than anything, but you know, we've kind of like, it was literally like here. And it's like,

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 40:21

oh, she had to kind of

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**P7** 40:23

put bigger processes into place.

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 40:30

Okay, so building it,

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**P7** 40:31

you know, maybe probably like maybe when you talk to P8 but you probably want him to have experience really many challenges, honestly, but he might from an advisor perspective. With some of them he might mention some of those things and

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 40:47

Okay,

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**P7** 40:47

yeah.

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 40:52

Okay those were my questions.

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**P7** 41:03

Yeah, I'm sure I'll have some follow. Up answers for you like, oh, Rene, I forgot this

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**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 41:08

well, and if you do, please, please share or email to me or however, so that I can incorporate all of that as I'm analyzing the data for sure. I'm going to stop this okay.



## APPENDIX X:

### P8 INTERVIEW

P8

Thu, 8/25 1:09PM • 27:48

#### SPEAKERS

Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee, P8

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 00:03

All right. Okay, P8. So we had a few minutes to kind of chat offline explained kind of what the study is about today, and how you were able to fit and help in this project for you UGS BGS program and with our industry partner ENGACO. I do want to ask your permission if it's okay to record this conversation today.

**P8** 00:30

Yes, it's okay.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 00:31

Thank you. Thank you for that. So we did talk a little bit offline about the discussion that we're going to have today. I have four questions for you, based off of and these are the similar questions that Beth has talked about with me and the industry partner, P6 has and and XXXXX and XXXXX, I think you might be familiar with either of them as well. So very similar questions are the same questions as our students would have answered to. I've broken them down into four subject areas to help to in this evaluation process. The first one really is going to focus on describing partnership structure. The second one is going to hopefully address factors that influence the effectiveness of a university industry partnerships. So basically, what's important the third question revolves around your perceptions of sustainable components for a partnership and for a program like this because EnGaCo and USF has a very unique program. And then the fourth one is really going to look at are there any improvements or opportunities that you see that might need to be addressed in the current program or for future programs? You know, so those are the four specific areas and then based off of how you answer I may ask some follow up questions. I'm hoping this will take around you know, 40 to 45 minutes at most. Oh for you. Okay, so, first, I'm just going to ask real simple questions. What is your title?

**P8** 02:13

Academic Advisor for BGS and I advise L-Z.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 02:24

Okay, and you're also the sole advisor for ENGACO.

**P8** 02:30

Yes.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 02:34

And you have been doing that for ENGACO for how long?

**P8** 02:39

It'd be a year next month in September.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 02:43

Oh, so one year anniversary?

**P8** 02:46

Yeah.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 02:46

Okay, so you came on board September of 2021. For ENGACO.

**P8** 02:51

Yes.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 02:52

Thank you. Okay, so the first question I've got for you, like I said, is really going to address the partnership structure, specifically. So how do you perceive the relationship between ENGACO and USF for this degree program?

**P8** 03:14

Um, it's been good. I mean, this students reach out to me all the time. You know, just have different questions. Just making sure that you know, everything is online. And I you know, talk to them and reach back out to them. And you know, me and P6 have you know, talked as well. We basically decided to coordinate some time next month in December, trying to meet the students face to face because I haven't had a chance to actually meet the students. I've only talked to them through emails. So this will be the first time that where we'll be able to, like, meet the students face to face with the academic advisor and the students. So I'm excited about that. But it's been a good partnership so far, to me.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 04:10

coming on board since you've only been with them a year, how is that transition for you coming in to the ENGACO program?

**P8** 04:19

is not too bad. I mean, P6, you know, fill me in about my role best fill me in about what my role was and different things like that. And so, you know, they just told me to, you know, use my own personality, and helping the students. And so, you know, it's been good so far. So, but, you know, I've been filled in what my role was, you know, helping the students who the students were at ENGACO, what they do, and what all they needed to fulfill with their requirements so that they can graduate and get their, get their degree

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 04:58

and your communication with the students. With them. Has there been any significant challenges that the students have come to you with that you've been able to help them?

**P8** 05:08

I'm mostly just getting in their classes getting registered because I have to register them. And so just making sure that I register them is like the Friday before school, start so that was kind of a challenge, because some of them get like financial aid and different things like that. So some of them have to be registered for like, two classes instead of just one class. Because they take an eight week course the first semester and then they take another eight week course the second semester. So someone wants to be registered for both of those classes. And then some of them only are registered for the first class in the first eight weeks, and then the next eight weeks, the other ones that get registered. So you know, just try to you know, continue to figure all that out with students. Who need to be registered for two classes and students who just need to be registered for one but they usually reach out to me and let me know their situation. And if they want to be registered for both classes,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 06:10

how many students are you balancing? Approximately?

**P8** 06:15

I think it is... like around 18, or 20.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 06:27

That's the current cohort.

**P8** 06:29

Yeah.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 06:32

Is that cohort five?

**P8** 06:34

Yeah.five

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 06:35

Do you have any lingering or did they take students from previous cohorts and merge them into cohort five?

**P8** 06:42

No, they're they're all broken down in their each cohort. So if a student a cohort four needs a requirement or didn't finish all the requirements for cohort four, then I can help them with those requirements, but they're all separate.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 06:59

Okay. And it sounds like do you do the registration for the students and within the system to get them all registered for it? It's not something they have to go into Oasis themselves and do it since they're on a

**P8** 07:13

Yeah, I have to do it. I have to go in and put the override in first and Banner. And then once I put the override, and then I go in and register them for their for their courses.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 07:25

Do you register them for their electives as well? Or they do that?

**P8** 07:28

No, no. No,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 07:30

it's just the required

**P8** 07:31

just the required course.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 07:32

Okay.

**P8** 07:35

Yeah, and I think that was kind of a mix up because I think XXXXX was registering them for like all of their courses because I had a student today was saying XXXXX was registering for all all of their courses. But I was only told to register them for their required courses on the list that I had, and that they would register themselves for their other electives and different things like that. So I explained that to the student and so they were like okay, because she's registered for two of the courses that she needs. That are required on the list for the fall. But she was under the assumption that I was supposed to register her for like her electives and different things like that. So I explained to her that she that was her responsibility,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 08:17

okay. What is your perception of the process that students go through to become a student at USF?

**P8** 08:31

I mean, I think it's pretty good. I mean, I really don't know the full system of you know, how they actually get into an BGS and how the whole pool work, pool works, you know, how they are selected and different things do they just apply? And different things like that. Under the ENGACO cohort does P6 pull all of those students I'm not for sure. Like how that process works.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 09:00

Okay. So well, yeah, because I guess you came in in September and the current cohort would have already gone through the application process orientation process and started Okay, got it. Do you believe you'll be in that process going forward when they bring on the next cohort next year? Probably?

**P8** 09:19

Cohort Six. Yeah.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 09:21

Okay. Okay, anything else you want to add about the your perception of the relationship?

**P8** 09:31

No.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 09:32

Okay. Thank you. All right. Next question has to do with factors that influence the effectiveness of the partnership. So what what's really important so what do you see that makes this program work?

**P8** 09:48

I think the relationship with the advisor and the relationship with P6 the coordinator of over the ENGACO students, I think that's very important because you know, if we're not all communicating on the same page and making sure exactly what the students need, make sure the students know what they need, you know, students won't then fulfill those requirements. So I think all of those factors plan together that we all have communication, and are on the same page. And so, you know, I always when I'm talking to students or emailing students, I'm always telling them to check their Degree Works. Not just ENGACO students, but all of my students because that's a that's a platform that the graduation offers us is declared students to graduate. And so I always tell students mistakes are made. We're all human, but they did have to take ownership of their responsibility as students as well to make sure they're getting everything that they need. So I always encourage them to check their degree work so they see it as well, exactly what they need and to make sure that they are fulfilling all of their requirements. So if they're checking their Degree Works, I'm checking their degree works. And if something come up that they need or they're missing, then they can reach out to me and we can discuss it and different things like that. And then we can make sure that they graduate on time.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 11:27

Similar question perhaps. What do you believe is made this program successful? The length of the program

**P8** 11:37

I just think the students being able to get their degree and work at the same time and the pace of the courses, man, you get, like two courses done in one semester. So you get one course done and one eight weeks and then you get another course done and another eight weeks. And so, you know, I think that's been beneficial for the students to make it work. But you know, just students being having an opportunity to work and get their degree and everything like that. And so, to me, that's been beneficial.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 12:23

Next question is going to look at your perceptions of the Sustainable components for the program and the partnership so specifically between ugs BGS program and ENGACO. So if one of the one of the ideas and we talked about it beforehand was if we were to to build a program model, and take it to other industry partners, maybe Port Authority USAA MetLife to implement a similar program, or a partnership, I'm sorry, between USF BGS program, and one of those industry partners. What factors do you believe are important and should be considered in building this program model?

**P8** 13:10

I think the factors that will come down, you know, to the students, you know, you know, Will Will those partnerships that have those employees are will be willing to you know, want to go ahead and further you know, their degree and, you know, get their degree. I think that'd be up, you know, to the partnership, if they do have, you know, a lot of employees and different things like that, wanting to finish their degree and different things like that, like EnGaCo I think it'll work well. I think, you know, by us being to have another cohort six, it seems to be working good. I think if it wasn't working, I think it would have stopped in cohort, maybe two or three before I got here. But obviously, something is going right because we're going to add another cohort six and you know, students are, you know, graduating and getting their degree. So, I just think it comes down to the relationships, you know, the employees of those different partnerships, and those employees wanting to finish their degree and seeing that this is an opportunity for them to you know, get their degree and further, you know, whatever they want to do in their career. So far, you know, use Thomas as an example. You know, he's already working. I don't think he's a ENGACO student. He's just an employee somewhere working but they offered him a different position with a higher salary, but he had to have a degree. And so he decided, like, hey, you know, I need to get this degree and go back, and BGS you know, providing him that opportunity. To finish his degree and, you know, possibly go ahead and get a higher salary and a new position. So, you know, that's something that, you know, employees want to do and they're offering. You know, they're offering that to the employees and I think it'd be a good thing.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 15:19

Are there any other factors or components that you believe would be important to developing a partnership with USF?

**P8** 15:32

I think basically, you know, what we offer to students and employees you know, our program gives students the opportunity to graduate you know, in a good amount of time, based upon the credit hours and the program that we have with the requirements. So, you know, we have, you know, similar students who come from other different majors who can't finish that major, and they want to come to BGS you know, to to just complete all of their finished their credit hours, some of them have a lot of credit hours, they can't finish and other majors. So providing that, you know, that opportunity for students to, you know, finish their degree through our program without going to, you know, a major and so many requirements that they may have to take, which BGS doesn't, you know, have that many requirements that they have to fulfill to get their degree. So, I think that's what's worked well, with BGS providing students that opportunity to you know, finish their requirements and graduate

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 16:52

anything else you want to add in reference to that?

**P8** 16:55

No

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 16:56

okay. Next one has to do with improvement.

**P8** 17:02

Okay.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 17:02

So thinking about the current program in its current state, and also thinking about bringing this to new industry partners and introducing them to USF BGS program and having that level of service that you provide to ENGACO. What do you think could be done differently? That might help improve the program and make it better?

**P8** 17:32

To be done differently. I think maybe one of the things is maybe having the students register themselves and kind of take a little bit more ownership of registering and sales and seeing everything that they need to degree worse. Sometimes I've noticed with ENGACO students, they just depend on the adviser to do everything for him. And they really don't take the ownership to see like, Hey, let me look at this or let me do this. Because it's just something when you are taking really ownership of being invested in something and you know, this is your degree, you will push yourself a little harder to make sure that everything is done. And so a lot of times they you know, lean on me heavily to, you know, register them for their courses and different things like that. And so I think you know, if it was a way where they can register themselves, and I put the override in and tell them hey, this is when registration is going to start this is when you can start to register. I think they took ownership to go ahead and do that then. But me personally, they would, you know, push themselves a little harder to make sure that everything is in line for them to graduate and look at their Degree Works and, and different because they have sent me emails say hey, you know, can you check my Degree Works and looked at this and I'm like, you know, you have that access, you know, as well. But I think if they were registering themselves, then they would they would have that pushed as well. Let me go check. My Degree Works to make sure that I'm registered for his course and not just what the advisor register for me, so I must be registered. So just you know, taking more ownership of you know, their education and getting their degree, so forth, you know, things like that.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 19:29

Do you think that from the advisor role in the previous advisor, do you think that's just how it was set up between the previous advisor and the cohorts that she was going to take over? Making sure the registered so there was no problems or why do you why do you think the process is the way the process is because you inherited the process?

**P8 19:49**

Right, right. And I'm not sure if that was the case that you know, they just wanted to make sure that the students were registered and, you know, there was, you know, no hiccups or anything like that. So she just took on that ownership and said, I'll register them I'm not sure why was designed that way. But I just noticed that you know, from since I've done it up until now, like students lean on me heavily to make sure that they are registered and sometimes they don't like I said, Take ownership to actually look at their Degree Works or actually look at, you know, their requirements to make sure you know, they are all met, you know, and so you know, I think it was just set up like that from the previous advisor.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee 20:36**

Okay, got it. Yeah,

**P8 20:39**

because maybe me and Beth even talked about maybe possibly having you noticed students kind of like registered themselves once I put the override in and let them know hey, you can go in there registered. Now check your Degree Works to make sure you see all your requirements. You know that like I said, That way students that take more ownership and and giving them that push to say hey, you know, I really need you know, to make sure this is getting done.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee 21:04**

So, do you. You're transitioning back to being able to have some on to campus face to face time with the students. And then I'm imagining that you're onboarding of the new cohort next year. You could probably implement that more freely with the new cohort because they won't be used to anything from previous so do you do you feel like with that in person engagement, you can do that type of training to say here's your Degree Works. This is how you This is how you register for courses. So do you perceive that that's something you'll implement in the future?

**P8 21:43**

Well, that's my vision that I would be able to basically because we have a PowerPoint through the registrar's office with DegreeWorks that'll walk you through how to look at Degree Works, get on there and look at the requirements. But I visioned that I could like meet all of the students and have it set up on a projector where I can click on Degree Works and then walk them through Degree Works with all of the requirements how many credit hours that they see what their major is, because I just think when you visit when when you have a student that visualize what they need to get done and see it, it kind of pushes them more to get it done because they have a vision in their head and visualize it based upon what they see. Based upon just somebody doing a form and they just read in something. So that's my vision of you know, going to the cohort, putting it on a projector and walking them through a step by step showing them how to register. Let them know when I emailed them that the overrides are in how they can go in there register themselves and how they check their Degree Works. That way that they can now see for themselves what all they need to do. So I'm just a big believer that if you vision, envision something and see it in visualization. It kind of sticks with you more than just kind of reading it on paper or just having somebody do it for you.



**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 23:15

Do you perceive the curriculum to be applicable to their job roles?

**P8** 23:21

Ah, yes, I mean, you know a lot of that courses that they're taking, like the education courses and leadership courses and different things like that, I think is applying it to what they need to further their career. And I think the information and the content that they're getting, is helping them when if they do further their career and get into a different position, it helps them so I think it's very beneficial all of the required courses and everything that they're taken to help them

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 23:55

okay. Have you had in your engagement with students have you had any students talk about online classes versus face to face? Do they feel like the online courses are as effective or do they feel like they're missing out on anything?

**P8** 24:14

Not now, so far I haven't I mean, they've enjoyed all the some of the face to face and online courses. So I haven't had any students reach out to me and say, Hey, I don't like this course because it's online or I don't like this course because it's face to face. So I haven't heard I haven't had any complaints.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 24:33

Okay. So no complaints. Are there any other resources that you feel would be helpful for these ENGACO students? Since this programs a little bit unique to them? They're not coming onto campus per se. Sir. They're they're resources that the campus provides other traditional students that you think would be helpful for them. As opposed traditional.

**P8** 24:59

I mean, that would that would be something that, you know, I would have to basically, you know, sit down with the students and see what other resources they would need the majority of these students to me are like post traditional students, they know what they need, they know what they, you know, want and everything. One of the things I would probably implement as a resource is like I said, give them that visual visualization. That would definitely be one of the resources where I would show them on the projector exactly, how to use their degree works, how to register for courses and different things like that. But many of these students you know, already know what they want and different things like that they very mature and you know, doing what they need to do. So. I'm not sure like what other, you know, resources that they that they would need versus like, you know, somebody that's coming in like a freshman or sophomore.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 25:59

Okay. Okay, so training on USF systems really, right. How to how to navigate those pieces. Yeah, is what you would perceive as a need for them. Okay. In our discussion. Is there anything else you can think of that would be important for me to include in this evaluation?

**P8** 26:27

I mean, I think we'd have discussed everything. I mean, I think we went over everything communication, partnership, different things like that. We talked earlier about caring for the students. I think, you know, in this role you have to you know, really care about the students, you have to really put yourself where those students are as employees and workers and not you know, students who are you know, not working. And so, you know, those those things are, you know, very important that you really care about the students and, you know, really making sure that their needs are met so that they can, you know, get everything they need because I'm sure they already have a lot of anxiety where work and home life and different things like that. So you know, just a lot of care. Okay. Perfect.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 27:32

Okay, with that, I'm going to stop recording

**P8** 27:35

Okay,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 27:35

sounds it sounds like we're pretty good. I think I think I've got what we need here. So let me go and stop across you know, my 54 devices

## APPENDIX Y:

### P9 INTERVIEW

P9\_19Aug2022

Fri, 8/19 1:46PM • 52:04

#### SPEAKERS

P9, Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee

**P9** 00:00

35 years plus now, and mostly with undergraduate level students who were kind of first time in college but some, you know, some other non used to be non traditional, you know, students. But I when I was working and living in the UK, I got my adult certification. And that got me very interested in working with those types of students. And when I have this opportunity to teach the ENGACO cohort, it was amazing because what I teach is organizational communication and organizational change in communication. And what it means is a real understanding of the experience or ability to apply the theories and the concepts to their real experience. And oftentimes, those were difficult topics to teach young people who had limited organizational experience. Now it's just a breeze right like, you know, because they can really reflect on it. They can really apply it, they can analyze it, they can do all the things that we asked them a student to do, but the relevance is much stronger, right. And whereas I used to have to create the relevance in my classroom for undergraduates, now it's already built in so bottom line, it makes my job easier.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 01:27

Well, it does. Like you said that the dialogue between the students between yourself is much more relevant to them and they can apply it to real world events at work, so that's good. I agree. I mean, I've a post traditional student is helpful. I don't know if if me if the younger me would have appreciated the education that I'm receiving now. I don't think I would have

**P9** 01:53

you didn't know where?

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 01:55

Yeah. Now I wouldn't have been able to relate to any of it. You know, I would have had to rely on scenarios.

**P9** 02:00

Yeah.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 02:01

And then try to understand what that looks like.

**P9** 02:03

Yeah. My students used to say, Boy, you've done a lot of different work because I'd like fill in what, let me give you an example when I worked in this, but let me give me an example of when I'm working this or let me show you this person working in this scenario and this case study of what happened to them. And they'd be like, Oh, but you know, you didn't get as much of them going. I know what that's like, yeah, when I do this, or in my experience of and that's the difference. Yeah.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 02:31

So you like working with post traditional? certainly do. Okay, so with that, so that the first question really is about the partnership structure. How do you perceive the relationship between EnGaCo and USF to be?

**P9** 02:47

I think it's a very positive relationship, and that has a lot to do with the people who are the champions of it, right like, P6. If it were not for him, really wanting this for his people at ENGACO. And for the people who have been at UGS kind of saying, you know, we believe in this and believe it is a value. I don't think that it has much of a chance, right? Like it really requires champions. And it's good. You know, right now, I think they're very clear about what it is that they want. I think that, you know, the people who work in undergraduate studies to support it had done an excellent job of juggling quite a few things, you know, the different instructors and you know, that kind of thing. I've had quite a long tenure, but you know, I understand that they've also had to find different instructors at different times. I came in, in I can't I don't know when the first ENGACO cohort started. I think it was like 2013. Would that be about Right? Was it

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 04:00

even earlier? Could have been earlier instead they had some gaps in time. Yeah, of that. But because I think the partnership started even before that, and then they kind of trialed and aired it before they develop. The actual first cohort was

**P9** 04:14

cut. Yeah. And so I think I was in like, I started, but I essentially I started teaching in an ad hoc way because they had lost an instructor for one of the courses and so they needed a quick you know, like, Hey, do you teach, which is kind of like how I've gotten all my jobs, but it's like, Hey, you teach and then you go on from there.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 04:39

I know that working? Yep. Okay. What else within that? relationship, or the program itself? Do you think? Do you perceive that that's let me think what I'm trying to say. The process for the students. I don't know how in you're probably indirectly involved in that but you do. Face to face with the students. That process for them becoming students at USF. What do you what's your perception of that process for them?

**P9** 05:14

Okay, that's a very interesting question because I know that they kind of straddle you know the type of student they are right as because and I'll talk in a few different ways because there was a time where

we had a cohort and there were, you know, few different kinds of individuals in the cohort, some of which had completed an AAA some of which could have completed the as some of which had some, you know, college credit, some other college. So, you know, some of them came in a different way. So I'm trying to kind of create a cohort out of people who had kind of done things at very different times. I think now, they've kind of gotten more of like a, okay, you start here and you finish this and then you move on to this and then you get into the cohort, but there was kind of a little bit of juggling back then, because people had come to it with a from a few different places like Oh, I'm almost finished with my degree to I just finished my A s or something like that. So that wasn't necessarily bad. But you had to be kind of aware of that when you were teaching because you had to see the students for where they were in their kind of lifecycle for things and how they perceive themselves as a USF student was also very different. And that's, that's very individualized. I find some want to have opportunities to actually come on campus to go and check some things out or something like that. But I do find most of them, you know, see themselves as a ENGACO employee primarily, and trying to get a degree to better themselves.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 06:58

Do you believe that the large majority of the students that you have come into contact with from ENGACO are doing it for professional advancement?

**P9** 07:08

Yeah, um, first is Yeah, internal. Yeah. So. So I usually ask that question at the start, like, you know, what brings you here, you know what, you know, where I said, I'm sorry to ask this, I know that you probably get asked every time you you know, you come to the new instructor, but you know, I try to get to know that in the first class that I teach, so that I have a good sense of like the division that they work in, you know, the kind of work that they've done, their professional trajectory, and then their purpose for being you know, where they're at now in this program trying to get this degree and that helps me to frame things for them and help them to kind of understand kind of how the Dark Horse fits in their overall learning.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 07:52

Do you so you would have taught face to face on campus

**P9** 07:57

done that

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 07:58

and now, still teaching?

**P9** 08:01

No. Since COVID, I guess since mine, I'll have to look it was because I taught fall 20 in on campus, so it must have been this, and I don't have that one on here. I'm like, which one did I go? It must have been this past fall was my first full online but I think I did a spring so I'm missing my spring course.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 08:28

Okay,

**P9** 08:29

yeah. But anyway,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 08:30

okay, so you you've done both iterations of going to take a campus to teach face to face versus transitioning to the online environment now just

**P9** 08:38

the past two years in the online since since pandemic

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 08:42

Do you see a change and kind of jumping, jumping forward a little bit, but then we'll just dial it back. Have you seen a difference in the interactions with the the ENGACO students from the face to face to the online environment?

**P9** 08:57

So when we were at ENGACO, it was very nice in some ways, because, you know, P6 would come in and he wouldn't, you know, give his safety talk for the day or we or whatever it was, and they you know, would chit chat a bit and you know, we you know, before they got started for them, it would that was the opportunity to kind of like chit chat because, you know, the, that's when they saw each other and that kind of thing. However, it was challenging for a lot of them because they didn't all live close to that location. Like some of them were driving or work even some of them were driving for, you know, an hour or so you know, to get to there and then to get home. So, so it was very challenging. I had more challenges with reasons why they wouldn't be able to make it to class and things like that. Then I have had an online where they're able to be there right you know, in the online environment. And you know, I get it that you miss out on that kind of interaction like I see you looking like that and I you know, you're okay, you're good are the eyes here you you guys are starting to talk now. Are you talking about something in class are you talking but on the other hand, there's not as much of that chit chat in small, you know, pairs and instead we're kind of here and you know, and then they're asking different kinds of questions I find to you know, I think it's a trade off you know, you get some, you get some better kinds of a gauge moment when you think of yourself as you're learning with the instructor, versus I have to represent myself in this space with these people for a minute. And I think people almost got a little lazy, you know, it's there. Okay, any questions? And you know, look around the room and they'd be like, no, and then they'd start talking to one another. I'm like, you obviously have questions, let me pull it out of you. But in the online, I'll just go okay, now you need to respond to this. And you know, people like Oh, I feel like now I'm here. I need to respond with my my question. So instead of just kind of throwing it out for conversation, I do more of like, I want this response. Give me your response, everybody. Now, give me your response.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 11:21

So more directed Do you feel like the courses are any less effective online than in face to face? Or do you just feel like it's

**P9** 11:31

I haven't seen it in my assessments? For sure. Yeah. And now I feel that the cohorts have, you know, changed solely, you know, over the years. To in terms of the kinds of students who were in the in the courses, but I don't think that that's the only reason why that's changed. I mean, I rarely ever get a student who is not performing at a B or above level. In that in those cohorts. Yeah. Okay. I mean, I'm motivated because I believe that's their, their structure that they have to get earned and B or better in order to get reimbursed. But I think that they're also very motivated because that's exactly the way they're thinking about it. It's money. It's money, but then I also think the aduP9s they're like I'm in this is I paid for this. I'm doing don't waste my time. I'm not gonna you know, have oh, sorry. Yeah, no, I

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 12:31

agree with you. I think I do think that's where I think it goes back to like being a student now versus then. Younger, you could have said, I'm just gonna not go to class tonight. I don't care and the elder says, like, I have to go to class and then after that, I'm going to take care of the 15 things I have to do before I go to bed and get it back up in three hours. Because we just figure out how to make it all work because we're paying for it. Yeah. And we want to be there. Right? I Yeah. So

**P9** 12:57

you know, my challenge is making sure that it is relevant enough for them to feel that they get the value, right.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 13:05

So that's good. Where's my relevancy? Here we go. So speaking of that, so we're just going to kind of dance around some of these. How do you make sure that your curriculum every semester or how often you evaluate it is applicable to their job roles, because this is a very specific unique industry that you're teaching in versus a blanket business class. So how do you make sure that it's relevant as an instructor?

**P9** 13:37

Well, I mean, I think I have an easier job because mine is organizational communication. And you can't avoid that no matter what industry you work in, and you know, that no matter who you are, so I could apply it to anything, right. Like I used to teach family communication. I use a lot of my I would because those students would be in a program that would have taken maybe family communication and organizational communication. And you know, personal like interpersonal communication, I could show them the relationship throughout, right.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 14:10

Yeah.

**P9** 14:10

And I do that in the same way. So it's easy for me because you can't avoid it. Yeah, it is part of the nature of organizing. Um, so that's not too much of a challenge. I think that one of the things that I always do is, especially with the Organizational Communication course, because I do a lot of having to

go back over some of the traditional organizational theories that they use. Excuse me, that they learned in like the management courses and other spaces, so I have to make sure that I learned what they learned, like I you know, I kind of asked them alright, where else did you learn about this? What else do you know about this? You know that and so I'm constantly trying to do that, because there is a level of redundancy in some of those courses, because they have kind of a similar you know, Leadership Theories are going to apply whichever leadership topic you're going to do. You know, the organizational behavior theories are going to apply no matter which one you do. So you have to kind of be aware of those. Then when you bring in your subject area or your application area, you have to be kind of relating it back to what they've learned before. So that's, again, that's not particularly challenging, but it makes it more relevant when instructors do that. And so that's why I think you know, I don't think I'm the only one that does that kind of thing. Because, you know, you're trying to build that knowledge and so, you know, having those redundancies buiP9 in helps.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 15:49

Do you ever have conversations with the other instructors that teach within the EnGaCo i have

**P9** 15:54

i yep, yep. Yep. And they and again, just to try to understand, you know, originally I saw some of the, you know, syllabus and stuff like that to kind of get a sense of it. But you know, what my best learning does come from the students themselves because, sure, it might be on another syllabus, but I gotta evaluate what they actually took away from, and then kind of say, All right, I get that. Yeah, eating. So we took you that far. This is where I'm going to take you with that. And so, so I do a lot more with that.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 16:25

To meeting them where they're at.

**P9** 16:27

Oh, yeah. And I kind of quiz them a little bit and you know, wait for him to finish. Like I'll say, I know you learn this, so I'll just pull it out. Yeah.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 16:36

And sometimes it does take that because different instructors will teach differently and have the the information is delivered. And then how it's taken from the student is auto different.

**P9** 16:51

Yeah. And then you'll hear one say something about it, and then then it starts clicking and they go, oh, yeah, I remember that. Yeah, I remember when we learned that. Oh, yeah. Yeah. And then you're like, Okay, now that we've all gotten back our memories,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 17:06

week. It's hard, right when you're learning to remember everything you learned in the course of a class. And I mean, I think that's the nice thing about being in a cohort model is you can help each other with because we all take different pieces away whatever is important to you might not be important to me because I might relate to something else that was said within the course and based off of my work,



**P9** 17:34

right, right. And bottom line. The other part of it is administratively that comes back goes back to your other question. It doesn't make it easier as well. They help one another. They're like, don't forget this is due on this day. You know, remember we waited they asked for this or that reinforcement like a criteria for an assignment. You'll see them kind of checking on one another. Did they say that we needed this in the areas that kind of like and then somebody will finally be brave enough to ask the question and that kind of thing and like, yeah, right. Yeah.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 18:09

But that's what that's, that is a benefit to being in a cohort, is they can they can help each other and ask each other questions, you know, and then or from the instructor point of view, because we used to do it, you know, get everybody to same questions, or one person is going to ask it, so then you're only fielding the question.

**P9** 18:26

Yeah.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 18:26

Once versus 15 times, yeah. Which makes it better for everybody. factors that influence the effectiveness of the of the partnerships. So what do you see what is your perception that of things that are happening that make this program work?

**P9** 18:43

Okay, so I really believe that, as I said before, you must have a champion right? You must have someone who deeply believes in the benefit and the value of the program. If you don't have that, you're, I don't think the program would sustain itself. Right? You can't it's not a plug and play type of thing. I think that it really does take some passion behind wanting it needing it. It's not going to run itself.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 19:19

Some people what, and what do you believe has made the program successful? Again,

**P9** 19:30

again, the people, P6 Yeah. I'll be honest, yep. That does it. But yes, I think we've hit upon the cohort model. It does help the students to feel like they're part of something that that they are celebrated by the organization. I think that that's significant, that they have like their own graduation and you know that and that the institution acknowledges that partnership in special ways. You know, they've had special guests whether it be the president or you know, whatever it is come to their graduation events and stuff like that. I think that those are very significant to making sure these partnerships work, and that they can continue to encourage their employees to think about these programs. But you know, I think that that's it you need someone in those areas in the industry, who's going to be the cheerleader, the recruiter, the you know, the the person who's stirs up the interest, and then you have to have the institution saying yes, we will. We will value this partnership and we will show up and we will support your students and show that we value you also Yeah.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee 20:59**

Do you think that there are other factors for the students that helped to make this program work?

**P9 21:05**

They really like Continuity, like, yeah, I can tell when when I teach them the first time, and then I come back and teach them the second time they you know, they're like, Okay, we know kind of how you work and how you know, and so they get to know the instructors that they work with and that kind of thing. So that really helps them I think that they need flexibility and for the courses to be built in ways that acknowledge their other roles. And when we talk, you know, if we want to talk about kind of, you know, what, what we might need to consider in the future what other places might need to consider in the future it really has to do with you know, you know, I often ask them, okay, what kinds of trainings have you been through what kinds of certificates does your, you know, institution provide you, you know, for training and learning and that kind of thing, and, you know, for EnGaCo it's a lot of safety stuff, and you know, that I think that there's some other spaces too and you know, maybe and I tried to bring that to bear in kind of our stuff is that we do like a training evaluation and you need to do different things like that. But we need to probably even look at things like that, like how can we take their experiences and the other things that they learn on the job and find ways to integrate credits, maybe not full course credits, but maybe credit for a course right? You know, like, if you complete this training, at your institute, at your or in your organization. Then you completed that unit for this course. So you know, now you can, so there could be more creative, I guess there could be more creative ways to reduce some redundancies. That might seem a little bit you know, too much like you know, they think oh, if I've done this already, why do I have to listen to this whole lecture again, or read all these chapters? Again, I did that, you know, in my certification for you know, my role in some other way. So, I think that there could be some matching there.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee 23:20**

That's that's an interesting outtake on that with the certification piece because there probably is some overlap with it. And then how does the institution provide credit for that because we provide institution credit to for other other industry military credits, so I wonder

**P9 23:41**

Yes, that's because I know especially when this is about leadership, because there must be you know, kind of like USF has managing at USF. You have to go through all these, you know, things in it. So what if I went to a management course and I'm like, oh, here we go. Again. I just did that whole module, wouldn't you? Couldn't I get some credits for that. That's a great point, you know, and again, it might not be for the whole course credit, but could it be unit credits, and then we break it down to units and you have to collect so many units rather than the traditional, you know, three credit courses and things like that.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee 24:15**

Right. So could it be done because it's already tailored differently? Because all the core classes are eight weeks versus the traditional 16. So then if that's the case, then could we not? It's very interesting. Okay, that went down in my future recommendations.

**P9 24:33**

Yeah, I thought that I think I skipped ahead. It's

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee 24:36**

fine. No, no, we're good. We're good. Okay, so perceived components we've talked about where am I? So perceptions on sustainable components for the partnerships, so if we were to take this to other industry partners or community partners Port Authority USAA MetLife to implement a similar program, what factors do you believe are important that should be considered for the industry partner? For the University?

**P9 25:12**

Well, again, I don't know how deep the permanent structure is view versus from me being kind of thinking about the organizational structures and but one of the things that I would say any industry that you would take it to or any organization you take it to, they would first need to assess you know, is it an industry for which a terminal degree is required? Right, like, you know, do you need a bachelor's degree to get most of the positions at this at this institution? If so, are they already recruiting at the level that they need? Right? If not, if they were recruiting but only you know, but students, but students, but employees who want to be promoted need degrees, that's a big difference. So when you need to be an assessment of that first, right, that just makes sense. But then, you know, what makes a difference? Yes, I think that for the most part, you need to provide flexibility. So there will be some, you know, individuals who will be like I need to learn in person. And I'm not very good if you put me in an online environment, right. Others will be like I need that level of flexibility in order to be able to do online. So having just one model won't work for all right, I think that there would need to be some buiP9 in and that is one of the criticisms that I would say for this for the cohort that it was right where it's like they all had to show up at that location. That was very hard for a lot of them. Okay. The other things so buiP9 in with that flexibility is, aP9hough it's great to have a cohort model, and that keeps people moving along. Is there other ways that it can be done and we've seen this and you know, P6 has been like, Okay, I'm gonna pull you out of that cohort. You know, you weren't able to complete this course. So you're gonna do that next term and he you know, make sure that that they still get to know one another, and, you know, in they work kind of through that way. So I think there is some flexibility in that. But those are those are the big things. Of course, yes. They'd be willing to reimburse them for the tuition and provide support for things like you know, the books and and you know, the time all of those things that kind of, say we value your you're wanting to get this done for yourself, because we want to invest in you. I think that that's very important. And then the partnership has to be one that can be sustainable, right? And that can be a challenge because you need personnel at the educational institution that can provide that ongoing support. And they need to look at their budgets and what that costs them and what they get from it and you know, all those kinds of things that are involved in it. So yeah, you need the pipeline.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee 28:00**

This thing is being weird. I mean, you talked about some challenges. So you because you were having that direct connection with the students. You heard from it sounds like it was sort of a consistent message with at least some of them that all of them going to the Skills Training Center at the time, for some it was a challenge to get there.

**P9** 28:40

Or good home or Yeah, you know,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 28:43

okay, so, so traveling there. Did they ever say that there was what would have been the fix for them? I guess what if that was a challenge to get to the on site skills training center for ENGACO. And they liked that model, what would have been a good fix for those that drive from Lakeland to get there?

**P9** 29:03

I don't know that there would be an easy fix. Because again, they're, you know, it. You we'd be all here and you know, you'd have

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 29:12

somebody from Polk County trying to

**P9** 29:14

get there. Yeah, it was like this, you know, so nobody had it. You know, nobody was like, well, it's easy for me and but if we moved it here, it would be easy for more, right? It was kind of like wherever you moved it you weren't going to disadvantage someone someone else. Yeah. So I think that that's that's the nature of an industry like EnGaCo is where their workers are going to be in a lot of different locations. If you had a more centralized location, of course, that's going to be easier. You know, you're in office, and after work, you just stay there and you know, you've already come into work for the day and then it's located that of course, that's an easy one. But if you have people at multiple sites and multiple areas, it that's always going to be a challenge. So

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 29:58

in the case of ENGACO, because they are unique in having all of the different sites. I think they had 10 or 15 different sites in their service territory. Do you think that like a hybrid type of a course setting would have been helpful? So you had this you had the skills training? Center for those that couldn't be there, but for those that lived an hour away? They could remote in

**P9** 30:24

Yeah, to class? Yeah. As long again, I think that there would be a uniqueness of that as well because you'd have that different different challenge that the challenge that is created because you're you're showing up. I think that was it, okay. So the way you handle it is it's important to have something that's synchronous, if you're going to do a virtual thing, so that you still have that, that opportunity of we're engaging in this together. In a space, right? It might be a virtual space, but we are engaging in it together in a space and I think that that's more relevant than than a hybrid, because hybrid creates other challenges, right?

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 31:08

It does everywhere. So do you so less of a challenge? Having moved to synchronous learning?

**P9** 31:18

Yes, absolutely.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 31:19

As far as logistics go for the student. Do you see any challenges from a learning perspective or delivery? Perspective? To the ENGACO students specifically, to have you seen any

**P9** 31:33

they have not indicated technical challenges? Yeah, I mean, that would be something that if you were going to run something like that, then definitely you would want to check it beforehand to make sure that whoever you were doing you were also supporting them. So maybe giving them the opportunity to stay at the workplace and use their facilities to have you know, that internet connection and all that kind of stuff that they need, in case their home situation. did not have that or whatever. Yep.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 32:08

Do you think that this this program with ENGACO could work if the students came to campus to USF campus, I keeping them in the cohort model but coming to campus?

**P9** 32:27

I think that it could. I think that you would have to start it like that in the first place.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 32:39

So like incoming cohort 23

**P9** 32:41

Right.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 32:42

Coming in and if they if you were to start them on campus, okay.

**P9** 32:45

The challenge is of course is USF is not a small campus, you know. You know, if you have a small local or satellite campus of some sort, it might be easier, because it creates that same kind of feel. But when you enter a large campus scenario, you know, it can feel a little bit overwhelming. At that stage, you almost venue you, you ask that you have to ask the question. Is it also a value then to maybe have them in a cohort model but also add other students in that class? So as they have some of those classes like that,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 33:40

would they be from other industry partners or like any, it would be open to any students for us? Those are

**P9** 33:47

those are the kinds of things that I think remain. I don't think I have an answer to that. I think those are good questions. But I don't think that I could say, without a doubt, I know that if you did this, that would be a good thing, or a bad thing or whatever,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 34:03

you know, and it's just as we're talking through it now and thinking about you know, could we do it this way? Or if this was introduced to USAA? Could you do this same sort of partnership that bring the cohort on campus or do you combine USAA with ENGACO?

**P9** 34:24

And those kinds of things, I think is of that those are a value because EnGaCo has allowed in certain situations, people who worked in other spaces and other you know, in other places to do that because of a special situation. You know, can you can ask P6 about those and everything, but there have been and then they bring, you know, like everybody will be talking about what it's like for you know, their unit and ENGACO and then they'll say, well at my space, you know, and you know, in my work we do it like this, you know, that kind of thing and there would be different perspective brought in right. And that's not bad at all. It really does help broaden that conversation

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 35:16

can't spell. Improvements. So, as we talked about, there's other industry partners and maybe you were able to bring another industry and USF into the BGS program similar to ENGACO. Is there anything that you believe could be done differently? That would help improve the program or the current program? You know, making it better?

**P9** 35:46

Yeah, I again, I think that there is an opportunity to allow for them to, although the cohort model is very effective, and they you know, really do enjoy learning from one another. I think that the program itself is so tight, right? Like, you know, here's the courses that you take that if it would be beneficial for one student to kind of go alright, I'd like to you know, I'm going to only take one course as you know, semester I do in their own way, right, like, have a little bit more flexibility within the model for completion.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 36:30

So I know for the core courses that's very specific so you have to take this before you can take this they're eight weeks versus 16. So they've got those courses back to back. So how do they work that for the students that maybe don't need? They start in cohort three, but they sort of have some overlap because they've already had coursework, but because of where they're starting with USF. That's where they lumped into do they move them in cohort, do they jump them around or

**P9** 37:02

what is your so that it's inconsistent in terms of because I was looking at it and I'm like, okay, that has happened where a student kind of jumped out of the sequence and then had to kind of finish things, you know, slowly Yeah, back in. If I were looking at it, and this is me, but I would see the way I know that they work it I would take like, my two courses, which is the organizational communication, which is

more that kind of theoretical basis. And then my organizational change course, which you know, is the deeper application and change environment. Okay. I've got them right back up against one another. So that they were you know, that they would say this in this semester. These two are the ones because they complement each other complement one another. Yeah. So if you're available for that semester, you know, you might be able to do that. You can do that in whichever semester you want to do so but those two would kind of sit together. In that sense.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 38:06

But, you know, do you do you have my curriculum list?

**P9** 38:11

I have some of it. And again, I don't know if these stay the same or have stayed the same. But the you know, I think that there is the leadership classes in particular there. Should be some level of you know, you do a Leadership Theory s things that then get a specific application and so you should be able to have like it, you take you're in this leadership class, and then these application classes, you take this public administration class and then you get an application class, you take this management introduction class and then you take these management application court you know, that

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 38:51

have you so

**P9** 38:53

because often I feel like you know, when I'm doing my backup is all like Teach you know, one one year and then it's not until the next fall,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 39:03

but I bet you're teaching that

**P9** 39:04

Yeah.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 39:05

Okay. So then you have to kind of revisit, yeah, what you taught a year ago with them to bring them back forward.

**P9** 39:12

Yeah.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 39:12

Which takes time and that's a challenge because you're in an eight week segment.

**P9** 39:15

Yep.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 39:15

Got it.

**P9** 39:16

Yeah.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 39:17

So with that? Who are how is the curriculum designed? I know there's a package of what 15 courses or something 12 courses?

**P9** 39:27

I think it's it's 33 it's 11 courses. I think it's 33 credit hours. It's 11 courses and then when the Capstone Capstone

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 39:40

is in your best recollection, has that ever been evaluated? Or have they changed it? I know at one time, they would have added courses to it because I think they started with six and then maybe in 2015, maybe? , remember, right. They added to make the 11 courses, is that right? Yep. Yep. Has it been evaluated sense is that I think

**P9** 40:02

the evaluation must be like ongoing based on you know, the course availability and instructor availability. I would assume because that's always a challenge, but I don't

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 40:14

know how have they has whomever is making the decision on the curriculum design structure. Have they ever spoke with you all as instructors to say exactly what you just said about if you were designing it these two courses would be together because I'm gathering that the other instructors also probably have some feeling of well it make more sense if we did did it this way, because you all are the ones teaching it know where the knowledge is scaffolding you know, is building upon each other

**P9** 40:46

right? No, I have not given that feedback to them specifically, okay. And mainly, I'm also thinking, oh my gosh, yeah, I'd be sitting all semester. Like, wait, what have I gotten myself into? Oh, maybe maybe you know, summer, fall, and then spring and then. But yeah, I mean, I think it's a practicality thing that goes on. But this goes back to like, I think it would go beyond just doing that. I think it would then get into unit that thing that I taught you to credits where we might look at unit credits for a semester based on a certain topics so we could do a topic for a semester and look at unit credits and evaluate those and then see which unit credits you would need for the full six hours that you were going to earn that semester. You know, for that, that full unit.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 41:37

It's interesting, because I don't know that USF is specifically buiP9 that way. But it would be interesting to at least look at to see



**P9** 41:47

could be evaluate could be done because you could look at it you know per you know course and look at the modules within the course even and see how you could break those down and see how they fit into other spaces. And stuff like that.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 42:01

Do you know whom on the USF site is responsible for curriculum for ENGACO

**P9** 42:07

it would be Dr. Betancourt. Yeah.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 42:11

And I think she also wouldn't be able to pull specific data on the curriculum and all of that, okay. Anything else you would think of that would be to improve upon the program?

**P9** 42:26

And again,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 42:27

this is for the partnership.

**P9** 42:28

Yeah, not necessarily specific to EnGaCo. But just thinking broadly about you know, how you do this. And, and I guess the only other thing would be, you know, what other resources are there, right? What other things will the industry bring to the institution right and say, You know what, we'd really like to see this. You know, P6 has been very good about going okay. What can we offer, you know, let's get them. We want them to get the degree that's the, you know, the most important thing, but I think that that reciprocation would be very interesting, like, what's the other side of it, you know, where the the the actual industry could say, oh, there's all these things in our industry that are available. And we want to kind of create something more than the sum of its parts, right. Like we're we're still in this some of it our parts, right, we're like we are USF and we do courses and these Isn't this what course present looks like this. And then P6 is going I have these students who need a degree and I need to move them into these courses. You know, that kind of help. I think that's the whole thing. Like, what are we both bringing to this and how can we synergize that a little bit more?

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 43:57

What have been some challenges?

**P9** 44:01

Um, I think that it's just really challenging. It's the same aduP9 education challenges. I don't think it's been it's any different aduP9 education, and it hasn't, you know, you better be relevant every day every moment, you know, and it's not always easy to engage aduP9s. If you're not being relevant and if you're not needed, trying to find the space in which they're thinking about the work, and how it relates to

their experiences and all those kinds of things. So, those are always the challenges they you know, they have worked all day. They have stressors, they have things going on in their personal lives, they have everything that they bring to it and and you just need to be aware of that. Right. And be accommodating with it because it's not because they're not learning. It's it's there's just a lot of other things going on.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 44:59

There's other moving parts. So being cognizant from an instructor perspective is important. I'm thinking about this, the ENGACO students do you feel they miss out on the feeling like they are a USF Bull? Do you feel like they're part of the community or do you think that their identity really is like they're a ENGACO employee going to school at night?

**P9** 45:27

I think they're a ENGACO employee going to school at night for the most part. They have some small piece of identity that is as as a USF Bull, a small piece of identity that some of them lean into more than others, right? Some people want to need that. And so they think it's a great opportunity, and others don't care one way or another. They're really here so that they can get the promotion or you know, you know, in that kind of thing, so yeah, I'm not going to paint it all with one brush. I think that everybody comes to a different differently. Yeah.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 46:06

Do you what resources do you think? would be helpful?

**P9** 46:11

Oh, boy. Um, definitely. I think textbooks are consistently one of the things that we work through, you know, every semester you know, I always feel horrible when I have to, you know, say I've updated the text you know, that kind of thing. But now we have electronic texts and things like that make it a lot easier access and things like that and a lot of those kinds of things, but then, then just making sure that they have that I haven't run into any of them, who have really had strong resource needs. I think that ENGACO has been very good about making sure they have what they need to be successful in the courses. So that for sure. I don't think that that has been an issue with any of my students so far.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 47:02

Have you ever run into any students that are needing like tutoring or things of that nature?

**P9** 47:09

Um, most of the time, by the time I've gotten them, they are aware of their resources and they've already kind of gone into it, but I had a couple of ones where I've said, you know, let's go to the, you know, the Writing Studio. In particular, that's more likely than tutoring and the content isn't really the challenge for most of them. Okay. But, you know, sometimes they haven't done certain styles of writing or need more practice and help and I think that that's the main one. I tried to recognize that early. And then what I tell them I've always done this within it's not just a ENGACO cohort, but you know, if you submit it early, I will review it and I will give you edits, you know, or you know, telling you what needs to

be improved on your paper so that you can improve it and then submit the final draft. You submit you wait till the end and just submit it and you get what you get what you get. Yeah.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 48:12

Okay. Anything else? You can think of? That would be helpful.

**P9** 48:19

They've got I mean, I guess there could be more of a community but that's, you know, really tough of the instructors here. You know, I know them I know some of them and I've met some of them, but I don't you know, we don't really have a community that we don't talk like the facuP9y.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 48:45

You know, specifically the, the ones that rally around the ENGACO because I think there are there were nine I think there's seven of you maybe

**P9** 48:52

Yeah, and so, you know, it's not like we have a, you know, monthly or even semesterly, you know, facuP9y meeting or whatever it happens to be, you know, the instructor meeting to think about those things. Okay.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 49:07

Do you think that would be helpful for you all that or

**P9** 49:10

if we are going to continue, you know, say even but beyond the EnGaCo and, you know, into some of these other spaces that you talked about? I think that that would be very important. Because there's you it's hard. Well, it would be easier, most of us have other jobs admittedly Of course, yeah, of course. So that's always the challenge, right? It's like, yeah, so I kind of understand that.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 49:35

But if you were to create a facuP9y of sorts, or tried to create a coffee connection, where you're all talking via teams, that you could talk about the needs of the industry or the students or challenges that that would be probably helpful.

**P9** 49:52

Yeah, I think so.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 49:55

Or your overlap of teaching. What are you What are you teaching? Your students? Okay. Got it. That's Are there any other connections that you think would be valuable for yourself as an instructor of this program and if other industry partners came in, is there any other connections you would help you and being successful in what you do?

**P9** 50:27

I mean, we have plenty of stuff like yeah, you know, kind of our learning. I can get as much help as I need to do the teaching that I need to do you know what yeah, there's so many resources that that's there's another never dearth of that.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 50:47

So you feel supported? Oh, yeah. I

**P9** 50:48

feel instructively supported as an instructor. I don't think that that's been a challenge ever. Would I like administrative support that would help me like order my textbooks and new you know, people that's sure I would love that on so many levels of my life. That'd be nice to take care of myself. Sitting you know, do do my does set my canvas up for me, you know, yeah, sure. Would someone like to do that?

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 51:14

That'd be great.

**P9** 51:14

Yeah, so I've been wonderful.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 51:15

I would be great. As I'm fighting for mine right now. Okay. Well, and I think too, though, you know, if this became large, a larger program and there was more industries involved and you were teaching for multiple cohorts, then it might be that there could be an administrative support person that helped. You know, maybe a couple of you in doing some of that Canvas design or making sure the syllabus has everything that you know, we're supposed to have in every semester, so, so it's possible Okay. Anything else you can think of? I think we've covered a lot.

**P9** 51:56

I was gonna say you pulled a lot of good stuff out.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 51:59

I think we've covered a lot. I'm going to stop recording. Okay.

## APPENDIX Z:

### P10 INTERVIEW

#### P10 Interview

Wed, Aug 31, 2022 11:34AM • 22:43

##### SPEAKERS

Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee, P10

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 00:02

Okay, let's go ahead and dive in. So, P10, from your perspective working in higher education, what is the importance of UI partnerships to the institution?

**P10** 00:16

I think the university industry, collaboration is imperative to our success, especially as a state institution. We serve the public, and certainly our surrounding communities. And that's a benefit for our community that we have industries that are thriving, and it's a benefit to our community. If we have successful higher education, entities that are providing that lifelong learning, that are providing those on time certifications, and responsive to the industry needs, so the community needs as well as liberal arts education that we know is important for positive citizenry.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 00:51

Thank you for that. And I guess the first question, is the importance to you now, not only with the institution but with the community to with university industry partners like EnGaCo has with USF specifically the BGS program.

**P10** 01:12

Sure. So I mean, just one example is, is the recruitment of quality staff into the industry, you know, can sometimes be challenging and also the retention of those staff. And so if you have that wonderful partnership with a higher education institution, then you can incentivize your employees with opportunities for them to continue their learning their upward mobility in their career in their profession. And that also helps the industry be able to retain quality staff and then provide opportunities for them and growth where they don't have to do the turnover on the onboarding, right. So they can you know, continue to do that. And I think that where we really see some strong partnerships with the industry and with the community, so if you have knowledgeable people who've been here for a longer period of time that are invested in they're going to also serve the community outside of their professional work, and get involved with the community which also helps so I think everyone benefits from that.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 02:12

Thank you for that. So looking at your past experience and present between the universities, what challenges have you seen with university industry partnerships, such as working in academics?

**P10** 02:29

So, part of the challenge is that you have industry driving everything. Industries adapt easily, pretty dynamic space, and things kind of evolve very fast and there might be a new thing out there that's innovative. And we're not able to respond as quickly sometimes in the higher education environment. But at the same time, we have set curriculum, we have accreditation, we have things in place that we know are valued and are important. So yes, we need to be able to shift and grow with the industry demands but we also need to remember our purpose, what we are mission driven goals are so sometimes that can be a a tug of war a little bit where an industry needs something very quickly and we're not able to respond as as fast because that's where you see like the non degree opportunities, the corporate partnerships certification, things that might not be exactly what another institution may be able to do. You know, for example of a for profit pirate. I think the institutional type is important. Too in this. You have some technical colleges, you certainly have some say colleges, you have some vocational opportunities and apprenticeship programs that exist outside of a traditional four year liberal arts institution public that I that I think it can look a lot differently but I do think the nuance of the institutional types of important. How did you think about that relationship because there are some institutions that their specific mission is focus on the industry, and what those needs are.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 04:14

Why do you think I'm going to throw a curveball at you real quick? What are you and with the beat with UTS the BGS degree program? We've only got one industry partner that partners with us and they've partnered for some time, but why do you think we only have one? Why is there not more? Do you do you see, you know, adding to those in the future. I mean, obviously that's kind of my intention. With why I'm studying this because I have I have a personal interest in in this type of partnership, but why do you believe there's only one or what is that one of the challenges of it?

**P10** 05:02

Yeah, I can't speak necessarily the history you know, how take a really evolved? I've heard different, different things. And I know you're talking to several different people. So you probably have a clear understanding of that. I've tried to put some guardrails around an agreement and new agreement that we can have that is transparent and clear. And so we've been working on that by started here at USF around what that can be for the exchange of ideas and resources and support and certainly during COVID There were changes that were made, you know, courses that used to be taught face to face or overran the EnGaCo building are then shifted to online. And there's been a lot of a lot of those kinds of things, but we didn't have laid out agreement. So I don't I mean, I would love to see what the agreement originally was. And I do think that we need to formalize that. And that would help us then what do those next types of agreements be? I do think a lot of it comes down to funding and resources. So you know, we don't we don't receive direct funds from EnGaCo for this program in the way that other institutions may have that partnership. And the professors that are teaching the courses and just sort of how it's done. It's very, it's very unique and different and I think we need to come to some sort of agreement on some parameters. There and then we would be able to absolutely start expanding. But I think there's some of the reasons that there's a push pull is because you do have a corporate partnership, training and professional development program that focuses on corporate and industry partners. And that the curriculum for those, you know, those partners that is for profit, and ours is different, ours is completion, and trying to support. So I've actually been looking more internally and started some initial conversations with HR because in my past experience, I worked very closely with

the university to identify staff who didn't have their GED yet or staff who didn't have a bachelor's degree yet and getting them enrolled in these programs and academic degrees. And because we have tuition waivers, you know, it's a whole process that is something that we could do, and we aren't doing that right now. So that's really where my thought is that will probably go first. And then it maybe we'll be able to do it simultaneously. But until we get this EnGaCo one really ironed out, like what is the agreement and how are we moving forward? It's hard for us to figure out what that next step is. And I actually have a meeting with XXXXX, who is response, like lead a lot of the partnerships for innovative education coming up and that's part of our conversation. You know, where does this fit? And what are those opportunities, but it would have to be resources, because if we don't get resources that taking advice, academic advisors away from our undergraduate students and so there's, you know, it has to be has to be done differently, and we don't have it that way, are BGS the best advisors are advising all of our students. We don't have somebody who's only EnGaCo and doesn't do anything else. Right.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 08:35

Right. Right. And that's, you know, one of the thoughts behind that behind that, as I've been working down during this program evaluation, that's one underlying theme that continues to come up is how, how would you get the industry partner to provide those those funding resources so that you could provide more of that concierge service, if you will, to those industry partners that have the need because, you know, what I'm finding is and talking and having talked with a lot of the students and the industry as well, they're, you know, in order for job advancement, you know, job progression, their trajectory, they're needing this bachelor's degree, and that's what's unique about the BGS program is it's able to have been tailored to fit the needs of the energy company. You know, but the question comes out to is what does what is the funding that it would take to create a sustainable program model for this so that you could have dedicated staff on the university side, focused on more industry partners other than just EnGaCo? Because one of the ideas that I've had in discussions with the EnGaCo with the industry partner and the stakeholders within that is, you know, they've really enjoyed the cohort model, and that's been really positive experience and impactful for the students. However, to diversify that cohort to bring in other industry partners, you know, in the Tampa Bay community, they believe that the students and the instructors that I've spoke with better teach in the program, thought that that would just kind of broaden, you know, the thought in the curriculum in its entirety beyond the energy company. You know, and I don't know what that funding might look like and like you said, you're just starting to have that conversation. But I know that the bachelor's degree versus a training program has been a driver, you know, for them. You know, in this and I had discussions with the stakeholder for the industry partner about would that be because it's been in kind services, if you will, in they offer the tuition reimbursement policy for their their employees to go back to school, but would they entertain if there's enough ROI on the industry? standpoint, paying for that type of a service? And then what would that look like? You know, so then, of course, the question in my mind starts thinking so what's the cost to run this what we're doing a cost benefit analysis and trying to figure out what is the true funding that ujs would need to be able to support you know, dedicated, dedicated advisor, dedicated program administrator, the instructors that because they're building the curriculum is unique to them for the core courses that they're teaching. So that takes time to build the curriculum and then to evaluate the program unit to make sure that it continues to be applicable for the industry partner. So and I don't know, you know, I don't know if any of that has been done. I actually am going back to XXXXX. I'm one of my 1000 notebooks here to ask her if she's got retention persistence numbers, and then how is the

curriculum evaluated, you know, cuz that, that would be part of if I'm, if I'm looking at trying to figure out at the end of all of this, besides improvements to the program, providing XXXXX them the improvements to the program, but what does a sustainable program model look that's beneficial to the institution and to our industry partners in the community, that would make it make it work for the long term? And I don't know what that is. I know. I know industry partners would be open to if you know if they needed to put stake in the game and fund it and make it a sustainable program. But what does that look like? I don't know. So that's a challenge with it, so how do you see like some of those challenges like we talked about with funding, other resources, things like that. Have you and in your experience, have you seen resolves that have addressed those types of challenges that you spoke of earlier? And would that work in this instance?

**P10** 13:22

Yeah, I mean, it's really about communication and relationships. That's how this agreement was first made my understanding for EnGaCo. And we've got the bill those relationships. I mean, obviously, President law has great relationships with EnGaCo. And we just need to circle back around and have that honest conversation and that's why the academic agreement and that's why MOU things are so important. Because you have the timing where you commit to every year or every two years or three years reevaluating, reviewing, everyone has a conversation and voice and what needs to be tweaked. And I think that's, that's really the resolution that we're trying to do here is be transparent about what's being offered and what the needs are. And you know what the limits are? Because pEnGaCo isn't my priority, right? They're not you know, they are important. Absolutely. And we are committed to supporting them. But we can't because of our limits in our resources. We can't expand right now. We don't have a full time instructor. We don't have a full time advisor. And we're very limited in what that looks like. And because of the the uniqueness of the BGS program those courses are being offered, you know, in the colleges. So other than the Capstone, it's, it's also a decentralized, it's an interesting, you know, degree program, right? So it's also just navigating those kinds of pieces. I think that's really the resolution is in the solutions that I've seen is just to building those relationships and that we've got to start fresh because Provost Wilcox had great relationship and was really foundational and creating this and with his transition. Now it's having the conversation with President law with previs Eisenberg with Vice President DeLuca about what do we want this to look like with the EnGaCo you know, CEO and CFO and, you know, higher ed liaison. What, you know, how has it been going we have some data, but you know, what does that look like? Is that still what they need? Do they need more than what they're being offered? That's where Mark fully honest, I think comes in where we could have more of a menu of options. I'm working with him so that BGS has on his menu of options and he's talking and then we have his stuff on ours, you know, so we kind of offer these different pieces. But I think that's really the biggest part. I mean, the solutions are are the conversations, and the communication and the network. There's a lot of people who don't even know that we have the EnGaCo partnership. And in some ways, it's good because we can't really afford to increase it. And in others, it's like we do want them to know this is something that we could do. But with Tika, we were just told my understanding that we were doing it and there wasn't any funding given to support it. So everything that we are doing is on top of our other work and the money that the instructors are paid is higher than what we're allowed to pay our fat, our adjunct faculty, which doesn't sit well with anyone. You know, and so there's just a lot of nuances to that. And while I'm trying to write the ship on some of that get approval for us increase our adjunct stipends and things, you know, there's still this dynamic of, well, why are they getting this over



here? And you know, but I have no interest in trying to pursue like the SDH funding, so I'm not interested in that at all. I would be more interested in like I said, you know, an instructor that we could have for Capstone, you know, an advisor that we could have that particularly support some of our special populations. So, they I think, I just think it boils down to communication we don't have any kind of written agreement from when it was first started.

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 17:30

Yeah, so my understanding is that way back when, when the Provost and the CEO had the conversation, it was sort of like a handshake on a napkin deal initially, I guess, and then it kind of evolved out of that, because there was EnGaCo had a need. Provost had a solution, and together that relationship was formed. And then of course, it's evolved. You know, from my understanding from from what I'm being told as well. So it's been very interesting, though, to think about how not so many years ago, the relationship evolved over a handshake, you know, to extremely large institutions. But, yeah,

**P10** 18:13

I mean, it's, it's problematic for many, many reasons. When they're when things go wrong. When things don't go how they're supposed to go within it is in my two year it's very problematic because we do not have an agreement, right. And so it is, it's very challenging, though it would serve all of us and protect the students, right, you know, protect the EnGaCo employees. So that what they've been promised is what, you know, is actually transpiring

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 18:47

Of course, no, absolutely. Of course. Last question, and we're doing really good on time is, so if I'm thinking about building a UI partnership model, and you kind of alluded to some of the answers anyway, but what are some key elements that you feel are necessary in developing that this sustainable program?

**P10** 19:09

I mean, I think I've mentioned a couple of them. Certainly the communication and network building sustainable funding that's needed. You know, the development officer, industry partner. I do think the advisory boards are really helpful when you're trying to build this though. Similar to what we're doing with careers right now with like the new billini center and some of that where you have industry partners actively involved on your advisory council, you know, to help you inform the curriculum to help you be more responsive, where we're not and think about, is this really a bachelor's program or is this a certification need? Or is this more of a workshop session like what is that actual need that they have? And I do think that's remarkably honest, is working toward that corporate partnerships, but not just the for profit, but for the other, the other side of that. So I think that's what we really need from the sustainable side is looking at this big picture and I think President law is doing that right now. There's lots of conversations happening, where we are talking about right now with MacDill, for example of what are their needs, like what are their education needs? Do we want to do something similar to what we have with Zika with them? So I think that's what's probably the biggest, you know, obviously, resources is important but intentional resources, you know, what do the students actually need to be successful? So, is there some specific tutoring that's needed? I mean, I think of them as, as special populations. These are post traditional students. And they're having a different experience, and we can't apply our

traditional undergraduate experience to them. So what does that look like for wraparound support? You know, how are they registered? How are they advise what tutoring provided their courses? You know, all of that. I think the cohort model helps with that. But I can, I can see what your colleagues are saying about the expansion of it and the benefit there. But it helps us to keep it contained through and make sure that they get what they need and they're successful. So it will be an interesting to think about sustainable sustainability wise, would you expand the cover? So would you have different paths? You know, what would that or what could that be? Yeah,

**Amboy-Biller, Lan Renee** 21:35

Allison, I think this has been extremely helpful. For me, oh, good in all in all of this and in conducting, you know, the program evaluation and starting to I'm at the analyzing the data phase. So I'm conducting, I guess, my second third stage coding right now and starting to identify themes and things. Of course, it all gets convoluted, and I'm doing this at this like 5:30am to 7am hour because that seems to be the timeframe that I can like focus so people think I'm wickedly crazy right now because they're like you're doing what at five in the morning, but I have to fit it in. And I know if I wait until the end of the day, my brain is mush, you know, if I'm trying to work on it at seven at night, because that's what he's trying to do. I wasn't productive at all. So my productivity for that is in this timeframe. So good yeah. So I'm really appreciative. This was really helpful for me to kind of understand like the trajectory from the high level of it and where thoughts are because, of course, the stakeholders that I'm speaking to





## APPENDIX CC:

### CODEBOOK

#### Code Frequency

1 BLUE	21
2 YELLOW	46
3 GREEN	49
4 MAGENTA	30
5 Cohort Model	168
6 Learning	17
7 Started	38
8 HCC	29
9 Instruction	22
10 Administrative	45
11 Industry	247
12 Courses	206
13 Degree	119
14 Students	313
15 USF	208

#### Codes

##### 1 BLUE

Phrases in participant interviews answering Q4 (Improvement) were highlighted for key participant perspectives.

##### 2 YELLOW

Phrases in participant interviews answering Q3 (Sustainable Components) were highlighted for key participant perspectives.

### 3 GREEN

Phrases in participant interviews answering Q2 (Effectiveness) were highlighted for key participant perspectives.

### 4 MAGENTA

Phrases in participant interviews answering Q1 (Partnership Structure) were highlighted for key participant perspectives.

### 5 Cohort Model

First cycle coding – The code interchanges participants description of the word cohort. The description included cohort model, cohort, and program under this code across all interviews.

### 6 Learning

First cycle coding – The code interchanges participants description of the word learn and learning. The word learning appeared across all interviews.

### 7 Started

First cycle coding – The code merges variation of the word start to include started, began, and beginning under this specific code. The word started appeared across all interviews.

### 8 HCC

First cycle coding – HCC addresses the community college participants attended (Hillsborough Community College) used across all interviews.

### 9 Instruction

First cycle coding – The code merges variation of the words instruction to include instruction and teaching under this specific code. The word instruction appeared across all interviews.

### 10 Administrative

First cycle coding – The code merges variation of the words administrative to include admissions process, tuition reimbursement program, paperwork on industry or institution, and degree plan under this specific code. The word administrative appeared across all interviews.

### 11 Industry

First cycle coding – The code merges variation of the words industry to include stakeholders for the industry, designated person, advocate, champion, point person, company, recruiter, personnel, driver, staff, and performance coach under this specific code. The word industry appeared across all interviews.

### 12 Courses

First cycle coding – The code merges variation of the word's courses, classes, and curriculum under this specific code. The word courses appeared across all interviews.

### 13 Degree

First cycle coding – Degree addresses specifically the word degree across all interviews.

### 14 Students

First cycle coding – The code merges variation of the words students to include student, students, and employees under this specific code. The word students appeared across all interviews.

### 15 USF

First cycle coding – The code merges variation of the word's key stakeholder for institution, advisor, dedicated person, instructors, and personnel under this specific code. The word USF appeared across all interviews.