



**THE EDUCATION
COLLABORATIVE**

Systems Change Program - Employability Pilot Program Report 2024

CONTENTS

3	ABOUT SCP-E
3	ABBREVIATION
4	OVERVIEW
6	STRUCTURE
10	IMPACT PILLARS
12	SCP-E PILOT
14	REVIEW OF EXTENT OF TRANSFORMATION
20	CONCLUSION
21	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

About the Systems Change Program – Employability

The Systems Change Program - Employability (SCP-E) is a transformative process to develop a deep sense of internal ownership and control of the processes and attitudes it takes to create, sustain, and measure improved outcomes in employability development systems. The content of this document outlines an 18-month pilot with four institutions; namely Ashesi University, Strathmore University and Kepler College as mentor institutions to University of Cape Coast (UCC) and Accra Technical University(ATU) in Ghana, Burkina Institute of Technology [BIT] in Burkina Faso, and Integrated Polytechnic Regional College (IPRC) Gishari in Rwanda.

Abbreviations

SCP-E

Systems Change Program – Employability

ATU

Accra Technical University

HEIs

Higher Education Institutions

BIT

Burkina Institute of Technology

COPs

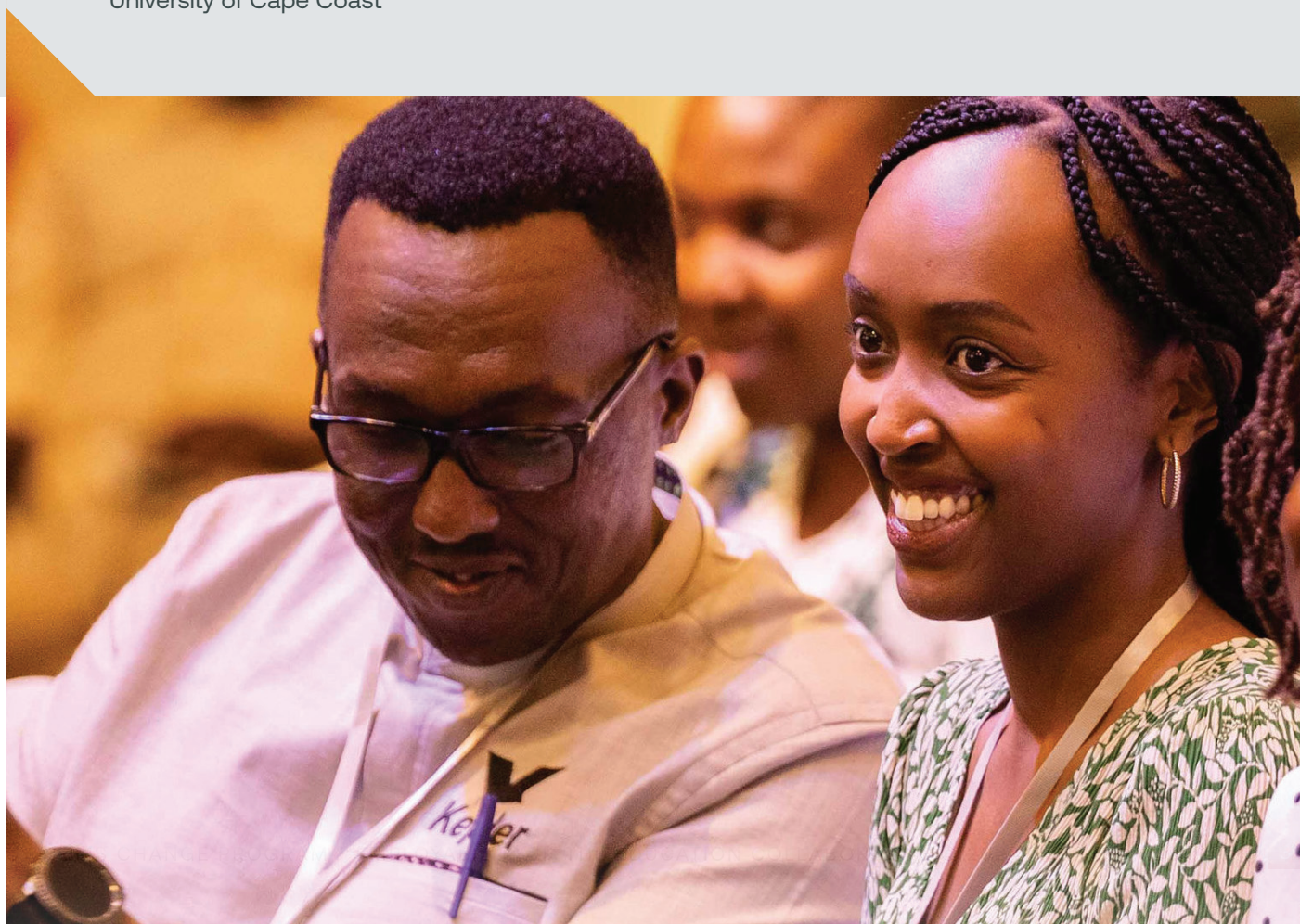
Communities of Practice

IPRC

Integrated Polytechnic Regional College

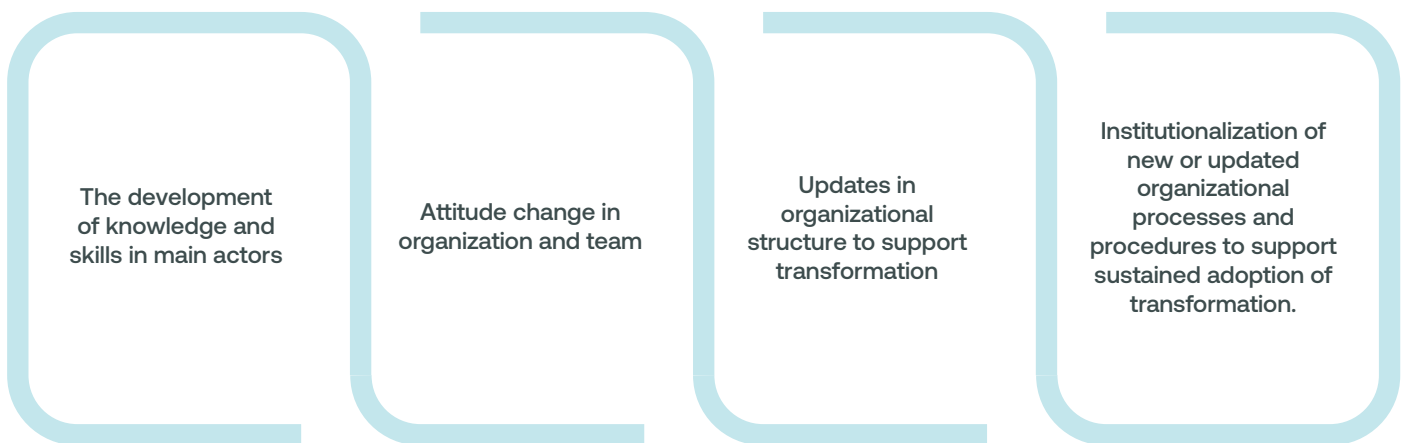
UCC

University of Cape Coast



Overview

This report on the Systems Change Program - Employability (SCP-E) shares the process, outcomes, and insights from the SCP-E framework, designed and implemented to support career services and skills development in four higher education institutions in East and West Africa. The institutions in the pilot program were University of Cape Coast [UCC] and Accra Technical University [ATU] in Ghana, Burkina Institute of Technology [BIT] in Burkina Faso, and Integrated Polytechnic Regional College (IPRC) Gishari in Rwanda. The report period covers the program cycle from November 2021 to September 2023. Using a mixed-method approach, the program's effectiveness and success were evaluated along four areas established at its inception as the critical pillars needed for transformation. Evidence of;



The Systems Change Program - Employability (SCP-E) was designed as a deep transformative process to develop a deep sense of internal ownership and control of the processes and attitudes it takes to create, sustain, and measure improved outcomes in employability development systems. During the 18-month period, participating institutions worked with peers and experts in a process that fundamentally developed the components and structures of key systems that would drive improved outcomes in their departments and institutions.

The report outlines the structure of the SCP-E, the actors and roles in the program, and the impact of the program for each of the participating institutions. It will also highlight insights from an analysis of the pilot process and the differing outcomes in the participating institutions.





Structure of the SCP-E

Structure of the SCP-E

The Systems Change Program for Employability is a transformative initiative spearheaded by The Education Collaborative in partnership with Kepler College. This program is designed to enhance student employment outcomes by developing and implementing critical systems and structures within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

The SCP-E was designed to achieve the following:

1. Drive ownership of the transformation process from within the participating higher education institutions.
2. Engage member institutions with exemplary career outcomes in The Education Collaborative as leads for transformation in their areas of expertise and experience.
3. Build lasting mentorship, collaboration, and sharing relationships in the identified focal area (in this case, employability systems) across institutions on the continent.

At the end of the SCP-E program period, with mentorship and training, each institution would have defined clear outcomes and pathways to positively change their employability structures and alumni engagement activities. They would have identified and strengthened key partnerships needed and addressed critical challenges that arise through the implementation process. They would have strengthened their ability to be sustainable and developed the tools to raise further resources if needed for their career units and programs. More specifically, an institution will have:

1. An established career center and program calendar for the university, including the technology to support this program.
2. A trained team of leads/staff for the career center and programs.
3. Curricula for various employability programs including soft skills training curriculum, exit strategy training for final year students, processes, calendar, and design for experiential learning programs such as job shadowing, internships, etc.
4. A monitoring and evaluation framework and tools to measure impact and outcomes.
5. Standardized tools for tracking graduate employability rates annually.
6. An improved employer engagement plan and an effective platform for mutually beneficial relationships.
7. A peer network of career services development professional in The Education Collaborative for continued learning.

The program builds on a theory of change that suggests that if the right institutional champions are backed by leadership and governance policies, structural change will be possible and sustained. And if this is done in a system of continuous learning and mentorship within a community, seed resources will be maximized to achieve the outcomes needed to secure sustained resources and systems change will occur. The program identifies leads from Higher Education Institutions as champions for change and takes them through expert training and mentoring and provides them with a small grant for innovation and proof of concept to improve on and develop new systems within their department or institution. Other actions involve peer engagements through collaborative learning, networking opportunities, and participation in Communities of Practice as well as receiving funding support.

The actors:

- **The lead and participating institutions:**

Institutional commitment to the SCP-E is key and begins from the nomination process and continues throughout the program. A nomination letter and a nomination form are required as a part of the application process to provide evidence of an institution's commitment to the program. The institution commits to consistent communication and update meetings from the program leads throughout the program. Institutional leadership provides acknowledgement and review of interim, outcome and impact reports at all scheduled milestones throughout the process. The program leads are expected to be from the senior leaders of the participating institutions.

- **The mentor:**

The mentors have an exemplary track record in the proposed areas of career services development and are selected based on the institution's need, location, and model. Participating leads also have access to The Education Collaborative's pool of career services development mentors who have expertise in various aspects of career services and employability development, and employer and alumni engagement.

Core pillars of the program

1. **Expert training and capacity building:**

Leads begin with a deep dive into the theory of change and the strategy development process in a two-day workshop. Together with other institutions they learn about exemplar career services centers and strategies in Africa. Leads engage in job shadowing of units at peer institutions, formal training on monitoring and evaluation tools and models, and trainings and workshop on fundraising and managing upwards. These insights, knowledge and the training equip the leads to map out a full career services strategy, and one-year career services development plan for implementation together with their primary mentor.

2. **Mentorship:**

This pillar pairs institutions with experienced mentors to guide them through the development and implementation of new systems (Figure 1). This mentorship is built to meet the specific needs of each participating institution, ensuring that the solutions are relevant and effective. At its core, is a robust system of sustained mentorship support and continuous tracking of progress facilitated through different online tools, i.e., mentor – mentee check-in reporting tool, shared online working spaces for participating institutions to store all working documents related to the program, monthly check-ins with the overall team to share best practices, and allowance for other informal communication channels. This helps to ensure that the mentoring process remains dynamic and adaptable while allowing mentors and leads (participating institutions) to tailor their needs and support.

3. **Funding:**

A small grant is awarded to help the participating institutions to test and innovate around the designed foundations needed for continued growth. At the end of the program, with mentorship and training, the institution would have defined clear outcomes and pathways to positively change a system. They would have identified and strengthen key partnerships needed and addressed critical challenges that rise through the implementation process. They would hence have strengthened their ability to be sustainable and raise further resources.

4. Monitoring and evaluation:

The impact tracking and measurement of the SCP begins with the establishment of a baseline and ends at the end of phase two with a final measurement. There are multiple points of review assessment of progress and outcomes by the leads and their mentors. And the lead institutions learn to adapt measurement tools for their continued use after the program.

5. A Community of Practice for continuous learning:

All participating institutions join the Employability Community of Practice to share best practices and ensure that they remain adaptable and responsive to the ever-changing needs of systems necessary for institutional transformation.

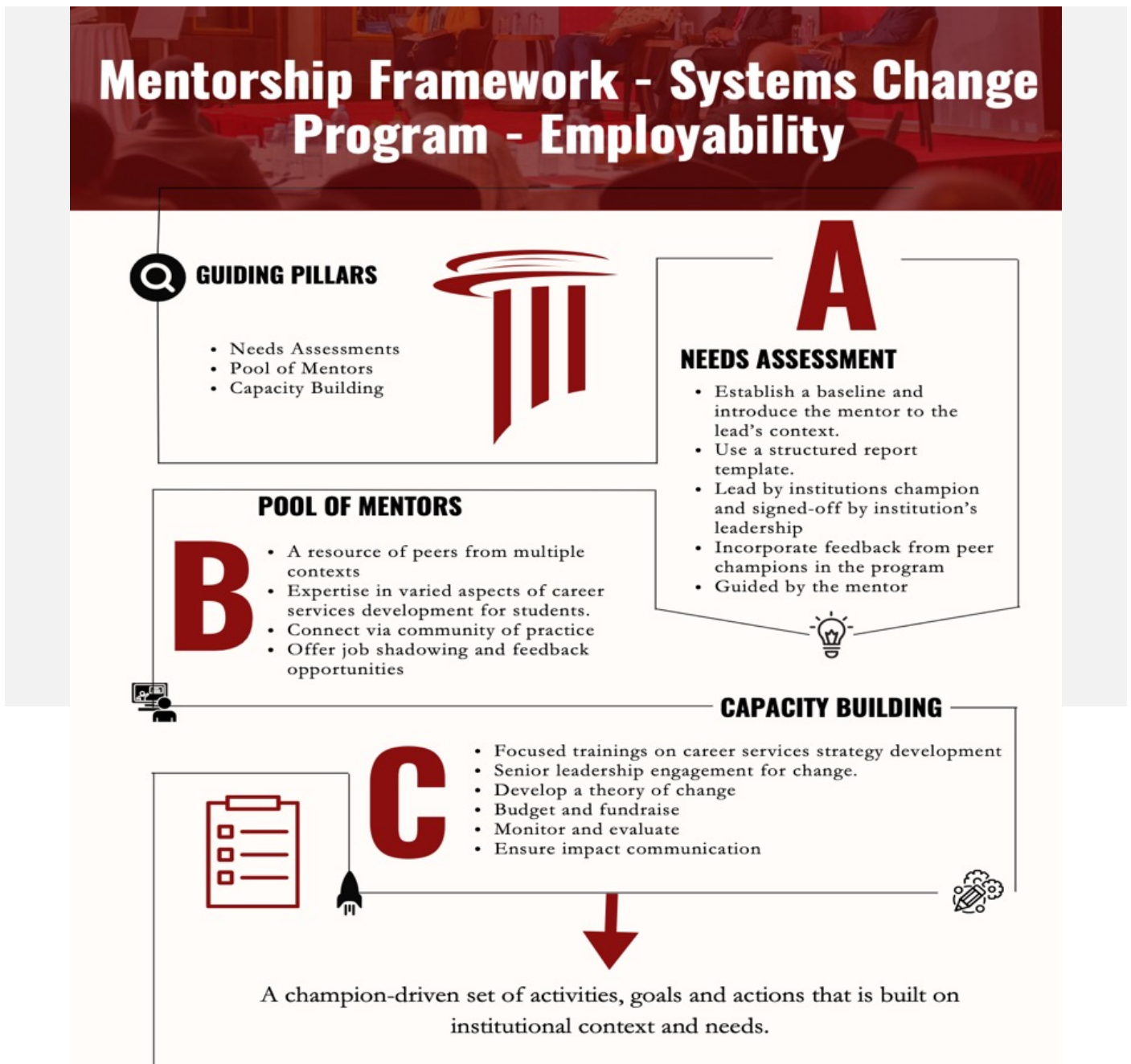


Figure 1: The Mentorship Framework – SCP-
E



Impact Pillars

Impact Pillars

The program’s effectiveness and success are hinged on the realization outcomes in four pillars through the process of transformation.

Impact Pillars	Definition and Criteria for Success
Development of Knowledge and Skills	Documented, accessible training and capacity development plan and process in place for relevant stakeholders.
Attitude Change	Change in attitude of senior leadership, increased support, and commitment from senior leadership.
Organizational Structure	Update structures and reporting lines across all connected units and departments to ensure the continuity and success of new systems and processes; communication flow and awareness of structure created.
Operational Procedures and Policy	Institutionalization through policy formulation, communication, and adoption of key procedures and processes, budgets and funding, and logistics created for student career services and support.

The pillars are the result of careful analysis of the systems change theory to measure impact. The pillars selected delineate the systems change process to address the needs for fundamental and sustained changes in policies, processes, relationships, values and norms, and power structures.

Rating Title	Score	Interpretation
Goal achieved	3	All milestones and success measures have been achieved.
Active goal	2	The goal is still in progress; some milestones have been achieved.
Goal deferred	1	For timing or other reasons, the goal has been deferred.
Goal not met	0	Time frame for goal has been met; however, some or all milestones and success measures have not been met.



The SCP-E Pilot

The SCP-E Pilot, November 2021 to September 2023

The program pilot engaged seven institutions in The Education Collaborative network. Four enrolled as participating institutions looking to build or improve their systems and structures for employability. Three of the institutions were institutions with career and employability departments and teams with notably good outcomes. The participating institutions were enrolled through a call and subsequent application process. There was a deliberate mix of public, private, mainstream and technical institutions along with consideration of a diverse geographical location, year of establishment, size, and governance model of the institutions. The mentoring institutional departments engaged in the pilot were Ashesi University’s career services department, Strathmore University’s career development services department, and Kepler College’s career services department.

Participating institutions’ profile

	University of Cape Coast [UCC]	RP – Integrated Polytechnic Regional College (IPRC) at Gishari	Burkina Institute of Technology [BIT]	Accra Technical University [ATU]
Year of Establishment	1962	2013	2018	1949
Conventional / TVET	Conventional	TVET	Conventional STEM	Public
Type	Public	Public	Private	Public
Vision	To be a university with worldwide acclaim that is strongly positioned for innovative teaching, research, outreach, and professional development,	To provide quality education that complies with applicable standards through vocational education that enables beneficiaries to acquire skills required to create jobs and compete in the labor market.	To educate a new generation of leaders.	To be recognized as the top technical university in Ghana, with strong regional influence.
Colleges/Schools/ Departments	5 Colleges	4 Departments	2 Departments	17 Departments
Student Population	Over 74,720	1,368	317	20,017
Alumni	N/A	1,017	27	N/A
Country	Ghana	Rwanda	Burkina Faso	Ghana

Figure 1: Institutional Profiles in SCP-E



Review of extent of transformation in participating pilot institutions

Review of extent of transformation in participating pilot institutions

A mixed-method approach is used to present impact across the four participating institutions (University of Cape Coast, Ghana; Rwanda Polytechnic, Rwanda; Burkina Institute of Technology, Burkina Faso; and Accra Technical University, Ghana).

The extent of transformation in each participating institution was analyzed using the four pillars along the measurement scales created.

Pillar	IPRC Gishari	UCC	BIT	ATU
Development of Knowledge and Skills	Achieved	Achieved	Active	Active
Attitude Change	Achieved	Achieved	Achieved	Achieved
Organizational Structure	Achieved	Active	Achieved	Active
Organizational Procedures and Processes	Achieved	Achieved	Achieved	Active

The data above demonstrates the program’s transformative potential in facilitating the development of knowledge and skills, change in attitude, and improving organizational structures, procedures, and processes to build and sustain employability systems. This has undeniable potential to continue to foster and nurture a culture of adaptability and innovation, as well as an environment that embraces agile, responsive systems for heightened efficiency towards student employment outcomes.

Spotlight per participating institution

Integrated Polytechnic Regional College [IPRC] - Gishari

IPRC Gishari set out to improve career support services for graduate employability by achieving the following key objectives.

1. Build staff capacity to deliver soft skills training.
2. Equip students with soft skills for employability.
3. Build a network with potential employers for industrial attachment and employment opportunities for students and graduates.
4. Build a strong alumni network.
5. Establish and equip a functioning Business Incubation Centre.

IPRC has identified structures and processes needed to drive student career services and their related student employment outcomes. Since joining the program in 2021 and through mentorship, IPRC Gishari has developed a career strategy (the institution’s first) to provide a quality education that complies with applicable standards through vocational education. This enables beneficiaries to acquire the skills to create jobs and compete in the labor market. Other institutional firsts include:

- **An institutional career mentorship program.**
- **Developing an employability skills curriculum and integrating it into the current system.**
- **Developing and implementing career fairs and employer engagement models.**
- **Developing a business incubation model.**

In line with the program’s performance evaluation model, the table below summarizes IPRC Gishari’s performance in achieving the goals set through mentorship in the SCP – E.

Pillar	IPRC - Gishari
Build staff capacity to deliver soft skills training	Achieved
Equip students with soft skills for employability	Achieved
Build a network with potential employers for industrial attachment and employment opportunities for students and graduates	Achieved
Build a strong alumni network	Active
Establish and equip a functioning Business Incubation Centre	Active
Overall status	Active

University of Cape Coast [UCC]

UCC set out to impact the successful employability of at least 70% of its student participants through the SCP – E program by introducing impactful, industry-relevant career development programming and experiential learning opportunities to the student university experience in a systemic, intentional, and institutionally coordinated manner. To achieve this, the university aimed to:

- Establish a university-wide coordinated career services center to handle all employability and career-related issues.
- Develop soft skills and improve accessibility and scalability of career development programming across a significant portion of the student population.
- Introduce tracking and impact assessment of all career programs and students to improve their employability outcomes.

As it is UCC’s strategy to promote active and reflective teaching and learning through SCP – E and the mentorship provided, the institution developed a Careers Peer Coaches Model (CPC) to support its desire to improve and mainstream career support and services that benefit and sustain the needs of its large student population across different schools. Moreover, since joining the program, UCC has also achieved various institutional firsts, including:

- Creating and implementing an institutional Career Peer Coaches program guide and evaluation methods.
- Training over 109 career peer coaches.
- Securing a designated facility under its Design Hub for its Career Center and its FlexLab to serve as a training center.

In line with the program’s performance evaluation model, the table below summarizes UCC’s performance in achieving the goals set through mentorship in the SCP – E.

BIT Goal	Performance
Establish a university-wide coordinated career services center to handle all employability and career-related issues.	Achieved
Develop soft skills and improve accessibility and scalability of career development programming across a significant portion of the student population.	Active
Introduce tracking and impact assessment of all career programs and students to improve their employability outcomes.	Achieved
Overall Status	Active

Burkina Institute of Technology [BIT]

BIT endeavored to transform institutional career services and support in three ways: students, employers, and alumni. The transformation sought was by standardizing the programs offered by its career service department, focusing on closing long-term partnerships with companies, and establishing a formal alumni network. Specifically, the university aimed to:

1. Program-structured career support interventions for integrating student career support in academic programming to ensure student readiness for the labor market.
2. Develop and initiate the implementation of an employer engagement strategy to bridge a gap between what happens at BIT and labor markets.
3. Develop an alumni engagement strategy to support and strengthen institutional alumni bonds.

Through mentorship and support offered in the SCP – E to standardize and mainstream BIT’s student career services and support programs, the institution has significantly succeeded in beginning to reap the benefits of its strategy. This notably includes:

- Completing career awareness workshop series for over 130 first-year students.
- Completing industry-relevant workshops for over 340 students, equipping them with different employable skills, including CV preparation, professional email writing, interview preparation, personal branding, and networking.
- Planning and carrying out the institution’s first alumni networking event.
- Planning and holding entrepreneurship summits.
- Integrating career service and support workshops into the curriculum.

In line with the performance evaluation protocol set for the SCP – E, the table below shows BIT’s performance in achieving the goals set through mentorship.

BIT Goal	Performance
Program-structured career support interventions for integrating student career support in academic programming to ensure student readiness for the labor market.	Achieved
Develop and initiate the implementation of an employer engagement strategy to bridge a gap between what happens at BIT and labor markets.	Achieved
Develop an alumni engagement strategy to support and strengthen institutional alumni bonds.	Active
Overall Status	Active

Accra Technical University [ATU]

ATU set out to transform the university’s career services through systemic programs to bolster student employment outcomes. To achieve this goal, the university aimed to:

1. Design and establish a careers services center for the university.
2. Design and implement capacity building of students around soft skills through DigiCap.
3. Design and implement a Career Peers Coaches model to sustain the implementation of programs across the university over time.

The table below shows ATU's performance in achieving the goals set through mentorship.

Table 7

Performance – Systems Change Program for Employability [SCP – E]

ATU Goal	Performance
Design and establish a careers service center for the university.	Achieved
Design and implement capacity building of students around soft skills through DigiCap.	Active
Design and implement a Career Peers Coaches model to sustain the implementation of programs across the university over time.	Achieved
Overall Status	Active





Conclusion

In conclusion, the program's mission to transform institutional employability systems has been achieved significantly. In particular, the program has greatly succeeded in fostering a shift in attitude for senior leadership within participating institutions, who have now become its advocates. This newfound commitment and engagement have been instrumental in driving success and symbolizes the potential for a cultural transformation to institutional sustained support and resources for the program's long-term viability.

Moreover, the program's impact on improving organizational structures and procedures to build and run employability systems has been a resounding success. Whence some goals in this aspect have partially been met, the progress noticed demonstrates a remarkable success compared to the initial baselines at its outset. The newly restructured employability systems in participating institutions help provide enhanced support for student employment outcomes, streamlining student-centric programmatic endeavors and demonstrating the program's dynamism and adaptability to serve institutions through a personalized and contextual transformation framework.

Acknowledgement

This report was written by
Dr George Mugabe, Program Manager,
Systems Change Program -Employability



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