

Make-It-Better. Connecting Technical Education to Business Degrees

ACTE NextLevel Fellows are changing the future of postsecondary career and technical education. Through the yearlong program, Fellows develop their professional and leadership skills while creating a plan to solve a real challenge at their institution. Below is the story of one Fellow whose Make-It-Better plan led to transformative change.

Kari Lamoreaux, 2023 ACTE NextLevel Postsecondary CTE Leaders Fellow | Utah State University

The challenge

Throughout her career in technical and academic education, Kari saw a persistent barrier facing students who earned business certificates. Although many students wanted to continue their education, their technical education certificates often did not count toward business degree programs, leaving them with no clear pathway to further develop their knowledge and skills. Kari saw an opportunity to build stronger connections between technical education and degree programs so students could continue their education without starting over.

The plan

Kari developed a Make-It-Better plan to revive and redesign a transferable Associate of Business degree that would connect technical education certificates to bachelor's degree programs. She redesigned the degree around flexible credit categories so students could meet prerequisites for multiple majors without following one fixed course sequence. The NextLevel Fellowship helped Kari turn her vision into action by providing mentorship, accountability, and administrative buy-in. With guidance from her mentor and support from university leadership, Kari built the institutional partnerships needed to move the project from concept to implementation.

Kari's Make-It-Better plan included

- Reviving a transferable Associate of Business degree
- Redesigning the degree using flexible credit categories
- Aligning technical certificates with bachelor's degree prerequisites
- Partnering with faculty members, university leaders, and industry
- Expanding advising and outreach to promote the new pathway

The impact



Institutional impact

- Launched a redesigned Associate of Business degree
- Enrolled 48 students in the new program
- Increased concurrent enrollment in business programs
- Expanded transfer opportunities into business degree programs

Professional impact

- Founded Utah's Postsecondary Association of Career Educators (PACE)
- Led statewide collaboration among postsecondary CTE professionals
- Secured ECMC Foundation support for PACE initiatives
- Expanded partnerships across Utah and the national CTE community

This work reinforced Kari's belief that every student's prior learning should be recognized and valued. For Kari, one of the most meaningful outcomes was creating a degree pathway that allows students to build on their technical education rather than start over. She was also encouraged to see increased interest in concurrent enrollment, as students now recognize that their technical education courses can contribute to a business degree.

Advice for future NextLevel Fellows

Kari encourages future Fellows to choose projects that directly improve opportunities for students and to think beyond the day-to-day responsibilities of their roles. She believes educators are uniquely positioned to identify barriers and create practical solutions that lead to lasting change.

Kari also highlighted the lasting value of the Fellowship network. Building relationships with Fellows from across the country gave her a trusted group of colleagues to exchange ideas with, learn from, and stay connected to well beyond the program.

The ACTE NextLevel Fellowship helped Kari transform an innovative transfer pathway into lasting opportunities for students while expanding her leadership in postsecondary CTE.

To learn more about the NextLevel Postsecondary CTE Leaders Fellowship, visit www.nextlevelcte.org

