

COMPETENCY-BASED

Student Journey Map



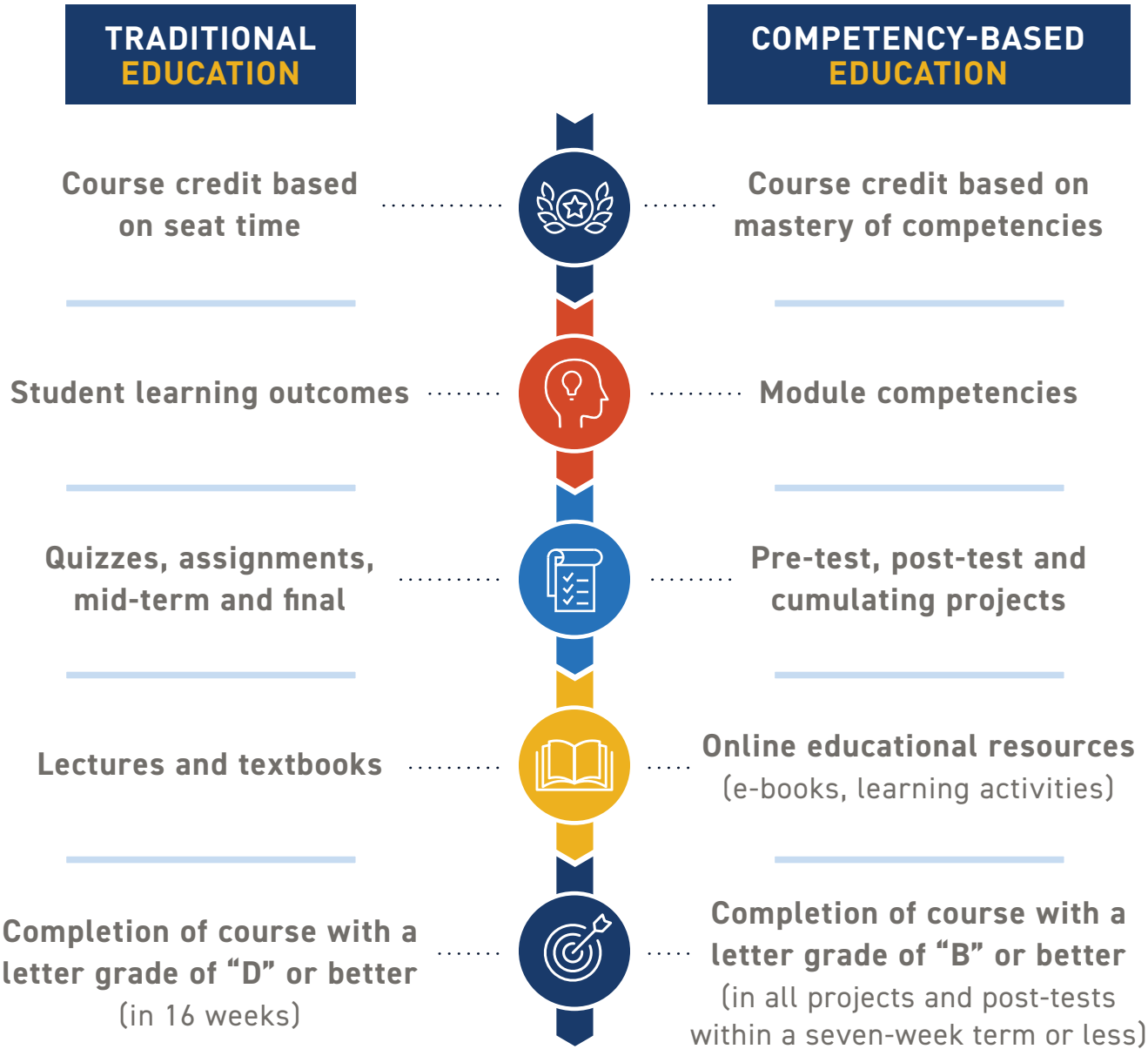
A&M
COMMERCE

What is Competency-Based Education?

Competency-Based Education (CBE) is one of the most effective models to serve non-traditional students. CBE measures student learning from a demonstration of knowledge rather than a required number of hours spent in a classroom. Students acquire and demonstrate their knowledge by engaging in learning exercises, activities and experiences that align with clearly defined student learning outcomes.

CBE is student-driven and self-paced, guided by individualized feedback from an instructor and advisor. CBE is also flexible and offered fully online, so it works around the busy personal and professional lives of adult learners and working professionals.

While graduation is a shared goal, no two student journeys are alike. By combining wrap-around student support and career planning, the **College of Innovation and Design** empowers students to leverage their prior coursework, life experiences and knowledge to achieve their educational and professional goals. Personalized support from key personnel is integral to our students' success.



FAST FACTS

180 students were served in the launch of **two new academic degree programs.**



71% of surveyed students graduated **without debt.**



21 students completed a bachelor's degree **in less than two years.**



57% of students obtained a raise or promotion **within 6 mo. of graduation.**

EXAMPLE PATHS



Transfer Student

Sam is a mid-career warehouse manager with some college credit. Despite the responsibilities and challenges of his personal and professional life, he is determined to complete his degree and elevate his career trajectory. He selected the competency-based **Safety and Health** program as a tool to enhance his skills and position himself for his company's Director of Occupational Health and Safety position.



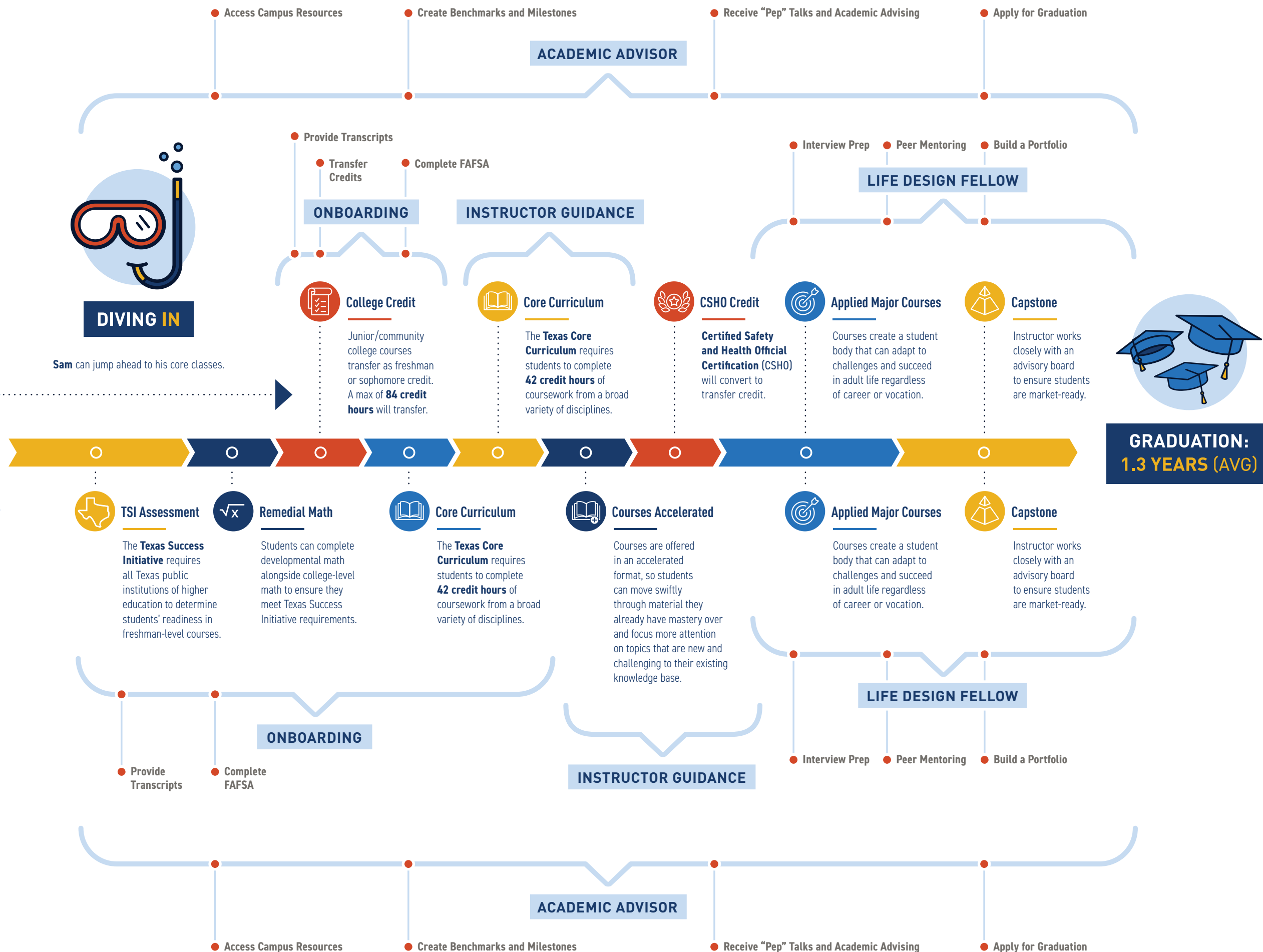
DIVING IN

Sam can jump ahead to his core classes.



First-Time Student


Ella is a part-time medical worker while her kids are at school. Recognizing her potential, Ella's boss encouraged her to earn a degree so she can begin a full-time professional career. Ella has no college experience. She is unsure how she will manage her family, work and school commitments but she's resourceful and goal oriented. She selected the competency-based **Health Services Administration** program to position herself for an office manager role.



University Partnerships Coordinator

UNIVERSITY STUDENT ID

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Name: Sam


Age: 45

Major: BAAS in Safety and Health

Job Title: Warehouse Manager

Work Schedule: 40-60 hours per week

Personal: Some previous college credit



We created a student journey map to depict the variety of ways adult learners navigate the higher education system. “**Sam**” began college, but was unable to complete his degree when he also became employed full time. CBE represents an ideal pathway for Sam to continue working while earning a credential that opens opportunities for advancement in his current organization and industry. Sam was able to jump into college where he left off, completing his core curriculum requirements and receiving credit for his prior college and **Workforce Education Course Manual (WECM)** courses. Because CBE is fully online and asynchronous, Sam was able to balance school and work comfortably by completing two courses every seven-week term.

Greater Texas Foundation grant funding supported the position of **University Partnerships Coordinator**. Rather than targeting traditional high school students, we explored and refined the process of recruiting adult learners through community college partnerships, employers offering tuition reimbursement programs, and professional agencies offering professional certification.

Community college partnerships involved the creation of dozens of degree pathways, ensuring a seamless pathway from an **AAS** to a **BAAS** degree.

An **MOU** with the **Texas A&M Extension and Engineering Service (TEEX)** made possible the recognition of the **Occupational Safety and Health Official (CSHO)** certificate for up to 19 semester hours of college credit.

Our university partnerships coordinator also forged relationships with **EnergyWorld.net**, **Reeves County Emergency Management**, **Concord Church** and **Los Barrios Unidos Community Clinic**. Organizations like these have employer tuition-reimbursement programs that serve as an important means for working professionals to obtain a college degree without interrupting work commitments or taking on student debt.



CBE programs align with the strategic plan of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB): Building a Talent Strong Texas, resulting in a workforce with marketable skills and elevating the socioeconomic dynamic of the community.”


- DAVIDA TARPLEY,
University Partnerships Coordinator



Undergraduate Enrollment Specialist

UNIVERSITY STUDENT ID

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Name: Ella


Age: 33

Major: BAAS in Health Services Administration

Job Title: Part-time Medical Worker

Work Schedule: 20-29 hours per week

Personal: No college credit



Our work with adult learners indicated that the inquiry, admissions and enrollment process is complicated and intimidating for first-time adult learners and those who have been out of college for some time, necessitating the creation of a new role: **Undergraduate Enrollment Specialist**. “Ella,” from our student journey map, is a first-time adult learner with no prior college coursework seeking to obtain a college degree. The process of submitting an application, **FAFSA** or **E-TASFA**, and taking the **TSI exam** may seem intimidating. Our Undergraduate Enrollment Specialist demystifies the process, serving as a personalized point-person who walks potential students through all aspects of the admissions process.

The undergraduate enrollment specialist manages the admissions pipeline to build relationships with key departments across the university. We have found a need for continuous collaboration between multiple departments and divisions, including admissions, advising, registrar, financial aid and the bursar’s office. As the undergraduate enrollment specialist locates barriers to student access, internal procedures and policies are adjusted, modified or clarified for the unique needs of adult learners.

This method prevents the learner from being handed off between departments as they complete the financial aid process, submit their transcript and make financial plans.

Many adults are intimidated by the thought of going back to school and may feel they do not belong. The undergraduate enrollment specialist serves these learners by building a relationship with the student and ensuring they feel welcome and included. Together, they discuss the student’s prior course credits and workforce experience to help students identify the degree option that best aligns with their career aspirations.

In our student journey map, Ella overcomes many potential barriers to pursue college. With the help of wrap-around student support, she completes her developmental requirements and gains the confidence to accelerate through many courses, making faster-than-average progress toward her degree.

Whether students need remedial developmental coursework or assistance identifying which community college credits, military credits or professional certificates will translate into their degree, the undergraduate enrollment specialist meets students where they are and orients them to A&M-Commerce and our academic degree requirements.



For more info, visit tamuc.edu/CBE

Academic Advisor



Guiding students from enrollment to graduation, the **Academic Advisor** provides holistic advising to support student success. College may seem hierarchical in nature, elevating instructors as experts who may be perceived as disconnected from students. The academic advisor is often a liaison between the student and the professor, advocating for the student with the instructor. The process also occurs in reverse when an advisor may reinforce a message from the professor that might have otherwise been missed or lost in translation.

The academic advisor develops degree plans that make steady progress toward graduation. They consider prior coursework and the student's life and work experience to suggest possible elective courses to upskill or reskill students. The advisor registers students for courses, guides decisions on when a student needs to drop a course, and provides input and monitoring of students on academic probation.

CBE academic advisors are often lifelines for adult learners and working professionals who may need reassurance that college IS for them, and who may need assistance learning to navigate a fully online program. Adjusting to the pace of online learning, acquiring the acumen to establish their own time management, and strategizing to accelerate into additional courses can translate into academic success.

Did you know?



87%

of students who complete their first three CBE terms go on to graduate from our programs.

The academic advisor connects with students to learn about their needs and the road bumps they are facing in their academic journey. They may reach out via multiple platforms including text, phone, or email. The academic advisor can refer and connect the student with campus resources. A student facing technology issues can be connected with the **Center for IT Excellence help desk**. A student facing stressful life events can be connected with the **Counseling Center**. While these adults are fully online, they remain connected to the campus community and its benefits.



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Life Design Fellow

Assisting students as they begin their college career is crucial to success at the university. However, guidance should continue beyond graduation. Adult learners benefit from CBE because they can leverage their life and work experience to customize the courses they take to prepare them for their career aspirations. Whether they are **career chargers** seeking a promotion in their current line of work, a **career changer** who seeks to gain new skills to pivot into a new industry, or a **career explorer**—who may be a lifelong learner or needs time to reflect on their prior learning before taking the next career step—our newly created role of **Life Design Fellow** provides insights for multiple careers that lie ahead for our students.

Our life design fellow plays a key role in helping students to identify their passions and connect with their potential career trajectories. Using the **Design Your Life methodology***, the life design fellow specializes in facilitating transition, using the principles of positive psychology and engineering developed at Stanford University. This position enhances our existing success teams by ensuring each student is placed in the right major and program to pursue a career trajectory that will provide purpose and meaning for their lives.



*Burnett, Bill & Evans, Dave. *Designing Your Life: How to Build a Well-Lived, Joyful Life*. 2016.



Outside of providing resources and help with career exploration, the most frequent problem I'm able to solve for students is helping them not feel guilty about pursuing their own dreams and passions despite their current circumstances. You'd be surprised how many people feel stuck in their lives (at any age) because they are afraid of failure or they feel or have been told that what they really want to explore isn't feasible for them."

- CHELSÉ LILLY,
Life Design Fellow



The Design Your Life curriculum empowers students to be adaptive to change, resilient to failure, and less anxious about preparing for the post-graduate world of employment. By providing resume review, interview preparation and on-demand materials, we provide learners with a wealth of resources to prepare them for life after graduation.

The life design fellow helps students research transferable skills that best position them for a career change. Within this process, the life design fellow offers students the support and motivation needed to make big change happen.



For more info, visit tamuc.edu/CBE

Instructor

Student success lies in wrap-around student support. From inquiry to graduation, our students receive support, guidance and motivation from the academic success team. This attentiveness carries over to the academic experience, with instructors who merge academic rigor with real-world experiences. Instructors in our CBE programs provide applied learning in a responsive environment, answering student emails within 24 hours, especially during periods where acceleration into new courses is possible.

The overarching role of the **Instructor** is to deliver student-centered excellence in teaching. The instructor engages the student during the learning process and provides a student-centered approach to instruction. To best serve adult learners, the instructor is expected to provide timely feedback and evaluations with the understanding that adult learners may need assistance during non-work hours.

As a non-nursing healthcare worker, I needed a degree that would help advance my career.

I wish the Health Services Administration CBE program had been around then. I believe this program is going to help so many people in non-nursing healthcare roles further themselves and reach their career goals."

- D BESSON,
Instructor, Health Services Administration



In a course where the learning is fixed but time is variable, engagement is instrumental to ensure students continue completing coursework in a timely manner. Instructors must remain current in online instructional technologies to develop and teach course content that engages the student throughout the learning process.

Using **open education resources** rather than textbooks necessitates vigilance to ensure cutting-edge class materials are available. In addition, consultation with industry advisory boards ensures our courses are relevant to real-world scenarios that future employers need graduates to be equipped to handle on day one. Individualized feedback provides students with one-on-one learning that matches their learning style and level of knowledge.



For more info, visit tamuc.edu/CBE

Who We Are

The **College of Innovation and Design** was created with you in mind!
Your college delivers a unique blend of services and programs to help reach your educational and career goals.

By combining unique programs, personalized advising and career planning, the **College of Innovation and Design** provides you with the knowledge, confidence and practical tools for a career-ready professional who is prepared to compete and contribute value in the global marketplace.

Contact Us



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This graphic was made possible by a grant from the Greater Texas Foundation.