

CREATING A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE WITH MICRO-CREDENTIALS IN CRITICAL SOFT SKILL AREAS

Post University's groundbreaking partnership with American Management Association positions graduates with the skills and knowledge to answer difficult management challenges.

When posed the question "What does workforce readiness mean?" Post University students taking an Independent Study in Management course went to a credible source for answers. Honors Program students Juliana Rigano and Catherine Proulx explored the topic in an interview with KC Blonski, Senior Vice President of Higher Education Partnerships from the American Management Association (AMA). Blonski credited Post University's Malcolm Baldrige School of Business (MBSOB) for their innovativeness to bridge the gap between academia and industry. The partnership between AMA and the MBSOB allows students to earn micro-credentials in soft skill areas critical to workforce success.

These soft, or human, skills have become much more important in today's workplace. Organizations are seeking employees who can professionally engage and interact with internal and external customers. In addition, employees need the fortitude and mental strength to handle extreme changes, like those posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. In turn, self-motivation, conflict management, problem solving and emotional intelligence rise to the top of the "in-demand skills" list for job seekers. Honing these skills, therefore, is critical to career success.

Students in the MBSOB learn that leaders need to adapt to effectively manage change, like hybrid teams brought on by COVID. Effectively adapting to fluid environments allows leaders to maintain their organizations' key values and culture while remaining flexible to workforce and customer dynamics.

The partnership between AMA and Post University positions graduates with the skills and knowledge to answer difficult management challenges like:

- **How quickly can we onboard new hires to be productive and support the organization?**
- **How do I maintain the values and culture when the environment changes?**
- **How motivated are my employees to get the job done?**

AMA and Post University are working together to help prepare students and future employees for the workforce of tomorrow. The MBSOB has incorporated workforce-ready credentials into their degree offerings in an effort to allow students to hit the ground running after graduation. Blonski revealed that AMA is addressing a current skills gap in the areas of creativity and innovation, conflict management and problem solving. Dr. Jeremi Bauer, dean of the MBSOB, believes this partnership with AMA creates a competitive advantage for students entering the workforce, working toward a promotion, or looking to change careers.

Here is what the two Honors students had to say about being workforce ready.

Catherine Proulx, business administration major, believes that workforce readiness requires having the right "tools" to be successful in an organization. "You should have a large skillset that will benefit you when completing projects and the knowledge to accomplish what your manager asks you to do," says Proulx.

"The skill I'd like to improve to be workforce-ready would be my critical thinking. Sometimes, when I face a challenge, I forget to look at all sides of a problem. I must be able to analyze and evaluate all circumstances of an issue before making a decision. I believe that improving my critical thinking skills will allow me to become more open-minded and a versatile leader."

Juliana Rigano, business administration major, defines workforce-ready as "... prepared to take on a new task, class and/or job. Being organized will prepare you for future endeavors. Exploring your options and being involved in extracurricular activities will help build decision-making skills and shows your willingness to be open to trying new things."

"I want to develop a few different skills to be workforce-ready. A skill I think that would help me most is time management. This is essential to develop because we constantly meet deadlines, which continues in the workplace. I also want to develop stronger communication skills because even though I work well with people, I want to speak and write in a professional tone."