



## Scholars Preparing to Join Workforce

Avenue Scholars (AS) has a clear mission. That mission is to ensure careers for committed students of hope and need through education/training and supportive relationships. Furthermore, AS aspires for each student it serves to complete our program having satisfied the following guarantees: education/training, work experience, work-ready skills, attendance, and financial and personal wellbeing.

We define work ready habits and skills in a committed Avenue Scholar as an ability to demonstrate responsibility, work ethic, communication, positive attitude, professionalism, teamwork and problem solving. Sometimes, these skills are called 'soft' skills in the workplace, in contrast to the 'hard' skills of experience, education, and training.

Why is it important to be able to demonstrate this readiness for work? Employers have long touted the importance of soft skill development in hiring. According to P. Loretto (2019) at [balancecareers.com](http://balancecareers.com), "Employers value these types of skills because they demonstrate the internal thought processes of a person and how effective they will be in the organization." In fact, according to J. Bauer-Wolf (2019), writing for [inside-highered.com](http://inside-highered.com), "...employers emphasized leadership and ability to work in a team as the most desirable attributes when recruiting ... ahead of analytical and quantitative skills."

High school is a perfect place to develop and hone these work ready skills. The Nebraska Department of Education created the Nebraska's Standards of Career Readiness (adopted in 2011), available online at this site, which guide our work with students. <https://www.education.ne.gov/nce/careerreadinessstandards/>.

The Avenue Scholars program builds work-ready skill development into its curriculum and activities from day one. One example is the use of a text, called *Bring Your A Game to Work*, by E. Chester (2012). It involves activities and discussions around developing a work ethic that focus on attitude, attendance, appearance, ambition, accountability, acceptance, and appreciation. Our curriculum engages students in problem solving and critical thinking about appropriate work behaviors, coaches students on employability, and monitors and supports growth in transferable job skills. The first measure of demonstration of developing work ready skills is completion of the Avenue Scholars' career ready curriculum.

The second measure used to monitor and support growth in students' work ready skill development is through the experience of part-time work and employer feedback. All Avenue Scholars complete part-time work during their junior and senior years, a perfect training ground for practicing those work ready skills. To build a successful work history, Avenue Scholars' coaches assist students in finding those part-time jobs, monitor work hours, complete employee feedback forms, and facilitate student self-evaluation and progress evaluations. Students are expected to meet or exceed standards on the employer feedback form.

The Employee Feedback Form that we use in the program represents what employers value in work ready skills. Employers rate students in a variety of categories as proficient, progressing or not progressing. In the area of responsibility and work ethic, we look at reliability and dependability. Communication includes both oral and written communication and timeliness. Positive attitude is

reflected as respect for others, confidence, and environmental awareness. Professionalism is measured as carrying oneself with confidence in one's behaviors and attitudes. Teamwork looks at working collaboratively with others. Problem solving includes decision-making, adaptability, initiative, and conflict resolution. Coaches then support

the student in the application of strengths and development of weaknesses in these areas.

We know that employers strive to find workers with valuable work readiness skills. They believe those skills are likely to influence retention and satisfaction on the job. According to B. Bean-Mellinger (2019) at [smallbusiness-chron.com](http://smallbusiness-chron.com), "Candidates with workplace skills are employable because they make sound decisions, have the capacity to acquire new knowledge and easily adapt to various work situations."

What can parents do to help their students? The development of work-ready skills are mirrored in the behaviors and attitudes you expect of your teens at home. Help your student with etiquette and manners. Practice listening and having conversations face to face. Review their digital footprint and social media accounts. Practice time management and goal setting. Expect responsibility and dependability of your teen in everyday life. Any practice at home will help to hone the skills that will benefit a teen for a lifetime.



<http://dm.greenville.edu/2019/05/soft-skills-9/>



Avenue Scholars students are given opportunities to explore jobs in various career fields, such as health care.

*Outstanding Junior Scholar*

**Bacon plans for future in health care field**

High School Career Coach Kamina Lemons describes junior Sophie Bacon as “a go-getter.”

“She is responsive to others needs and overall responsible,” Lemons said.

Bacon’s past activities include volleyball, cheer, and tennis. She has been a part of Newspaper, Drama, Student Council and Art club. Bacon



is an Honor roll student and participates in the UNMC High School Alliance program. Bacon is currently awaiting her spot in earning her CNA this year.

Her ultimate career goal is to become a Physician’s Assistant in an emergency room or obtain a specialty license in gynecology.

Health care is currently the most desired career track among Avenue Scholars.

*Outstanding Senior Scholar*

**Campuzano eyes career in business world**

High School Career Coach Kamina Lemons believes senior Lizbeth Campuzano is destined for a successful career in the business world.

“Lizbeth is an amazing student,” Lemons said. “She is always looking for career awareness and exploration opportunities in the field of business.”

Students in the Avenue Scholars program are expected to gain experience in the work force by working part-time during the school year. Scholars are also mentored and encouraged to choose a career field to explore and pursue early in the program.

Campuzano currently works for Raising Cane’s. She aspires to major in Business at Metropolitan Community College next fall.

**UPDATE**

Bryan High School Avenue Scholars are working hard to find balance between school, family, and work life during the pandemic.



Students have transitioned back to school for in-person learning. All Avenue Scholars at Bryan have applied to Metro Community College.

In the classroom, the juniors have learned about Avenue Scholars and the benefits that come from being in the program in addition to the required commitment.

The seniors started the semester have reviewed the commitment required to activate their full scholarship following graduation — including having strong attendance, passing all their classes, participating in a part-time work experience, and demonstrating strong soft skills both while at school and in the workplace.

In class we have conducted personal transcript reflections and began looking at MCC programs. Scholars have created and updated their resumes and completed and/or reviewed their Gallup Strengths.

At Bryan, we are moving towards creating strength stories and learning about employability skills with an extra emphasis on motivation.

**Kamina Lemons**  
 High School Career Coach  
 Cell Phone: 531-721-7988  
 klemons@avescholars.org