ACADEMY

The Academy

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LEADERSHIP

LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

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Leadership in Action

By Bill Lamb, Bernadette Montoya, and Idahlynn Karre

"Action learning is a powerful problem-solving tool that has the capacity to simultaneously build successful leaders, teams, and organizations." – Michael Marquardt

They listen. They coach each other for good questions. They inquire into concerns offered by their colleagues. They seek understanding of the problem. They are engaged. They learn. They grow as leaders. We are witness to their excellence in action learning.

This issue of *Leadership* is devoted to articles based on the Action Learning Projects of the Luoma Leadership Academy which is the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) state-wide Leadership Academy. These Action Learning Projects are the result of yearlong investigations into considerable issues facing higher education.

The leadership lesson of Action Learning Projects goes beyond researching and seeking solutions to issues. The lesson is one of learning to use a process of inquiry, listening, and problem solving as a member of an Action Learning Team.

These articles also represent a yearlong effort by leaders to explore their own capacities as listening, engaged, learning leaders seeking a new and more open process for discovery and decision-making. These projects represent teams of leaders from across a statewide system of colleges and universities working together on common issues for post-secondary education. Learning about each other's challenges and successes. Valuing their commonalities and differences.

Likewise the process of action learning and these articles represent the best of the Academy for Leadership and Development curriculum in Understanding Self, Leading Teams, Managing Conflict, Leading Change, Understanding Dimensions of Leadership, Strategic Planning, Recognizing and Coaching for Success. These Action Learning Projects are evidence of leadership learning at its best.

These articles based on Action Learning Projects come to press after the considerable assistance and guidance of the Luoma Academy Editorial Board. Lead by Nerita Hughes, North Hennepin Community College the editorial team included Tonya Huber, Normandale Community College; Nadine Haley, Metro State University; Jennifer Eccles, Century Community College; Michelle Malott, Minnesota State University. The Editorial Board of *Leadership* is indebted to these individuals for their contributions to this issue.

As a reader of *Leadership*, you will benefit from hearing about

Idahlynn Karre, Bill Lamb, and Bernadette Montoya with Mary Tyler Moore, downtown Minneapolis, July, 2012

these leaders' journeys, the scope of the projects and the details of these investigations. The narratives of each article provide insight into the challenges we are all facing and references at the end of articles are gifts for our learning.

We begin with Anita Rios, Director of Talent Management and Organizational Effectiveness for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU), providing the background and use of Action Learning Projects as a part of the Luoma Leadership Academy. "Action learning is a process that involves a small group working on real problems, taking action, and learning from those actions," she says as she introduces the process and outcomes for the MnSCU system and the Leadership Academy.

The seven articles that follow help us understand more about our work with students, each other, and our systems. Together they represent a range of important topics with which we all struggle each day in our roles as post-secondary leaders.

We as the co-facilitators of the Luoma Leadership Academy 2011-2012 and editors of this issue of *Leadership* invite you into the world of MnSCU and Action Learning process.

Together we celebrate these leaders.

MAXIMIZING LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ACTION LEARNING

BY ANITA RIOS

BACKGROUND

In the mid 2000s, the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system identified a need to develop mid-level leaders. This effort was championed by then Board of Trustees Chair, Jim Luoma. In fall 2004, the Luoma Leadership Academy was created. I was hired to partner with the Chair Academy in delivering the program to our state college and university leaders, as well as faculty and staff aspiring to leadership positions.

Feedback about the program was consistently high for our first two cohorts, but I found that participants felt disconnected during the year-long practicum. They wanted to meet with their cohort colleagues for additional learning and support during the year. Participants also commented that they experienced barriers to applying what they learned during the program after they returned to campus.

At the same time, as a system of 31 state colleges and universities, we had a strong interest in building system leaders: those who can communicate effectively across a geographically dispersed area, work strategically with cross-functional teams, and develop collaborative relationships across our system.

To strengthen the Luoma Leadership Academy, build system leaders, and provide greater opportunities for participants to apply leadership practices, I integrated an experiential action learning component into the program. Starting in 2006, we began implementing team-based action learning projects with the help of senior leaders throughout our system who serve as executive sponsors for the projects.

WHAT IS ACTION LEARNING?

Action learning is a process that involves a small group working on real problems, taking action, and learning from those actions. It differs from traditional task forces or problem-solving teams, in that the learning of the team is valued as much as the solution that the team develops.

According to Michael Marquardt, author of several books on action learning, "Action learning is a powerful problem-solving tool that has the capacity to simultaneously build successful leaders, teams, and organizations."

To fully engage in action learning, Luoma action learning teams are encouraged to practice reflective inquiry and continuous learning. The teams are asked to focus on questions first, rather than solutions, in order to:

- Gain a common understanding of the problem
- Gain a sense of potential strategies
- Achieve innovative and breakthrough solutions

To reinforce the practice of reflective inquiry, an action learning coach is designated for each team. The coach's sole role is to facilitate the groups' learning by listening, observing, and asking questions.

HOW DOES ACTION LEARNING WORK AS A LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY?

During action learning, leaders are stretched in multiple ways. They are often tasked with projects that are outside their area of expertise. They must learn how to work effectively together and bridge differences in institution type, location, background, position and personality preferences. They must also work with senior leaders from other institutions in our system, which can give them exposure to different leadership styles and create opportunities for advancement.

Kristina Keller, team sponsor and Dean of Business and IT at St. Cloud Technical and Community College, commented on her team's ability to communicate:

"Communicating within a group of people in a variety of positions can be tricky---they [participants] represent multiple unions, institution types, geographic regions, position authority, background and experience. Paying particular attention to communication among members to ensure all perspectives are heard was an important part of this team's success."

When teams are able to use their differences as strengths, both their learning and their projects benefit as a result. Jane Reinke, team sponsor and Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs at North Hennepin Community College said,

"Having different types of institutions represented allowed the Strategic Enrollment Management team to view our results from different lenses. This allowed for a richer discussion and broader ideas."

As they work throughout the year, teams are not only challenged in new content areas, but in important

"Action learning is a process that involves a small group working on real problems, taking action, and learning from those actions."

leadership competencies, such as self-awareness, managing emotions, motivating oneself, and empathy. Developing these competencies is critical for leaders in our system and beneficial as we work toward greater collaboration across our institutions. Joan Bloementhal, Chief Academic Officer for Pine Technical College, noted,

"The action team seemed to identify and utilize the strengths of the various team members; when we met with the team, I observed strong collaboration and commitment to the issue."

THE PROCESS

The team-based action learning projects take place in the intervening year between the two one-week residential sessions. Team members are expected to spend at least 16 hours per month working on their project and meeting with their teams. Because teams are typically geographically dispersed, most meetings take place virtually via ITV, phone, or online meetings, with a few carefully planned in-person meetings. After the teams complete their projects, their reports and lessons learned are integrated into the second-week curriculum of the Luoma Leadership Academy. Each team gives a presentation of their project to their sponsors and the program participants.

To successfully launch action learning for each cohort, I solicit 10-11 volunteers from among our presidents and senior leaders to submit project proposals that could be addressed by five to six Luoma Leadership Academy participants within a 12-month timeframe.

The best action learning projects address a real-life problem or issue that affects a college, university, or the system. To make sure we have good projects that provide plenty of learning opportunities, I shared the following questions with executive sponsors submitting the proposals and used the questions to serve as selection criteria.

1. Is the problem significant and important to the organization and or individual?

2. Is a one-year timeframe appropriate for this project?

3. Is the problem within the scope and feasibility and understanding of one or more potential Luoma Leadership Academy participants?

4. Does the problem provide learning opportunities?

5. Is this project within the scope of the Executive Sponsor to move forward after the action learning team completes its work?

To support the teams during the year, I ask Executive Sponsors to do the following:

1. Meet periodically with the action learning team; minimally twice: once at the beginning of the project and once at the end of the project to receive the team report. Executive Sponsors may certainly be more involved with the team, but the actual work should be led and completed by Leadership Academy participants.

2. Serve as a resource to remove obstacles when needed or suggest resources for the team.

3. Facilitate sharing of the team's work when completed as appropriate.

4. Designate one or more content experts to serve as advisors to the team.

CONCLUSION

Comments from past participants are illustrative of the value in adding an action learning component to formal leadership development programs.

In referring to an Instructional Cost Management Study project, Jeffery Thomas of Northland College, remarked, "our project assisted in the development of tools that other MnSCU institutions can use." Rex Veeder, professor at St. Cloud State University, added that his team overcame obstacles in terms of distance and style. In the end, Rex said, "I believe we learned more about the system and our place in it, as well as how a small group of people can make a difference."

ANITA RIOS

As director of talent management and organizational effectiveness for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU), Anita Rios leads systemwide efforts to attract, retain, and develop employees in MnSCU's 25 community and technical colleges and 7 universities. In addition to partnering with the Chair Academy to deliver the Luoma Leadership Academy, Anita has worked to create leadership programs that give MnSCU leaders the support they need at all levels, from first-line supervisors to executives. Anita is currently working on efforts to integrate and strengthen talent processes within the system, including: workforce planning, talent acquisition, performance management, learning and development, competency management, leadership development, and succession planning. She earned her masters degree in Human Resource Development from the University of Minnesota and a bachelors degree from St. Olaf College.

COLLEGE READINESS ADVOCATE PROGRAM

BY

Thomas Matos, St. Paul College

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Michael Van Keulen, Minnesota West Community and Technical College

Our Luoma Leadership Academy Action Learning Team was charged with assessing the effectiveness of Hennepin Technical College's (HTC's) College Readiness Advocate Program and providing recommendations for its improvement. HTC's readiness program is a partnership program between HTC and several area Twin Cities high schools. Our analysis of the program drew on observational data, a review of current research, and an analysis of other college readiness programs throughout Minnesota and the U.S.

HTC's program places professional readiness advocates directly in high schools to work with students identified as less than college ready. The advocates work in collaboration with administrators and faculty to develop individual and purposeful relationships with the students.

Strengths include program flexibility, inclusion of best practices, highly involved and knowledgeable readiness advocates, and strong success with tracked students.

Recommendations for improvement include clearer metrics of program success, soft skills training for students, and more robust tracking of students after high school.

INTRODUCTION

The problem of college readiness for incoming students has long been an issue in higher education. Currently, it a problem at two-year colleges with open enrollment policies. These schools often get the least-prepared students – often students of color, low-income, and first-generation – that four-year schools with stringent admissions criteria will not admit. In Minnesota many schools have developed readiness programs designed to prepare these students to be successful in college. For example, The University of Minnesota developed a program called Ramp-Up to Readiness (http://www.rampuptoreadiness.org/); Century College's Preparing to Achieve a College Education (P.A.C.E.) program led to the creation of a website to help teachers, students, and their families bridge the gap in college readiness (http://century.brg.project.mnscu.edu/index.asp); and Minnesota State Community and Technical College started The Center for College Readiness in 2008 to help middle school and high school students improve skills in reading, writing, and mathematics skills before they graduate from high school. Nationally, products such as ACCUPLACER's® A+dvancer™ and Pearson's MyFoundationsLab™ are also designed to help students improve their readiness for college.

A major obstacle to the success of college readiness initiatives and resources is the lack of a clear definition of "college readiness." Early resources were focused on making college accessible, especially financially. Later (and most current) resources were designed to build the academic skills necessary for college success, and more recent resources are incorporating "soft skills" into the definition of college readiness. Because of their distinctly human presence, the college readiness program currently being implemented by Hennepin Technical College in Minnesota seems more comprehensive than most other programs with similar goals.

THE BACKGROUND: RESEARCH AND BEST PRACTICES

The purpose of this report is to evaluate and provide recommendations for Hennepin Technical College's (HTC) College Readiness Advocate Program. The Readiness Advocate Program is a partnership program between Hennepin Technical College and area high schools. The primary focus is on preparing high school students for college. Analysis of the program was conducted by a Luoma Leadership Academy Action Learning Team in 2011/2012 and draws upon observational data, a review of current research, and a review of other college readiness programs in Minnesota and elsewhere.

The College Readiness Advocate Program at Hennepin Technical College (HTC) developed out of both the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) and national best practices research that was focused on college readiness and is funded in large part by an Access and Opportunities grant. The primary goal of the College Readiness Advocate Program is to partner with area high schools to help students in the "middle quartile" graduate from high school and ready to attend college.

The program's readiness focus includes increasing students' awareness of college opportunities and the importance of a college education in the world today. HTC wants students to understand the academic skills they need to successfully take courses at college. They also aim to assess students' academic readiness early enough so they can improve their weaknesses prior to high school graduation. The Readiness Advocates help students understand the resources available to them to make college a real possibility: encouragement from parents and families, support from counselors at the high schools and colleges, and financial aid.

HTC's current readiness initiative primarily focuses on four area high schools: Robbinsdale Cooper, Roosevelt High School, Minneapolis South, and Brooklyn Center (they have recently been invited to Hopkins High School as well). The driving forces of the program are the College Readiness Advocates, HTC employees who work in these schools on a regular basis. Starting with 9th and 10th graders, a Readiness Advocate works individually with a student to discuss career interests and explain technical programming at HTC; the College also invites groups of students to tour HTC for hands-on demonstrations of specific programs. For 11th and 12th graders, the advocates build on the initial contact with students and hold more specific individual planning sessions. They also administer the ACCUPLACER placement test and interpret the results on site. If necessary, they assign A+dvancerTM tutorials and then retest.

All participants in the Readiness Advocate Program

proceed through the same training process prior to placement in the high schools. After initial training at the College and before working on their own, new advocates shadow in the schools with the lead of the Readiness Advocate program. They also enroll in the College Connector Training program through the MN College Access Network. Lastly, the advocates all meet regularly to discuss how the program is working and how to better serve the students with whom they work.

Of absolute importance to the Readiness Advocate Program is communication with and buy-in from the schools in which they work. To a large degree, HTC tailors the advocates' approach in a particular school to that school's needs. The enthusiasm on the part of Faculty, counselors, and administrators about the regular presence of HTC staff varies by school. A model partnership has developed between Robbinsdale Cooper High School and Hennepin Technical College. The Cooper principal has made creating a college-going culture a priority at the school. The football coach has been instrumental at directing failing students toward the advocates, and the school's counselor and support staff work to make sure every student has multiple opportunities throughout their high school years to meet with the advocates and prepare for college. Without this high level of buy-in, the relationships between other schools and the HTC Readiness Advocates have not been as effective.

The average age of students at HTC is 31. Therefore, a major incentive for the Readiness Advocate Program was to increase the visibility of HTC programming among area high school students. By maintaining a regular presence in these high schools, students will see HTC as a viable option for learning the skills necessary to reach their career goals. Because HTC is a technical college, a practical objective of the Readiness Advocate program is to prepare students for entry into technical career programs. However, the overriding goal of the program is for students to graduate and enroll in college anywhere. The primary metric of the Readiness Advocate program is the rate at which the students with whom the advocates work graduate from high school; the theory is that increasing their motivation to complete high school will show students a future pathway to post-secondary education.

HTC's College Readiness Advocate Program creates a wonderful opportunity for professional readiness advocates to work with high school students individually, preparing them for college success. Examination of readiness programs throughout the U.S. reveals the increasing presence of readiness programs in many high schools. Several of the interventions that make up the HTC program can be found in other readiness programs throughout Minnesota and other states. Though many of the efforts of HTC's program are not unique, the ongoing, direct and regular contact between professional readiness advocates and high school students provides very unique opportunities for powerful personal connections. This appears to be unique to HTC's Readiness Advocate Program.

HTC'S PROGRAM EVALUATION

As our project team worked to evaluate the effectiveness of HTC's readiness program, it became

apparent that the implementation of analytics was needed to capture evidence measuring the programs' impact on student behavior. The advocates are clearly passionate about student success and are trying everything they can think of to prepare students for college. As a result, it is difficult to determine if the Readiness Advocate interventions have made an impact on student decision making as it relates to college enrollment. Although HTC tracks every student from initial contact through high school graduation, they cannot determine what – if any – of the strategies affected student decision making and college readiness. Though students are asked incidentally what they felt was most impactful in their work with the readiness advocate, purposeful exit interviews would strongly benefit the program. At this time HTC can track those students who matriculate to Hennepin Technical College; access to college enrollment data at all Twin Cities post-secondary institutions would provide information needed to assess true program impact.

A second opportunity for further development in the program (as in similar programs around the country) concerns the primary focus of motivating these students to finish high school, which does not necessarily mean a student is ready for college. Too often "college readiness" is defined by placement test scores and whether or not students need developmental coursework. Course placement is based on the results of the placement tests in areas such as reading, English, mathematics, or ESOL before taking college-level courses. Because those exams do not require college-level academic skills to pass, there is indeed an often glaring gap between the academic skills necessary to graduate from high school and those necessary to take college-level courses. HTC's program does help students identify that gap early enough to motivate and assist students in closing the gap before high school graduation.

While this is a start, the members of Team 9 agree that graduation from high school does not equate to readiness for college. Students also need maturity, motivation, a sense of personal responsibility, clear and attainable goals, the ability to self-advocate, and other "soft skills" not measured by tools like the ACCUPLACER®. These personal traits and skills are not integrated into high school curriculum, nor are they measured in required graduation standards. As we in the colleges setting see with many PSEO students, having the academic skills requisite for success in college courses does not mean students are mature or motivated enough to be successful in college. We acknowledge there is a growing and measurable gap between the academic skills required to be successful in high school and those required to be successful in college. However, it appears that the biggest gap between high school and college readiness is in the soft skills that are not as critical to high school success; but, are essential for college success. The lack of a reliable assessment tool for these soft skills poses a significant problem. Most current tools cover "work readiness," and while most agree that work-readiness soft skills are also relevant to college success, they are not identical.

RECOMMENDATIONS

One possible way to address the lack of soft skills required for success in college for prospective college students is the systematic identification of these skills, which would be addressed with a pre-college class or set of workshops at the College Readiness high schools. First, participants in the Readiness Advocate Program work with college faculty and staff to identify a set of soft-skills important to college admission, persistence, and completion. Second, Readiness Advocates would find and use a tool to measure these soft-skills. Third, Readiness Advocates would work with college faculty to build a curriculum that promotes the development and strengthening of these important soft-skills. Next, the College would create a set of workshops or classes to deliver the new curriculum. And, finally, the College would establish a set of measures to determine the outcomes of the new curriculum. The curriculum could then be adjusted as the data helps identify what is and is not working for the students. Because academic skills are an essential aspect of college readiness, the program would be greatly enhanced by academic tutors as well, even for one day a week on the high school campus.

A site visit to one partner high school identified leadership as a key ingredient to program success. The strong support for this program by high school administration included granting HTC staff access to both students and student data. The leadership at HTC chose to assign staff as an ongoing presence in the high school. Visiting the school multiple times each week meant that the students knew HTC staff would be available for follow-up meetings and to help answer their questions in a timely fashion. According to information gathered by the Project Team 9, this leadership and follow-up was not the case at all of the high schools currently participating in the HTC College Readiness network. All considered, strong and engaged high school leadership, coupled with college staff availability, seem to be closely tied to the success of the HTC College Readiness program. The relationship between HTC and the high school might serve as a model for future adoption and expansion of the current College Readiness Advocate program.

While it is recognized that each high school and college operate differently, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining a set of basic expectations on the part of both the college and the high school involved would be helpful. The purpose of this MOU is to establish a baseline agreement that would outline, for example, what data is to be collected by the College or how much access college representatives would have to high school students. Additionally, this MOU would offer a menu of College Readiness services from which a high school can choose, allowing the college to conduct cross-school comparisons and determine which services are most requested and, perhaps more importantly, which have the greatest relative success.

The Project Team 9 also recommends standardizing the College Readiness Advocate program, making it easier for additional high schools to adopt, manage, and measure. The standardized model includes a required annual report from HTC to individual partner high schools documenting movement toward predetermined, desired readiness outcomes. The purpose of such a report would be two-fold: First, it would give HTC an opportunity to let the high schools know exactly what they are doing at the schools and the kind of impact is taking place on student decision making related to college readiness. Second, the report would allow for year-to-year comparisons of events, activities, and the number of advocate-to-student meetings. The College may already be collecting and reporting much, if not all, of this information as part of one or more of their program-supporting grants. Creating a one-page report with information such as the number of advocate visits, the number of individual students met, and the number of college-bound students who have met with an advocate at some point in their high school career would provide good and useful feedback to the high schools. This is also information upon which future grant opportunities could be pursued.

Finally, we believe there is an opportunity to work with marketing professionals to develop a name and logo to brand the College Readiness Program in a way that emphasizes the value of the high-touch Readiness Advocates that have made HTC's college readiness efforts stand out.

From EAGLE to WARRIOR

Tom Boylan, Metropolitan State University
Paula Hoffman, Pine Technical College
Denise Kirkeby, MnSCU System Office
Liz Sabel, Normandale Community College
Katie Svoboda, Century College
Terrence Wilcox, Lake Superior College

A STUDENT TRANSFER PROJECT

As part of an action-learning leadership project, a group of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) leaders were charged to review the transfer process between Minnesota State College - Southeast Technical College (SE-Tech), a two-year college, and Winona State University (WSU), a four-year university. The team was comprised of leaders from across the MnSCU system and each brought a unique perspective from the following departments they represented: MnSCU system office, general education faculty, student services and academic administration from both two year and four year institutions; MnSCU was broadly and well-represented on this team project. In addition, executive sponsors from administration at WSU and SE-Tech provided key insight, historical data between the two institutions, and guidance.

The timeliness of this project is fortuitous from a national, state, and system perspective. Nationally, the transfer rate between two-year and four-year institutions hovers around 29% (Forbus, Newbold, and Mehta, 2011, p. 36). In a study completed by Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (2012) the success and access of post-secondary education is seen as a major impediment to developing a competitive workforce. In addition, several studies and initiatives are investigating and looking for ways to improve students' transfer success (Horn and Radwin, 2012 and Handel, 2011). From a system perspective, this project directly relates to MnSCU Strategic Direction 1, goal 1.4 "Support students to reach their educational goals with a focus on graduation and transfer" (Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Strategic Plan 2010-2014).

Both schools involved in this project indicated that the relationship between the two institutions was positive and flourishing and reiterated that this project was based on improving joint initiatives and shared projects already in place to support both SE-Tech and WSU students. At the crux of the issue was the anecdotal report that students transferring from SE-Tech to WSU were experiencing difficulty in articulating and transferring course work in order to continue with their educational goals. The sponsors wanted this project to assist them in identifying potential transfer students, help the two schools work closer in communicating with transfer students, and put in place a system that adequately and effectively advised students who planned to transfer to WSU.

METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this project, the team developed and administered two surveys aimed at measuring students' satisfaction. The first ten-question survey was administered to Minnesota State - Southeast Technical College (SE-Tech) students who were currently enrolled in Career and Educational Planning, a course intended for students majoring in Individualized Studies who plan to transfer to a four-year university. The survey asked about their perception of the transfer resources available to students at the institution; looked at the visibility of WSU's admission representative; and solicited the students' thoughts and opinions on the transfer process. The Winona State survey was administered as part of WSU's Assessment Day. The ten-question instrument was sent to currently enrolled students who were identified as having transferred from Minnesota State - Southeast Technical College (SE-Tech) to Winona State University (WSU). The survey was aimed at finding out the opinions of students who had successfully completed the transfer process from SE-Tech to WSU. A combined total of 142 undergraduate students from Southeast Technical College (n=56) and Winona State University (n=86) completed the survey. From both surveys, the following strengths, obstacles, and opportunities were identified.

STRENGTHS

The relationship between Winona State University and Southeast Technical College is both strong and positive and provides the potential needed to have successful outcomes based on our recommendations addressing the transfer challenge. Both SE-Tech and WSU are committed to improving the success of their students' transfer experience. The survey results also show some positive feedback from students who knew ahead of time they were planning to transfer to WSU.

Nearly 75% of the respondents who successfully transferred from SE-Tech to WSU answered that they did not have issues or problems transferring credits. This gave our group some assurance that while there are kinks in the system, the transferability of credits is less problematic than other areas impacting transfer. Another strength, which may be an indicator of the positive relationship between the two institutions, was the number of students who sought assistance from faculty and/or staff at either SE-Tech or WSU while still attending SE-Tech. Looking at these numbers;, we could infer that students are comfortable seeking assistance at both their current and future institutions.

OBSTACLES

In the survey administered to the students who had already successfully completed the transfer process, 51% indicated that SE-Tech prepared them to transfer to WSU; 49% indicated they did not feel that they had been prepared to transfer. Notably, many factors could play into this response; for example, many of the respondents had taken time off between attending SE-Tech and enrolling at WSU and therefore did not go back to their former institution to seek transfer assistance. Per the recommendations, it would be prudent to make transfer resources available throughout the students' educational path from admission to the completed transfer process.

In addition to conducting student experience surveys, the team conducted an articulation agreement analysis between SE-Tech and WSU. It was discovered that

> *"Nearly 75% of the respondents who successfully transferred from SE-Tech to WSU answered that they did not have issues or problems transferring credits."*

SE-Tech had one formal agreement with WSU for Individualized Studies. In comparison, Rochester Community and Technical College (RCTC) established 7 program specific agreements with WSU.

This analysis provided insight that other MnSCU institutions have been successful in constructing formal articulation agreements, but the analysis also added to the team's concerns about the inability of two-year institutions being able to form articulation agreements with larger institutions. Staff at SE-Tech expressed that obtaining an articulation agreement with a MnSCU institution for the Early Childhood Education program was challenging, but they were able to put an agreement in place with the University of Wisconsin-River Falls within six months. Pine Technical College experienced the same difficulty obtaining an Early Childhood Education articulation agreement within MnSCU and instead sought out an agreement with UW-River Falls and UW-Stout. There is a possibility that MnSCU could lose students due to the lack of standards in the process of forming articulation agreements within our own system.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

The team's recommendations specifically identify action plans and suggestions for these two institutions, but believe this will provide a greater opportunity for the Minnesota State College and Universities system. The project identified strengths, obstacles, and opportunities for growth that have informed the team's four recommendations:

- Establish clear articulations agreements and/or transfer guides for smoother transfer process. The two institutions were also encouraged to develop program-specific transfer guides that would replace the individualized studies articulation agreement.

- Revise the orientation process to identify, track and advise transfer students early. This recommendation also included a suggestion to create an online registration/orientation process that could better identify and track students who indicate that they are interested in transfer.

- Implement a pathway model, similar to the Pathway to Purple model used between Rochester Community and Technical College and Winona State University. This model establishes a transfer presence that students can access regardless of when they determine that transfer to WSU is beneficial to their educational plan.

- Identify a communication process for students who self-identify as interested in transfer after the initial semester at SE-Tech.

- Establish a visible public relationship in the Winona Community between the two institutions. Educate SE-Tech students about the shared services available to them at WSU, the positive relationship between the institutions, and the increased educational opportunities it provides. The enhanced communication would allow students at SE-Tech (the Eagles) who identify as transferring to WSU (the Warriors) to make a smoother transition and feel comfortable more quickly in their new community.

CONCLUSION

According to a report written by Callahan (2012), "Transfer students make up a significant segment at WSU undergraduate student body. One third of admitted degree-seeking undergraduates were transfer students in fiscal year 2011." Richard Kahlenberg, in a July 2011 report entitled "A Welcome Mat for Community College Transfer Students", states "only about 10 percent of students who enter community colleges end up getting a bachelor's degree, even though surveys find that between 50 and 80 percent of incoming community college students have that goal."

Creating a strong partnership between the two campuses supports MnSCU Chancellor Steven Rosenstone's Workforce Assessment Initiative. He plans to partner with the Minnesota business community in workforce development to build a stronger state economy. In a Star Tribune article Rosenstone indicated that he will meet with each "region's business owners to describe their workforce needs in the next two to five years, and for educators and government officials to figure out how to prepare workers to meet them – not sporadically or serendipitously, as too often happens now, but systematically…If we are going to meet the immediate skills gap that is clearly already here, and, in a long-term and sustainable way, align the graduates that we're already producing with the workforce needs of Minnesota, we need to do things differently," (Sturdevant, 2012). Along those same lines, in a 2012 news release, Senator Amy

Klobuchar, a proponent of technical schools, believes technical schools have the ability to increase our state's competitive edge and the nation's economy. She is working on legislation that will increase partnerships between the business community and technical schools. The decision to create the pathway program will require increasing articulation agreements between the two and four year institutions, but in the end, will positively affect the local and state economy. Implementing the Path to Purple program at SE-Tech will align the region with these economic and workforce trends and plans.

The authors of the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, The Role of Community and Technical Colleges in Economic Development (2012), states, "The college system will need to expand capacity in industries with supply/demand gaps, especially in the state's strategic industries. The economy can't grow without raising the knowledge and skill levels of all current and future workers. In fact, workforce development is a leading economic development strategy used successfully in other regions and countries. The college system will need to serve a greater share of the state's population to raise the knowledge and skill levels of its citizenry, with emphasis on underserved populations such as low-income adults and working adults. Colleges can improve retention and transition of students to meet the demands of the economy. We need to raise knowledge and skill levels more quickly with fewer leaks in the pipeline. The college system needs to develop more mechanisms for continuous knowledge and skill improvement, including education and training for people who are already working."

The team recognizes that this project provided SE-Tech and WSU with only a slice of information that impacts their specific wish to build upon and facilitate transfer success. All of the cited literature stated that the student transfer is a complicated process which involves more than the acceptance of credit. Student transfer is a system, state and national issue that will require system and culture changes. The team does believe that the timeliness of this project, the development of further research that supports the four recommendations, and the renewed focus on transfer initiatives, could provide insight that is useful as the system strives towards its strategic goals.

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From Exploring to Success

NON-CREDIT INSTRUCTION IMPROVING ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

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TEAM CHARGE: Our goal was to identify the extent to which students begin their college educations in non-credit instruction and determine what institutional changes could be made to encourage students to become degree seeking. What practices encouraged student success and what issues inhibit students from transitioning to credit enrollment?

TEAM DIRECTION: After resourceful inquiry and extensive research, we focused on approaches to improve access to higher education, success in skills attainment and creating pathways to encourage non-credit students to become degree seeking. After reviewing contrasts in structure and practices of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) institutions, we created an integrated framework encouraging four strategies to be considered by Continuing Education/Customized Training (CE/CT) leaders:

1. Improve access to target market and create pathways
2. Plan organizational structure and approaches
3. Create stronger connection between non-credit and credit articulation
4. Track education outcomes

INTRODUCTION

The objective of this action-learning project was to identify the strategies that would encourage equity across credit and noncredit instruction. It further explored the opportunities to create linkages that may leverage support and increase access to our desired learners while strengthening Minnesota.

Noncredit workforce education can play an important role in responding to local labor market demands by meeting the workforce needs of employers and the needs of students for immediate skills. It can also benefit students by providing access to credit programs, generating meaningful recorded outcomes for a range of student needs, and facilitating the long-term pursuit of degrees. Noncredit workforce education can play a central role in states that prioritize funding to support career pathways as part of their workforce development agenda by connecting short-term training to programs leading to degrees and credentials. There is no preferred organizational structure to support noncredit programs; however, the structure chosen by an institution is driven by several factors: need for flexibility to responding to employer needs, state funding policies, and relationship between

credit programs. Colleges may need to pursue unique organizational practices that best serve their needs. Either choice should create a stronger connection between credit and noncredit programs.

There are barriers to data collection and recorded outcomes. In addition, there are many implications for noncredit workforce education outcomes. Institutions are faced with reduced budgets and prioritization on revenue generating programs may seem more attractive. Attitudes about noncredit instruction appear of lesser parity than credit instruction. How do we create seamless pathways from noncredit into credit coursework and how do we add value to the outcomes of continuing education and customized training?

STRATEGY 1: Improve Access to Target Market and Create Pathways (Student & Employer needs)

Non-credit instruction is a growing significance. The forecast of higher education supply and demand is necessary because education is a gateway to further training and greater earning potential; colleges and universities represent only 35 percent of the entire postsecondary education and training system. One national data source suggests that close to 60 million people, or 42 percent of the workforce, need some form of occupational certification, registration, or licensure to perform their jobs. Some 45 million of these certifications are test based. (Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2010). There is a direct connection between educational demand and occupation. Therefore, who should be the target market? How can we deliver the necessary instruction?

TARGET POPULATION

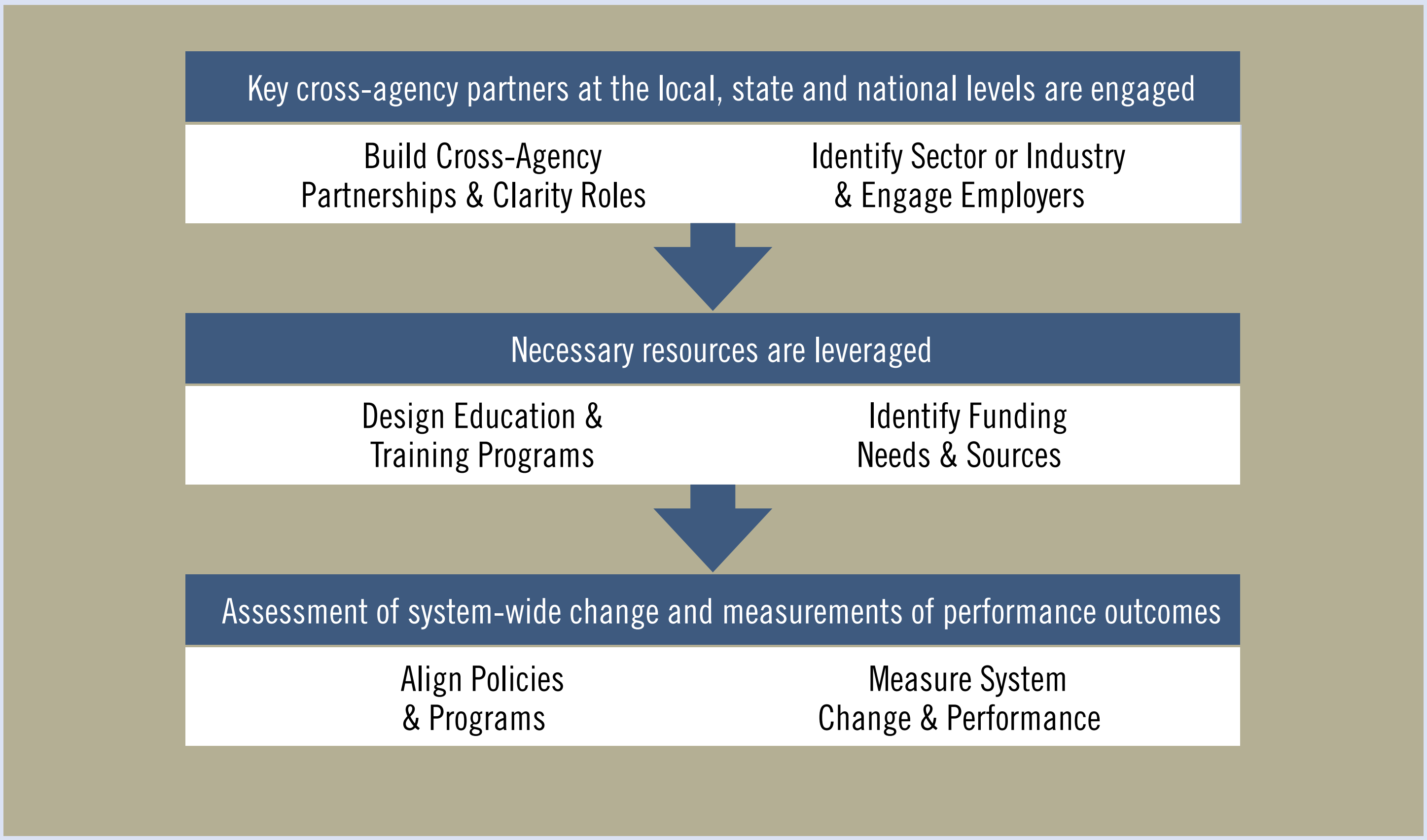
Continuing Education/Customized Training (CE/CT) can be classified as noncredit instruction. CE/CT serves the needs of both the adult learners' and the employer's needs. Our success in meeting the needs of the learner and business & industry contributes to a viable state economy. Creating pathways improves access and success.

Essentially, postsecondary education or training has become the threshold requirement for access and the pathway into better jobs for the adult worker. Career pathways align major education, training (degree and non-degree technical certificate programs), and workforce development programs to meet the skill needs of students, jobseekers and workers; and the skill requirements of employers in high pay/high demand industries and occupations. The labor market demand indicates opportunities for recruitment and development of customized education and training programs.

CAREER PATHWAYS

The way in which we deliver instruction must be replicable and promote quality improvement. Career pathways systems offer a clear sequence of education coursework and/or training credentials aligned with employer-validated work-readiness standards and competencies. Some characteristics of career pathways consist of sector strategies, stackable educational/ training options, contextualized learning, accelerated/ integrated education and training, industry-recognized credentials, multiple entry and exit points, focused wraparound services and designed for working learners (Jobs for the Future, June 2012).

All career pathways initiatives differ somewhat according to the needs of the states, regions, and individuals served. The Minnesota Career Fields, Clusters & Pathways identifies six (6) career fields, 16 career clusters within those sectors and 81 career pathways relating to the clusters. The programs of study and curricula particularly pertain to the involvement of our educational institutes on the more granular level of the pathways systems where we focus on the delivery of instruction. Though, to some extent, we can become engaged in several or all of the six key elements of a career pathway framework as follows:



For developing programs, it is important to understand the external forces that influence demand. Unfortunately, an economic downturn plays a role in creating a need for additional. Partnerships with private industry and public economic development agencies can increase opportunities to deliver much needed services. Since resources are scarce it is helpful to prioritize based on state and local needs.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The CE/CT model allows us to enter into partnership with businesses to develop a customized training program designed for upgrading the skills of their workers. It also allows us to develop program curriculum for credentialing individuals in certain industries. This is one source of revenue generation. Some non-credit programs also depend on the

support of the college's general fund for overhead and infrastructure which creates a perception that they are taking scarce funds. Since non-credit instruction costs are market driven, the cost can be higher than for credit instruction. State funding lowers the cost, which allows for greater access. States that receive general funds for support usually impose limits on charges for non-credit courses. We can apply a business model in order to identify our target markets: adult learners, business and industry and public sector agencies; and then we are tasked with creating an infrastructure, designing curricula and quality programs, establishing partnerships, identifying resources and responding to needs while ensuring access.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Several recommendations result from an examination of non-credit instruction. It is necessary 5 to understand the trends and labor market demand (local or statewide). Universities must create career pathways that align with education and training and incorporate the key elements of a career pathway framework. They must cultivate opportunities for the adult learner to enroll in courses and short-term credentialing programs. Most importantly, actively engage employers in targeted industry sectors and create partnerships. Leverage access to target population by working with public agencies, businesses and industry and establish a viable way to measure outcomes.

STRATEGY 2: PLAN ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE & APPROACHES

The organizational structure and approach to noncredit instruction is dependent upon multiple facets from structuring (according to the institution's funding formula) to determining the structure or approach based upon the economic demand in relation to workforce development industry needs. There are multiple approaches in which colleges and universities can structure their noncredit division: the noncredit instructional programs are a separate structure and its division is an organizational unit within the college & university or as integrated structures where the noncredit instructional programs are intermingled within the academic units typically by content area. The three areas of which an improvement can be made are: noncredit outcomes, its program structure, and its financial implications.

NONCREDIT PROGRAM OUTCOMES

The outcomes of noncredit programs will fluctuate based on the demand of the institution, the enrollment trends, and the business and industry needs. These programs have a great impact and play a crucial role in reference to recruitment and training the future workforce. Some of these outcomes can be based upon the overall strategic direction of the college or a funding mechanism that involves an enrollment strategy for credit. The key is to develop a sustainable funding structure that will support noncredit education. Since noncredit workforce education is not regulated by the academic rules that govern credit education, the recorded student outcomes from participating in a noncredit program vary and serve different needs (Van Noy t al. 2008). By building measurable outcomes for noncredit education it allows institutions to meet needs at a higher rate because the programs are not regulated and the divisions can be operated in an entrepreneurial-like manner.

NONCREDIT PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Currently, there are practices to help integrate collaborative endeavors within colleges and universities. There are a variety of noncredit program structures that range from separate units to integrated structures. Noncredit program structures have evolved; the structures are designed according to the demand of the population and the business industry. These structures extend beyond the academic realm of the institution. The noncredit structure promotes partnership opportunities for faculty to engage by interspersing credit programs within the noncredit structure while offering dual enrollment options. The separate structure allows for the unit to function more like a business structure with obtaining revenue in order to decrease expenses occurred. Integrated structures support the idea of the credit and noncredit programs to be the central contact for businesses or employers as the needs are being met of the individual student and the employer through workforce development.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are several advantages and disadvantages of the noncredit organizational structures within the college. One advantage is the funding formula model allows for institutions to have defined criteria to follow in

order to achieve results. Within an integrated structure, enrollment options can be offered as a dual offering to avoid cancellation of courses and loss of revenue. One disadvantage of funding formula would be the lack of qualitative data to incorporate within the funding policy. There are funding challenges that affect the type of structure that institution decides to adapt at their institution such as enrollment challenges because of the high cost of course offerings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Organizational structure and approaches suggests a need to develop a seamless strategy around dual enrollment in order to increase enrollment for credit and noncredit courses. This structure advocates a stronger coordination effort of credit and noncredit programs to support the needs of MnSCU's Strategic Framework. The use of noncredit funding to provide counseling and other student services that are equivalent to those provided to credit students is critical. Last, such approaches recommends adapting an equivalent program structure that will provide the greatest gain within the community and business needs.

STRATEGY 3: CREATE STRONGER CONNECTION BETWEEN NONCREDIT AND CREDIT ARTICULATION

The chance for students to transition from non-credit instruction to college enrollment offers MnSCU institutions opportunity to enrich program offerings. Creating accessible pathways can support increased transfer and completion of degree laddering.

NONCREDIT WORKFORCE EDUCATION AND NONCREDIT-CREDIT ARTICULATION

Industry certification was created to meet the needs of a changing employment market. Certifications are usually portable, valid for a particular time period, and must be renewed periodically. Noncredit instruction offers many benefits to students such as: easy enrollment procedures, flexible scheduling, and an informal classroom atmosphere thus a less threatening learning environment. For post-secondary institutions, the ability to offer new noncredit education programs swiftly (respond to emerging industry needs) is advantageous and as well as having the student transition to a credit-bearing status later on. Having noncredit workforce education courses can also function as a bridge or pathway into the credit side of the institution.

CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is a method of granting credit for noncredit workforce education. It is a process that is widely used by universities and colleges to evaluate learning that has occurred outside the traditional post-secondary classroom. In most cases, PLA seeks to evaluate a person's learning and knowledge gained through work, employer training programs, military service, independent study, volunteer or community service, and open source course study. Procedures for awarding credit for prior learning include: credit applied on a course-by-course basis and determined by an academic department, student portfolio, challenge exam or competency test, articulation agreements to an existing campus class, and military experience.

The importance of improving affordability and access to higher education for adults is greater since President Obama's challenge that all Americans complete some form of post-secondary education/training was introduced. Many experts contend that PLA is often a disregarded strategy to assist adults in degree completion. The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) conducted a study in 2010 (Fueling the Race to Post-Secondary Success) that examined PLA and graduation rates. The study concluded that overall PLA students had much higher degree-earning rates than non PLA students. Moreover, PLA students that did not earn degrees did complete 80% or more of the credits toward a degree compared to the non PLA students who earned 22% of the credits toward a degree.

PLA benefits for the student and institution. It creates pathways to programs of study and shortens the time needed to complete a program/degree. This may motivate students who may otherwise be discouraged with the length of time to complete a degree. It validates students for their accomplishments. There is recognition that learning that takes place outside the classroom and in the work environment is of value. Further, such programs serves the "non-traditional" student as well as eliminating repetition or duplication of learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Institutions need to regularly monitor, review, evaluate and revise prior learning assessment policies and practices to maintain and improve institutional standards.

- Institutions should seek to enhance funding to remedy the disparity between noncredit and credit funding without interruptions to the current credit funding.
- Faculty unions and administration system-wide need to work together to bargain the upcoming changes for faculty workload anticipated with the increase of PLAs.
- Increase student career pathways by making accessibility to PLAs visible and student friendly.
- Institutions should offer a variety of opportunities to support learners' progress through the assessment process such as: single point of contact, advisors, one-stop access, and portfolio templates.

STRATEGY 4: TRACK EDUCATION OUTCOMES

Colleges must be successful in tracking students from non-credit to credit instruction before a thorough analysis of progression rates and factors affecting those rates may be accomplished. Within the MnSCU system, three suggested areas for improving tracking progression are: student identification, transcripts, and financial issues.

STUDENT IDENTIFICATION

System colleges and universities vary in how they register and identify non-credit vs. credit students (Oleksiw, et al. 2007). Often students enrolled for non-credit courses are not "fully admitted" into the ISRS database system the same way that for-credit students are enrolled. Customized training students admission might only have the name of the student and the company as information in the database. Continuing Education may only have student name and phone number in the database. This lack of information in non-credit registration creates a situation where, when the student registers for credit courses, their previous records might not be readily found. When this happens, generation of another student ID for the same person occurs. That student's information as to progression from non-credit to credit education is then lost.

Lumens is a system used to register students in continuing education courses. However, it is not used consistently to register students in customized training courses. With this situation, information on student education progression is lost. Also, the information from Lumens does not consistently transfer to the ISRS database, where the information on students taking classes for credit is held. Student information is entered in three different systems when they register for non-credit courses: Lumens, ISRS, and Finance. This has the potential for errors in data entry, which may result in the possibility of inaccurate tracking of student progression information.

TRANSCRIPTS

Colleges and universities across the MnSCU system are not consistent in how transcripts are generated for non-credit courses. Some institutions transcript all credit and non-credit courses either on the same transcript or separate transcripts. Some institutions do not transcript non-credit courses. The same variances occur for recording of student activities, which makes it difficult to utilize those activities in a Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) evaluation. Some transcript issues relate to the above situation regarding differences in student identification. When the student is not fully identified, they may end up with more than one transcript as they enter into different educational opportunities within the institution.

FINANCIAL DIFFERENCES

There are institutional differences in the cost of credit vs. non-credit courses. In some cases, one class may have both credit and non-credit students enrolled and sitting side-by-side. However, the student receiving credit is paying more for the same course than the student not receiving credit. In other instances, the non-credit student is paying more for their course than the credit student. Funding for non-credit vs. credit courses has a long history of challenges. Across the United States, state and federal funding and scholarships are generally higher for credit courses. This creates a challenge in that, to be practical non-credit courses must either break even or be profitable. This results in inequities in faculty to student ratios, student services, instructor qualifications, and possibly quality of instruction and learning (Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, 2009; and Oleksiw et al. 2007).

One method to manage this issue is to create an adjustment fee that non-credit students may pay to convert their courses to credits. For instance, a student may take a Certified Nursing Assistant course to obtain

certification. If they wish to convert this program to college credit, they might be allowed to pay a small fee per credit. Allowing a student this option would create a situation where the student may “try out” school at a lower rate before committing to a higher tuition cost.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enter all non-credit students into the same tracking software as credit students.
- Collect detailed registration information for each student, including: date of birth, social security number, phone number, and email addresses. This will allow ongoing evaluation of student movement through non-credit to credit and to completion. E-mail information will also allow for marketing of credit programs to non-credit completers.
- Provide a student ID number for all non-credit students which will follow them into any MnSCU credit courses.
- Provide one transcript for all credit courses, non-credit courses and activities.
- Provide a system for students to convert non-credit to credit courses (i.e. pay $20 per credit when they want to convert) in a pathway that provides students stackable credentials.
- Create pathways from non-credit to credit. Market those pathways directly to non-credit students.
- Create a “College Credit through Advanced Standing Guide” for non-credit students

CONCLUSION

As colleges and universities strive to enroll more of the growing adult student market, they face significant challenges. As a part of our infrastructure we can develop plans to market to the adult student who may benefit from career pathway systems. Career development, the labor market demand and how we respond drives those crucial activities. We must also develop our infrastructure (which includes implementing tracking systems to collect data and record outcomes), create better ties between noncredit and credit programs, establish priorities and build capacity in order to support MNSCU’s strategic framework. Along with this, establishing partnerships can leverage our outreach to our desired population of learners and at the same time sustain Minnesota’s economy.

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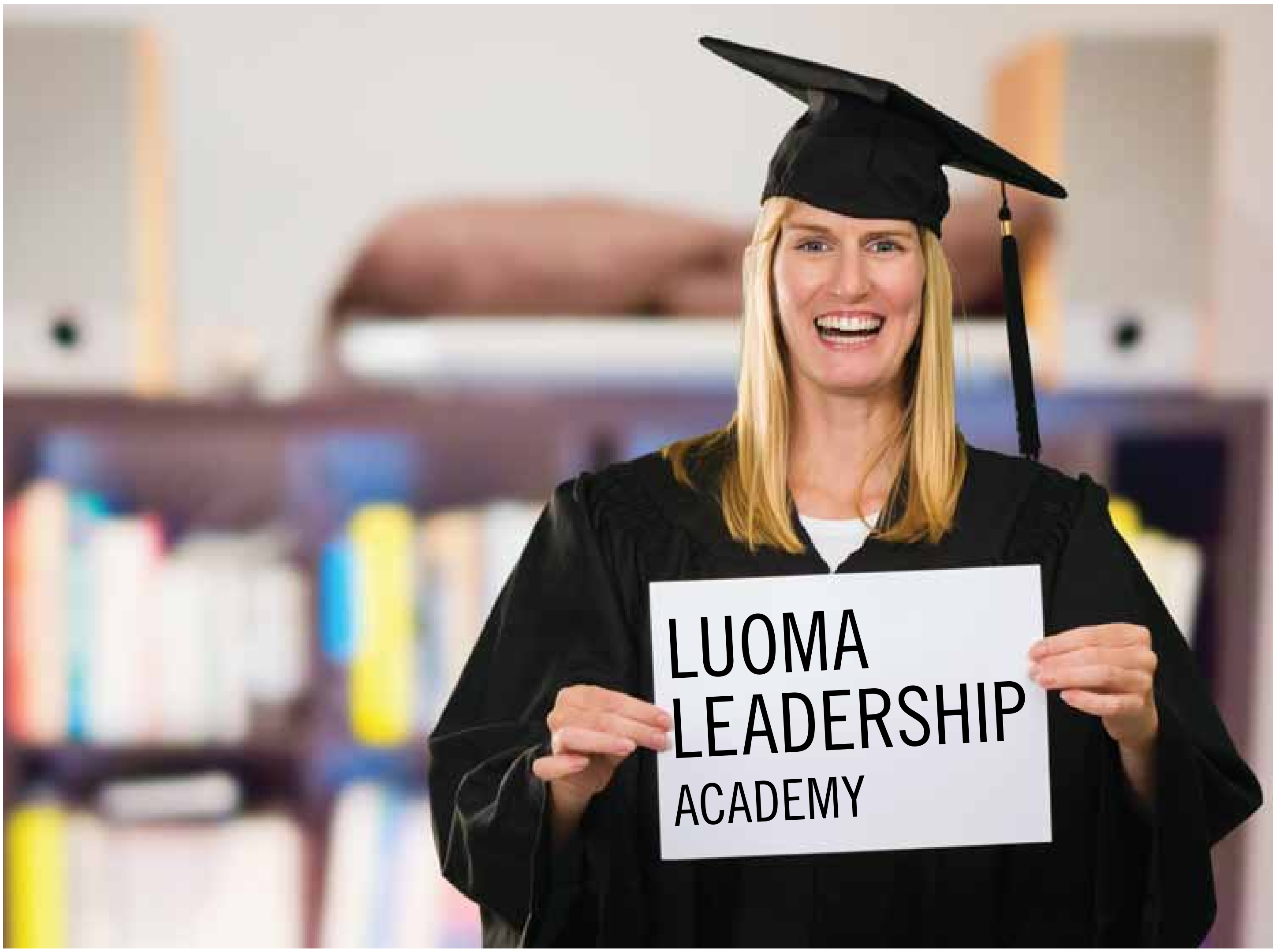
Promoting Undergraduate Research in Minnesota



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ABSTRACT

As participants in the 2011-2012 class of the Luoma Leadership Academy, the authors comprised an action team charged to investigate how undergraduate research is currently incorporated into collegiate studies in Minnesota. We developed a survey that was delivered to Deans at all Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) institutions using the MnSCU Deans listserv. Respondents to the survey represented all 7 universities and all 30 of the community colleges. This suggests that the findings of our action project have real generalization within the system and potentially similar public systems of higher education in other states. We offer data-driven recommendations and conclude with leadership lessons learned.

As participants in the 2011-2012 class of the Luoma Leadership Academy, the authors comprised an action team charged with an action project to investigate how undergraduate research is currently incorporated into collegiate studies in the Minnesota States Colleges and Universities (MnSCU), the system of public community colleges and universities of Minnesota. Each of these community colleges and universities have their own unique mission and vision, although they all have as their central purpose the education of students. Even approaches to teaching and learning differ among institutions. Thus, when exploring how to embed undergraduate research into campus cultures, we naturally expected to encounter a variety of perspectives.

Undergraduate research has been demonstrated to benefit both students and faculty (Froyd, 2008; Kuh, 2008). Students become more engaged in their learning as they develop the skills to participate in the processes and procedures of their disciplinary areas in a relevant manner. Additionally, faculty are able to further their professional development and, along with their students, contribute to their fields of study. The charge of our action project was thus highly appropriate to the current state of affairs in higher education.

BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

As a system, MnSCU is institutionally and demographically diverse, providing educational opportunities at community colleges and universities in the liberal arts and sciences, professional education, and technical education to a range of students hailing from all geographic and socioeconomic sectors of the state. With such a range of options for undergraduate students within MnSCU, determining a focus for the action team presented an initial challenge. How does one meaningfully gauge the activities of such a diverse range of workgroups? In addition, although each of the action team members was aware of undergraduate research initiatives at their own institutions, early discussion and reflection indicated that little communication regularly occurred across campuses. This realization prompted a number of questions: How often was undergraduate research being conducted on the various MnSCU campuses? What disciplines/programs were involved? At those campuses featuring little if any undergraduate research, what was the level of interest or desire of institutions to engage in research? How was undergraduate conducted research communicated beyond the classroom? What were the institutional infrastructures supporting research? What institutional support for faculty development and involvement was available? The generation of these guiding questions provided our action team with a roadmap of sorts to take the next empirical step in the action project.

THE ACTION TEAM PROCESS

Subsequent to the generation of a set of guiding questions, our action team endeavored to develop a definition of undergraduate research through a process of reflective inquiry. Creating a definition facilitated the conceptualization of MnSCU as a broad entity offering a wide variety of programs and courses of study, and provided a unifying perspective of research for the diverse programs and courses of study across the system. The result was an actionable definition of undergraduate research inclusive to all academic, professional, and technical perspectives:

A culture of inquiry on campus begins with the knowledge and passion of the faculty and their desire to incorporate the best practices of research or inquiry within the fine arts, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and in the applied programs. It is modeled from the first day of class and is predicated upon engaging students to more deeply comprehend the principles of study and the applications of practice in their respective areas of learning. Faculty guide students, often as a collaborative venture, to investigate relevant problems, test those problems with the methods representative of their area of learning, and share their findings with an appropriate audience.

It was the intention of our action team to offer this definition as a broad context to help define the various forms of research and inquiry-driven learning to which students within MnSCU are exposed.

In order to best understand the scope of existing undergraduate research activities among MnSCU institutions and aid the action team to address the questions we established, our action team developed a survey (see Appendix A) that was delivered to Deans at all MnSCU institutions using the MnSCU deans listserv. The survey requested that the Deans

respond to a series of items designed to elucidate the current state of undergraduate research in the system. Items were nested in such a manner that Deans were presented only with those items relevant to their initial responses and thus would minimize the requisite time required to complete the survey. Finally, our action team concurrently engaged in a review of the literature related to best practices in undergraduate research. It was readily recognized that there exist excellent resources available through national organizations (see Appendix B) such as the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) and the Association or American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). Indeed, one of the action team members had previously participated in a CUR workshop focused on undergraduate research at 2-year institutions.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

A total of 55 individuals responded to the survey. The representation across MnSCU was excellent; responses came from all 7 universities and all 30 of the community colleges. This suggests that findings of our action project have real generalization within the system and potentially similar public systems of higher education in other states. A majority of the respondents indicated that their campuses offered opportunities for undergraduate students to engage in supervised research. More than half of the responses suggested such opportunities were limited to the science, technology, engineering, and medicine (STEM) disciplines. It also appeared that opportunities for undergraduate research in the arts and humanities was quite common, with such opportunities among the trades and professionals being somewhat less common.

Further analysis of the survey responses suggested several relevant themes. First, it appeared that a number of MnSCU institutions were attempting to integrate research into undergraduate coursework, sometimes with the goal of producing public scholarship. Such attempts were often characterized by faculty doing this "on their own time," which our action team interpreted to suggest that the research aspect of the course was not required per course objectives. Similarly, it was reported that some faculty use their research to enrich the courses they teach and that there was ostensible popularity to form campus committees to explore the possibility of undergraduate research. The greatest boon to creating opportunities for undergraduate research across the disciplines therefore appears to reside among the faculty.

Second, there appeared to be a number of undergraduate research conferences and fairs extant within MnSCU. However, these events appeared to be limited primarily to the universities. A similarly observed trend in the data was that capstone projects requiring research appeared to be required across the disciplines. However, as with the conferences and fairs, capstone projects might be limited primarily to the universities. Finally, there were ostensible efforts to offer faculty with professional development opportunities to promote the incorporation of undergraduate research into courses.

Third, the data indicated that collaboration among community colleges and universities appeared to be scant. This was a most discouraging discovery. As an action team, we represented various colleges and universities from within MnSCU. Our initial meetings suggested that we were personally unaware of what was occurring on other campuses within the Minnesota system; this was most especially true when exploring matters of community college-university interactions. The responses to our survey from members of every community college and university in MnSCU revealed that our action team-based quandary was likely representative of a systemic state of affairs.

RECOMMENDATION FOR ACTION

Consideration of these three major trends in the data prompted our action team to proffer a single, major recommendation. In his installation speech as MnSCU chancellor, Rosenstone (2011) espoused that all state community colleges and universities are committed to "ensuring access to an extraordinary education for all Minnesotans" (p. 2), but that "... no person... no organization...no single college or university can accomplish alone what needs to be done" (p. 5). The results of our survey indicated there to be major interest within the MnSCU community colleges and universities to create and maintain opportunities for undergraduate research across the disciplines, especially among the STEM disciplines. Yet, there did not appear to be significant interest within MnSCU institutions for community college-university collaborations to promote opportunities for undergraduate research across the disciplines.

Furthermore, finances and facilities were commonly perceived to be obstacles to creating opportunities for undergraduate research across the disciplines. With a majority of survey respondents holding positions in administration, there was clearly understanding of the campus resources needed to promote undergraduate research. Chancellor Rosenstone stated that MnSCU must "embrace new ideas to advance educational quality; redesign the way we do things and empower presidents, the faculty and staff to be entrepreneurial– keeping many important decisions at the local level" (p. 5). Our action team concurs.

Therefore, it is recommended that the Office of the Chancellor actively coordinate communication among MnSCU campuses to strengthen individual campus initiatives while fostering communication between campuses regarding their successes and practices in support of undergraduate research. Additionally, thoughtful and open collaboration between administration and faculty could best determine how to utilize the limited resources on campuses to promote opportunities for undergraduate research.

LEADERSHIP LESSONS LEARNED

The result of our action team project was the generation of data-based recommendations intended to promote change in a state-wide system of higher education. Along the way, we also learned a few things relevant to leadership and action team-building. First, our action team was comprised of faculty and administrators from a diverse range of departments and institutions across the state of Minnesota. Although technology allowed for a number of action team meetings, we soon discovered there was simply no substitute for the synergy that resulted from meeting face-to-face. Second, it was unanimously agreed that the success of the project would result not merely in recognizing one's own ability to carry the torch, but in appreciating and fostering the abilities of one another to do the same. Each action team member brought important skills, abilities and perspectives needed to make the action project a success.

Third, and perhaps most emphatically, our action team came to understand that it was simply insufficient to do good work and step back in the face of an ostensible

need for change. The public community colleges and universities of Minnesota offer a first-rate education to their students. However, the results of our survey made it clear that there were numerous missed opportunities within the system to leverage internal funds and cross-campus collaborations to promote the development of undergraduate research across all disciplines. Leading in a culture of change can be difficult (Fullan, 2001), and initiating such change even more so (Fullan, 2011). Yet, such an effort appeared incumbent upon our action team. We are currently in the process of submitting the results of our action project to present at the annual MnSCU Joint Meeting of the Chief Academic and Student Affairs Officers and University/ College Deans. This will allow us an opportunity to share our findings and recommendations with those individuals most capable to initiate a change in policy and culture to support the growth of opportunities for undergraduate research among the many fine community colleges and universities of Minnesota.

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APPENDIX A UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH SURVEY.

Item 1: Please identify your college or university. Item 2: What is your position with the college or university? Item 3: Do undergraduates on your campus have the option of engaging in supervised research?

If Yes to Item 3...

Item 4: Is undergraduate research on your campus primarily limited to the STEM disciplines? Item 5: Can undergraduates on your campus become involved with research in the arts and/or humanities?
Item 6: Can undergraduates on your campus become involved in research in the trades and/or professions?
Item 7: What is done on your campus to integrate undergraduate research into the curriculum?
Item 8: What are the perceived resources which support undergraduate research on your campus?

If No to Item 3...

Item 9: Is there interest on your campus to initiate programs of undergraduate research?

If Yes to Item 9...

Item 10: Is the interest primarily limited to the STEM disciplines?

Item 11: Does the interest include arts and/or humanities disciplines?

Item 12: Does the interest include the trades and/or professions?

Item 13: What are the perceived obstacles to starting undergraduate research on your campus? Item 14: Would there be an interest on your campus to engage in state university- community college collaborations to support undergraduate research?

APPENDIX B

Annotated reference list.

Association or American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U; www.aacu.org)

The Association or American Colleges and Universities provides a wealth of online and print resources for the interested professor or administrator. Especially relevant to the current paper are the resources listed under Project Kaleidoscope. Although primarily oriented toward the STEM disciplines, these resources are widely applicable across disciplines.

Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR; www.cur.org)

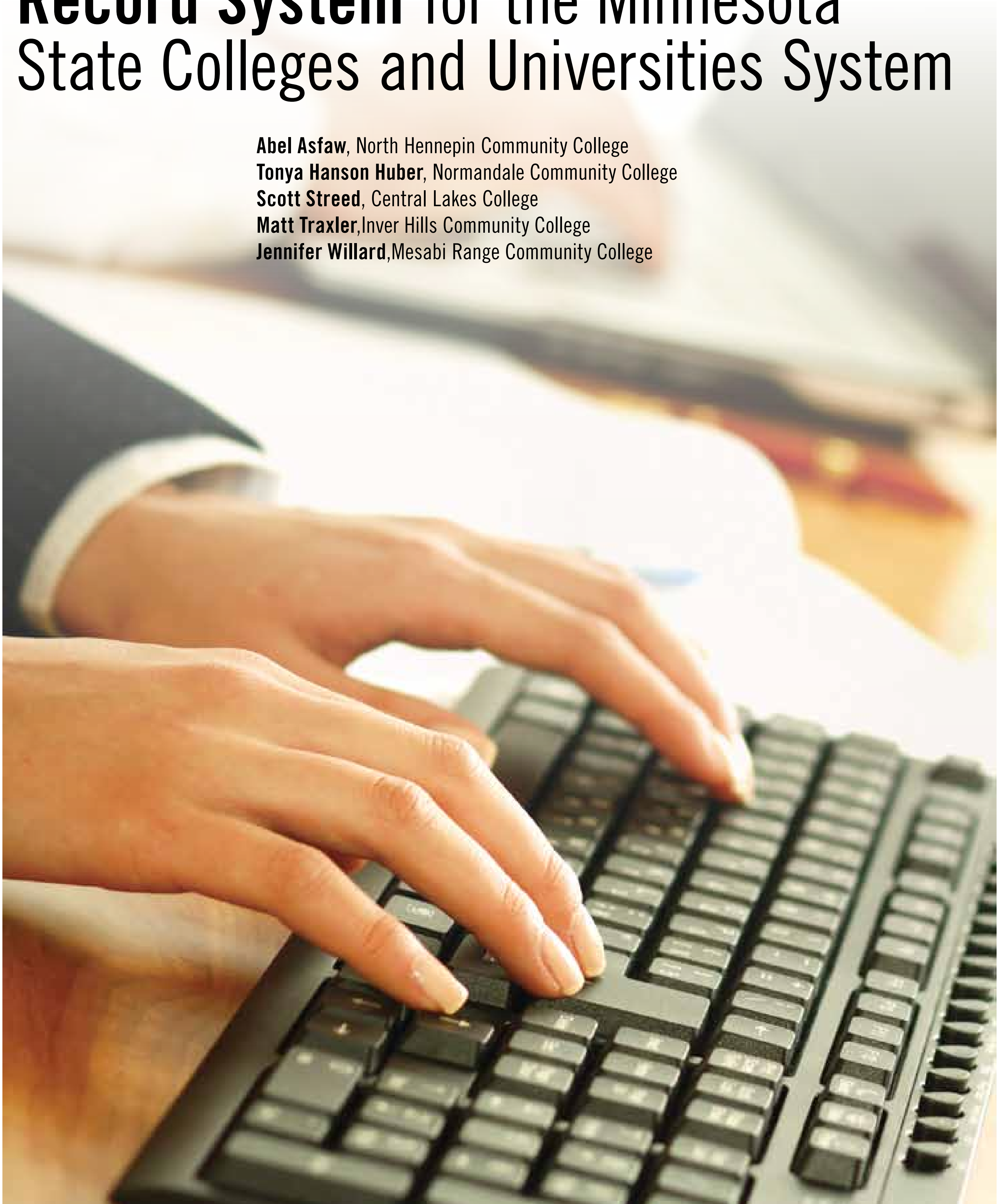
The Council on Undergraduate Research is widely recognized as one of the major sources of guidance on how to implement research into undergraduate education.

Kuh, G. D. (2008). High-impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges & Universities.

Kuh's seminal research on high-impact practices in undergraduate education is highly relevant to all disciplines. Contrary to the tendency of "best practices" to be based upon anecdote, the high-impact practices delineated in the report are supported by research.

Enhancing the Integrated Student Record System for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System

Abel Asfaw, North Hennepin Community College
Tonya Hanson Huber, Normandale Community College
Scott Streed, Central Lakes College
Matt Traxler,Inver Hills Community College
Jennifer Willard,Mesabi Range Community College



Background

The Integrated Student Records System (ISRS) is the student information system that is utilized by all institutions in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system. Created by System Office staff and implemented in spring 1998, ISRS is comprised of interdependent modules for admissions, registration, courses and curriculum, financial aid, accounts payable and receivable, disability services, facilities, human resources, and others.

With the implementation of ISRS came the creation of statewide user groups (e.g. admissions officers, registrars, business officers, financial aid officers), where issues that arose from the various modules could be addressed and where enhancement requests could be discussed, prioritized and submitted. ISRS enhancement priorities might also come from System and college administration in response to Board policies, legislation or other needs.

DATABASE FIELDS

FIELD NAME	DATA TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Request Number	Numeric	Used internally for linking to status table. Automatically incremented and assigned when a new request is submitted.
Project Name	Text	Name of the project request
Project Status	Text	Drop down list that contains pre-defined values such as new, under consideration, implemented, not feasible, etc.
Project Area	Text	Business Group that this project applies to (Finance / Admissions / Registration / Financial Aid / Etc)
Project Detail	Text	Large text area for users to enter description of the project request
Strategic Justification	Text	Large text area for the requestor to identify how this request relates to and supports the local campus or MnSCU strategic plan.
Submission Date	Date	Date that request was submitted. Automatically assigned by system.
Initiation Campus(s)	Text	List of campuses submitting request
Request Contact	Text	Name of one person who will serve as the main contact for this request
Request Email	Text	E-mail address of the request contact
Priority	Text	Recommended priority of request
Completion Date	Date	Requested completion date
Project Manager	Text	Name and contact information of assigned project manager
Votes	Numeric	Number of votes this request has received by users

MAIN TABLE

FIELD NAME	DATA TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Request Number	Numeric	Used internally for linking to status table. Automatically incremented and assigned when a new request is submitted.
Project Name	Text	Name of the project request
Project Status	Text	Drop down list that contains pre-defined values such as new, under consideration, implemented, not feasible, etc.
Project Area	Text	Business Group that this project applies to (Finance / Admissions / Registration / Financial Aid / Etc)
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Completion Date	Date	Requested completion date
Project Manager	Text	Name and contact information of assigned project manager
Votes	Numeric	Number of votes this request has received by users

THE PROJECT

Several years ago, administration from Rochester Community and Technical College (RCTC) submitted a simple ISRS enhancement request to the MnSCU System Office: display individual course section notes (an existing ISRS field) on the student's printed schedule. Having received no feedback, RCTC created a group to sponsor a 2011-2012 Luoma Leadership Academy project with this task and then, in preparation for the initial meeting with our team, discovered their request had already been fulfilled. What caused this enhancement request be approved, tested and implemented by the System Office without the requestors' knowledge? There had to be a better way to track and communicate ISRS enhancement requests, and thus, the purpose of this project was born.

We began with polling other ISRS users both at our home campuses and in our respective user groups to assess our group's and our sponsors' perception that the ISRS enhancement request process was lacking and to determine stakeholders' wants. We learned that over the course of time, several user groups abandoned the enhancement request process or utilize it intermittently. Respondents almost unanimously indicated that feedback and communication about the status of prioritized requests was lacking. System Office priorities, legislation, technology needs and other factors sometimes set all other priorities aside with little communication of that effort. Users also expressed frustration that issues encountered at one campus may have already been reported by another but weren't

STATUS TABLE (Table that holds notes and status updates. There can be multiple records in this table that link to a single record in the main table.)

FIELD NAME	DATA TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Request Number	Numeric	Used to link to main table
Date	Date	Date of note
Note	Text	A large text field for project managers to enter comments and notes regarding status updates.

VOTES TABLE (Table that holds votes and user comments for each request. There can be multiple records in this table that link to a single record in the main table.)

FIELD NAME	DATA TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Request Number	Numeric	Used to link to main table
Date	Date	Date of vote
Priority	Numeric	Holds values of 1-3 allowing voter to rank importance
Comment	Text	A large text field for voters to enter comments regarding the request.

LOGICAL FUNCTION OVERVIEW

FUNCTION	DESCRIPTION
Add Request	User is presented a form to fill in the information to add a new request.
Browse Requests	User can browse through a list of requests. Ideally, there should be some filter capabilities so the user can limit the list by range of dates, business group area, status, etc.
Search Requests	User can enter key words to search for requests matching specified criteria. Wildcard and "fuzzy" searches should be supported. Results should be presented in a list that the user can select a specific request from to get complete detail.
View Request	After browsing or searching for requests, the user can select a request, and see complete detail and all status notes and comments associated with the request.
Vote	While viewing a request, the user would have the opportunity to vote, rank priority (1=high, 2=medium, 3=low), and add comments regarding the request. This function would append a record to the votes table. The view request function would then be responsible for querying the votes table for the request being displayed, calculating the total number of votes, determining an average priority level, and also display any comments.
Update Request	For use by ISRS project managers. This would give the manager the ability to update status fields of the request. An e-mail would be sent from the system to the request contact outlining what updates and changes were made to the request.
Add Comment	For use by ISRS project managers. This would give the manager the ability to enter notes and comments regarding the request. An e-mail would be sent from the system to the request contact outlining what comments were made to the request.

communicated to all users, thereby causing a duplication of effort when reporting a need for a bug fix.

Our next step was to formulate a project proposal with our sponsors to a.) improve the transparency and understanding of the enterprise system's project prioritization process; b.) inform campus users about new enhancement requests; c.) provide users the opportunity to comment on and rank project proposals; d.) give MnSCU ITS personnel more guidance and clarity on system-wide enhancement priorities, which would benefit the majority of users without restricting others.

Our recommended resolution: a web-based enhancement request intake and tracking system which would provide users with a central source to submit enhancement requests, view their status, view enhancement requests submitted by others, and even vote and comment on requests.

Team members vetted the idea with campus and System-level administration, campus users, and system-wide user groups. Specific stakeholders included the Admissions Office Business Group, Financial Aid Officers Business Group, Registrar Business Group, and campus users from data entry staff through administration, supervisors, deans, vice presidents and presidents.

We reviewed existing models such as Rochester Community and Technical College's Idea Hive (https://secure.rctc.edu/ideahive/), RightNow Technologies (a tool currently utilized by many campuses and MnSCU Technology Services as a Help Desk ticketing system), Microsoft SharePoint, and other commercial and open source products. The team took the feedback and our technology expert drafted a design document for our proposed system, which we named the ISRS Enhancement Request Tracking System (IERTS). Refer to the end of this report for more information about the design.

This project supports goals 5.1 and 5.2 of the 2010-2014 MnSCU Strategic Plan by providing a platform for ISRS project managers to better understand needs of ISRS users. By having a better understanding of priorities from users, ISRS project managers can make better objective decisions, and allocate resources to enhancement requests to achieve the greatest impact across the system. This in turn reduces unnecessary costs by ensuring resources don't get spent on low priority projects that benefit only a few.

"Our recommended resolution: a web-based enhancement request intake and tracking system which would provide users with a central source to submit enhancement requests, view their status, view enhancement requests submitted by others, and even vote and comment on requests."

Similarly, this project also supports goal number three of the 2012 MnSCU Strategic Framework. By having a central database of enhancement requests, users will be able to more efficiently track requests, eliminate duplication of efforts, and developer resources will be deployed to the highest priority requests. All of this reduces costs, and delivers the highest value to students and taxpayers.

THE AFTERMATH

While considered complete in terms of the Leadership Academy, this project is still in its infancy in MnSCU. It is being discussed and endorsed by college and System Office administration, and it is the goal of this team to see it reach implementation.

HIRING PROCESS FOR UNCLASSIFIED EMPLOYEES: *Luoma Leadership Academy Action Team*

By **Michelle Thom**, Normandale Community College *and* **Donna Brown**, Moorhead State University

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this project is to examine Mankato's hiring process for unclassified employees. The project's sponsors are Dr. Richard Davenport, President of Minnesota State University (MSU), Mankato and Becky Barkmeier, Chief Human Resources Officer at MSU, Mankato. Action Project Team members interviewed the project's sponsors, stakeholders, as well as examined several MSU, Mankato documents used in their current hiring process. In addition, mapped Mankato's current hiring process to determine where additional efficiencies might be achieved. Finally, we reviewed Normandale Community College's current electronic workflow for Mankato staff to determine if it could be modified for use by MSU, Mankato and to gauge the receptiveness by Mankato HR staff. After which, made recommendations, including pursuing an automated hiring process that is developed and implemented in phases.

BACKGROUND

Minnesota State University (MSU), Mankato submitted an action project proposal to the Luoma Leadership Academy in 2011-2012. The project proposed an examination of Mankato's hiring process for unclassified employees. The project's sponsors are Dr. Richard Davenport, President of MSU, Mankato and Becky Barkmeier, Chief Human Resources Officer at MSU, Mankato. Action team members are Michelle Thom, Normandale Community College; Donna Brown, Minnesota State University, Moorhead.

To complete our project, we used several methods. First, we interviewed the project's sponsors, as well as additional stakeholders from MSU, Mankato. We then examined several MSU, Mankato documents used in their current hiring process. Next, we mapped Mankato's current hiring process to determine where additional efficiencies might be achieved. We demonstrated Normandale Community College's current electronic workflow for Mankato staff to determine if it could be modified for use by MSU, Mankato and to gauge the receptiveness by Mankato HR staff. Finally, we made some recommendations, including pursuing an automated hiring process that is developed and implemented in phases.

SPONSOR INTERVIEWS

In an effort to further define the problem, we interviewed our sponsors last summer during our week at the Luoma Leadership Academy. Following are the results of our interview:

- Mankato's hiring process is long and cumbersome.
- It is the most frequent complaint the administration receives from employees.
- Steps have been taken to reduce the steps.
- The sponsor is requesting that the team review the process and determine if additional efficiencies can be achieved.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

We also conducted stakeholder interviews. Stakeholders interviewed are as follows:

- DeeAnn Snaza, Assistant Director of Human Resources
- Linda Hanson, Director of Affirmative Action
- Dr. Vijendra Agarwal, Dean of Science, Engineering and Technology
- Dr. David Jones, Associate Vice President of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management

Stakeholder concerns were similar to those expressed by the project's sponsors and are summarized as follows:

- Too many steps
- Convoluted process; needlessly complex and confusing, particularly for new hiring managers and search committee members
- Paper-based system too confusing for both search committees and candidates
- Concern over loss of candidates as process takes too long

DOCUMENT REVIEW

The team gathered several documents used in Mankato's hiring process. The purpose of this was to review the documents to become more familiar with the process used, as well as to consider whether one or more documents currently used could be eliminated from the current process. The documents reviewed are as follows:

- Search Process Checklist
- Position Requisition Form
- Screening Summary Report
- Unclassified Personnel Document New Hires/ Changes in Appointment
- Finalist Approval Form
- Offeree Approval Form

PROCESS MAPPING

We created a map of Mankato's current unclassified hiring process in an effort to determine where additional efficiencies could be achieved. The current process map is attached. The current process map clearly illustrates the complexities of the current process.

INITIAL CONCLUSIONS

At this point in our project, we paused to reflect on what we learned. Following are our initial conclusions:

- The steps have already been reduced from 35 to 21. It will be challenging—given all the requirements – to reduce the process further.
- Mankato's Human Resources and Affirmative Action functions are housed separately – Given this separation of functions (and offices), it will be difficult to reduce steps further.
- Complex State and Federal requirements related to collective bargaining agreements, public employment, Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity also make it difficult to reduce steps further.
- Institutional commitment to and culture surrounding inclusive hiring by search committee will also make it difficult to reduce steps further.

SITE VISIT

Normandale Community College implemented an automated hiring workflow during the course of this project. Based on the experiences of the project team member who is employed by Normandale, the project team discussed modifying Normandale's process to meet Mankato's needs. Remaining project team members Donna Brown and Michelle Thom traveled to Mankato in June to meet with sponsor Becky Barkmeier and staff from Mankato's Information Technology and Human Resources departments. We demonstrated Normandale's new process for those present at the meeting and a discussion occurred after the presentation. Based on the conversation, following are the project team's recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

If applicable, it makes sense to look at the current process and determine whether further efficiencies can be gained. Because we may not increase the efficiency of this process by further reducing the number of steps, Mankato should consider an electronic or automated solution for this issue. Correctly identified and implemented, an electronic solution could reduce the amount of time it takes to hire someone and reduce the number of candidates who get lost in the process by moving on to a different employer of choice with a less cumbersome process. Following is a summary of our recommendations:

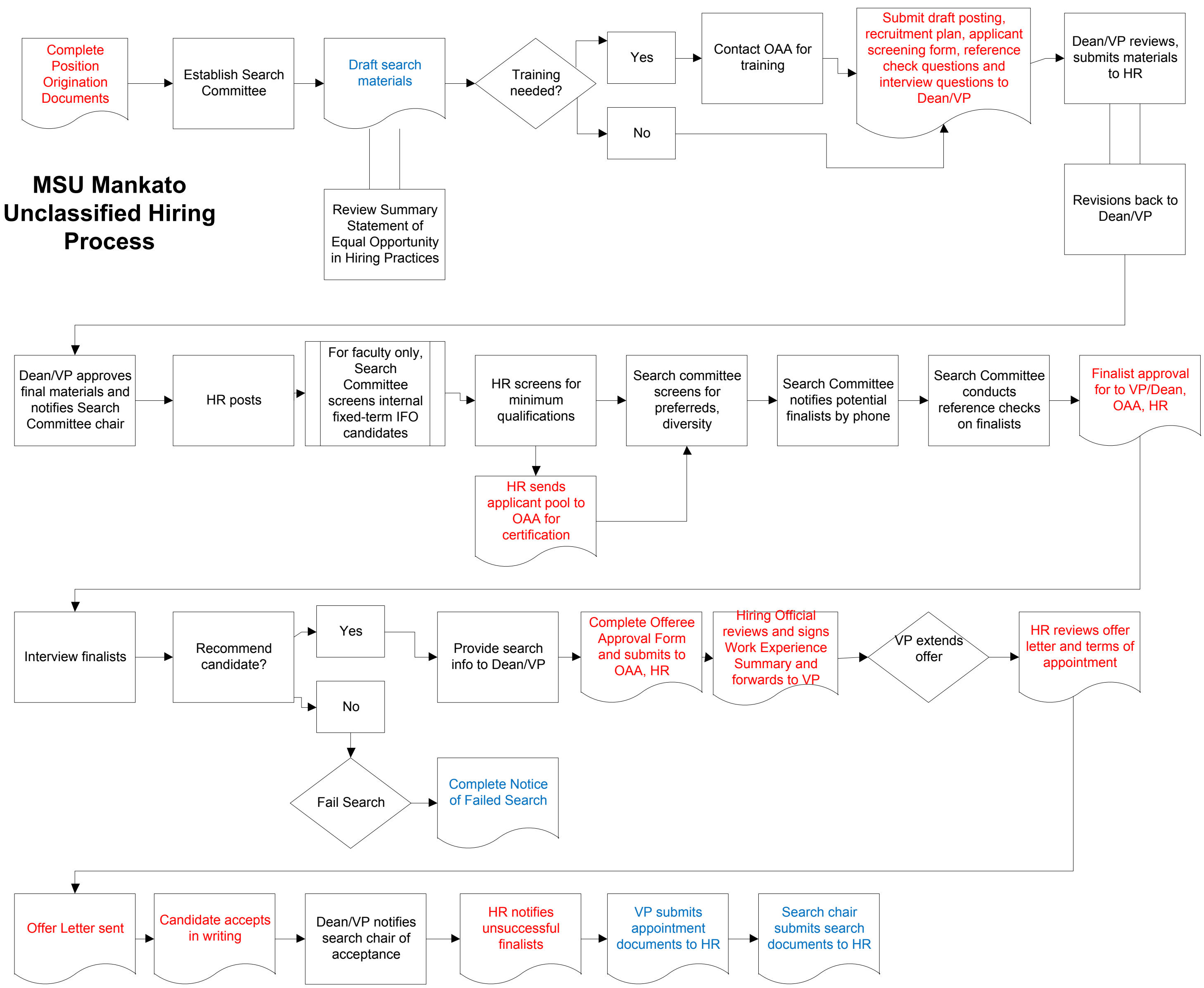
- Create greater efficiency through automated/ electronic system.
- Use electronic forms where possible.
- Use automated workflows to speed up process.
- Electronic system could be phased in.
- Several recruitment tracking options should be explored: ImageNow, NeoGov, SharePoint.

Attached are four new process maps that illustrate how the current hiring process could be broken down and phased in. For this project, we took the current process and broke it down into four phases: Position Origination; Candidate Recruitment and Screening Materials; Search Committee Process; and Finalist Offer. Each process map or "phase" depicts activities in the hiring process that could be automated and those that would likely continue to

occur "off-line," or could not be automated without a more significant investment. Each map also highlights in yellow a potential step that could be eliminated. For example, in the Position Origination phase, the Budgetary Authority step could be eliminated if that responsibility is fully delegated to the Vice President or Dean overseeing the hire in question. In the Candidate Recruitment and Screening Materials phase, the new process suggests that two forms that are currently separate – Draft Job Posting Form and Recruitment Plan Form – could be combined and made into an electronic form thereby eliminating the need for two forms to be completed by the hiring supervisor or search committee chair. In the current process, the Vice President drafts an offer letter, which is then sent to Human Resources (HR) for review and sent to the finalist. The Finalist Offer phase process map has HR drafting the letter (in consultation with the Vice President) and sending to the finalist thereby reducing the need for the Vice President to find time to draft the letter.

In addition, each phase of the new process map highlights in red a possible electronic form that could be developed to automate the process and make it more efficient.

Other avenues to explore include NeoGov and SharePoint. Hennepin Technical College is utilizing NeoGov for the process of position requisition. St. Paul College is using the Microsoft product SharePoint to create electronic workflows for documents in its onboarding process. The functionality of SharePoint



could be explored for hiring purposes as well; however, because Mankato has used ImageNow in the past and has licenses that are current, our recommendation is to consider using Image Now to create workflows like those attached to speed up its hiring process and make it more efficient overall.

BARRIERS

Just as there are significant opportunities for improvement, there are also barriers to achieving efficiencies in Mankato's hiring process. Some barriers are as follows:

- COST – An automated system with electronic forms and workflows will involve an upfront investment in time, dollars and human capital; however, the long-term return on investment would be significant.
- CUSTOMER BUY-IN – As is the case with any change, getting buy-in from the customer or end users will be critical. Involving customers on the front end, such as through a campus-based advisory committee, might be worthwhile.
- HUMAN RESOURCES STAFF BUY-IN – Already overburdened staff expressed concern about taking on yet another project. This is one reason to consider phasing in workflows. Also, helping staff to understand that an upfront investment of time will result in a future savings will be critical.
- ADDED COMPLEXITY DUE TO NUMBER OF HIRING MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS – Mankato staff also expressed concern about establishing workflows due to the large number of hiring supervisors on the Mankato campus. Information Technology staff should be consulted up front to get their ideas on how this could be managed and maintained.
- CAPACITY – Similar to gaining staff buy-in, like most campuses, Mankato's Human Resources capacity has limitations due to the number of staff. Staff workloads may have to be temporarily reviewed and shifted to accommodate a project that involves making a significant change to the current hiring process.

LEADERSHIP LESSONS LEARNED

As a team, we learned several lessons about leadership and effective functioning for the good of the group. Some of our insights are as follows:

- CLEARLY DEFINE ROLES – It is absolutely crucial to ensure all team members understand their role and what is expected of them. Ensuring members are aware of and play to their strengths is also critical for ensuring a team is productive. Our action project coach was unclear as to what their role was and struggled to assist us with moving forward due to that lack of clarity.
- COMMIT TO THOSE ROLES – Once roles are clarified, members must commit to following through and carrying out their role. Otherwise, the team will suffer.
- ASSIGN ONE PERSON TO LEAD – Assigning one person to lead is also critical. The skills and talent of the leader assist with moving project teams forward and ensuring a successful outcome. Our team did not have a designated leader and consequently struggled to accomplish our goals.
- ENSURE HOME CAMPUS LEADERS UNDERSTAND COMMITMENT REQUIRED BY ACTION PROJECT – All members of our team took this project on in addition to the work that we do day-to-day on our campuses. Ensuring our campus leadership is aware of that commitment and is supportive of our pursuit of our action project would have been extremely helpful in the case of our team.
- ADAPT TO UNEXPECTED CHANGES – Our team was completely unprepared for the loss of two project team members. As such, we were unable to identify where our gaps were occurring and find other expertise to assist us in moving our project along. For example, we lost our IT expertise to other commitments. We knew our project would require an IT solution, yet after losing our expert, we had difficulty identifying who else could assist us.
- LOGISTICS – Unlike other teams, we did not establish our communication norms from the beginning of the process. This may have assisted us with completing our project in a timely manner. Solutions such as web communication tools and simply scheduling regular meetings as a team would have also greatly assisted using accomplishing our goals.

ACTION LEARNING TEAM PROJECT: Administrative Evaluations

By
Robin Layer, Century College
Kara Galvin, Hennepin Technical College
Karen Buboltz, Minnesota State Community and Technical College
Jeanne Qualley, MnSCU System Office
Charles Paulson, Minneapolis Community & Technical College

SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT:

The goal of this project is to provide recommendations to update the current administrator evaluation process at St. Cloud Technical and Community College (SCTCC). SCTCC would like to enhance and formalize the current process to include all components of evaluation and develop the infrastructure necessary to connect all evaluation activities to professional development and succession planning. The project includes research and development of an updated evaluation policy, process and procedure for administrators and managers/directors which includes but is not limited to: professional development planning, supervisor evaluation and assessment and portfolio development. Consistency and alignment will help the college:

- Encourage and recognize the importance of continued professional development;
- Support quality improvement efforts;
- Create a systematic approach for evaluation that utilizes the leadership competencies as developed by MnSCU and meets all state and MnSCU evaluation requirements;
- Align evaluation methods for consistency and equity;
- Effectively manage and engage administrators; and
- Create tools that can be utilized in decision-making and promotion within the campus.

THE PROJECT, PROCESS, AND OUTCOMES:

Supervisors, each the captain of an individual ship that en masse makes up the organizational flotilla, must ask of each member of their crew: “Is this person a sail or an anchor?” Sails must be rewarded and retained; anchors must be confronted and, in the absence of immediate and dramatic change, eliminated (Grote, 2000, retrieved from www.groteconsulting.com). The real values of performance appraisals are as a human resource tool (to determine who is a sail or an anchor) and to tightly link the day to day performance of each employee with the mission and values of the company as a whole. However, despite the linkage to organization goals and their inherent value, typically little time is spent on employee performance appraisals.

In order to enhance their current performance appraisal process, St. Cloud Technical and Community College (SCTCC) sought the input of an Action Learning Team through the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Luoma Leadership Academy. SCTCC is one of thirty-one institutions, including twenty-four two-year colleges and seven state universities which comprise the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities’ system, the largest single provider of higher education in the state of Minnesota. The goal of SCTCC’s project was to develop a systematic, comprehensive, formative and summative evaluation process for administrative employees that allowed for strategic decision-making in compensation, promotion,

and succession planning on their two-year campus. SCTCC recognized the need for development based on recent feedback from sources including an AQIP Feedback Report, Baldridge Express, and participation in the Foundation of Excellence program.

One of SCTCC's goals was to align their evaluation process with their institutional values and mission. This would enable administrators and their supervisors to use evaluations as a tool for matching their own efforts to the strategic priorities of the College. Our Action Learning Team studied SCTCC's materials (website and other documents) and spoke with College leaders about their vision for the institution. The vision statement for SCTCC is:

"St. Cloud Technical and Community College is the college of choice for quality career, technical and transferable education, focused on highly-skilled employment and life-long learning opportunities."

Their mission statement is:

"St. Cloud Technical and Community College prepares students for life-long learning by providing career, technical and transferable education."

We were able to build on an impressive amount of work that SCTCC had done in clarifying their priorities and identifying measures of success for each. SCTCC's five "Pillars of Success" are their priorities to achieve performance excellences. The pillars are:

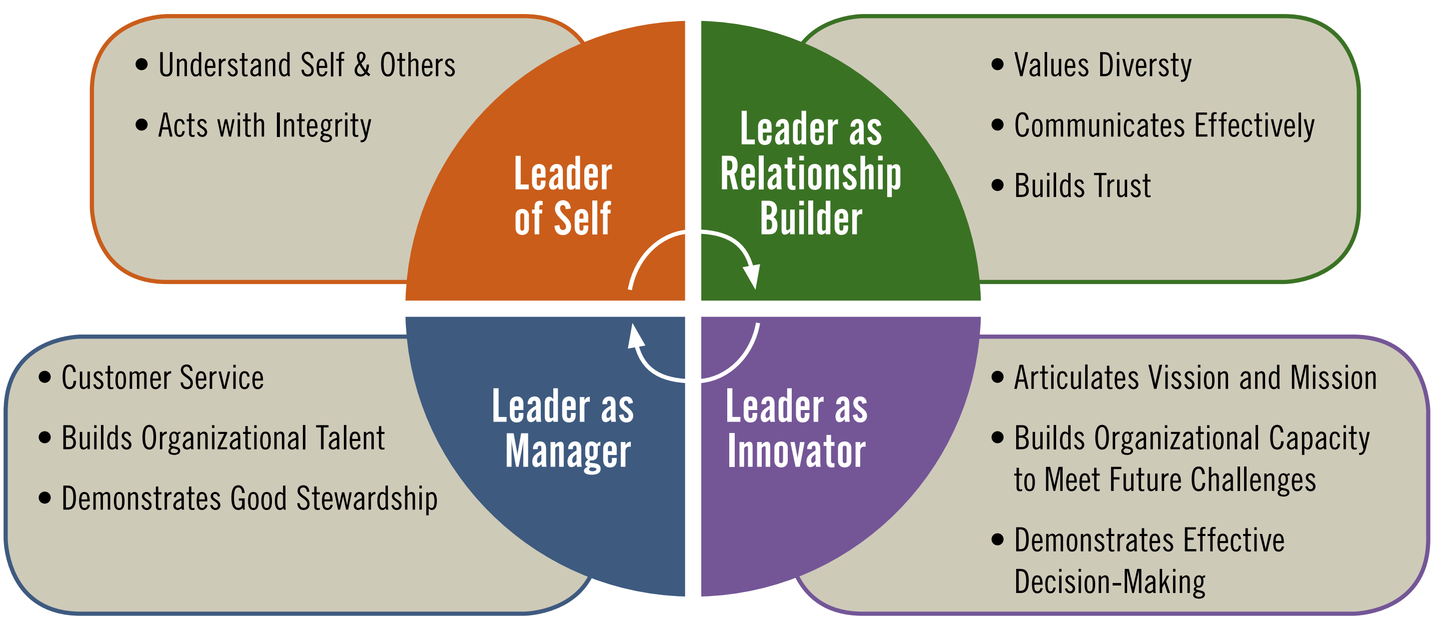
1) Student Success, 2) Community Building, 3) Skilled Workforce, 4) Sustainability, and 5) Employee Engagement.

In addition, SCTCC identified key measures to define and measure progress toward their five "Pillars of Success". For example, the Key Measures for Pillar 1, Student Success, are:

- Completion Rates
- Placement Rates
- Persistence/Retention
- College Transitions/Transfer
- Readiness for College
- Student Learning

Another goal in developing the evaluation process was to align with the leadership competencies identified by the Staff and Leadership Development Steering Committee of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU). This Committee identified four foundational competencies that were incorporated in the performance evaluations and are indicated below:

- Leader of Self
- Leader as Relationship Builder
- Leader as Manager
- Leader as Innovator



The MnSCU leadership competencies added value in two different ways. First, they created a good, functional outline of personal competencies for an administrator. When we talked with administrators at different colleges, we got a sense that this outline would be a useful component for development and evaluation. Second, the inclusion of these competencies forged a link between the individual institutions and the state system as a whole. One of the system goals in talent development is to equip developing administrators to rise within the system, often by moving from institution to institution. An awareness and connection to the MnSCU competencies was seen as something that would assist such administrators in this kind of mobility.

While the bulk of our research focused on other MnSCU institutions due to how we process our alignment to the system office strategic framework, we also researched how other private and public organizations evaluate employees. This research provided different perspectives and other examples of performance evaluations to utilize. To conduct our internal research of thirty-one different institutions, we reached out to the Human Resources division of our campuses. A survey was sent out to all MnSCU Chief Human Resource Officers looking for information on the frequency, tools and methods of administrator evaluations in each of their institutions. There was a 75% completion rate to the survey which provided an excellent foundation for the project. Once the survey of MnSCU Chief Human Resource Officers was complete, a matrix was created to compare and analyze institutional practices. This matrix allowed one to quickly review all responses which could assist in the decision making process and provided a baseline of information.

Compiling this information gave our Action Learning Team much to review. Through this research process, the group discussed the many options presented as well as new ideas and developed a list of best practices for SCTCC. The Action Learning Team thought the product presented by North Hennepin Community College (a MnSCU institution) was an evaluation method that would fit right in with the SCTCC administrative evaluation goals. However, our group did not stop there. SCTCC also wanted forms they could use or modify to fit their needs. Therefore, along with the many forms we received from our survey of different higher education institutions, we also created various template forms and process guidelines

to add to the mix. These forms were designed to cover the needs of SCTCC while also being easy to use. In order to meet the Sustainability priority of SCTCC "Pillars of Success", an electronic 'tool-box' of evaluation sample forms and processes was created and provided to house all of our research and provide a one-stop shop for SCTCC use by any number of employees. This tool-box is currently hosted on the SCTCC D2L website for reference purposes. In addition, if other MnSCU institutions or committees are interested in access to the D2L site, SCTCC can set up an account to allow access.

Along with the best practices, the Action Learning Team recommended a systematic approach to evaluations that align with MnSCU Leadership Competencies and SCTCC Strategic Framework. In a system, the framework begins at the system level. All institutions within the system should use that framework as a foundation for their own strategic plan. Our MnSCU system office has worked with colleges and universities in our system to develop Leadership Competencies which should also feed out through all of our institutions.

Through the Action Learning project, our team concluded that performance appraisals offer multiple valuable opportunities to organizations. Not only are they a chance to create links to the company goals, but they are also a chance to focus on employee satisfaction, development, and evaluation of performance. In addition, in the 'it was needed yesterday' work environment, performance reviews offer an opportunity for managers to have one-on-one discussions with their team members that are not emergency discussions or ad-hoc situations. Our key findings include:

- Performance evaluations are a powerful way to improve individual and organizational effectiveness.
- Evaluations should facilitate multiple mid-year touch points and conversations.
- Performance management should include setting goals, providing feedback and reviewing outcomes.
- Managers, employees and human resources department may have different interests in the evaluation process.
- There is a wide variety of approaches to administrative performance evaluations at MnSCU institutions.
- There is high interest within MnSCU for streamlining this process and incorporating a web-based software product. This may include:

> Customizable features

> Notification when evaluations and touch point meetings should occur

> Reminders to update performance notes

> Allows supervisors and employees to provide feedback more frequently

> 360 degree and multi-level performance analysis

> Links to succession planning

Historically, a performance appraisal was seen as merely a painful annual event where a manager must rate, rank, or determine which employee was an anchor and which employee was a sail over the previous twelve months. The appraisal system was barely linked to the company level missions and values and the process was only symbolic. However, the need to measure performance has become critical and the ability to understand and evaluate true performance has been the target for years. Performance appraisals are a key part of a team. Done right, they can inspire employees to improve performance, focus on company goals, and create a competitive advantage by ensuring employee satisfaction.

REFERENCE LIST

* * Administrative Evaluations Final Report: http://www.hr.mnscu.edu/training_and_development/Leadership_Academy/documents/Cohort%206%20Week%202%20ALP/Team_2_Final_Report.pdf

* * Minnesota State Colleges & Universities Leadership Development website: http://www.hr.mnscu.edu/training_and_development/leadership_developme.html

* Desire2Learn webpage containing all research results. Please contact SCTCC to obtain a password http://www.sctcc.edu/

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