Workforce Learning Summit Innovation/Best Practice

Bladen Community College

Relationship Building: Bladen County Schools and Bladen Community College

Our best practice is with Bladen County Schools. Although the college has worked with the county school system since the inception of the college in 1968, a College Tech Prep grant received in 2010 and implementation of the Career and College Promise program in spring of 2011 propelled our relationship to a new level. A new college president (2008) and superintendent (2009) who desired a stronger relationship enhanced this partnership tremendously.

DETAILS

Although the college has worked with the county school system since the inception of the college in 1968, the relationship was strengthened with the help of a College Tech Prep grant. The college and public schools had received the College Tech Prep (CTP) grant from 1991-2004. The grant was applied for in spring 2010 and awarded in June/July of 2010. An articulation meeting involving 20 college and public school personnel was held on December 1, 2010. Strong relationships were forged with public school personnel to include the Career and Technical Education Director of the county along with special populations counselors. College personnel included the VP for Instruction and Student Services, Associate VP for Academic Programs and Dean of Engineering and College Transfer. A secondary purpose of the grant was to “increase collaboration among secondary and post-secondary partners,” and the grant achieved this secondary purpose. Due to federal budget cuts the grant was only funded for one year.

A welding instructor retired from West Bladen High School in 2012. The public schools asked us to fund this position and began teaching community college classes at the high school in fall 2012. This was approved by SACS/COC and has been a successful program. The public schools have another vocational instructor at East Bladen they anticipate retiring in the near future. The college has already sought SACS/COC approval to teach these classes as well when the opportunity presents itself.

The college began teaching Career and College Promise classes in January 2011. We offer four college transfer pathways, and pathways in cosmetology, electrical/electronics, machining, and welding. Total number of students for combined pathways: 2011-12 – 21; 2012-13 – 90; and 2013 – 14 – 133.

Counselor internships for high school counselors funded by the State Educational Authority and institutional funds have proven to be instrumental in the implementation of Career and College Promise. Counselors are able to assist college personnel in the financial aid office and admissions office while at the same time learning about the Career and College Promise program. Informed counselors have made a tremendous impact on making sure high school students are aware of and understand college program offerings. The college is scheduled to have two more counselors employed for summer of 2014.
Opportunities exist for the creation of additional Career and College Promise pathways in the coming years, and the college is poised to take advantage of these opportunities. Implementation began in February 2010.

**Partner Type(s):**
- Public Schools

**Impact/Outcomes**
The outcome is the college is serving a larger high school population than what we previously had been serving. The college and the public schools are meeting the needs of our community whether it is helping students achieve credit for college level courses that will transfer to a four year college or preparing students for the workforce through our vocational programs. In academic year 2013-14 over 130 high school students were served through our Career and College Promise program.

**Funding Source(s)**
Funds have been needed to cover the cost of hiring additional instructors in welding, machining, and cosmetology ($150,000 of state funds); equipment ($300,000 – roughly $120,000 or more from Perkins and $180,000 from state funds for machining equipment); and renovation of a carpentry shop into a machining shop ($58,000 – $10,000 local budget and $48,000 from the state budget). The State Educational Authority funded a counselor position for the past three years ($5,000 per year) and the college funded a position ($5,000 per year). Over the past three years the public schools have purchased roughly 12,000 worth of textbooks for vocational classes.

**REFLECTIONS**

**Innovation or Best Practice**
It is a best practice because two public agencies are working together, with the best interest of students in mind, to provide hope, opportunity, and jobs to the citizens of Bladen and surrounding counties.

**Lessons Learned**
Like any relationship, it is give and take. The public schools began to pay for textbooks for the high school students taking vocational classes in cosmetology, electronics, welding, machining, etc. The college in turn was able to waive all fees (parking, activity, technology, science lab, etc.) of the high school students. Through the State Educational Authority and minimal institutional funds the college has been able to employ two counselors for each of the past three summers to work in the Student Services Department. We provide summer employment for counselors and the counselors learn about our programs. Trust is at the heart of the relationship.

When changes are made with Career and College Promise program late in the academic year (after Christmas) it is difficult for the public schools to respond. Public schools in our area typically publicize registration and enrollment information in February to high schools. This causes a great deal of confusion for the colleges and high schools. Alignment of DPI and NCCCS calendars and turnover of personnel are always a challenge.

**Scalability**
Yes, it takes time, energy, and willing colleagues to build relationships as well as the commitment of the college president and superintendent. Financial commitments are also important--
• Financial commitment of the public schools to pay for textbooks and the college to waive fees
• Financial commitment of the college to pay for instructors in the high schools and institutional funds to defray the cost of one counselor for several months during the summer

RESOURCES

Workforce Learning Summit Presenters
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