

awareness

parents
technical
college
major
maturity
job-shadow
website
career
education
drop out
pipeline

planning
decisions
talents
friend
goal-setting
OJT
finances
curriculum
internships
required
money
interests
marketing
understanding

Final Report: "Matchmaking Made Easy..."

A Project of the K-State Center for Engagement and Community Development
March 1, 2009

Synopsis of the project proposal:

This project is a pilot program that will bring together postsecondary educators, trainers, high school counselors, parents and employers in a

Background:

A preliminary planning meeting was held at the Highland Community College Center in Wamego on June 12, 2008. All the key partners from K-State and Highland attended, and tasks were described and assigned.

In order to accommodate the schedules of the counselors, the date of February 4, 2009 was selected as the day of the event.

An address list of the counselors (along with their principals and superintendents) was prepared by Highland. In late November postal letters and e-mail invitations were sent to all the counselors, using the facilitation expertise of the conferencing office of the Division of Continuing Education, which set up the online registration system. Letters were also sent to the high school principals, encouraging them to allow the counselors to attend the event. Several counselors came because of their principals' encouragement. Betty Stevens sent reminder e-mails to the counselors about two weeks before the event. Betty Stevens personally called and invited all the college representatives and the state officials. Will Gladhart personally invited the local workforce representatives. Highland representatives identified and invited some parents of high school students.

On January 27 Joe Krause and Betty Stevens visited the Holton site to confirm the meeting arrangements, and were assisted by Denise Herbers, manager of the Holton Center of Highland Community College. Joe Krause arranged to bring a laptop and a projector, as well as markers and newsprint pads for recording by the table groups. The K-State College of Human Ecology loaned five easels to hold the newsprint pads.

Responses to the invitation were very good. Of the 35 counselors who were invited, 25 attended. This was considered to be a very good turnout by very busy people.

Workforce representatives from Atchison County, Jackson County, and the Rural Development Association of Northeast Kansas attended. Several parents from locations near Holton attended.

A senior staff member of the Kansas Technical Education Authority (a board serving the Board of Regents) attended, as well as a representative of the Kansas Department of Commerce. (Unfortunately, the day that worked best for counselors was the same day the TEA was having a meeting in Topeka, but members of the TEA board sent their regrets.)

Representatives of all the invited colleges attended.

A list of those attending is included in the Appendix.

Format and procedures for the meeting.

Highland CC personnel provided morning refreshments: coffee, juice, Danish, cookies, fruit. Guests and participants began arriving about 8:30 and mingled until the program started at 9:30. The meeting room was arranged with five tables arranged in a semi-circle with a central projector and screen. Each table was provided an easel with a newsprint pad and colored markers, as well as pens and note pads. Each table was also given candies, and giveaway toys, trinkets, etc. from K-State and Highland CC.

Betty Stevens, as facilitator, welcomed those in attendance and let everyone introduce himself or herself to the group. Each person had a pre-printed nametag with the first and last name, and their association. Counselors were asked to provide the primary discussion, with the other guests roaming from table to table to observe, provide information, and comment as they saw fit.

Dr. Stevens gave an overview of the plan for the day:

1. Background information and the task of the group;
2. Table group assignments (1-5) by number (pre-arranged to mix schools of different sizes);
3. Description of the problem, "The Vanishing Students" (see attachment);
4. Small groups discussed and decided on the reasons for the problem;
5. Small groups shared ("sold") their discussions and "reasons" were compiled among the entire group;
6. Entire group voted on the most important "reasons."

There was a break for lunch, catered by local barbecue restaurant. During lunch, votes were counted and results were posted. Participants and guests had time to visit and reflect on the morning's work. The afternoon session focused on solutions.

1. Facilitator briefly reviewed the morning's findings, and introduced the afternoon task: to suggest solutions to the problem.
2. Small groups discussed possible solutions and proposed top five solutions including cost issues;
3. Small groups shared ("sold") their solutions with the entire group;
4. Entire group combined table results and voted on top solutions;
5. Top solutions were discussed as recommendations to TEA and others.

The meeting concluded with evaluative feedback from all in attendance. Each person was given a 3x5 card and asked to write two things the person learned during the day, two things the person contributed during the day, and suggestions for improving the meeting if it were to be replicated around the state. (See "Feedback" attachment in the Appendix.)

Part 1: reasons for non-retention in the first year.

The five table groups came up with several possible reasons for students not being successful or satisfied with their first choice of postsecondary education, thus contributing to the colleges' loss of first time, full time, degree-seeking students before the start of their second year. Because there was considerable duplication among the groups' findings, the findings were combined into a single list. This first list is all the possible reasons that were generated, as combined from the morning discussions, in no particular order.

Perceptions by parents and students

- College = better life
- Prestige of school ("tech school," "junior college," etc.)
- Lack of understanding of job market and postsecondary schools

Outside influences

- Parents
- College recruiters
- Athletics recruiters
- Peers
- Relatives
- Boyfriends and girlfriends

Unrealistic view of self by the student/immaturity

- Poorly developed work ethic
- Lack of research into the choices
- Unprepared academically
- Unprepared socially
- Lack of student responsibility
- Misjudge college expectations
- Don't see relevance of college to self
- Can't adjust to new lifestyle
- Can't follow through on commitment
- Doesn't want anything to change

Economics of postsecondary education

- Perception of affordability
- Unaware of financial aid
- Misjudge costs one way or the other
- Don't understand private vs public colleges
- No savings
- Don't understand money matters (part time job earnings ≠ price of college)
- Can't relate cost of college to future earnings

Curriculum

- Unclear relationship between high school and college curriculum
- Students seek “relevant” curriculum
- Role of General Education
- Traditional assessments might not capture student talents and interests
- Traditional college assessments might not be suited to student learning style
- Biases about types of education
- Preparation for higher learning processes
- Sequential connections in disciplines
- Preparation without direction or a goal in mind

Funding of K-12 education

- Counselors have many duties besides vocational guidance
- Career specialist not affordable in most schools
- Attention to each individual student not possible in larger schools
- Might need a statewide career ed curriculum
- School time taken up with other things
- Counselors are not required in Kansas

From the above list, the entire group came up with the following “most important” reasons for the students who don’t make the best choices of their postsecondary education.

**Top five reasons for
students making poor
choices about
postsecondary
education:**

1. Outside influences,

Part 2: Possible solutions to increase student retention from year one to year two.

Below is a list of all the possible solutions that were presented by the five small groups, in no particular order.

- One-stop website for career/postsecondary planning
- Incentives for discounts/scholarships tied to performance for 1st or 2nd year students
- Mandatory career educator in all schools
- Marketing (better marketing information about postsecondary institutions)
- Campus visits which require parents to attend with students
- Training collaboration time for counselors and other educators
- 13th year mandated parent/student career objectives
- Funding for additional staff for career development or other non-counseling duties in middle school
- Adequate funding K-12 classes
- State-mandated career education curriculum to be completed for a high school diploma, including:
 - Job shadowing
 - Instruction in personal finance
 - Goal setting
 - Decision making
 - College and career research
 - Internships whenever possible locally
- Postsecondary I.E.P. and advisor for every student
- Hire additional staff for non-counseling duties
 - State assessments
 - Kids' data
 - Secretarial: transcripts and records
- Protected time for counseling curriculum
- Align CTE and Regents' class standards
- Partnership with business
 - Technical classes
 - Job shadowing
 - Career cluster/academics
- Require career education benchmarks for high school students
- Higher Education career/college success course for all students year 1 or 2 (postsecondary)
- Non-need-based tuition assistance to students who meet identified standards

From those items, the entire group selected the following, in order, as the most important solutions.

Top five solutions to help students make better choices about postsecondary education.

1. A state-mandated

Comments from the group indicated that the proposed solutions would overcome many of the reasons why students sometimes make the wrong decisions about their postsecondary education. For example, having better information would help the students disregard or overcome those outside influences that might be based on wrong facts or irrelevant concerns.

Some members of the group suggested that in this area of the state there is one particularly notable career education curriculum that could be proposed as a model. It was developed by Wayne

Ledbetter at Perry-Lecompton High School.

At the conclusion of this discussion, the representative from the Technical Education Authority pointed out that the “one-stop website for career and postsecondary planning” is in fact a work-in-progress. The group expressed support and gratitude for that initiative.

Cover “word cloud” image designed at <http://www.wordle.net>.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: The VANISHING Students

Appendix 2: Attendance

Appendix 3: Evaluative Feedback

The VANISHING Students

Thirty years ago at Pratt Community College we were lamenting the fact that we didn't have enough grading options to choose from. We had A, B, C, D, and F. What we needed was a V for Vanished.

This discussion is not about student retention; it is about students who vanish, students who go to a college for a degree and then leave before their second year. Why do they leave? Did they choose the wrong college, the wrong kind of college, the wrong major, the wrong town? The losses of these students constitute a significant loss of effort, expense, and investment on the part of the student and on the part of the institution they attended.

The meeting today will give us a chance to think about those students who go from high school to college, to attend full time, and to get a degree. These students constitute the bulk of those students who are reflected in the retention figures quoted below.

These figures are based on data in the National Center for Education Statistics (IPEDS), for the year 2006 or 2007, whichever were the latest reported. The following institutions are included in these averages: Kansas State University, Benedictine College, University of Kansas, Washburn University, and Emporia State University. Community and technical colleges are not included because their programmatic missions represent a different mix of students' goals.

MEAN Retention Rates, first year to second year, first time full time degree-seeking students:
76% (High 80, Low 66)

MEAN Graduation Rates, as a percent of the beginning cohort, first time full time degree-seeking students:
63% (High 74, Low 50)

Total number of students lost before the second year, full time students, just from these five colleges:

2,387 !!!

(This is almost twice as many students as the entire enrollment of Benedictine College)

We will NOT assume that they didn't learn anything, and we cannot assume that they failed out. However, something happened to make them leave the college of their choice at or before the end of their first year there. This represents a significant inefficiency of time, effort, and money. Let's assume that there is some expenditure by each student or some government for each year of college that averages \$5000 just for tuition.

That many full time students, multiplied by \$5000 equates to an investment loss of \$11,935,000.

Where did they go?

WHY did they leave?

Our question today is, why did they go to that college in the first place, why were they not successful in maintaining their progress toward a goal of a bachelor's degree at that college, and what could we do better in order to reduce this loss of time, effort, and money?

Compiled by Betty Stevens, 2009

Attendance

Autem, Karen	Doniphan West HS
Benson, Karen	ACCHS
Carpenter, Janet	Holton (parent)
Cheramy, George	Troy HS
Davis, Rae Ann	Kansas Dept. of Commerce/TEA
Durow, Douglas	Kaw Area Technical School/Washburn
Evans, Briana	Nemaha Valley HS
Foster, Susan	Holton HS (parent)
Gladhart, William	Highland Community College
Herbers, Denise	Highland Community College
Hladky, Joyce	Bryan College
Holaday, Pam	Jackson Co. Development
Hurla, Crystal	St. Marys HS
Isaacs, Christy	Atchison Co. Economic Development
Kaiser, Carlene	Marysville HS
Keller, Andrea	Highland Community College
Krause, Joe	K-State Salina
Kugler, Jina	Wamego HS
Martin, Gerre	Atchison HS
McClelland, Laurie	Onaga HS
McFarland, Rick	Jefferson Co. North HS
Morris, Janet	Wabaunsee HS
NewPoth Cadoret, Susan	Kansas Dept. of Commerce
Niehues, Laurie	B&B HS
Oblander, Tim	Bryan College
Peterson, Timothy	Washburn University/KATS
Rhule, Susan	Holton HS
Robison, Betty	Horton HS
Schmidt, Deborah	Jefferson Co West HS
Schmitz, Lisa	Centralia HS
Shepard, Beth	Rossville HS
Shugart, JoAnn	Atchison HS
Snyder, Jana	Perry Lecompton HS
Sorensen, Gary	Royal Valley HS
Stevens, Betty	Kansas State University Division of Continuing Education
Toedman, Sara	Sabetha HS
Wilcox, Janet	Benedictine College

Note: a few participants represented two or more entities.

Feedback from participants

At the end of the event, each participant was given a 3" x 5" card and was asked to write on it their feedback to the following three questions. They were told that they could include their name if they wished, but they could also remain anonymous. The responses are listed in one continual list, with no division between participants and in no particular order.

Part 1: At least two things that I learned today.

- We're all facing same Challenges
- Challenges in other schools
- Others have same issues or problems that I have
- HS guidance counselors aren't required positions
- A need for separate career counselor
- Other counselors are facing similar road blocks as I
- More counselor collaboration is needed
- The reality of "vanishing" students
- What other schools/counselors are doing to prepare students for post-secondary life (i.e. career courses, Pipeline usage, etc.)
- Counselors wear too many hats
- Need for Career Development for students
- I don't think I learned anything new, but realization of many stakeholders involved.
- Kansas Career Pipeline can be a great tool
- There are a lot of smart people out there who want KS children to be prepared
- There are common problems throughout the schools
- Most counselors are expected to do too much with too little
- Appreciated dedication of counselors to their students
- Several reasons kids 'vanish' and how many are
- Several ideas on what I could change to help where I am
- Other counselors have the same issues as I do
- Not to forget to get employer suggestions for students. What do businesses want?
- I learned that we all do similar things and have similar problems
- The various difficulties I face are not unique
- We are all thinking alike in where the needs are to better prepare our students for college/career lives.
- Vanishing students affects all levels of education
- We (educators/institutions) need to work together to solve the issue
- Staggering stats about 'vanishing students' and the financial cost incurred
- Impact of outside influences on college choices
- People in vocational area have same concerns as I do
- Programs in Kansas education are cyclic
- All counselors are experiencing similar things
- Possible reasons why students get misplaced or leave after 1st years
- Outside perceptions/pressures are taught to battle
- The Career Pipeline is an excellent tool
- Counselors have very similar ideas/understanding of issues

- Work ready certificate training February 9th
- There is a need for more career education in Kansas
- Holton has a great BBQ place
- Other counselors have same frustrations as I do
- Information on commerce
- Other high school counselors experiencing the same influences affecting students' decisions
- KBOR is working on new promotion for technical programs with great possibilities to come.

Part 2: At least two things that I contributed today.

- Provided info on WU when asked
- Recommended that the KBOR degree program inventory be more accessible via the internet
- A perspective from four year college
- Challenged some to look at old problem in new way
- My experience
- Solutions that have work for our school
- Ideas for each of the tasks
- Specific experiences that were shared with the group in trying to answer each question
- Conversation and wrote ideas
- Ideas and programs that we use in our building
- Ways we have overcome some of the road block we've faced
- That student maturity level is important
- Suggested to have principal/counselor day at KSU Salina
- Numerous ideas regarding influences of decisions
- Wording for suggestions on board
- Many discussions were similar at each table
- Clarification of goals
- Brainstorm suggestions to achieve goals
- Possible ideas with why students leave, main things that I see
- How I used the career pipeline information
- Information on what my school is doing
- Ideas
- Planted some seeds for some change at all levels
- Information related to cost/economy
- Gave input from a recruiter's viewpoint
- Established better relationships with counselors
- The need for business people to educate about what they have to offer
- Was a roamer so my real role was to listen and I learned a lot
- Input on why students fail
- Input on how to change things
- Ideas
- Organization to stay on task (the voice of the table!)
- Contributed to the discussion regarding helping students to develop more realistic views as this is crucial
- Career education ideas
- Recommending Wayne Ledbetter
- To all discussion by sharing experiences
- Offered suggestions to each proposed subject

- College daughter's experiences
- Personal experiences
- Helped with clarification/combination of ideas
- Idea about one stop website
- Observations of students/graduates in our school
- I think I need to do more as a school counselor for the cause of post secondary success; I have a role/impact

Part 3: If this event were to be replicated at other places throughout Kansas, in what ways would I change it to make it better?

- Comment would be to add more business input to help understand the needs
- Share information from other states that have successful career education programs (or other solutions)
- Better details prior to reaching the goal of the meeting
- Have outsiders stay at our table and contribute during the first sessions
- Include more community people and let them be more involved not counselor driven
- Could business people be included in these seminars? If it didn't do anything else it would help each one appreciate the others' challenges
- One of ED peoples challenge is to inform businesses of programs to help with training employees. They are out there but we need to spread the word. Maybe we need separate sessions to do this because it may be too much for a single group.
- Follow up: what will be done with our ideas?
- Include others i.e. superintendents
- More business input
- The format was good. I would like to go further with the three goals.
- Let people sit with groups they know. Many of us knew people at the table anyway but we really like to visit with some colleagues we rarely see.
- Continue to do this. Come together again to measure progress and search for more solutions
- Involve administrators
- Involve students
- Replication of event
- Really Like
- Require an outside agency to stay at each table
- More collaboration time
- I think agenda and timeline was appropriate, no changes necessary
- Thought the format was great, enjoy the discussions
- Having a financial aid person to answer general questions
- Focus more on business/employer input
- I think I am luckier than some of my colleagues. I am treated fairly well, maybe have it easier than some.
- Invite at least one legislator to participate, involve more post secondary schools