

Strategic Goal #4: Improve Student Career Preparation

November 19, 2012 L 144

Attending: Co-leader Dawna Perez, members Ashley Bragger, Irene Chalek, Euthemia Gilman, Sue Grolnic, Deb LaValley, Deborah Regan, Glennys Sanchez, Josefina Taveras and guest Colleen Walsh.

We began by discussing the All College Assembly and how Sue Grolnic's Experiential Learning coincided with our team's goal. We discussed our website and how, although we have a Career Services shell site, we need a centralized location with all information on it. This is our possible deliverable in year one. Sue received \$7,000 of funding for her interactive website through the Merrimack Valley Sandbox and has engaged Ning to develop the site and plans to roll it out in the spring with a pilot group. We are not sure if the website entirely meets the needs of our team and there were concerns about continued funding and the lack of immediate career services provided to all students based on the fact that the website requires student, faculty, and employer accounts to be set up.

It was mentioned that we should either tap into our resources at UMASS Lowell or utilize the talented students we have at NECC to help us develop the website. A challenge we are experiencing, however, is that at approximately the same time as our Goal 4 team receiving its charge from the strategic plan, Sue was given a charge in her new position by Academic Affairs. Although our work is clearly related and even overlaps in places, there is not **one** united common vision and goal. We ultimately need to come together so that we are not duplicating work and we also need a concrete plan to benefit students. We appreciate the investment of all team members in successful fulfillment of our goal to improve student career preparation at NECC, and want to assure that any plan of recommendations going forward has the input and support of our team.

Some concerns expressed:

If we in fact combine our team's efforts with Sue's, we can see students being confused by Sue's proposed name of Community Based Learning. We are trying to make career service information more readily accessible to students that being housed in one location under this name could be even more confusing and hard to find than it currently is.

Ning is being used in one department for collaborating and integrating. Although the first year cost was something like \$19.95, then the second year it was \$149, the bill this year for the service is \$249/month; she is debating whether or not it is being utilized by her team enough in order to justify the cost. Will the cost of our interactive website access increase at such a rapid rate?

It is important to have a generic website that employers are used to using, may be a webpage that employers can come in and post jobs and information. With somewhat canned software it may be difficult for logistical reasons, especially with employers. How do we track its outcomes with an outside service?

Team members expressed an interest in looking at how the ning website works in action.

Have we determined that Ning is in fact the best by looking into other vendors? Couldn't an interactive website be potentially frustrating for members outside of the college? For example, employers may forget their password, get frustrated and decide not to post their job with NECC. We want to make the process seamless for employers.

The Steering Committee has asked for business plans to materialize some of our proposed recommendations. Do we have enough details about our current ideas to produce tight business plans?

Logistically how will the ning interactive website work, who will operate it and keep it going in the following years, how are employers going to get involved, where will additional funding go, what's the website going to look like when it is rolled out in the spring (is there a plan for what will be in it?) are our student's ready for this and will they use it?

Sue presented to the group and discussed the following points:

1. It's an interactive website that is used for virtual entrepreneurship projects, students make videos and employers and mentors can connect with these students
2. One of the CUNY schools went to this process because it eliminated the need for management, but Sue thinks that the website will take a certain level of management, perhaps an intern under her supervision
3. The funding she received will cover the cost of buying, building, and managing the website for one year (to be implemented spring semester)
4. Accounts are needed to access the website, students, employers, faculty, and staff will receive one if they want
5. The biggest push back has been from faculty because it takes too much time, that is why Sue had faculty speak at the All College Assembly to show others the ease at which their colleagues are doing experiential learning
6. Since the software will be owned by the college soon, she recommended that we begin to think about a Center for Community Based Learning to house the website and Experiential Learning support
7. Sue said that this social website is an empty vessel and we can do whatever we want with it
8. It costs \$600/year to run and operate and the college does not pay by account, therefore we can have as many as we want
9. The downside is how do we get employers on the website, at some level we need to do some screening

Sue wants people to collectively buy-in to this vision and she wants this website up and running entirely in the fall, how full it will be is the question. She is looking for help in populating the system. She is also looking to propose a budget plan for her Center in February.

When asked about what other capabilities the website has besides student videos, Sue responded blogs, individualized websites, videos, and reflection reports. It can ultimately be whatever we want to be. We can create relationships and monitor and manage. Sue said she knows the overall goal of where she wants to be and that the details in between will come.

It was suggested that maybe it would be best for the Goal Team to go ahead with their plan of improving and continuing to develop NECC's Career Services webpage to include all relevant information. From there, we could link to Sue's page for students to delve deeper into career prep and mentorship through Experiential Learning.

At the end, Ashley updated on her advisory board interviews and Glennys discussed the box of inherited quick tips she received from the prior Career Service Center that need to be updated. Additionally, Ashley discussed the National Career Readiness Certificate and how we plan to develop a business plan for its use at the college. Lastly, Deborah noted that the National Career Development Association is having their conference in Boston this year. This conference may be interesting for some team members to attend depending on the allotted

budget. She also suggested looking at the itinerary once it is posted in order to get an idea about possible people or college we may want to look at.

KEY POINTS/SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE THOUGHT OR DISCUSSION:

- We need to resolve the disconnect between Sue's mission and that of Goal Team 4, how can we work together
- Steering Committee is now looking for us to materialize our recommendations. We are in a good position based on the research we are gathering to begin business plans for these suggestions.
- Make sure that we remain focused on our charge from the college and be careful to be thoughtful in our suggestions and actions to ensure they align completely with our goal

NEXT STEPS

- **Dawna and Ashley** to work on coding of advisory board interviews to pull out trends. These trends will help us in better understanding how to align our career preparation suggestions with what employers see as necessary skills.
- **Deb LaValley** will send out reminder about Whittier lunch visit
- **Leadership** will meet to figure out how Goal 4 and Experiential Learning for Academics works together.
- **Sue** will present the software to the group so that we can understand how it works and whether or not it makes sense for our team to utilize it
- **Ashley** will have Beth Donovan post the minutes to Strategic Plan webpage <http://facstaff.necc.mass.edu/vision-and-planning-initiatives/strategic-planning/strategic-goals-2012-2015/goal-4-improve-student-career-preparation/>
- **Ashley** will begin in late December to work on a business plan for the National Career Readiness Certificate proposal
- **Ashley and Deborah Regan** have divided up best practice research for MA community college websites and will pull the information together into a spreadsheet to utilize in our own website development efforts
- **Ashley and Glennys** will work on revamping some crucial information from the prior career services office in order to have materials to post to the proposed website
- **TEAM**—will be visiting Whittier Technical School December 6th as part of a subgroup to learn about their best practices in career preparation of their students.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Monday, December 17, 1:00 – 2:30 PM in L 144