

Strategic Goal #4: Improve Student Career Preparation

December 6, 2012 Whittier Tech

Attending: Co-leader Chuck Phair, members Ashley Bragger, Deb LaValley, Deborah Regan, Irene Chalek, and Jason Bohanan.

How Whittier handles career preparation of their students:

- Freshman year: students chose a career path and develop a career plan which follows them all four years. Each year of the plan has specific requirements that the students must meet, such as completing an employment application, writing a resume, and understanding how to make experiences relevant on resumes.
- Each student is assigned counselors and begins to develop portfolios and career check lists. There are 4 guidance counselors per cluster. They work to see the students through their program.
- In the beginning they use Career Cruising with the students to help them in their future career decision making process. They also bring the incoming students through each of their programs and what they do, so that students can make informed decisions about which program will make them happy.
- Their students participate in the Skills USA competition, year round at the state and national level.
- Professionalism is dress code and presentation is reinforced. In the Tech portion of the program, students are required to be in uniform appropriate for their job. This professionalism most often carries over to the classroom portion of the program. They do not have many issues with students and their presentation. Students are constantly working with the public so it is always being reinforced to them. For example, if a student comes in with facial piercing and wants to do the culinary program, they will not be allowed. When there are issues, students are sent home to change.
- The main issues they have with professional dress often lies with the faculty, sometimes it is hard to get the faculty to present themselves in a professional way in their dress to send the correct messages to the students.
- If students are late for school they are considered late, not tardy. Bill said that if you are late at your job too many times you will get fired; there is no such thing as detention. Students need to understand this and have it reinforced to them.
- They have heard of the National Career Readiness Certificate
- They currently have 210 co-ops who are juniors and seniors working out in the workforce.
 - Students keep weekly co-op journals
 - Rated on employability skills
 - If students are unhappy with co-op placement, Whittier allows them to change, it's not a problem, but they coach the students on how to do it correctly. The students give two weeks' notice and fulfill their work requirements in those two weeks. This helps to maintain good relations with the employers they work with.
- School week is broken up – half in the classroom and half on the trade. The week starts on Wednesday so there is only one weekend in between the academics and trade.

How does Whittier steward relationships with their external partners?

- They operate under chapter 74 which requires an advisory committee for each technical area. This committee is charged with advising and helping by giving the perspectives from someone in the field.
- Advisory board members are from a broad spectrum of backgrounds and industries. They meet two times per year.

- Whittier hosts annual appreciation dinners with guest speakers. This shows the advisory board members and the greater community partners that they appreciate their involvement with the programs.
- Whittier remains constantly up-to-date on trends in employment
- They heavily rely on their alumni network as a resource.
- When an employer calls for co-ops, they first ask them how many people they are looking for/want to interview. Then they open the opportunity to all students; they do not pick and choose good candidates. This is important because it gives the students interviewing experience.
- They also tap into their own faculty's strengths to help in areas that others have weaknesses such as resume writing.

Next steps

- Ashley to set up a shadow meeting with Bev DeSalvo to learn more in-depth information about their program, particularly their grading on employability, etc. Need to come up with additional things Ashley should look to find out.
- NECC Strategic Goal 4 Team was invited to Whittier's celebration dinner on April 11th to see what they do to show the greater community their appreciation. Need to coordinate.