Rice Lake Student Forum Notes  
September 11, 2008  
Attendance – 112 students  
Admin: Bob Meyer, Craig Fowler, John Will, Kim Olson  
Faculty & Staff: Diane Peterson, Todd Solberg, Hugh Harris, Aleesha Drost  

- Craig Fowler welcomed the students and introduced Bob Meyer.  
- Handouts: Student Survey, Core Trends, Establishing Goals, Strategic Goals/AQIP, and 7th Ranking brochure.  
- Input was given by students in response to the following questions:  
  1. In your view, how can WITC best serve you as a student?  
  2. Why did you choose WITC?  
  3. In the future, what would you like to see WITC do differently?  
  
  a. Top-notch Instruction  
      It took two years for one student to get an associate degree at UW-Barron County. The student is now in the Welding program at WITC and will make more $ and gets better (more) hours than a previous job. Keep providing top-notch instruction.  
  
  b. Increase Shop Areas  
      Larger shop areas for the Welding and Automotive programs are needed. In addition, the shop for the Auto Collision program isn’t big enough for the amount of students. Are there any plans to expand this? Bob Meyer noted that this is part of our facilities planning process.  
  
  c. Branch Campus Expansions  
      A student from Ladysmith asked if we foresee our branch campus expanding to help with the gasoline issue. Enrollment is increasing because of the gas prices and there is an opportunity right in the Ladysmith Branch Campus building to expand there. John Will noted that we are looking at the Mt. Scenario building and aren’t moving forward with expanding in the existing Ladysmith Branch Campus building at this time. Craig Fowler noted that we are restricted and can’t run the full one-year/two-year programs at the branch campuses.  
  
  d. Expansion of the 5th Campus  
      The “5th Campus” is a virtual campus that offers an alternative to face-to-face instruction. One student asked if there are plans to expand the 5th Campus. At the same time “hands-on, minds-on” learning adds unique value for our students/graduates. We need to have a balance point between online and hands-on programming. The “5th Campus” and online instruction is a direction we will strongly pursue to provide greater access for students. The college is very committed to looking at providing more access to students in a more affordable way.  
  
  e. Expansion of Buildings  
      The state budgets are getting tighter; however, are we looking at any expansion of buildings to help get students to stay in the community? Is there any housing for students? Bob Meyer noted we have a facilities plan that we work on a continual basis. The state allows us access to $1 million dollars for 500 square feet per year. The new state budget has a proposal to raise the cap to $1.5 million.  

A student asked if the Masonry program students could be part of potential facility expansions where students actually build the buildings. Craig Fowler thought we might be restricted somewhat. John Will noted that we have actively tried to pursue this.
f. **Housing**
   There is a housing proposal that was approved by the USDA in Washington (Obey's Office). Craig Fowler said the housing (100 beds) would be for WITC and UW-BC students.

 g. **Daycare**
   A future need for WITC or better service to students is some type of facility for daycare for students that are attending this college. Students are unable to afford to go to school full-time because they can't afford to pay for daycare.

 h. **NATEF and other Space Concerns**
   One student was following-up on a petition that was written up last year requesting more space in the Auto Maintenance program (auto lab). There are a total of about 30 students in the program. Craig Fowler noted that this information was given to the dean for that program and the request will come through our facility planning process this year.
   
   *Note: NATEF stands National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation, Inc. They are the accreditation agency for any Automotive Technician program throughout United States.*

 i. **More Instructors**
   There aren't enough instructors to provide enough help for the students. There are 18 students in the Automotive program and only two instructors.

 j. **Learning Disabilities**
   There are a lot of students who come in to the college either as returning adults or out of high school; however, they have learning disabilities that were overlooked or missed. Is there a chance to have on-site testing to help identify learning disabilities that students may have?

 k. **Online Opportunities**
   Does WITC anticipate looking at more online courses and opening up the one-on-one with the students.

   Bob Meyer noted we are planning for more online courses and we will need to do some workshops to help students with online/technology.

 l. **Unbundle Software within Textbooks**
   An Accounting Assistant in his first year noted that when he got one of his books it included a CD. When he arrived to class the teacher told him he only needed the CD. Can students pay for just the CD instead of the entire book if the book is not needed? Bob Meyer said we can look at these bundled items. We are also going to look at some options relative to books for the students. All hands went up when asked about having book issues and the cost of books.

 m. **Financial Aid Disbursement**
   There is an issue for students not getting their financial aid money until the week before school starts. This is not enough time to have money in time to pay for rent, books, etc.

 n. **Job Placement Rate Leveraging for More Funding**
   One student commented on the high job placement rate and asked if the rate is higher than the UW graduation rate. Can we get more funding because of our high placement rate (is it a good selling point for the state for additional funding)? Bob Meyer clarified that we have a 93% placement rate and that it does help with the state. The state is looking at an increased budget and the placement rate helps justify the increase.

 o. **Get involved in Wisconsin Student Government**
   Students were encouraged to get involved in Wisconsin Student Government (WSG) and it
was noted that this group lobbies in Madison. If students have issues or want to get involved, they were asked to please check out the Web site wsgtech.org or talk to Aleesha Drost.

p. Student Signatures Needed to Support the State Budget
The president of WSG requested signatures from WITC students requesting that the Governor approve the state budget.

q. Student Senate (local SSA)
Students were encouraged to get involved with the local Student Senate.

r. WITC President’s Top Priority
Bob Meyer was asked what his major concern or top priority is with the technical colleges. Bob Meyer responded that providing exposure or marketing the value of technical colleges. Our economy needs more two-year graduates than 4-year graduates. Education needs to take place with the general public. We need to do a better job marketing the technical colleges and fantastic career path options that are available and change the image of technical colleges.