Superior Employee Forum Notes
September 24, 2008
Attendance – 35
Admin: Bob Meyer, Diane Vertin, John Will, Kim Olson
Faculty and Staff

- Bob Meyer welcomed the employees.
- Handouts: Employee Survey, Core Trends, Establishing Goals, Strategic Goals/AQIP, and 7th Ranking brochure.

Input was given by employees in response to the following questions:
1. In your view, how can WITC best serve communities/businesses/students?
2. What are some of the barriers to serving WITC communities, businesses, and/or students?
3. In the future, how can we as an institution impact students’ lives?
4. In the future, why would people want to choose to work at WITC?
5. In the future, what might you read or hear that would make you very proud of WITC?

a. Marketing to Parents
   We need to market to the parents of high school students that it isn’t a waste of time to come to WITC. We need to sell parents on our associate degree and one-year programs.

   Bob Meyer noted that there are valuable experiences that students get by being on our campuses. WITC is marketing very well, but we need to do more of it.

b. One-year Diplomas are Valuable
   How do we sell our one-year diploma programs? We need to ensure that they are viewed as highly valued programs.

c. Ask/Respond to Community Requests
   We need to ask the community what they want for training/courses and provide for those requests as fast as we can. Currently we don’t have an effective way to do that, nor do we have the technology to track it. The Lifelong Learning Management System, however, is the technology that would allow us to capture the information we need. We used to capture the student feedback (evaluation) via a scantron form; however, today we would have to track the information manually.

d. Student Barriers
   More and more students are coming to WITC with lots of barriers (financial, emotional, physical, etc.). What direction are we going to address the barriers that our students are coming to us with?

   Bob Meyer noted that national studies indicate a rise in students that have a diagnosable mental illness (this came from one of the WITC forums, however, he hasn’t actually seen data on this yet). This is a major challenge for us. There may be something that will come out of the counselor model review; and if so, Bob Meyer would be supportive.

e. Pilot Low Cost Programs for a Faster Response Time
   Would it be possible to propose to the Wisconsin Technical College System the ability to offer (pilot and/or try out) a low cost program that another technical college has for a faster response. Bob Meyer would be more than happy to try that.
f. **Shadow WITC Classes**
   It was suggested that we bring high school students and adults into our classes, specifically Certified Nursing Assistant and Nursing (to include the labs). Currently we bring high school students in twice a year to show them some of our programs. The Dean of Students stated that we do shadowing in the trades programs. Bob Meyer said it sounds like a great idea and something we can work through with a little bit of safety and planning.

g. **Marketing – Lose the “Vo-Tech” Terminology**
   One person who previously worked with the public educational system noted that there were transition plans with notes to send students to “vo-tech”. It seems that the teachers at senior high are finally starting to realize what the technical college is due to the marketing efforts. We need to help K-12 schools understand the value of the education we offer.

h. **Transferability**
   One employee referenced Bob Meyer saying earlier today that it is the primary role of WITC to be a two-year technical college or a feeder to the UWs. This is a huge barrier with our students (especially with our associate degrees). When students go to Lake Superior College, for example, students know when they are done they can transfer their credits. We need a big push to work together like Minnesota does. We need to make transitions to four-year schools smooth.

   Bob Meyer feels we should be proud that we are a technical college and preserve the “technical college education”. There are all kinds of paths that are possible.

   The same employee above thinks this hurts our enrollment. Bob Meyer noted that transferability has to wrap around our mission. Whatever can transfer should transfer.

i. **Provide Training for Job Skills to Gain Employment**
   There are people 30 years old and older who want to improve their job skills so they can move directly into being employed. We need to build programs that will provide this opportunity.

j. **Student Success Center**
   There is a need in our community relative to having a large amount of students with various special needs (not necessarily learning disabilities). The Student Success Center is not well known – students don’t know that it is available and what it is for. There is a stigma with it. Bob Meyer said that students attending these forums agree with that.

   One employee would like to see the people that come in with nothing, and leave with a GED or acceptance into a program, given attention for that. We have the GED graduation and then we drop it there. There is a big pool of potential students that are ready to go and want to go on for more education. It was also suggested that there be more districtwide dollars put into the success of the Student Success Center.

k. **Nursing Instructors Need Administrative Support for Clinical Site Awareness**
   An ADN Nursing instructor would like to see us partner with the businesses in the area. In Superior we are in a unique situation as we are also the Twin Ports.

   St. Mary's Hospital in Superior is where students were able to get their clinical experience. We are vying with six other medical centers. There needs to be more of an administrative direction and interaction with healthcare providers to ensure quality clinicals. The instructors have tried but need some help. There needs to be an awareness of the clinical experience sites.

   We also have openings for faculty; however, we have considerable turnover because of the competition with the nurse practitioner.
I. Investing in Tomorrow's Workforce
   There needs to be an initiative to encourage business and industry to help develop tomorrow's workforce.

m. Advertising for Specific Programs
   There needs to be funding for advertising specific programs vs. advertising for the “one college”. Sometimes people don’t know what career opportunities exist. Bob Meyer noted that it is one thing to brand the college; however, people need to be aware of the specific opportunities within the college. Bob Meyer asked about the kinds of marketing that would be good. There was nothing specific; however, it is about finding those niche markets and using the most effective tools for each program. A simple brochure that could be handed out to the employers at work and/or brought to the high schools would be good.

Advertising costs are higher in Superior.

n. Flexibility for Campus Cultures
   People don’t get what WITC is and that we have different locations. How can we keep our campus cultures, while as one college still try to utilize our Human Resources and finances effectively? Bob Meyer noted that we need to figure out how to brand things but then allow some flexibility.

o. Keep Our Name Out There – Use Signage
   We need to get our name and face out there. They don’t know what “WITC” is or means. Another person said we are kind of “tucked away” (hidden) in Superior. There is no really good signage. It was suggested that maybe we should partner with UW-Superior and have signage with them.

p. Marketing - Change the “Vo-Tech” Terminology
   Is the community listening? There is a need to change the old “vo-tech” terminology. The marketing that is being done is wonderful.

q. Change our “Second Choice” Image
   For our inservice, we are going out to high schools and business & industry (which is a positive thing). We have to change the high school mentality so that they know we are not a “second choice” college. We are seen as something secondary; however, it is slowly beginning to change.

r. Career Fairs for Parents
   Why don’t we have Career Fairs for parents?

s. Campus Cultures
   Bob Meyer was asked what he found out about the culture within each of the campuses. He said that there are some unique flavors to the campuses that are compelling and should be celebrated, and we don’t want to lose that or throw that out. A theme has surfaced is that there is community support for all of the campuses – WITC is viewed as a “jewel” in the community. That reflects on the college as a whole and also on the people at each campus. Figuring out the balance is the hard part. The community is asking for varying levels of involvement by the campuses. Where we need work, community members want to help. It has been a very positive experience.

Bob was thanked for giving employees an opportunity to have a voice. It was suggested that on occasion (annually) employees be allowed to continue to do these forums to have an opportunity to share, regardless of our positions. Bob Meyer noted that at some point, after we bring a draft to the board, we will bring a draft back to the staff. Everything that is said won’t be addressed, but will be prioritized. It is a continuous improvement process.