

Opportunity Partnership Year End Report 2014

Northwest Workforce Development Council:

The planned revision of the Experience Work Project (EWP) website allowed expanded ease of access to information and application forms resulting in valuable time saving to employers who prefer electronic communication. Additionally the college study hall lab availability provided a means for computer access for those students who did not have a computer available at home, which greatly increased the overall participation as the number of applications and completions increased.

The OPP program in Skagit County serves a broad student demographic of Skagit Valley College's Opportunity Grant program. Some students participating in the program were low-income, high risk, while others were more highly educated and higher income. While there were challenges in working with such a diverse group of students with various levels of need and competency, the program provided valuable work experiences to advance all the students along their career path.

Evaluation of survey data clearly indicated that students who participated in the program were very pleased with the support and opportunities to learn about their desired career field via either a job shadow and/or internship. Relationships with mentors were also positive with most employers that participated reporting that they would be willing to host a job shadow or internship again.

Overcoming challenges:

Mentorship and internship opportunities in the medical industry is a challenge due to the newly adopted regulations requiring a long wait to get FBI background checks even for job shadows. In addition, the capacity of health care mentor sites in this rural region is, at times, overwhelmed with the number of students seeking placements. However with the recent expansion of the Opportunity Grant program into Phlebotomy and Medical Assisting, the team was able to develop new job shadow and internships sites to host additional students.

BEST PRACTICE STRATEGIES – The Successes

- NWC's historic and ongoing relationship to the medical employer sites supports quality placements.
- There was extensive communication between students and coordinator to identify appropriate placements leading to more student and employer satisfaction.
- The regularly scheduled mentorship/job shadow dates well in advance, the introduction of all forms and communications electronically, and staff assistance offering guidance and support throughout the process significantly improved the outcomes. These improvements affected the efficiency and reduced strain on all relationships. Employers quickly provided positive comments on these changes.
- The partnership between the Mount Vernon Chamber Foundation's Experience Work Project, the Northwest Workforce Council and Skagit Valley College continues to increase its effectiveness and efficiencies for student and employer outcomes.

Spokane Area Workforce Development Council:

The program enrolled an initial 40 students, with 38 of them completing their mentorships successfully. By using other funding, the project successfully added an additional 40 students, who also had a lot of success with the model.

Participating employers have embraced mentorship as a way to meet, develop, and hire new employees. Their involvement has been instrumental in helping develop intentional and meaningful program activities. In most cases, these involve weekly meetings with specific activities that will enhance student learning by providing relevance to actual job duties. All of the participating mentors have agreed to be part of the program again next year. The most successful aspect of the program is that companies such as Pearson Packaging, Toyota Scion, Boys & Girls Club and R.W. Fab have hired students directly from this program.

Educational Partners:

Spokane Falls Community College

Spokane Falls instructors that are a part of the Opportunity Grant, have discussed their interest in the program starting this fall. The instructors in the Addiction Studies Program have expressed their interest in job shadows, and group mentorships for all of their students starting this fall.



Spokane Community College

Instructors at the college are very supportive of job shadows and mentorships. The Automotive and T-10 programs have found great success from the job shadows, and look forward to continuing to send their students out again in the fall. There has been great success with the Hydraulic and Pneumatics' program, with the job shadows at Pearson Packaging and Applied industries. All mentors have committed to next year's job shadows and mentorships.

South Central Workforce Development Council:

The Opportunity Partnership Program focus was the recruitment of students at the Yakima Valley Community College (YVC) Foundations course, which is an orientation course for students beginning the Nursing Assistant program. WDC staff were invited to give presentations to the classes at both campuses, Yakima (Fall and Spring Quarters) and Grandview (Spring Quarter). A total of approximately 75 students were introduced to the Mentorship Program. Students were also given the option of registering for the program by e-mail, by post-mail, or in person at a later date if they preferred. Presentations included extensive question and answer periods.

In addition to the students in the Foundations class, we also received, each quarter, a contact list from YVC of all Opportunity Grant recipients who were contacted first by telephone, then by e-mail, then by post-mail to every student in an Allied Health or Allied Health related field. Once again, extensive time was spent making telephone calls, e-mailing, and sending letters to each student on the list.

Throughout the year staff actively pursued employers/partners by visiting local hospitals, clinics, rehabilitation centers, nursing homes, dental clinics and other medical and dental facilities to gain their support and recruit mentors. Staff spoke to administrators and supervisors and left posters and flyers at each location.

Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council

During the Winter Quarter, nine workshops were scheduled and students had a total of four months in which to meet with mentors. Students enrolled in the Spring Quarter were only able to schedule six workshops, but students had 1.5 months in which to meet with mentors. This shortened time frame, especially for Spring students, was a strain in their schedules and some were only able to meet with their mentor once or twice due to schedule conflicts.

As expected, some students had difficulty scheduling time to meet with mentors or attend the weekly workshops.

However at the contract end, two students were employed as a result of their participation in the Opportunity Program. One student from LCC attributed her success to the interview skills from the Mock Interview and Interview Workshop that was organized. The second student was prompted by his mentor to apply for a welding job and after interviewing he was also hired to the position.

Looking at volunteer feedback, some mentors, particularly those in Nursing and Medical Office Administration fields, suggested that students in the mentoring component of the program should be students who are within 1-3 quarters of finishing their degree. As it turned out, a few students were in the very early stages of the program, and having a mentor at such an early time is not as effective as a mentor for those students whose careers will be starting in the near future. Students with 1-3 quarters left are much more serious about applying for jobs and learning from industry experts, while students who are starting in the program are still not quite sure of their career intentions and do not place a lot of value in resume or interview workshops.