RRV: Collaboration agreements assist students, while meeting work force demands

By: Alan Van Ormer, Prairie Business Magazine

Minnesota State University Moorhead and Minnesota State Community and Technical College-Fergus Falls, MN, have set up articulation agreements that would allow accounting and business students to transfer credits from the two-year facility in Fergus Falls to the four-year facility in Moorhead, MN.

To me this is a very huge step in facilitating transfer from a two-year to four-year school,” says Marsha Weber, Dean of Business and Industry at MSU-Moorhead. “It allows more students to transfer without taking more classes.”

In addition, for a number of years the two institutions have had an agreement in place called Business 4.0, a four-year degree program presented by MSUM faculty to students on the Fergus Falls campus where students can complete a bachelor’s degree in business administration on the Fergus Falls campus. The classes are presented either by interactive television or online.

The two institutions are not the only ones in the Red River Valley devising articulation agreements or even collaborating. For example, an agreement between Valley City State University in Valley City, ND and the North Dakota School of Science in Wahpeton, ND, have devised the first agreement in North Dakota that allows credits from a technical specialty in an Associate degree to be applied to a Bachelor’s degree, says Doug Anderson, Director of Marketing and Communications at VCSU.

The collaboration is in the form of an articulation agreement that allows for transfer of credits from the Associate in Applied Science degree in Technical Studies – Journeyworker Track at NDSCS to the Bachelor of Science degree in Career and Technical Education from VCSU.

As for the MSUM and M-State agreement, Weber says this is an important step because many students who couldn’t start at a two-year school wouldn’t go to college at all. “Some students aren’t ready for a four-year school,” she states. “This allows students to attain professional degrees.”

A major reason for the agreement between the two schools is the demand for accounting employees. “There is more emphasis on transparency and good accounting practices,” Weber states. “This will help supply the region with well-trained and well-informed employees. The region has always had a large
pool of qualified people. The smaller towns will benefit as well because they will be fortunate to keep these people at home.”

As for the NDSCS-VCSU program, credits from the NDSCS program transfer through VCSU's Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) program, which allows adult learners to earn college credit for work experience. The credits can then be used to meet the technical specialty requirements of VCSU's B.S. CTE degree. These can include experiences gained in apprenticeship programs, which can involve years of experience working in technical fields.

“Through this partnership, adult learners can substantially reduce the time and cost required to earn a Bachelor's degree by earning credit for their work experiences as well as their study at the Associate degree level,” Anderson explains. “This is important because, like many parts of the country, the North Dakota workforce is getting older, so providing educational opportunities specifically for adult learners are an effective way to increase the capability of the state’s workforce.”

Anderson adds that collaborations like this are good for the state because they provide a convenient and cost-effective way for workers to meet the changing job requirements of employers.

“This allows new sectors of the economy to grow while leveraging existing intellectual capital,” he says.

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