



WE'RE STILL LOOKING FOR NEW IDEAS ABOUT NONTRADITIONAL

The more options students experience, the better chance they have of finding successful and rewarding careers. That's why it's important that the traditionally gender-specific CTE courses are welcoming to both female and male students.

With that goal in mind, we have been visiting schools and looking for fresh ideas about attracting and retaining nontraditional students. We would love to continue this work, visit more schools, and talk to more teachers. If you are interested in sharing what you have done, please let us know.

GET HELP FINDING DATA

It can be difficult to find the data you need for program planning, grant proposals, or other projects. Fortunately, you don't have to.

Virginia CTE professionals can contact Trailblazers any time for help with data needs. Don't waste time looking for information that we can help you find in five minutes. **Just call, 434-982-5582.**

VACTEA 2011 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The annual VACTEA meeting will be in Fredericksburg this year on October 5-7. I will be there to talk about employer partnerships, both in a regular session and at the advisory board meeting.

COMPLETER FOLLOW-UP

The 2011 Follow-up of 2010 CTE completers has been concluded. Virginia exceeded the 75 percent response rate target, as did all but 12 school divisions or regional technical centers. **CONGRATULATIONS!** Survey results will be available in the November.

TRAILBLAZERS BLOG

There is more to say about *Trailblazers'* topics than will fit in our newsletter, so we're writing a blog now. Take a look: <http://ctetrailblazers.blogspot.com/>

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Marketing, Advertising, And Word-of-Mouth Recruit Males Students To Health Programs

This year, Trailblazers has been visiting schools with Career and Technical Education programs that are successful at recruiting and retaining nontraditional students. This month's article describes how one teacher has gone about recruiting male students into her health and medical sciences course. Across the state, our health and medical sciences courses are predominantly female, though in the world of employment the traditionally female allied health careers are becoming more diverse and more welcoming to men. These careers provide great opportunities for male as well as female students, since health care is one of the few industries that has continued to grow during this tough economy.

The Story

Sheila Napala teaches the Physical Therapy/Occupational Therapy program at the Arlington Career Center. Unlike most of the health sciences programs in career and technical education, her class consistently enrolls a high percentage of male students. Given the good job prospects in health care, it's important to find out how to encourage more young men to consider this field, so it seemed a good idea to talk to Sheila about how she does it.

Her answer — marketing. In the 1990s, the name of the course was changed to Physical Therapy/Sports Medicine when Sheila completed a second degree in Health Fitness Management, a program that included athletic training. She says, "I think this name change is what attracted a lot of the males. They see 'sports medicine;' they know that a lot of athletes get injured and think, 'I want to be able to take care of them.' I saw a marked increase of males entering into the program when it was given this name. I get a fair number of athletes, and they're good students. I think the name is what's catching them."

Although the connection with sports attracts male students to the class, it's not necessarily sports medicine that holds their interest or becomes their career goal. "With this class as a background, students can go on into athletic training, exercise physiology, physical therapy, massage therapy. But now the boys are tending to go towards physical therapy while I thought they would go more toward athletic training. And the girls are going into athletic training; I thought it would have been vice versa."

Giving the course an alluring brand name is a great first start, but there is more to effective marketing than just a name. Sheila's best opportunity to attract new students is through the tours that are offered to middle schoolers.

During these tours, Sheila has a five or ten minute window to present something exciting and memorable, something that will make both boys and girls remember her class and want to come back. She always has an eye-catching Powerpoint, a display board, a handout, and a classroom laid out and decorated like a modern, professional, medical facility. But the key is to have an interesting demonstration. Sheila discovered her favorite demonstration by accident. One year, she had been teaching students how to use a paraffin wax treatment to help increase circulation after hand surgery and just happened to have the equipment on hand when the middle school tour came through. The demonstration of this equipment was so popular that now she uses it all the time.

I'll say, "Let's pretend you are a famous guitarist and you were rushing to the limo, and your driver shut the door on your hand and you had to have emergency surgery. To get back to your career, you have increase your range of motion and reduce the scar tissue and that's what the paraffin wax treatment is for." And so I'll just dip the kids' hand in the wax. And they remember it. Later on when I ask students how they found out about the class, a lot of them will say, "Oh I was in middle school and I took a tour of the Career Center, and I will never forget that demonstration."

Although correct branding through the course name and advertising through the middle school tours are important, Sheila believes that word-of-mouth is really what drives the males, and the young women too, to enroll in her class. Of course, you only achieve word of mouth success when you have a product that the customer really likes and wants to recommend. Students and parents know that there are many good career opportunities in health sciences, and this gives Sheila an advantage in building a reputation for this course. But high school students are looking for the short term reward of a program that is interesting and exciting as well as the long term reward of a program that leads to a secure future.

I think it is the wording of the program name that attracts the males in the beginning. But once they get in, they learn that physical therapists have to do a lot of physical work and they like that. They like the assessment of physical injuries and learning how to evaluate and treat them. Pretty soon they discover, "I'm not bad at this. Actually, I'm really good at it. I'm interested." Sheila reports, I've had a fair number of parents, especially mothers, say to me, "You know, my son had no direction. He wasn't sure." But they talked to him and said this might be a good class for you; and the boys just took off. They know what they want to do and then they start to study.

Sheila promotes learning and keeps her course entertaining by capitalizing on students' competitive instincts, a technique that both genders seem to respond to: "I don't differentiate between the genders; they are both very competitive, I find. I play games all the time. We play jeopardy review games, and I use buzzers and everything. What a kid would do for a candy bar; it's amazing."

Memorizing anatomy is essential for sports medicine/physical therapy students, but it is also very challenging, and like all memorization tasks, potentially very boring. For their exam on the ankle, for example, students have to be able to identify and palpate 24 anatomical structures on four aspects of the ankle, the anterior, posterior, medial and lateral. Sheila creates flash cards for each of the anatomical structures and then divides students into teams to have them compete to see how quickly they can sort the flash cards. Sometimes she even has students play flash card games as a kind of relay race.

I put cards with the four aspects, anterior, posterior, medial and lateral up at the front of the room. The teams sit at the back. I give them a card with an anatomical structure on it, and they have to run to the front and put it in the right category and then the next person runs up. They have to make sure they know the anatomy so they won't let their team members down. I'll time them to see which team can do it the fastest. They really get into that.

Of course not every student who comes into this program is already excited about the prospect of a medical career and eager to learn. But Sheila thinks that the competitive structure of her class helps all students to improve: "I notice that if kids aren't motivated, the other students don't like that." The highly motivated students push the less motivated to do better for the sake of the team.

She also thinks that the heavy emphasis on practical skills, which are crucial in this field, provides an opportunity for students of many levels to succeed. A broad range of students take this class. It includes English language learners, students with learning disabilities, as well as those who are gifted and talented. Sheila has to teach to all their different learning styles.

Thirty percent of the course grade comes from her one-on-one evaluation of students' practical work, on topics ranging from taking vital signs to wound care to correctly taping knees and ankles.

Those students who are not good at written exams can bring their grade up through the practical. You can have an A+ student, and they're great on paper, but you get them on the practical and they get nervous and fumble fingers. If you're here and maybe you're a C student, you can get a B if you are at the top on practical skills. I think it encourages students. It is hard, but if you work hard, you can get a better grade than if you were taking biology at your home school where it's all just sitting in class without any hands on work. I think that's why a lot of students like to take my class. They see that it's fun and they learn a lot.

Even during the great recession that we have experienced, we have continued to see career opportunities in health care. It is especially important therefore, that Career and Technical Education programs for these fields attract students of both genders. Young men as well as young women need the chance to try out this field and see if it is for them. It is exciting to

see that good marketing can begin to attract male students to enroll in Career and Technical Education's health and medical sciences programs.

Finding And Keeping Employer Partners

California's Career Academy Support Network [<http://casn.berkeley.edu/>] provides the state's network of over 400 Career Academies with extensive resources, many of which focus on forming and maintaining employer partnerships. In fact, employer partnership is deemed so important in California that the academies have been called collectively, Partnership Academies.

Resources include dozens of editable Word documents to simplify almost every sort of interaction that an academy might have with employers, students, or parents. Most of these documents can be used, with just a little bit of editing, by any high school, not just career academies, and CASN specifically encourages that they be widely shared, not just kept for schools and academies in California. They include documents such as a sample *Thank You Letter to Job Forum Panelists*, a *Student Intern Assessment Form*, and brief *Guidelines for Business/Industry Partners* that don't typically work with teenagers.

The website also includes a number of guidebooks on partnerships, internships, and mentorships. The *Partnership Guide for Career Academies* has good advice for every school looking to become more closely involved with employer partners, including 15 detailed steps to building a large partner base, and a checklist of guidelines for sustaining partnerships:

Nine Principles for Sustaining Partner Support in a Career Academy

Individualize. Involve them in the way most appropriate for the particular employer. There are lots of roles employees can play: advisory board members, speakers, field trip hosts, mentors, internship super-

visors, teacher externship coordinators, curriculum advisors, liaisons to other employers. Match your needs with their resources.

Establish communication channels. Identify specific points of contact for the employer and high school so there is an established channel of communication to plan activities and work out problems. Employers often become frustrated that they can't find anyone to talk to at a high school. Personal relationships help. So does email.

Value their time. Where meetings are involved, have an agenda and time limit and stick to them. Identify needed actions and next steps. Employers often complain about the lack of focus and time urgency in school meetings.

Give them jobs. They are task-oriented people. Their strongest motivator is the sense they are contributing. Make the jobs appropriate to their skills and time availability, but expect them to do things for the academy.

Treat them as colleagues. Teachers are sometimes awed by business people, or contrastingly, quietly disdainful of them. They're just people, working in a different industry. Ask them questions. Learn from their expertise and share yours. Work with them as fellow professionals.

Expose them to students. Many industry volunteers are people who love kids and may even have wanted to be a teacher (or perhaps were in the past). Their primary motivation is often to help kids. Structure activities so they have contact with kids.

Expect change. Be adaptable. Employers experience staff turnovers and industry adjustments, sometimes at an alarming rate. The people you work with may leave; the company's resources may change. Nothing is permanent. But often you can make adjustments and keep partnerships alive.

Anticipate trends. Read about developments in your career field, learn what jobs are growing and shrink-

ing. Stay ahead of the curve. This helps you to locate new employers to work with and adapt to changes in current ones.

Say thanks. There are many ways to do this: thank-you notes (especially from students), food, recognition at academy events, certificates, social events, and publicity for the company.

College Achievement Vs. Expectations

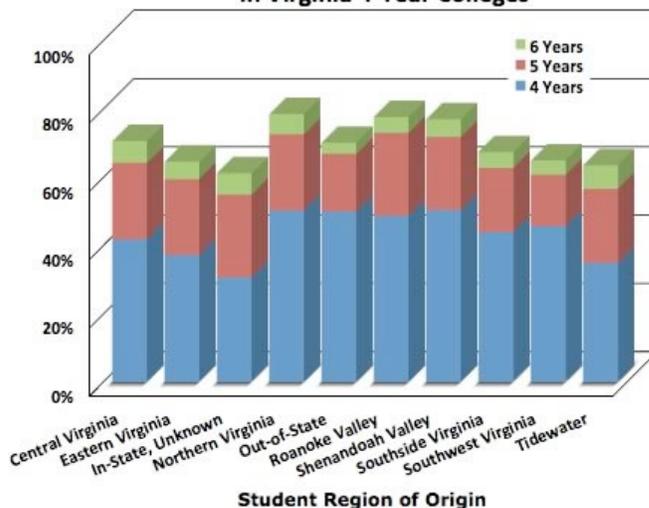
People with a bachelor's degree or more earn more and have lower unemployment rates than people with other degrees. Educators' efforts to teach students about the value of staying in school and aiming for this higher degree have paid off. In 2010 almost 84% of high school seniors said that they will definitely or probably graduate from a four year college, according to *Monitoring the Future*, a survey project run by the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center. Back in 1980, fewer than 60% of seniors expected to accomplish that goal.

Although students have lofty educational goals, the majority do not manage to obtain the degree they hope for. The U.S. Census Bureau's annual Current Population Survey, which tracks educational attainment, shows that over the last decade, the percentage of people age 25-29 with a bachelor's degree has risen slowly from 27 to 32 percent. Thus even though 80 percent of seniors in 1996 expected to earn a bachelor's degree, only about 30 percent of those 25-29 years of age actually had this degree in the mid-2000s.

Not all of the students who hope to earn a degree manage to enroll in college, and not all of those who enroll manage to graduate. The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, publishes the graduation rates for students entering Virginia's 4-year and 2-year colleges. Fewer than 50 percent of students from any region in Virginia graduate in four years and fewer than 80 percent graduate within six years. Students from Northern Virginia, Roanoke Valley, and Shenandoah Valley make the fastest progress

through Virginia's four year colleges. Students from Eastern Virginia, Southwest Virginia and Tidewater make the slowest progress.

Graduation Rates for 2003 Freshman Cohort in Virginia 4-Year Colleges

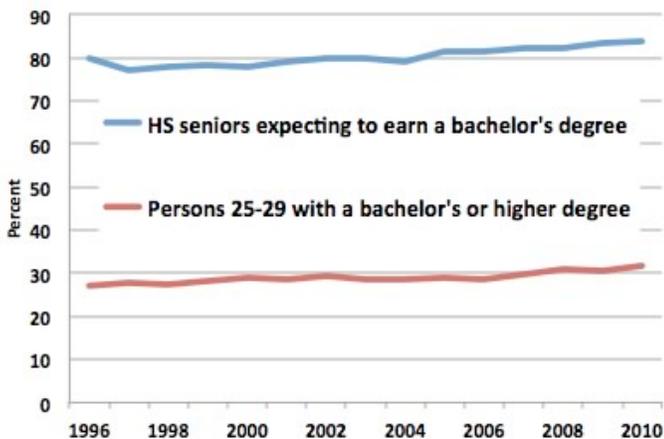


Source: SCHEV Research & Statistics

help to increase college graduation rates rather than lower them. Financial problems are the major barrier to completing college; therefore, giving students the qualifications they need to earn more money while they study may actually help students remain in college until they earn a degree.

College Expectations Exceed Achievement

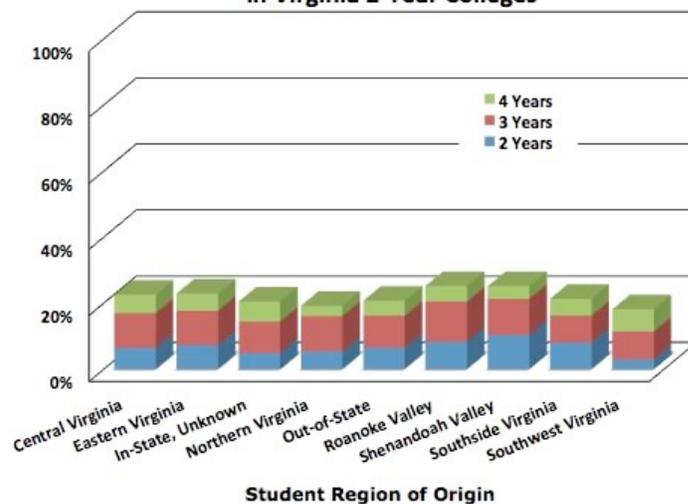
Percent of HS seniors expecting to earn a degree and percent of those 25-29 who have one



Source: *Monitoring the Future* and *USCB Current Population Survey*

Graduation rates from community college are even slower. This is to be expected, since these colleges target mature and low-income students — both of whom typically have family and financial responsibilities that slow educational progress. Only about 6-8 percent of Virginia students who enter 2-year and community colleges graduate within 2 years and only about 20 percent graduate within 4 years. Roanoke and Shenandoah Valley students make the fastest progress while those from Northern and Southwest Virginia make the slowest progress.

Graduation Rates for 2006 Freshman Cohort in Virginia 2-Year Colleges



Source: SCHEV Research & Statistics

The disconnect between students' educational expectations and their actual achievement underscores the importance of high school programs that prepare students for both careers and college. Students should have academic aspirations, but they also need an understanding of and preparation for the workplace, since the majority will enter the workforce before they complete a degree -- if indeed they ever do. And in fact, if the new Pew Report, *One Degree of Separation*, (we wrote about this report August) is correct, improving career preparation may actually