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/

NONTRADITIONAL BEST PRACTICE

So far this spring we have visited four different schools to talk about nontraditional student enrollment. We have seen urban, rural and suburban schools with different kinds of programs and activities. If you would be interested in talking to us about one of your courses or if you have advice to offer others, please get in touch with us. We would love to talk to you.

COMPLETER FOLLOW-UP

The 2011 Follow-up of 2010 CTE completers is underway. Passwords to access the system were uploaded into the SSWS dropbox but these have now expired. Administrators who have not yet collected their passwords should contact us at CTEcompleters@virginia.edu

EMPLOYMENT NEEDS DATA

Occupational employment projections for 2008-18 are available for Virginia's LWIAs from the Virginia Employment Commission. Administrators can use these data to prepare new courses, complete local plans, & prepare plans of study. Excel files are available on the Trailblazers website.

We can help you use the projections for program planning. Call or email us: Trailblazers @virginia.edu 434-982-5582

WORKPLACE READINESS SKILLS

CTE has a new list of 21 workplace readiness skills that must be taught in every course. The resources you need to implement this change in the curriculum are online at Virginia's CTE Resource Center website. To view these, click on Verso, then a program area, then a specific course. You will see the skills list & instructional resources for each skill.

Follow-up Survey Update

The completer follow up survey has been underway for about six weeks now, so we thought we would share some success stories:

- *One school has already surveyed 100% of its completers. While it's a small school, we wanted to extend congratulations for successfully completing this big project so quickly and thoroughly.*
- *Another school with over 100 completers to survey has already reached 90%. Excellent work.*
- *Fifty five out of the 139 Divisions and regional technical centers have entered data about at least some of their students. The remaining 84 divisions have not yet begun the data entry process, but they may have begun the survey process (we can't tell).*

Any administrators who have not yet downloaded their passwords to the survey website from the VDOE drop box should get in touch with us at CTEcompleters@virginia.edu. The passwords have expired but can be uploaded again.

Building And Sustaining Employer Partnerships

A few weeks ago the Charlottesville Regional Chamber Business Academy, a partnership effort of the Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce and Piedmont Virginia Community College held a workshop on *Creating Nonprofit - Business Partnerships that Work*. Although it focused on helping nonprofits better engage with businesses to raise funds, it also included information that can help CTE increase business involvement with our programs as well as raise some of the funds that we need to sustain them.

In preparation for the seminar, the presenter, experienced fundraiser Cynthia Hurst of *Butterflies in Progress*, interviewed executives at five local businesses about why they have been involved with nonprofits, what went well in those relationships, and what did not go well.

What is your company's overall philosophy regarding partnerships with nonprofits?
In answering the question, employers made several points. They like to be involved in local activities and give back to the community where they and their employees live. They like to work with nonprofits that are sustainable and have a clear positive impact on the community. And they also look for relationships that will have benefits for their companies.

- *We like giving back. This is our community.*
- *We want to work with groups that can help with sales of our products.*
- *We want to have a big impact in the areas we serve.*

CTE has an edge here. All of our programs are well-established, have a long history of serving the community well, and have the potential to make a difference for the employers with whom we engage by improving their employee pool.

How do you determine if a partnership is a good fit for your company?
Employers had a range of answers to this question. Some look for partnerships that their own employees recommend. Some look for partners that are directly related to their industry or will benefit their business. A number of the employers were looking for partnership experi-

Employer Partnerships (continued)

ences that would be educational for their employees by providing opportunities for their growth and career development.

- *We look for a connection of some sort, for example an employee is a member of their board.*
- *We look for partnerships that provide marketing opportunities.*
- *We want partnerships that are education-oriented.*

What do you hope to gain with such a partnership?

A successful partnership has to be a genuine two-way relationship; each partner needs to gain something valuable. Therefore, it is important to think carefully about what employers hope to gain from relationships with schools and how CTE professionals can help to accomplish this. Here are some of the things employers are looking for:

- *A way to feel good about solving a problem in the community;*
- *Volunteer opportunities for our employees;*
- *Name recognition for our company;*
- *Community good will;*
- *New customers;*
- *Thanks.*

What are some pet peeves about partnerships?

Businesses have trouble working with organizations that are disorganized or don't follow through on commitments. They like to be able to plan activities well ahead of time. They like to have a clear point of contact and to know who is responsible for doing what. They dislike*:*

- *Different people approaching various members of our staff at different times;*
- *Boards that are disorganized or lose track of the mission;*
- *Partners that don't follow through -- for example, not responding to a follow-up questionnaire;*
- *Partners that don't remember to send us the tax letter with the amount that we gave;*
- *Partners that aren't clear about what is needed, what is involved, and when.*

Businesses want to be appreciated. They don't want to have their donations or their service taken for granted. They dislike it when partners:

- *Become nasty when they don't receive what they request;*
- *Serve a competitor's products at an event for which we are a major sponsor;*

- *Do not consider doing business with us;*
- *Don't thank us.*

Schools can thank employers publicly for their service and ensure that parents and the community know how businesses are supporting their children's education. They can also take the time to thank employers privately and directly and to encourage students to do so too.

Do you wish to share anything else?

Employers want to be involved with projects that will make a difference and have an impact on their communities. You can help them do that. Share your enthusiasm with potential partners; when they feel your energy and commitment to education, they too can be inspired. And then share your thanks. A little appreciation goes a long way, a lot goes farther.

- *Who do you want to work with? People who care, give back, and have a heart.*
- *We really liked when we were thanked with calls and noted from a number of people involved with the organization, from staff, alums, and people who were helped.*

Students Grade Schools

A new survey that asks 18-24 year olds to rate their high school's performance in preparing them for work shows that the majority were not satisfied with the way that high school helps them choose and prepare for a career. Unfortunately, this survey does not differentiate CTE students from others, so we don't know whether our students would have given their high schools a higher rating.

Source: AP-Viacom Survey of Youth on Education