

**Community College of Philadelphia
Leadership Institute
2005-2006**

Project Final Reports

1. Project Title & Team Members' Names.

Project Title: Sustained Co-Curricular Programming at West Regional Center (WERC)

Team Members Names: Diane Brisbon, Lori Johnson, Bridget Scott, Matthew Shupp



2. An overview of the project proposal/goals.

Summary of Problem or Challenge to be Addressed by the Project:

While the main campus has many extracurricular activities to enhance students' college experience, it's much harder to find these opportunities at Community College of Philadelphia's three regional centers. Since many students at these centers may never need to attend a class at the main campus, faculty and staff need to be diligent in providing adequate programming opportunities—similar in structure and nature to that which takes place on main campus—at the regional centers. With the West Regional Center (WERC) being the smallest campus, students often feel they do not receive the same opportunities as students whom attend class at the main campus. We understand that there will never be the same level of activities at the WERC as there are at the main campus, but feel that there is a possibility of more than what is currently being offered.

Purpose of Project:

The purpose of our project is to offer more student centered activities at the WERC.

Overview of the Project:

Many of our students enter college at various stages of life. While this enriches the diversity of the student population, students are often at a disadvantage due to a general lack of information about the college process (from admission to program selection).

The overall project will consist of providing a week-long series of programs to enhance the students' overall experience at the WERC. A broad overview is as follows:

- ~ to create and distribute questionnaires to determine the level of interest for this event and possible programs that would interest students;
- ~ to meet with WERC Director and team members; and
- ~ to explore opportunities for a work-study student position at WERC to be a Student Activities Assistant

Possible Program Ideas Included the following:

- ~ Financial Planning Workshops (AES/PHEAA, Citizens Bank, etc...) – all free and could be paired with financial aid representatives to answer questions specific to CCP;

- ~ MyCCP Training sessions (how to use it, email, etc...);
- ~ Career Services Presentations (Resume, Interviewing, etc...);
- ~ Film Series;
- ~ Food: Ice Cream Socials, Make Your Own Sundaes, wings, etc...;
- ~ Passive Education: Have Student Government, Phi Theta Kappa, and other clubs and organizations (campus and community) have an involvement day with specific info, giveaways, passive education, etc...;
- ~ African-American Men's Book Club Meeting at WERC;
- ~ Study Abroad Presentations

Final Program Partners Included the following:

- ~ WERC
- ~ Office of Student Life
- ~ Campaign for Working Families
- ~ Women's Center
- ~ Health & Wellness Center
- ~ Sodexo
- ~ Barnes and Noble Bookstore
- ~ Student Government Association
- ~ Automotive Technologies
- ~ Office of Financial Aid
- ~ Leadership Institute
- ~ Counseling Center
- ~ Academic Computing

3. A summary of research undertaken in the completion of the project.

Research Findings:

According to the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition (2005), 65.2% of all schools surveyed indicate they offer extended and on-going orientation programs. Of these programs, nearly 80% offer academic seminars on various topics paired with a social activity. In response to a survey distributed in 2003, students identified the development of academic and social skills as some of the most important skills acquired from these comprehensive programs.

Community College of Philadelphia (CCP) is an urban community college located in center-city Philadelphia. CCP also has three regional centers in the surrounding areas. Servicing more than 40,000 a year, Community College of Philadelphia, according to its website (2005), is an open-admission, associate-degree-granting institution which provides access to higher education for all who may benefit. Its programs of study in the liberal arts and sciences, career technologies, and basic academic skills provide a coherent foundation for college transfer, employment, and life-long learning. The College serves Philadelphia by preparing its students to be informed and concerned citizens, active participants in the cultural life of the city, and enabled to meet the changing needs of business, industry and the professions. To help address broad economic, cultural and political concerns in the city and beyond, the College draws together students from a wide range of ages and backgrounds and seeks to provide the programs and support they need to achieve their goals. Community College of Philadelphia seeks to create a caring environment which is intellectually and culturally dynamic and encourages all students to achieve:

- Greater insight into their strengths, needs, and aspirations, and greater appreciation of their own cultural background and experience;
- Increased awareness and appreciation of a diverse world where all are interdependent;
- Heightened curiosity and active interest in intellectual questions and social issues;

- Improved ability to pursue paths of inquiry, to interpret and evaluate what is discovered, and to express reactions effectively;
- Self-fulfillment based on service to others, preparation for future work and study, and enjoyment of present challenges and accomplishments.

As part of CCP's Strategic Plan (2004-2009), "the College will strengthen its ability to identify and set priorities for an effective response to the changing educational needs of its communities" (p. 41). The changing educational needs of students are not only reflected in classroom learning, but outside activities as well.

College and university campuses are the foundation on which students can grow and connect to reach his or her fullest ability, both in and outside of the classroom setting. The *Wingspread Group* of 1993 supported this claim by stating that professionals in higher education must make student learning a priority. Likewise, *The Student Learning Imperative* (American College Personnel Association, 1994) challenged professionals to reaffirm their commitment to student learning and development. Coming to college has become an organized adventure, with individuals strategically placed in students' ways as to direct and guide their learning. Students may learn that the goal is to not only earn a degree, but to also take the opportunity and fully explore the possibilities that they have at Community College of Philadelphia.

According to George D. Kuh in the *Journal of College Student Development* (1996), "Students must be active, rather than passive, participants in the process and assume a large measure of responsibility for their own learning" (p. 145). Likewise, according to the *Student Personnel Point of View* (1949), "the student is thought of as a responsible participant in his or her own development and not as a passive recipient" (p. 22). These statements indicate that students need to take responsibility for gaining knowledge inside, as well as outside, the classroom setting. It is essential for students to take hold of these opportunities and learn as much as they can from them.

Many students experience two separate, distinct aspects of the college experience. They experience traditional academic learning, which consists of classrooms, books, professors, tests, papers, and homework. They also experience the non-academic side, which often consists of residential living, club-sports, student activities, and social engagements. However, as student affairs professionals, faculty, and staff, it is our obligation to unite the two. What was once believed to be separate, distinct entities now need to be bound together so as to appear whole and continuous (Kuh, 1996). This represents Kuh's aspect of *seamless learning*. In his estimation, one experience is not more important than the other. Having both fall on an even plane suggests students will have the most well-rounded experience. The two pieces of the puzzle must be put together.

According to the *Student Personnel Point of View* (1937), "it is the obligation of educational institutions to consider the student as a whole" (p. 39). Institutions have a primary responsibility to influence a student emotionally, socially, academically, personally, and spiritually. This can be accomplished through proactive, intentional collaboration by academia coming into non-traditional academic settings to teach class material. Or, in our particular case, interacting with our students in activities outside of the classroom setting. Without the cooperation of all university departments, the student will not be able to reach his or her fullest potential.

This research supports a need for campus programming that enhances classroom learning. It is for this reason that we are proposing a week-long programming series at West Regional Center.

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4. An outline of steps taken to complete the project.

Timeline:

- **December 2005**
 - Group Meeting – Research topic and brainstorm strategies
 - Contact Lillian Smith, Site Administrator of WERC, to alert her to our project proposal/plans and to get her feedback on the idea. Meeting held 12/8
- **January 2006**
 - Start putting together a survey to ask students what they might be interested in, etc...
 - Obtain days and times that students feel are best to hold programs
 - Meet with Mentor, Claudette Dia-Taylor
 - Meet with Student Clubs and Organizations
 - Select activities to take place at WERC
 - Contact participants to check on availability
- **February- March 2005**
 - Finalize calendar—theme (Go West!)
 - Work on logistics
 - Assign tasks to Leadership Institute group
- **April 2005**
 - Finalize details
 - Present programs at WERC

5. For short-term projects, if now completed, an overview of how they turned out.

Overview

One unforeseen positive result from our efforts was the creation of a student list serve of interested students that wanted to participate and gain experience in program planning. This list is being maintained to keep students interested in staying involved and speaks to a possibly way to sustain the programs from year to year.

Initial Outcome/Assessment

Out of the many departments that participated in our *Go West!* activities, please note below some of the initial reactions expressed by our participants:

“Regional centers play a vital role in raising student enrollment, diversifying the institution, and extending college visibility throughout the

Philadelphia region. Therefore, it is a necessity that students at regional centers have access to the same services provided at main campus.”

- Tarsha Scovens, Career Services Center

“This was my first visit to the WERC. I think it's a nice place that is very under utilized and understaffed. I was surprised at the empty rooms full of computers. We had a good experience, however. Students and employees came to our “booth,” took information, and showed a great deal of interest. I would like to go back again.”

- Ollie Johnson, Athletics

"Going to the Regional Centers is always a welcoming experience. The students, staff, and faculty welcome the added services offered. This provides yet another forum to offer the students services and activities parallel to the main campus."

- Claire A. Washington, CRNP

“Thanks for allowing me to participate in the Go West! activities this week. Conducting a scholarship workshop at the West Regional Center was a great opportunity to reach students and inform them of the 70+ scholarship opportunities the College offers, and the process of applying for them. I look forward to visiting again.”

- Patti Savoni, Scholarship Manager

6. For long-term projects, an outline of next steps and long-term goals.

Our hope is that our project will be successful enough to be sustained year after year. Sharing the success with *Transcripts, the Vanguard*, and announcements on the College’s website are all good mediums. Other ways our project can achieve a level of sustainability:

- Survey student interests during scheduled orientations
- Each year, select at least (2) WERC student representatives who will consult regularly with SGA and other student leadership groups
- Request different organizations schedule 1-2 of their meetings at WERC
- Maintain a student helper listserv
- Solicit support of WERC administration and faculty

7. An overview of how the project has been or may be institutionalized within the College for continuity.

A unique challenge that our project faces is that it is quite fluid. In other words, the needs and programs will change as our student dynamic changes from year to year. It would be hard to establish an office for this project to be housed given the sheer nature of what we found: that all offices, all departments across campus MUST make it a priority to service our students at the three regional centers.

8. Assessment results or plans for assessment.

Evaluation plan for the project:

Once the activities ran at the WERC, we evaluated the outcome by looking at the following:

- Attendance
- Interest level
- Student involvement
- Faculty involvement
- Cost
- Student benefits

Using surveys to obtain responses on the overall assessment of the activity and ideas for future activities will help continue to make future events successful.

Overall, the activities were well attended. The big events brought anywhere from 50-60 students in. The students were generally interested in what was being presented and because we used other departments at

the college the cost was non-existent or very minimal. For the most part, faculty were willing to help by letting the students know about activities and coming out to support them.

The students all benefited by being able to attend events at the WERC where they attend their classes. They were able to share in some of the same activities offered at main campus at their own site. Having more events like this at WERC will show the students that the college cares about the regional centers and is listening to what is important to them.

9. An explanation of how the project relates to this year's theme of "Fostering Student Engagement and Persistence."

The benefits to students and the College community are numerous and rooted in student retention. As our literature review suggested, extracurricular opportunities that enhance in-class learning assist in the overall retention of students and their success at College. By providing these opportunities at the WERC, we are assisting in the retention effort put forth by the entire College community at CCP.

Every student demands our attention regardless of where they are located. We need to be intentional in how, when, and where we program for students. We've learned it "takes a whole village." In other words, we've learned a campus-wide commitment is necessary for the success and persistence of our students.

10. A summary (from each individual) of what you learned by doing the project and how it impacted you as a leader.

Diane Brisbon's summary:

I learned that program planning requires many steps from the initial meeting to the final event. Even the best ideas are difficult to execute when there are budgetary constraints to consider.

Most importantly, I have learned that a team is made up of leaders. All of who possess different strengths and abilities. Team members must be willing to exchange roles and become followers when needed. It is a relationship of interdependence.

Bridget Scott's summary:

I have known for some time that working as a team to produce a quality product requires one to be open to new ideas, share ideas, and to listen effectively. I have learned from my experience with my team that sometimes it takes a little research before delving into what is proposed. The insight of the history of WERC, all the regional centers for that matter, made our mission quite clearer for me. The history made me appreciate how things evolved and how to go about implementing some positive changes. The impact it had on me as a leader, is that I will attempt to make more informed decisions on whatever issues are present. Also, I learned that it is important and OK to have some sort of mentor or "brain bank" to consult in times of need.

Lori Johnson's summary:

I learned that working together is the key to getting things done. It truly does "take a village" sometimes to make things happen. I also learned that there are always going to be snags, but how you handle them can make all the difference. How did it impact me as a leader? Well, I think I learned that sometimes you may have to compromise your plan, but that doesn't mean it can't be done!

Matthew Shupp's summary:

I learned that program planning is different depending on the student population that you are working with, and that it often demands that we rethink how we meet the needs of our students. It means putting students first, and listening to what they want, rather than assuming I know what might be best for them.

APPENDIX A

Student Survey Distributed at WERC

Student Activities at WERC

1. Do you attend classes at WERC during the ____ Day ____ Night ____ Both?
2. Would you be willing to remain on campus before or after your class to attend a program at WERC?
____ Yes ____ No
3. Which of the following student-focused programs would interest you?
____ Film
____ Financial information – i.e. money management, tax help etc.
____ Career Services – i.e. job placement, resume writing
____ Financial aid information
____ Ice Cream Social
Other _____
4. How often would you participate? ____ Once a month ____ 2x ____ 3x
5. Would you be interested in helping plan or work an event? ____ Yes ____ N

