

**Winona State University and Southeast Technical College Transfer Collaboration
Luoma Leadership Academy
Action Learning Project: Project #7**

Executive Summary

In July 2011, as part of an action learning leadership project, a group of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) leaders were charged to review the transfer process between Minnesota State College - Southeast Technical College (SE-TECH), a two-year college, and Winona State University (WSU), a four-year university. The team was comprised of leaders from across the MnSCU system and each brought a unique perspective from the following departments they represent: MnSCU system office, general education faculty, student services and academic administration from both two year and four year institutions; MNSCU was broadly and well-represented on this team project.

The timeliness of this project is fortuitous from a national, state, and system perspective. Nationally, the transfer rate between two-year and four-year institutions hovers around 29% (Forbus, Newbold, and Mehta, 2011, p. 36). In a study completed by Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (2012) the success and access of post-secondary education is sighted as major impediment to developing a competitive workforce. In addition, there are several studies and initiatives that are studying and looking for ways to improve student's transfer success (Horn and Radwin, 2012 and Handel, 2011). From a system perspective, this project directly relates to Strategic Direction 1, goal 1.4 "Support students to reach their educational goals with a focus on graduation and transfer" (Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Strategic Plan 2010-2014).

Both schools indicated that the relationship between the two institutions was positive and flourishing and reiterated that this project was based on improving joint initiatives and shared

projects already in place to support both SE-TECH and WSU students. At the crux of the issue was the anecdotal report that students transferring from SE-TECH to WSU were experiencing difficulty in articulating and transferring course work in order to continue with their educational goals. The sponsors wanted this project to assist them in identifying potential transfer students, help the two schools work closer in communicating with transfer students, and put in place a system that adequately and effectively advised students who planned to transfer to WSU.

After initial conversations with the Executive Sponsors and supporting staff, the team chose to gather information from students. The team developed two student surveys, data was analyzed and reviewed for insights and possible trends that would assist SE-TECH and WSU in developing a transfer process that was student friendly. A literature review regarding transfer and articulation was reviewed in order to identify data driven best practices. In addition, both institutions provided previously collected data that provided a descriptive background for understanding the student experience. After reviewing the data, the project team then set about finding recommendations to support both SE-TECH and WSU students' experiences.

The project identified strengths, obstacles, and opportunities for growth that have informed the team's four recommendations. The four recommendations are:

- Establish clear articulations agreements and/or transfer guides for smoother transfer process. Along with this recommendation the two institutions were encouraged to develop program specific transfer guides that would replace the vague individualized studies articulation.
- Revise the orientation process to identify, track and advise transfer students early. This recommendation also included a suggestion to create an online registration/orientation process that could better identify and track students who indicate that they are interested in transfer.
- Implement a pathway model, similar to the Pathway to Purple model used between Rochester Community and Technical College and Winona State University. This

model establishes a transfer presence that students can access regardless of when they determine that transfer to WSU is beneficial to their educational plan.

- Identify a communication process for students who self-identify as interested in transfer after the initial semester at SE-TECH.
- Establish a visible public relationship in the Winona Community between the two institutions. Educate the community about the positive relationship between the institutions and the increased educational opportunities it provides.

The following report identifies the project scope, the survey methodology and results, strengths, obstacles, opportunities, and finally the four recommendations. The project team believes that the findings and recommendations of this initiative can be used to further identify ways that foster transfer success for all MnSCU students.

Finally, the project team would like to thank both Minnesota State College - Southeast Technical and Winona State University for their willingness to let us examine the transfer issues on their campuses. The group found that the project leaders, staff, and other administrators at both institutions were cooperative and willing to share practices which led to the development of the recommendations that supported SE-TECH and WSU's wish to build on their strong partnership and enhance their shared student's educational experiences. Rochester Community and Technical College also shared research and data that supported our efforts. Without this support, our efforts would not have been as successful. We greatly appreciate having this opportunity to explore this timely issue and recognize the opportunity for SE-TECH and WSU to lead the system in exploring ways to meet our student's needs.