

Action Learning Project #8 Executive Summary - *Non-credit Instruction: Improving Access to Higher Education* **Luoma Leadership Academy 2011-2012**

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Team Charge: The goal of this project is to identify the extent to which students begin their college educations in non-credit instruction and determine what institutional changes can be made to encourage students to become degree seeking. What institutional practices encourage student success and what issues inhibit students from transitioning to credit enrollment?

Team Direction and Focus: After resourceful inquiries and extensive research, our team redefined the focus of our charge to improving access to higher education and success in skills attainment, while creating pathways to encourage non-credit students to become degree seeking. After effectively delving into comparisons and contrasts of structure and practices of our own institutions, we discovered an array of variances among MnSCU institutions. It became apparent that if we were to be successful in achieving our team goal, we needed to create a structured and plausible framework expounding on four challenges/strategies to be considered by CE/CT leaders:

1. Improve access to target market and create pathways
2. Plan organizational structure and approaches
3. Create stronger connection between non-credit and credit articulation
4. Track education outcomes

Conclusions and Recommendations based on inquiries and nation-wide researching of CE/CT best practices:

- **Strategy #1:** Improve access to target market and create pathways by capturing student and employer needs allowing education and skill advancement to be the driving force to improving the “work life” of today’s society. Allow sequencing of coursework and training to meet work and industry standards and competencies. Incorporate flexible educational formats, multiple entry and exit points, and course portability to encourage convenience and seamless progression and pathways.
- **Strategy #2:** Review organizational structure and approaches and address non-credit outcomes, program structuring and financial implications. It is imperative to develop a sustainable funding structure that supports noncredit education, whether your institution’s non-credit division stands alone or is integrated. Build measurable outcomes and meet the needs and demands of the population and business industry you serve. Nurture coordination of credit and non-credit programs allowing dual enrollment and access to high value, affordable educational opportunities.
- **Strategy #3:** The need to strengthen the connection between non-credit and credit articulation is inevitable today in higher education. The effective application of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) credits can bridge the gap between the classroom and the real world, as well as encourage student perseverance and success. Sound PLA policies and practices will strengthen institution and system-wide cohesiveness relative to credit and non-credit instruction.
- **Strategy #4:** Improve the tracking progression of students from non-credit to credit instruction by addressing student identification, transcripts, and financial issues. Track student movement through non-credit to credit to completion by collecting detailed registration information, providing one student ID and one transcript utilizing the same tracking software. Provide a feasible system for financially converting non-credit to credit in a pathway allowing stackable credentialing.

Teaming and Leadership Lessons Learned:

Clarification of your team goal is critical!
Get organized with a *Leadership Toolbox*: agendas, minutes, project timeline, team calendar and logo;
Create trust, unity, and a strong sense of commitment – “*be on the same page*” to foster synergy;
Respect, value, and utilize differences and strengths and empower one another;
Emphasize learning and discovery, practice inquiry and action learning to effectively problem-solve;
Teaming and leadership is a transformational process...

