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AUTHOR Parsons, Michael H.
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ABSTRACT

To meet the vocational needs of the college's new clientele and to update faculty knowledge and skills, Hagerstown Junior College initiated a five-year program designed to return all career faculty to industry on a temporary basis. Faculty members requesting a return to industry submitted proposals that specified the area of specialization, the tasks to be undertaken, the time required, and the resources necessary for completion. Each proposal was assessed on the basis of weighted criteria including length of time "out of field," degree of technological change in the industry, and accessibility of a host. Accepted projects underwent a formative, on-site assessment conducted by the Dean of Instruction, an initial summative review prepared by the on-site supervisor, and a final summative report prepared by the faculty member analyzing the integration of the experience into his/her teaching. A review of the 13 projects completed since 1978 reveals that: (1) the participants performed valuable services for the host industries; (2) there was an increased understanding between the hosts and the college; and (3) host industries hired an increased number of Hagerstown graduates. A third-party performance review conducted by the Appalachian Regional Commission recommended study into the duplication of the back-to-industry program at other colleges. (Author/JP)

THE SALT MINES REVISITED:

TWO YEARS OF FACULTY RETURNING TO INDUSTRY

A Paper Commissioned for the

NCSPOD Northeastern Skill-building Workshop

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Michael H. Parsons, Ed. D.
Dean of Instructional Affairs
Hagerstown Junior College
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

Introduction

In a recent assessment of the relationship between the community college and its service area, Bellas and Parsons point out that "Serious idealogical barriers exist between the campus and the business community. Strategic planning and effective execution by the college will determine whether these barriers will be reinforced or weakened."[1] Strategic planning can take many forms. For the last two years, Hagerstown Junior College has returned faculty to industry to overcome the ideological barriers as well as to update their expertise and validate current theory. This presentation will chronicle the return to industry project, assess its impact on the host as well as the participant, and suggest ways for other colleges to apply the strategy.

Currently, a cultural lag exists between the expectations of community college clients and those held by faculty members. Faculty were recruited, largely, in the sixties and early seventies. They came from graduate training programs or secondary schools. Few had attended community colleges.[2] Their expectations were clear; the curriculum was the first two years of a baccalaureate degree. Students came directly from high school, held "middle class" values regarding education, and were prepared for college-level work. The new clients have changed the accuracy of faculty perceptions but not the perceptions themselves.

Further, during the last decade faculty members have become isolated from their areas of expertise. Cohen and Brawer indicate that many faculty report reading no scholarly journals or journals related to professional education or teaching techniques.[3] During a technological revolution rivaling the industrial revolution of the 1870's, occupational faculty have been out of the business or industrial setting for as much as a decade.

The seventies has witnessed the emergence of a process to counteract Cohen and Brawer's characterization of the community college instructor as "recluse" - isolated, in an eddy away from the main stream of the discipline and the institution.[4] The President's Advisory Council for Education Professions Development coined the phrase "staff development" in 1971.[5] Five years later, Centra described the staff development as attempting "to help faculty members grow in teaching effectiveness by sharpening their teaching skills and knowledge. Other practices try to help faculty better understand themselves and their institutions, or to try to foster better environments for teaching and learning."[6]

The pedagogical needs of community college faculty members are being met by current staff development programs. Real world applications of subject matter and the dynamics of change in technology are not addressed. A significant group of faculty and, therefore, their clients are not served by existing programs. Occupational program faculty draw their expertise from the work place. Their students seek entry into the job market upon completion of the degree or certificate. Also, part-time students use occupational courses to climb the career ladder. The incongruity between the needs of occupational faculty and existing staff development programs was discussed by this author in 1977. "Should the community have a say in the nature and direction of the staff development process? Should, in fact, the community be the source for the college's development program. . . . Much research is needed; a model would be invaluable."[7]

It is easy to request research and lament the lack of a model; difficult to do something about the need. Using a combination of federal funding and

community planning HJC has designed a staff development activity that meets client needs, updates faculty expertise and establishes a working relationship between business, industry, and the college. The process is worthy of examination.

The Return to Industry Process

HJC is located in one of the nation's thirteen Appalachian regions. A current priority for Appalachian projects is staff development programming that fosters the improvement of occupational education. Using data drawn from a survey of local industries, the college obtained a grant designed to return all of its career faculty to industry over a five-year period. The project began during the summer of 1978. The goal of the project was quite specific. "Return to Industry will provide the opportunity for the occupational faculty of the college to reinforce, update, or expand the skills and knowledge required to keep current with changing technology within their professions."[8] Procedures were spelled out. The faculty member requesting return to industry was required to submit a proposal, including the specific area of specialization, the tasks to be undertaken, the time period required, and the resources needed to support the activity. Further, the faculty member had to identify the business or industry that would host the activity and provide evidence that the host agreed to participate. (See Appendix A.)

The initial year of the project tested the concept. A series of criteria were established to assess proposals. Included were: length of time "out of the field," nature and degree of technological change in the business or industry, relationship between the technological change and the college program, accessibility of a host, and application of the experience in the teaching-learning situation. (See Appendix B.)

Project Assessment

The evaluation design for return to industry is tripartite. One part is formative; two parts are summative. The formative component is an on-site assessment conducted by the Dean of Instruction or the participant's division head. The assessment is based on the objectives stated in the proposal document. The visitation is structured to include observation of the faculty member at work, discussion with the on-site supervisor, and dialogue involving the faculty member, supervisor and college evaluator. A summary report is prepared by the evaluator, reviewed by the faculty member and supervisor, then included in the project package.

The initial summative component is a review and evaluation report prepared by the on-site supervisor and reviewed by the faculty member.. Content includes the impact that the faculty member's activity had on the operation of the host business or industry. Again, this report is reviewed by the faculty member and college supervisor, then included in the project package.

The final summative component is a plan prepared by the faculty member analyzing how the return to industry experience will be integrated into the teaching responsibility of the faculty member. The college supervisor reviews the plan, then adds it to the package to complete the project.

Return to Industry: Performance Review

A review of the first two years of the project reveals the strength of the return to industry concept. Thirteen of the initial sixteen proposals have been approved and conducted. Participating programs were Accounting, Correctional Services, Data Processing, Early Childhood Instructional Aide, Electrical

Engineering Technology, Hospitality, Management, Mechanical Engineering Technology, Nursing, and Police Services. Ten of the college's fourteen occupational programs have had a faculty member return to industry. In total, twelve faculty have participated; one individual has had two projects, each related to a different aspect of mechanical engineering technology.

A review of the outcomes of the projects reveals the strength of return to industry as a concept. The first outcome worthy of mention is that each participant was able to perform a service for the host business or industry. The on-site supervisors indicated that these tasks were desirable but of insufficient priority to be assigned to full-time personnel. Therefore, both the faculty member and the host benefited. Another outcome was the increase in understanding that developed between the host and the college. Most of the on-site supervisors indicated a degree of apprehension regarding the project at the outset. The concern was replaced with genuine respect for the expertise and diligence of the faculty members. A positive result of the increased understanding has been an increase in placements for program graduates with those businesses and industries that participated in return to industry. Finally, hosts were unanimous in requesting continued participation. They indicated that the original participant was welcome to return. Further, they desired to have other faculty work with them. They have even requested participants from specific programs.

In August, 1979 a third party, performance review of the Return to Industry project was conducted by the Appalachian Regional Commission. A team of four individuals, a community college faculty member, a state college faculty

member, an instructional specialist from the Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Vocational Technical Education, and the Director of Research and Evaluation for the administrative area of Maryland's Appalachian region, spent two days meeting with participating faculty; and visiting host businesses and industries. Their report effectively summarizes the impact of the project -."It was evident to the review team that collaborative and supportive efforts among the faculty have contributed to the success of the program. ...It is the opinion of the review team that the purposes of the project are consistent with the philosophy and objectives of the college. ...It is recommended that the Project Director in conjunction with the Regional Education Services Agency and the Maryland State Department of Education explore the replication potential of this program in other educational institutions in the State of Maryland."[9] After two application cycles, return to industry is a viable strategy for updating the technical skills of community college faculty.

Of equal importance is the articulation value of the project. Businesses and industries in the college's service area are aware of the value of college faculty as resources. With faculty members assisting their hosts in meeting mutually beneficial goals, idealogical barriers tend to crumble.

Conclusion

Howard R. Bowen, in the W. K. Kellogg Foundation 50th Anniversary Lecture, offers a goal for community college education in the 1980's: "...each person has the right, and the obligation, to achieve the highest personal development of which he is capable. Higher education is an effective instrument of

personal development, and it must be committed to the goal of personal development."[10] For the new clients of the community college, personal development means access to the world of work. The return to industry model assists occupational faculty in fulfilling client expectations. One hundred and forty-two years ago, Ralph Waldo Emerson described the scholar as a person who "must take up into himself all the ability of the time, all the contributions of the past, all the hopes of the future. He must be an (sic) university of knowledges."[11] As community college faculty members face the 1980's, the university of knowledge concept remains valid. Staff development is a critical support system; return to industry has emerged as a component critical to successful staff development.

Appendix A

HAGERSTOWN JUNIOR COLLEGE

Hagerstown, Maryland

Return to Industry
Proposal Format

I. Subject Matter Area

A. Indicate in brief compass the specific area of specialization to be reviewed, updated or increased.

B. Specify how the proposed project will be applied in your teaching area.

II. Objectives

A. Identify what you plan to do.

B. Indicate the time frame required to accomplish the task.

C. List any specific resources necessary to accomplish the task. If there is a cost involved, please attach a budget.

III. Location

A. Where will the project be conducted?

B. Is the business, industry or agency willing to host you while you conduct the project? Please provide evidence of the commitment, preferably in writing.

IV. Evaluation

A. A report detailing the accomplishments of the project will be submitted to the Office of Instructional Affairs.

B. An assessment of the individual's activity will be submitted to the Office of Instructional Affairs by the host agency representative.

C. An on-site visit will be made by a college representative during the project.

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Appendix B

HAGERSTOWN JUNIOR COLLEGE

Hagerstown, Maryland

Criteria for Evaluating
Return to Industry Proposals

Return to Industry projects are selected for funding using the following criteria:

_____ 1. The length of time that an instructor has been out of the industrial setting.
10 points

_____ 2. A description of the technological advances or revisions that have occurred within the industry since the instructor last worked in the industry which change significantly that industry's production design or delivery system.
15 points

_____ 3. Demonstration that the changes within the industry are related to skills or knowledge needed by the student and, therefore, required of the instructor.
15 points

_____ 4. Availability and willingness of an industry to provide the learning experience needed by the instructor. The proximity of the industry and the comprehensiveness of the experience will be taken into consideration.
10 points

_____ 5. The comprehensiveness of the industrial experience package prepared by the instructor. Particular attention will be paid to the integration of the industrial learning experience and the skills and knowledge to be transmitted to the students.
10 points

60 points total

OIA/1-18-79

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