Inclusive Outreach for Community College Transfer Students in North Carolina

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Abstract:
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill University Career Services began conducting outreach to community colleges in February 2013 to introduce prospective transfer students to career services and the benefits of utilizing resources early. This effort encouraged students to identify resources and activities that support their academic achievement and performance. Brief, targeted presentations by a career counselor demonstrated intentional collaboration with transfer coordinators and advisors at the University and community college. Early outreach to community college students supports academic preparedness and the ability for incoming community college students to participate in transfer success initiatives that positively influence retention and persistence to graduation.

Need Statement:
University Career Services staff members had not spent time conducting consistent outreach to partner community colleges until 2013. A recent report on transfer students’ resource use indicated career services as a highly valuable resource, but many students regretted not using the resource earlier in their college experience. Many transfer students are not introduced to career services until orientation when they are inundated with resource information overload. Additionally, UNC-CH has experienced growth in the number of enrolled community college transfers who are first-generation college students (30% increase from 2011-2013). While this increase demonstrates their potential, these students have significantly lower retention and graduation rates compared to other transfer students (64% 2-year graduation rate compared to 80% graduation rate of transfers from 4-year colleges). Early introduction of available resources may assist in a successful transition to UNC-CH. Engagement in high impact practices and increased awareness of how these can positively affect performance will encourage transfer students to thrive.

Program Objectives:
Objective 1: Engage with community college students prior to their enrollment at the University.
Objective 2: Engage with community college students in smaller, more intimate settings.

Program Description:
Being aware of increased enrollment from community college transfers and lower rates of participation in services, University Career Services wanted to conduct consistent outreach towards this population, resulting in:
- Staff developed an informative, action-oriented workshop that could be delivered easily via PowerPoint by any member of the counseling staff.
- Staff developed a presentation to current transfer students and first-year students to determine relevance of content.
- Students responded positively to new resource information.
- Staff developed a program schedule for visiting and hosting community college students in the Carolina Student Transfer Excellence Program (C-STEP) for the 2013 academic year.
- Staff delivered presentation in collaboration with Transfer Advisors while visiting state community colleges and during community college visits to the University.

As a result, other community college transfer counselors have requested visitation and/or presentation and continuing annual visits.

Program Outcomes:
Objective 1: Engage with community college students prior to their enrollment at the University.
We evaluated this objective by reviewing past commitment to conducting outreach to community college students and developing a schedule for the upcoming year.
Objective 2: Engage with community college students without adding a significant cost to the annual budget.
We evaluated this objective by determining if we were able to conduct site visits and/or host prospective students for under $1,500 annually.
Objective 3: Engage with community college students in smaller, more intimate settings.
We evaluated this objective by identifying and presenting to groups of less than 40 students and reviewing the qualitative and quantitative responses we received from students who participated in the outreach program.

Program Testimonials:

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This program was recognized by the National Association of Colleges and Employers as a 2014 Diversity and Inclusion Award Finalist

Student Testimonials:
University Career Services has been a huge asset to me as a student. The CRC office has helped me plan for interviews, and for internships they helped me find. The CRC counselors laid out a plan that I could follow and helped me look for and get a job. I applied to 30-40 jobs and ended up getting hired at my current job, which I really enjoy. The CRC staff was extremely helpful and patient and provided me with the information I needed to feel confident and prepared for my interviews. The CRC has helped me tremendously.

Student Testimonials:
I am a non-traditional student, and I have experienced the competitiveness of the workforce first hand. When transferring to Chapel Hill, I began using University Career Services (UCS) to assist me with my job search. The UCS career advisors are knowledgeable and helpful. They provide knowledge, guidance, and a variety of resources that are available to students. The UCS staff is always available and ready to assist with any questions or concerns. They have been a valuable resource for me in my job search and I highly recommend their services to anyone who is looking for employment.

Student Testimonials:
I have attended several workshops and seminars at the University Career Services office, and have found them to be informative and helpful. The staff is always friendly and willing to answer any questions I may have. They helped me with my job search and interview skills, and I was able to secure a job as a result. Overall, I highly recommend the University Career Services office to anyone looking for assistance with their job search.