

Update: ISU Extension and Iowa's Community Colleges

Good morning to all of our friends from Iowa's wonderful community colleges and to my colleagues here at Iowa State University. At last year's meeting, it was decided that our ISU Extension area education directors would plan to meet at least once a year with the community college presidents and their respective staffs in each of the five ISU Extension areas in the state with the primary purpose of discussing our relationship and how to improve it for the future.

I am pleased to report that these meetings did occur and confirmed a healthy partnership, and produced many successful discussions on how to strengthen that partnership to serve better the citizens of our state. I want to talk to you about the issues raised in those meetings and bring you up to date on what already has been done to act on those ideas.

Partnership

Early on in these meetings, it became clear that ISU Extension and the community colleges are two separate institutions operating on common ground for a common goal: to extend educational opportunities into communities in all parts of the state. Both institutions act as a visible presence in both Iowa's rural and urban areas, letting the rural citizen and the urbanite alike know that we are dedicated to serving their needs and the needs of their growing children, too. Both institutions serve a two-fold educational objective: first, to equip Iowa's students with the theoretical knowledge and critical thinking skills they need to succeed in the academic college atmosphere; and second, to equip them with the practical and relevant job skills to succeed in the workplace. These two skill sets are not at odds with each other, but rather, serve as complementing factors. Real world skills provide examples for academic research, and academic research influences and guides career practices.

Community colleges and ISU Extension are not competitors; we're collaborators, and each institution complements the other with a unique set of services and needs.

Students

The issue of **student transferring** was a topic of utmost interest to the community colleges. American philosopher and educator John Dewey underscored it best when he said, "The result of the educative process is capacity for further education."¹ How true this rings for students who begin their education adventures with you at your community colleges and end them here with us at Iowa State. But one of the concerning trends raised in our meetings was the exodus of community college graduates out of the

¹ <http://www.lhup.edu/~dsimanek/eduquote.htm>

state. We're losing these students to border states, and we're losing these students because of our own transfer policies. Community college graduates leave the state when they can't make an easy transfer to an in-state school. We can't close the state's borders, but we should do all we can to encourage our students to continue their education within the state. It's a brain drain. Our state loses when these students don't complete their degrees at Iowa schools.

For an example of these transfer difficulties, I'll point out that during our second Southeastern Community College visit we learned that more of these students transfer to Northwest Missouri State than to Iowa State. Northwest Missouri State accepts all their credits. If the credits don't match required courses, Northwest Missouri State accepts them as electives. Iowa State accepts 65 units of community college credit toward degrees, but only 16 can be VoTech. Southeastern Community College students have 40 VoTech units upon graduation, so this is an important issue for these students. But it's also a Board of Regents policy. Getting over this hurdle will require a specific Board of Regents policy change, and it's a goal we need to work toward.

But transferring is a large and diverse issue, and one key equation for its success is the **"2 + 2" program**. Though it may be a simple math problem to some, to us in this room it represents our ability to provide an easy way for community college students to prepare a transfer to Iowa State. 2 + 2 degree programs were a topic of discussion at our meetings, and many of you expressed interest in creating these programs with Iowa State, which would allow us to recruit students as a team. Specific program areas brought up for potential 2+2's were: the pre-vet program with the College of Vet Medicine; agriculture management and dairy science with the College of Agriculture; and accounting, construction management, entrepreneurship, and supply chain management with the College of Business. These last areas were noted as being especially important to make available through distance education to place-bound students.

In fact, **distance education** was a top priority of our meetings, and we've shared what we learned from this past year's community college visits with Iowa State's Distance Education Council for dissemination to departments. Community colleges expressed interest in several opportunities for online education: students with associate of arts degrees need online opportunities to complete bachelor of arts degrees, particularly an increase in online business classes and degrees. There also is a strong interest in ISU's bachelor of liberal studies degree being delivered online.

Some students are clamoring for the opportunity to work toward their degree online, but other students are just interested in being able to come back to school to complete their degree. **Degree completion programs** serve another type of transfer student, one who transfers back to college from the working world. The community colleges were very interested in several types of degree completion programs: early childhood completion

programs in the College of Human Sciences; law enforcement/criminal justice programs in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; bio tech and renewable fuel programs, as well as horticulture and viticulture in the College of Agriculture; and finally, they mentioned a need for completion programs and seamless transfers into traditional engineering programs, such as electrical engineering and civil engineering. They also brought up a need for expanding opportunities in new fields such as wind energy, design engineering, and construction engineering, all areas of Iowa's exciting new economy that Extension recognizes as important to the future success of this state.

Teachers

Our partnership needs to focus on improving opportunities for Iowa's college students, but it should not ignore the needs of their instructors either. One of the themes expressed in our meetings was that community colleges are interested in general master's programs for professionals who want to teach at the community college level, as well as graduate opportunities for current community college teaching staff. They also were keen on continuing education courses in math for teachers, particularly those working toward the "No Child Left Behind Act" requirements and who want to increase math scores for their students. There also was interest in continuing education courses in science, which should come as no surprise: the changing nature of the job market is putting a premium on employers with math and science skills, and Iowa is doing its part to ensure our students are equipped with the best education we can offer in these fields.

The community colleges also are interested in their faculty and ISU's faculty meeting regularly within their disciplines to share ideas and research. As a result, Extension's Continuing and Distance Education unit is developing plans for academic conversations in Ames between community college and ISU faculty within their disciplines. This program is slated for fall 2007, and we're very excited about the potential outcomes this collaboration can bring.

Progress Since the Fall Meetings

So, where do we stand on the progress we've made since our fall meetings?

Well, we've had some follow-up meetings across the state regarding specific issues that arose last fall, as well as our many ongoing collaborations. For example, in our central area we met again with Iowa Central Community College in Fort Dodge. ISU Extension county education directors and Iowa Central's ag department have been discussing coordination of ag education.

Also in central Iowa, DMACC Admissions is collaborating with ISU Extension in Polk County and ISU Admissions on a student recruitment program called Jump Start. ISU Extension received a \$2,500 grant to

support this nine-month project. Nearly 100 youth participated in Jump Start, and a celebration activity on May 25 will feature Dr. Thomas Hill, from Iowa State's Division of Student Affairs. Additionally, we've had more discussions on how community colleges and Iowa State can coordinate activities regarding the Wine and Grape Center. We also have had discussions on how the community colleges and Iowa State can collaborate on the bioeconomy.

In the northwest part of the state, Extension held a grand opening of the new Sioux County Extension office in Orange City on May 1. Northwest Iowa Community College/Sheldon has opened a satellite office with Extension at this site, and they jointly share meetings rooms, etc. Workforce Development also shares the site. This has been a great working relationship, especially for our six county offices in the far northwest.

In the southeast, we're starting to develop a collaborative pilot project with Indian Hills Community College involving at least three major new educational events in the coming year. We will advertise these events jointly, and we will use staff from Iowa State, Extension, and Indian Hills. These events will feature a topic such as leadership, horticulture, or lean manufacturing. Benefits of this pilot project include sharing resources, eliminating duplication, leveraging tax dollars, and multiplying marketing and advertising dollars. We're also continuing the conversation with Indian Hills about using ISU staff and faculty as consultants for community college projects.

Diversity

Though these meetings taught us a lot about what our community colleges want from Extension and what Extension can do to help, they also taught us that we need to look to the future, and to new challenges faced by an increasingly diverse population of Iowans. New data released last week by the Census Bureau showed that Iowa's Hispanic population increased by 39 percent from 2000. Iowa's Asian population increased as well, by 24 percent. Future meetings between community colleges and Extension need to address new opportunities these increases can present for collaboration and how we can adjust our programs to serve the needs of a wider and growing minority population.

A public university constantly works to find new ways to meet the needs of its state's citizens, and a university is more effective when it does so by collaborating with other fine institutions across the state. We fulfill those needs best when we act in partnership; Iowa is a state that prides itself on its strong communities, and Iowans look to the leaders in this room to form a strong community of higher education in turn. We need to continue to build our partnership, our community, because as Henry Ford put it, "coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success."²

² <http://www.modelt.org/tquotes.html>

You know, it's fitting that we are meeting here in the Memorial Union, because that's what this partnership between our Community Colleges and Extension has the potential to become: a memorial union, an alliance dedicated to improving the higher education needs for every Iowan. Our next round of meetings is being scheduled and some already have occurred. I look forward to working with all of you in growing this collaborative partnership.