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Thriving in a Changing Academic Landscape: Moving at the Speed of Light

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Academic Chairperson's Conference Proposal

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Title

Thriving in a Changing Academic Landscape

Abstract

Chairs and administrators are facing pressure to change how they deliver education. To respond, one university charged a team of chairs and administrators with setting up educational programs that challenged the traditional notion of delivering classes. This session highlights how this team responded with an industry-experience hub and navigated a changing academic landscape.

Keywords

Faculty, leadership, change, management

Presentation Topic Themes

Leadership and Management, Communications, Pressing Issues and Trends in Higher Education

Target Audience

All department chairs as well as other university administrators

Type of Presentation

Best practices

Focus of Presentation and Relevance to Chairs and University Administrators

The value of a bachelor's degree is near an all-time high (Lambert, 2015, July 16). Yet, chairs and administrators are facing increased public pressure to change how they deliver education, to lower costs, and to show students and parents a "return on their investment." This pressure comes, in part, from the high levels of underemployment and stagnating wages faced by many college graduates (Lambert, 2015, July 16). Institutions of higher education across the country are considering how or if they will respond. To respond, one university charged a team of chairs and administrators with setting up an educational program that would 1) challenge the traditional notion of how they deliver classes and 2) improve the university's brand equity. This best practice presentation will highlight how this team responded with an industry-experience hub and what chairs and administrators can learn from the team's experience navigating a changing academic landscape.

The industry-experience hub is an innovative educational center housed approximately 30 miles from the main university campus. The hub is situated near the corporate and regional headquarters of companies such as Toyota, Frito Lay, FedEx, J.C. Penney, and Dr. Pepper Snapple group and within 10 miles or less of 4 cities with large school districts and active city governments and

economic development groups. This location provides an opportunity for the university to partner with industries and government entities near the hub to meet workforce demands and to provide a unique learning environment where students interact with and learn from not only faculty, but also industry professionals and executives. The hub serves first-time in college students, working professionals, and mid-level managers. The hub will offer degrees that cross disciplines, integrate internships and externships throughout the educational experience, and pair students with industry mentors.

In setting up the hub, chairs and administrators faced the following challenges:

- **Timing:** opening the doors 5 months after the hub was conceptualized.
- **Budget:** providing a return on investment as curriculum was put into place and faculty were brought on board. Because the location was leased before curriculum was in place, chairs, faculty, and administrators had to find ways to use the space as they developed curriculum and recruited students.
- **Engagement:** engaging industry partners, city leadership, and school districts.

Chairs and administrators of all institutions are facing the challenge of responding to the public demands to change how they deliver education. How should they face these challenges? This session will provide chairs and administrators with strategies for responding without compromising the quality of that education.

Description of the Session and Interactive Activities

Presenters will provide a brief overview of the hub and highlight the strategies used to successfully cut through bureaucracy and engage the academic, industry, and city leadership. They will also share the strategies that did not work and what they learned from these experiences.

In a “turn and talk,” participants will share how their institutions are responding to demands to change how they deliver education. Exemplar strategies will be summarized using facilitated discussion and flip charts. Small groups will be assigned using participant demographics (that is, size of institution and private vs. public).

Work Cited

Lambert, L. (2015, July 16). *Is a degree still worth it? Yes, Researchers say, and the payoff is getting better.* Retrieved from The Chronicle of Higher Education: <http://chronicle.com/blogs/data/2014/09/05/is-a-degree-still-worth-it-yes-researchers-say-and-the-payoff-is-getting-better/>