

Community College of Aurora (CCA)

Background

The Perkins Field Council's key areas of interest in this Local Plan are the courtroom, peer mentoring for students with disabilities, internship coach, and achievement coach.

As a top Colorado community college, the Community College of Aurora is conveniently located for commuters in and around the Denver metro area. CCA offers more than 40 areas for degrees and certificates as well as core and additional education courses available days, nights, and weekends. In the 2013 fiscal year, CTE Students made up 32% of the 12,780 students enrolled.

Perkins Field Council members were impressed with CCA's innovative use of Perkins funds. Perkins funding was used to purchase equipment and support items for Computer Information Systems, Applied Technology, Computer Programming, Networking, Graphic Storytelling, Multimedia Arts, Criminal Justice, Paralegal, Fire Science Technologies, Emergency Medical Services, Respiratory Care, Human Performance, Accounting, Business, Marketing, Diesel Power Mechanics, and Early Childhood Education. Perkins funds were also used to support the new Internship Coach position, Student Tracking Database, Achievement Coaching, Accessibility Service Office, and Translation and Interpretation Services.

The Field Council volunteers visited with representatives from several areas including the Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs, Data Tracking department, Academic Coach, Career Internship department, Criminal Justice program, and the Accessibility Office.

Key Innovation(s)

The Student Achievement coach position is a new position funded by Perkins money. The coach strives to fit the needs of a diverse student population. They have developed a tool for tracking the use and success of the resources available through the office. They also are working to identify students needing support before they become at-risk. Coaches teach time management and organizational skills and technology readiness. They develop workshops around the identified needs of the students using their services. They are also planning training for faculty to understand the process of interpreting the data they collect and report.

One student population identified is non-completers: students who have taken enough courses for a certificate, but who don't always follow through to get their certificate. The database is identifying those students so they can retroactively receive their certificate/degree. Also identified are students who are close to completing. This allows staff to reach out to those students and support them to complete.

The Career Internship program is another innovative project. This program is working to formalize the internship process for both employers and interns. The Internship Coordinator is funded by the Perkins grant this year. She works with employers to be sure they understand their responsibilities for participating in the program. Students in internships take an internship class and complete a project-based assessment.

The Courtroom being built on campus is able to support many programs. Once it is complete, the Criminal Justice, Paralegal, Fire Science Technologies, Emergency Medical Services and Police Academy will use it for different parts of their curriculum. An actual courtroom allows for a realistic learning experience and, therefore, a better understanding of the legal system in which these students will be employed. A side value of having the courtroom environment for students in the paralegal and public safety programs will be that immigrant students and/or other students will have exposure to our legal system and processes. For example, they will know what a courtroom is really like, which could ease their discomfort if they need

to navigate the system at some point in the future.

The Accessibility Service Office is using Perkins funds to establish a peer mentoring program. A disability professional works with CTE students to develop self-advocacy skills. A graduate student was hired to implement the CTE Cohort Mentoring Program. This consists of successful students with disabilities mentoring students with like disabilities. This peer support is an innovative solution to increasing successes in this population.



Key Factors to Implementation

Challenges

Some challenges identified through this visit were communication, tracking, and internships. Communication challenges consist of providing data to staff and students not knowing what resources are available to them. Tracking CTE student data and identifying students who complete or are close to completing are challenging the ability to provide additional support and outreach. Internship challenges are getting employers to offer internships and when they do, making sure the work is a learning experience for the student, not just a free employee for the company. The action steps written into the Perkins plan are addressing these challenges in innovative ways.

A challenge for the courtroom action step is the timing of the availability of the funds. It is difficult to have the project finished in time for the start of the current school year. CCA also has the unique challenge of serving students at two separate campuses. The current Perkins grant is allowing them to have a satellite office for the Accessibility Services at the Lowry campus to address this challenge.

Replication

The makeup of the committee that reviews Perkins proposals from faculty is a helpful process for others to model. Focusing on the students' needs helps insure that Perkins funds are used to help students directly.

RESULTS

Janet Brandau, Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs identifies two reasons for the Community College of Aurora's success. First, they have moved away from using Perkins dollars for only CTE departmental funding and equipment. Second, all Perkins proposals must now address the issues of student success, retention, and graduation. Additionally, they have shifted their focus from mainly obtaining CTE skills to the assessment of skills through simulation, producing portfolios, etc.