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The VCU Health Careers Pipeline

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The VCU Health Careers Pipeline

Team Members

Sheryl Garland, Bob Neale, Nancy New, Janis Ober, Seth Sykes. Team Sponsors: Dr. Roderick McDavis and Dr. Herbert Newsome

Project Description

The VCU Health Careers Pipeline is a proposal for linking and enhancing existing outreach, academic and mentoring programs on both campuses. The goal of the proposed pipeline is to increase the number of disadvantaged students from the Richmond area who successfully graduate with a VCU health care degree and obtain employment in the VCU Health System.

We propose the hiring of a full-time director who will collaborate with VCU programs and community initiatives to ensure the success of the program. This director will coordinate the outreach programs currently conducted by VCU departments that introduce health careers to local elementary, middle and high school students.

Through these outreach programs, the director will identify students with interest in pursuing such a career by means of an education at VCU. Eligible students will then be invited to participate in an academic support program that will offer counseling and tutoring to students at each stage of their academic career. Eligibility will be based on disadvantaged status (economic or social) and academic potential. Once admitted to VCU, the director will coordinate the support offered to these students by the Pre-Health Science Advising Program and the Campus Learning Center on the Monroe Park Campus and, once admitted into a health care degree program, the Health Careers Opportunity Program on the Medical Campus. In addition, the director will coordinate a mentoring program provided by the VCU Health System. These mentors will meet regularly with the students to provide moral support and guidance. Finally, the director will work with Human Resources in order to provide internship positions in the VCU Health System that will hopefully lead to future employment after graduation.

Because it provides academic and mentoring support to disadvantaged students from the Richmond area, the VCU Health Careers Pipeline will assist VCU as it seeks to fulfill its mission of serving the community “through its scholarly activities, its diverse educational programs, and its service activities.” In particular, the Pipeline will help VCU achieve its goals of providing “an optimal environment for educating and training health care professionals” and promoting “racial and cultural diversity in its student body and staff.”

Project Goals

The proposed VCU Health Careers Pipeline will achieve three specific goals.

1. The Pipeline will coordinate existing VCU programs to ensure active and effective collaboration across campuses and departments.
2. By providing academic and mentoring support to at-risk students throughout their respective programs of study, the Pipeline will increase the likelihood of these students persisting to graduation.

3. By increasing the number of disadvantaged students from the Richmond area who obtain employment in the VCU Health System, the Pipeline will promote racial and cultural diversity at VCU.

Strategies

Our team consisted of members from the VCU Health System, Information Technology and the College of Humanities and Sciences. Because we represent a cross-section of the university, we decided at our first meeting to develop a project that would promote more active collaboration between the two campuses. We also brainstormed ways that we could apply all our unique perspectives on the university to such a project.

Action Steps

At our first meeting, we shared some general ideas that represented our unique perspectives on the university. These ideas included: an outreach program to promote a diverse staff in the VCU Health System and a web-based system of encouraging collaboration among VCU departments. Since we were a diverse group, we decided to focus on the theme of collaboration. Once the decision was made, we developed a proposal that we presented to our original sponsor, Dr. Roderick McDavis. He encouraged us to conduct research to determine whether our proposed program had been attempted in any of our peer institutions. While conducting such research, we discovered that another group in the Leadership Institute was developing a similar proposal. Consequently, during the retreat, we returned to the idea of an outreach program to promote a diverse staff in the VCU Health System. However, we still wanted to emphasize collaboration between the two campuses. By the conclusion of the retreat, we had developed the first draft of a Health Careers Pipeline proposal. We then spent the next few months conducting research on whether such pipelines existed at other universities as well as having conversations with potential VCU partners in the pipeline. In August, we presented our proposal to our new sponsor, Dr. Herbert Newsome, who encouraged us to have further conversations with individuals who might be interested in housing and funding the project. On the basis of these conversations, we were able to finalize remaining details and complete the project proposal.

Outcomes

Due to the different perspectives that we all brought to the group and our commitment to the goal of promoting a diverse staff in the VCU Health System, we were able to develop a proposal that, we believe, will accomplish this goal.

Recommendations

In order to make this project a reality, we recommend the following steps.

1. Create a full-time director position to oversee the Pipeline.
2. Establish a steering committee consisting of representatives from the partners in the Pipeline.
3. Build a database of prospective student participants in the Pipeline from contacts established through the outreach programs to local elementary, middle and high schools.

Conclusion

All the members of the Yellow Group have appreciated the opportunity to work on a project of this nature. We see the obvious benefits that this Pipeline will produce for students, for the university, and for the community. We are all willing to assist in making this proposal a reality. We appreciate the assistance that Dr. McDavis and Dr. Newsome provided to our group and we are especially grateful to the Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute for giving us this opportunity to participate in a group process that challenged us to become better leaders in the university.