Putting the Earn into Learn:
Preparing Students for the Workplace
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Educators have a ve$ted interest in students graduating, getting and keeping jobs. Employed workers pay taxes to support the education system, our pay and pensions. To teach effectively:
1) Look at the following government sources: SCANS is a government study to identify workplace skills employers expect from employees. Create class assignments for students to demonstrate awareness and minimal proficiency use these sites.
http://wdr.doleta.gov/SCANS/whatwork/

For information on teaching the SCANS competencies
http://wdr.doleta.gov/SCANS/teaching/

Teach students to use the Bureau of Labor Statistics "Occupational Outlook Handbook" to match their interests/knowledge/skills to the job outlook when they will GRADUATE. Create class assignments for students to demonstrate awareness and minimal proficiency use this site
http://www.bls.gov/ooh/

2) Review the school mission statement, your job description, your department program goals, your course syllabi relative to SCANS. Find SCANS components that consistently link to and support the mission statement, your job description, department program, and course syllabi.

3) Make direct contact with ALL the stake holders:
3A) Your students:
3A1) Poll your current students to know their hopes and aspirations. How do these match with your departmental and course offerings?

3A2) Poll your past graduates to see:
3A2A) if employed, are they employed in the field? Ask what was useful from their education with you; what they are doing in their current job that was NOT covered in their education.

3A2B) if not employed in the field, what they felt was deficient in their education that caused them from getting a job. Give them information about SCANS and OOH with advice how to use these sites.

3A2C) if not employed in the field of their major, why not? (Did they feel the education from your department played a role?)

3B) Invite appropriate businesses to meet and brainstorm with your faculty about the present and workplace needs. Make these meetings an annual event. Try to time them well in advance of the cycle for proposing new courses or getting necessary approval for course changes. Don't forget to coordinate with catalog and course schedule description for making changes.

3B1) This would be a good time to establish a network for possible internships and student volunteer opportunities. Consider the details carefully and coordinate with the college administration regarding the roles and responsibilities of the school, faculty, and participating business. Don't forget to ask about insurance requirements for students going onto a business worksite.

3B2) Don't forget to ask about student volunteer opportunities. Consider creating a community service project. This could be sponsored by the business, school, or both to do community outreach or "give back to the community." Develop roles for student volunteers relevant to their major to build their resumes by having the business sponsor give volunteers a letter (on business letterhead) documenting their volunteer effort using the SCANS list as a guide.

3C) Contact the relevant state/county/local Employment Development authorities concerning job market conditions. Include this information (and appropriate web links to students with the advice for them to monitor these sites.) Create class assignments / exercises to empower students to demonstrate awareness of the site and minimal proficiency to use the site.

3D) If in a community college, consider meeting with target transfer colleges/universities to A) inquire about possible curricular changes they may be making that affect your courses' transferability, B) discuss any changes you are considering to see how the target school views those changes.

3E) query your regional accreditation association regarding possible course / curricular changes you are considering to see how compatible they might be relative to accreditation standards and requirements.

The effort to prepare students to be employable requires a full system view. By including input from all stake holders you have a better chance of implementing a true customer service culture and attitude in your program and courses.