

Leadership in Community Colleges

Leadership Abstract

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Practice: Theological Education Goes Beyond College Walls

Tyndale College and Seminary recently established the Roy Spaetzel Institute of Life Long Learning under the leadership of Patricia Webb, Dean of the newly created Institute. According to Dean Webb, a lifelong approach to learning is being supported and developed by the College as a response to major challenges faced by the school now and into the twenty-first century.

Three years ago, the college, faced with a serious financial challenge, developed a three year strategic restructuring plan to increase revenue by increasing access to theological and liberal arts education to the evangelical community. In developing its strategic plan, the school ascertained that only a small percentage of people in the evangelical community are taking advantage of the course offering at the school. As part of its restructuring, the college completed a strategic audit. The audit revealed that the primary barriers to attracting more continuing education students were the cost of traditional courses and the time commitment involved.

As the oldest and most established evangelical institution of higher learning in Canada, there is a strong sense of expectancy that Tyndale College must position itself to meet the demand for increased educational opportunities of all types. It is in this climate that Tyndale College is seeking to meet rural educational needs, by broadening its focus.

Target Group

Accepting the need for a new philosophy of education, having new roles and responsibilities for learning, the School of Lifelong Learning will facilitate theological training for those facing issues of accessibility, affordability, and in some cases, those lacking appropriate educational credentials. The target group includes ministry professionals, ordinary people interested in advancing their knowledge, workers in parachurch and secular settings, retired persons and adult students, interested in a variety of study opportunities to enrich their lives and enhance their skills.

Description of Practice

According to Tyndale College's president, Dr. Brian Stiller, a small college like Tyndale can best serve its constituency by focusing on the unique strength and relationships the College brings to the community. He believes that as far as higher education is concerned, we are entering into an era where lifelong learning is entrenched. Demands for a variety of educational programming of all types is becoming the norm for most private institutions such as Tyndale.

The Institute for Lifelong Learning has a three-fold strategy. The first strategy is networking and cooperation. The Institute will actively pursue strategic partnerships that will focus on the relationship between the school, the business and industrial communities, as well as other professional entities and educational institutions. The Institute will develop a multi-ethnic advisory board of leaders drawn from all sectors of the larger community.

The second strategy is resourcing and consultation. The lack of adequate information is a limiting factor to many potential students that could benefit from lifelong learning opportunities. In addition, consultation with all parties is an important element in maximizing planning and delivery for a range of lifelong education and training opportunities.

The third strategy is training. The Institute will offer training programs in team building, leadership skills/development, meta-skills learning, to name a few. The Institute also has a vision to offer continuing education programs at various locations throughout the city. In the words of Dean Webb, "Our goal is to become a leader in non-traditional education offering academically sound, accessible courses and programs in a variety of settings." The Institute is committed to the notion that educational programs should stimulate the development of core competencies and enable learners to pursue their own development and growth beyond a structured learning environment.

Delivery

To meet the lifelong learning needs of the citizens of the next century, the Institute is prepared to adapt to the rapidly changing economic, social, and technological environment. Presently, the Institute is in the process of developing courses that will be offered via the Internet as well as using satellite technology. Courses and other material will also be offered by correspondence using audio and videotapes. The intent is to facilitate training for those facing barriers of accessibility and affordability.

Anticipated Outcomes

Dean Webb anticipates that in three years the number of people enrolled in college level courses will increase by thirty percent. This expanded student population will revitalize the school by creating new roles and functions for Tyndale as an educational institution. There is also the belief that students will benefit from the promotion of articulation agreements and

partnerships between other theological institutions, universities, and organizations. These agreements will broaden opportunities for student with the wider educational community as well as the employment sector.

More importantly, it is the hope of both Dean Webb and President Stiller that people will view lifelong learning as an intrinsic beneficial educational activity, that will increase and elevate the quality of one's life. It is anticipated that the Lifelong Learning Institute will increasingly provide experiences for students to continually expand their cognitive achievements.

Both President Stiller and Dean Webb see the School of Lifelong Learning as a tool to develop and provide leadership preparation for the lay person well into the twenty-first century. Both believe that by providing educational opportunities in the most accessible ways possible by focusing on (a) content - what competencies must the student learn? (b) location- is it convenient? (c) and on cost- is it affordable? Tyndale College will effectively fulfill its institutional mandate.

For more information, please contact Patricia Webb, Dean, Institute for Life Long Learning, Tyndale College.

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