

Partnering with an Advisory Board

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Abstract

An objective of an educational program is to interact with various professionals in order to keep a program current and support it in achieving their goals. However, this may prove difficult if the program does not keep abreast of the rapid changes, advancements or does not interact with the professionals.

This paper examines PSH's advisory board for the Structural Design, Construction, and Engineering Technology (SDCET program), their membership and activities in assisting the program, the university, and the students. Their memberships comprise of large and small firms, owners; state agencies; suppliers; associations; graduates current student; faculty; an architect, and even an attorney & high school counselor. The board has over 20 members which may be considered large, but they operate like a fine clock piece. The member's makeup is unique but necessary for the board to achieve its mission.

Some of the board's activities include curriculum review; accreditation, financial support; diversify; cutting edge technology; outreach; networking; career support; and senior exit interviews. Each of these are a critical part of the program's timepiece.

This partnership has resulted in an excellent relationship with various professionals and the program's success in preparing its students. The program recognizes that an effective advisory board is a key component in enhancing the program efficiency and its success. The board is an excellent example of a win-win relationship for both the university, the program, its students and the industry.

Introduction

Partnership between educational institution and industry with an advisory board is not a new concept in fostering collaboration. There are many universities that work closely with business and industry partners to fit their needs. Universities and industries traditionally maintained relationships which may include some of same activities. The purpose of this partnership is to meet the needs of industries, governments, and support the program objectives in educating its students.

The goal of this program's advisory board is similar but also unique to provide the information, recruitment, and skills vital for the student's success in their chosen career and the program. The program is continuously planning, developing, and modifying its curriculum as well as other areas to keep abreast of the changes and advancements being made of this major. The industrial relationships and partnerships that the program developed with its board is one critical element to its

success. Programs that foster and strengthen relationships with firms , professional, and associations will not only benefit the program as well as the firms and associations.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the various connections between Penn State Harrisburg's Structural Design & Construction Engineering Technology program and their advisory board. This paper will also discuss the common as well as unique activities and partnership that are conducted from the advisory board, student organizations, national associations, financial support, and outreach. These various activities demonstrated excellent examples of a win-win relationship, which benefits both the university programs and its board.

Advisory Board

The Structural Design, Construction, and Engineering Technology (SDCET) advisory board is unique in its membership representative. The advisory board's by-law requires 20 plus membership consisting of program graduates, engineers, architect, construction, environmental; small and large firms; national and/or regional recognition with a diverse viewpoint. The board also include a representative from numerous organization such as Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (Penn DOT), Associate General Contractors of America (AGC) & Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC), Its membership makeup is unique that it also includes a lawyer in this field, an architect, and even a high school counselor. These members provides valuable resources to legal and state licensure; architect activities, and interaction access to secondary schools which an advocate to the program.

The advisory board does in an advisory capacity to this program, the School of Science, Engineering and Technology, and the college. However, the major goals of the board is to identify the needs and trends regarding curriculums being current; employment of graduates and internship, and cultivate opportunities including high school awareness of this programs. The board offer recommendations for improvement to the curriculum offerings and serves as an avenue of communication between the program, industry and secondary education. The boards have assisted in preparation of surveys and reports as required for their accreditations agencies as well as other information for the program. They promote financial support, and the student organization, Penn State Professional Engineers & Contractors which is an umbrella organization to student chapters of AGC, ABC, and NSPE.

The board has been identified by the college to be an excellent example of an outstanding and active advisory board. Their activities show how different professions, industries, students and others can benefit.

The advisory board activities include review of course syllabi, informal gatherings, student forums, sponsorship of a specific career job fair, and resource to the programs and faculty. They also host a luncheon that is held on campus for high school counselors and HS students about this industry, its economics, the workforce, and job opportunities. During this luncheon, the advisory boards present and provide information on the program, their similarity and differences or the university's other programs in the field, Civil Engineering and Architecture Engineering programs. They stress why they feel the program is excellent for high school students interested this profession. The advisory

board's career fair is held right after the luncheon to which the high school counselors and their students are also invited to attend and interact with firms in attendance.

Program majors have also the opportunity to talk with these career fair firms and have informal interviews about full-time, part-time, and internship/co-op positions. The event is always successful and numerous contacts are always made, which benefits both the firms and the students. It provides a great opportunity for counselors, firms, faculty, and students to network together.

As mentioned before the board helps with the curriculum. They annually review several course syllabi to ensure the material is current to the industry as well as provide advice to the instructors on course structure. The board also include key employees within their organization to assist in the review process. The constant interaction between academia and the industry is an essential requirement to train and develop students to have the knowledge of what is expected in the real world. The board's suggestions are also valuable and usually incorporated in the program's courses. The instructors also continue their relationships with the board firms in consulting, research, or other activities that provides a win-win partnership.

The advisory is also an excellent resource to the program and faculty. One of the benefits of being on the advisory board is maintaining the relationship with faculty and students. Advisory board members have the opportunity to be a guest speaker in classes as well as provide assistances on field trips. The feedback from students indicated that they enjoyed and benefited from these events. The students asked a lot of questions and enjoyed hearing from practicing professionals about the subject matter, which supplemented the instructor's material. The field trips is first hand exposure to what the student learned in their courses. The advisory board members have the ability to network with the students as well as inform them about their firm. This continues to be an excellent way for summer internships and permanent jobs for the majors.

The "Network Night" event is an informal gathering for Penn State alumni, program students, and the advisory board. The relaxed atmosphere with light refreshments makes the current students comfortable as they meet graduates; learn about the jobs, and network. During this event, students are able to gain valuable information to contribute in professional growth. The advisory board have been recognized and won a university award for this event. A student forum is also done annually by the advisory board. This allows students to have the opportunity to network with the advisory board members and provide information about the program.

The advisory board communicate with the school and university administration on issues that affect the program. The administration knows how involved they are with the program and that they value their comments. In fact, numerous program board members have also served on the college's advisory board. The board involvement to the administration is also valuable to the success of the program. The program also includes advisory board members on faculty searches. Their input provides another perspective of the candidates' experience and opportunities. Their participation also educates the board members in the academic process of seeking and hiring faculty.

Financial Support

The first college endowment was created for the SDCET program by advisory board associations to provide scholarships to students in the major. Additional endowments have been created since then to provide additional student scholarships, support faculty, research, outreach programs, and student development. Various firms as well as alumni have shown their support to the program and provide generated funds to support these endowments. The local associations have also created their own undergraduate scholarships with one criterion being that the student must be majoring in the SDCET or similar programs. This demonstrates their commitment and their partnership to Penn State Harrisburg.

Outreach Programs

Another key to the win- win partnership is the program outreach. The activities have fostered into a rewarding experience for both the firms and the program. Some of these activities include: research, part time job opportunities, continuation of education, workshops, and many other opportunities of keeping current with the industry.

The advisory board firms have provided frequent opportunities for the program's faculty. Faculty has consulted with firms to specific initiatives or research projects. Some of these partnerships have developed into a funded research project for the faculty member. This partnership has supported the knowledge to firms and the program.

Advisory board members have also hired faculty during the summer. This allows the faculty member to keep current in the industry, which is essential in the constantly moving industry. The faculty member takes this experience back to the classroom, so the curriculum is integrating this material. The firm's also benefits from the faculty members expertise and skills, which becomes a valuable resource. The firm continues the partnership with the faculty member during the academic year. This partnership provides advisory board members an opportunity to become more involved with the program, its students, and their future employees.

- The programs and the advisory board have offer outreach programs to the profession community, which has benefited in this partnership. This outreaching has offered workshops, presentations, and continuing education courses that give opportunity for various firms to obtain the information. The university's resources and advisory board involvement have provided an excellent environment to deliver these programs at one location, state wide, and by the Internet superhighway across the world. The program continues to partner with the advisory board firms and its success.

Conclusions

The various activities from the advisory board, demonstrates the partnerships with programs and universities can have with these boards. This partnership is a win-win relationship because at the end, they both help each other. They also both realize the need to work together for the betterment of the students and the profession's future. The various activities are only limited to the amount of commitment of these relationships. The programs that foster and strengthen relationships with their advisory board will not only benefit the program but also those firms and associations. The students

will be the industry's future and advisory boards member's involvement is essential in supporting the programs, the students, about their profession. Advisory boards can support academic program accountability by providing guidance and feedback and serving as partners in research and community collaborations

References

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Biographical Information

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