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Career Program Advisory Committee Handbook

A guide for improving the overall quality of career pathways through the use of effective advisory committees

Minnesota State
Career and Technical Education

Department of Education

Acknowledgment

This 2020 edition of the Career Advisory Committee Handbook is the cumulative effort of several people, including staff of the Minnesota State System Office and Minnesota Department of Education. It builds upon a foundation of prior versions developed by numerous educators, administrators, business and industry representatives, and career and technical education advocates.

Much gratitude is extended to those involved with the publication of this edition and to those who came before.

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Introduction

Everyone who manages a career and technical education (CTE) program in Minnesota knows that advisory committees are required. At the secondary level, they are written into state statute. At the postsecondary level, they are mandated by policy. As in other states, there are some program leaders who fulfill those mandates but do nothing beyond that. They see the mandates as an obligation—as a box to check off—and nothing more.

If you ask leaders of the most robust and successful programs about advisory committees, however, you'll almost certainly hear a different perspective. Successful program leaders know that if you invest time and effort into building a strong advisory committee, you'll reap outsized returns, including strong business partnerships, increased community support, discovery of new resources, greater strength and relevance of instruction, and numerous opportunities for both students and staff to succeed.

In fact, of the different types of partnership models available, advisory committees provide the greatest return on investment. If you're willing to do more than the minimum and take a truly collaborative approach to working with your partners, your advisory committee can be a powerful tool for improving student experiences and outcomes.

This handbook was developed to help you learn how to build and sustain a strong and active advisory committee. We'll look at advisory committee basics, such as committee structure and leadership roles, how to find and recruit members, how to manage an effective committee, and how to handle long-range planning. You'll also find a set of templates for essential advisory committee forms.

As you go forward, there is one guiding principle to keep in mind: There's no single right way to set up and manage your advisory committee. Some effective committees meet twice per year, while others meet monthly. Some establish multiple ad hoc or permanent subcommittees, while others operate strictly as a single committee. Some require business leaders to serve as chairs; others do not. While it's important to learn what's worked

There's no single right way to set up and manage your advisory committee.

for others, it's more important to talk with your education, industry, and community partners and determine what will work best for your partners, staff, and students. Advisory committee management is more of an art than a science, so take advantage of this flexibility and build a model that works for you.

Benefits of the Advisory Committee

If you run a CTE program in Minnesota, you're required to have an advisory committee and convene two meetings per year. By going beyond these minimum requirements, you'll have the potential to create significant benefits for all those involved in your program.

Benefits to Students and Educators

Students and staff benefit greatly from the guidance and support of industry partners in the following ways:

- **Ensuring program relevance** – CTE programs are valuable because they are relevant. They identify and address the needs of the industry they serve. Since industry needs change on a regular basis, your advisory committee is an indispensable voice in keeping your program aligned with your students' future employers.
- **Ensuring program quality** – Industry partners can provide important information on both workplace expectations, so teachers and students understand what is required of them, and on effective instruction and training strategies, which they can share with your instructors.
- **Keeping teachers current** – While many CTE teachers come from industry, their skills and knowledge of the industry can become stale if they don't work to stay current within their field. Advisory committees recognize this and work to support educators as they maintain their skills and knowledge.
- **Identifying and engaging partners** – It is extremely difficult for a CTE program teacher or leader to operate as a "one-person show," responsible for establishing and maintaining all relationships with business partners. Industry engagement is one of the core functions of an advisory committee, and members are not only expected to partner with the program directly, but also to solicit other partners on your behalf.
- **Developing advocates** – Business partners can say things you sometimes cannot say, and they can get the ear of people you may not be able to reach on your own. By allowing partners to "buy in" to your program through their involvement in your committee, you give them the opportunity to become advocates and speak on your behalf.
- **Tapping into expertise** – Beyond their industry knowledge, advisory committees have specific skill sets that you can access to improve program operations and outreach, such as management, marketing, social media, change leadership, and finance.

By allowing partners to "buy in" to your program through their involvement in your committee, you give them the opportunity to become advocates and speak on your behalf.

- **Asking "What if?"** – The world of education is often filled with traditions and rules, some of which may no longer be relevant or appropriate. Advisory committee members are in a position to question the way that things have been done in the past in favor of new approaches. This represents an exciting opportunity to innovate and break free of past restrictions.

Benefits of the Advisory Committee (continued)

Benefits to Business Partners

Business and industry partners benefit from their work with the program in the following ways:

- **Creating the future workforce** – Many industries are facing a workforce crisis of epic proportions as their baby boomer employees retire and they begin to realize that there are not enough qualified people prepared to replace them. Participation on your advisory committee is an important investment in rebuilding their pipelines.
- **Building a stronger community** – In many towns and neighborhoods, people recognize the local school or college as a centerpiece, or hub, of the community and appreciate the fact that a strong educational institution is essential to civic life. Remember also that industry partners are often parents who want to strengthen their schools and build direct relationships with the schools that serve their children.
- **Creating immediate workforce benefits** – While most conversations about employer benefits focus on long-term workforce issues, it's also true that current workers benefit from working with students. These workers often have higher morale, greater motivation, and stay with their companies longer.
- **Networking** – Businesspeople understand the importance of building connections with others in their field. An advisory committee, built on shared interests and goals, provides the perfect venue for peers to connect and build relationships.
- **Giving back** – Some businesspeople have a natural affinity for education and want an opportunity to give back. Others are grateful for the opportunities their profession has provided and want to be sure the next generation has those same opportunities. In either case, many industry professionals find committee service to be highly rewarding.

TIP

Don't assume you know what benefits your partners are getting from their participation—ask them. It will help you tailor opportunities to their interests and give you useful information as you recruit others.

The Perkins V Act

Federal funding for career and technical education is critically important for local CTE programs. States look to the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) as they set standards and expectations for programs within their jurisdictions. However, this isn't the case when it comes to advisory committees. According to Perkins V, there are no specific requirements for having such a board in place; therefore, states have taken the lead in setting requirements and standards for advisory committees.

That said, there are elements of Perkins V that speak to industry engagement in ways that are ideally suited to the advisory committee structure. Section 134(d), for example, when describing consultation requirements for the comprehensive local needs assessment, states that eligible recipients of Perkins V funds "shall involve a diverse body of stakeholders including, at a minimum,"

> ``(1) representatives of career and technical education programs in a local educational agency or educational service agency, including teachers, career guidance and academic counselors, principals and other school leaders, administrators, and specialized instructional support personnel and paraprofessionals;
>
> ``(2) representatives of career and technical education programs at postsecondary educational institutions, including faculty and administrators;
>
> ``(3) representatives of the State board or local workforce development boards and a range of local or regional businesses or industries;
>
> ``(4) parents and students;
>
> ``(5) representatives of special populations;
>
> ``(6) representatives of regional or local agencies serving out-of-school youth, homeless children and youth, and at-risk youth (as defined in section 1432 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965);
>
> ``(7) representatives of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations in the State, where applicable; and
>
> ``(8) any other stakeholders that the eligible agency may require the eligible recipient to consult.

Section 134(e)(2)(E) further states that consultation with stakeholders should be on-going in order to "allow employer input, including input from industry or sector partnerships in the local area, where applicable, into the development and implementation of programs of study to ensure such programs of study align with skills required by local employment opportunities, including activities such as the identification of relevant standards, curriculum, industry-recognized credentials, and current technology and equipment."

Section 134(e)(3) adds that continued consultation should also "identify and encourage opportunities for work-based learning." This can only be accomplished with the support and involvement of local business and industry.

In addition, the Act specifically allows Perkins V funds to be used for the purpose of engaging business and industry partners (Section 135(b)(5)(B)). So while Perkins V does not specifically mandate the creation of advisory committees, it does address involvement of partners in committee-related functions and allows for the use of funds in this area.

Minnesota Requirements

The state of Minnesota specifically requires advisory committees at both the secondary and postsecondary levels. State statutes (secondary) and policy guides (postsecondary) reference these committees in the following ways:

Secondary

At the secondary school level, Minnesota has statutory guidance that lays out the requirements for, and responsibilities of, advisory committees[1]:

> **3505.1400 LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**
>
> *Subpart 1. Establishment of local advisory committee.*
>
> Each eligible recipient local education agency or postsecondary educational institution which receives federal assistance shall establish a local advisory committee on career and technical education. The local advisory committee may be established for schools, the community, or the region in which the eligible recipient is located.
>
> The local advisory committee shall be composed of representatives of the general public including representatives of directly related business, industry, and labor.
>
> Representatives from several program committees, or representatives of several school committees within a local education agency, having the requisite representation in the above paragraph, may join together to form a general local advisory committee.
>
> *Subpart 2. Duties of local advisory committee.*
>
> The local advisory committee shall advise the eligible recipient on the current job needs and the relevance of programs (courses) being offered by the local education agency or postsecondary educational institution in meeting current job needs. The local advisory committee shall assist the eligible recipient in developing its application for funds.

ABOUT THE MINNESOTA PERKINS CONSORTIA

Minnesota's school districts and the two-year colleges of Minnesota State were regionally self-formed into 26 Perkins Consortia in 2008 to promote collaboration. Each Perkins consortium consists of a minimum of one Minnesota college and one or more school districts. The purpose of these entities is to share information and resources and to streamline the connection between secondary and postsecondary education. The model is particularly valuable for business partners who can interact with multiple educational bodies at once, both in an advisory capacity and as a business partner interested in supporting experiential education and other activities.

» **For more on the existing consortia in Minnesota, including contact information for each entity, see:** ***minnstate.edu/system/cte/consortium_resources/documents/2019-Perkins-Consortia-Map-no-crop-final.pdf.***

» **Supporting resources can be found at:** ***minnstate.edu/system/cte/consortium_resources/index.html.***

Additionally, there is language specifically referencing the need for advisory committees in programs that wish to be approved by the state:

3505.2500 INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM APPROVAL

The commissioner of education shall approve programs on the following basis. Approval shall be on the basis of a complete program as defined in part 3505.2550. The local education agency shall provide evidence that its curriculum is designed to meet career and technical objectives which shall include:

A. in-depth exploration of occupations to assist in the career planning process,

B. development of occupational competencies designed to be recognized for advanced placement in postsecondary programs, and

C. development of occupational competencies necessary to enter an occupation.

Each program shall have a career and technical program advisory committee to advise the teacher, the local authorized administrator, and the local board; the advisory committee shall meet at least two times a year.

Minnesota Requirements (continued)

Postsecondary

Board policies from Minnesota State speak specifically to the requirement for advisory committees. Details from Procedure 3.30[2] are as follows:

POLICY 3.30 PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Each college shall establish, manage, and operate college program advisory committees in compliance with this policy and System Procedure 3.30.1.

An advisory committee must be created for credit-based academic programs determined by a college to be preparation for initial or continued employment.

A college program advisory committee must include, but is not limited to, employers, students, and faculty who possess the requisite knowledge and skills relevant to the program. One advisory committee may serve more than one program provided that committee members possess requisite knowledge and skills relevant to the programs.

In terms of specific actions, Procedure 3.30.1[3] includes the following:

PART 3. COLLEGE PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE PROCEDURE

Each college shall adopt a program advisory committee procedure that addresses the following topics:

- Purpose
- Membership, including students appointed in accordance with Board Policy 2.3, size, roles, requisite knowledge and skills, and terms
- Structure and governance
- Meeting schedule
- Work plan and priorities
- Communications
- Collaboration
- Career and transfer pathways
- Recommendations and documentation
- Evaluation

PART 4. OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Subpart A. Public accountability

Program advisory committee procedure, work plans, membership, and meeting minutes must be made available upon request.

Subpart B. Evaluation

Each college shall regularly evaluate its program advisory committees and use the information for continuous improvement.

TIP

Bylaws or charters, agendas, minutes, and evaluations become a part of the permanent record for your advisory committee.

Advisory Committee Basics

Minnesota State defines an advisory committee as, "A formally organized committee that provides expert advice and assistance to college professional-technical programs."[4] The statute governing advisory boards at the secondary level defines them by their function, namely that "The local advisory committee shall advise the eligible recipient on the current job needs and the relevance of programs (courses) being offered by the local education agency or postsecondary educational institution in meeting current job needs. The local advisory committee shall assist the eligible recipient in developing its application for funds."[5] While both definitions are correct, advisory committees can do much more than what is indicated here.

These definitions also set considerable latitude as to how these committees are set up in terms of structure, leadership, and management. In short, the state provides program leaders and their industry partners with the flexibility they need to customize their committee structure in a way that lines up with their needs and circumstances.

Functions of the Advisory Committee

There are a number of ways in which advisory committees can support the ongoing management of effective pathways and CTE programs. These include:

Ensuring Program Relevance

Program relevance—making sure that a program of study is aligned with industry expectations and needs—is one of the core functions of an advisory committee. CTE programs exist in order to introduce students to certain careers and industries and to prepare them to successfully enter those careers. Guidance from industry partners is a necessary and indispensable source of information to make sure programs are sharing current and accurate information and effectively relaying industry's priorities and needs.

Assessing Program Quality

As employers—the people who ultimately will be hiring graduates from the program—advisory committee members are perfectly positioned to assess the rigor and relevance of a program of study. Your committee members can share firsthand information on their hiring expectations and work with you to determine which of your curriculum and instructional efforts will help students meet those standards upon graduation.

Problem Solving

Program leaders who try to put a positive face on their program, never letting their industry partners see their struggles and challenges, are doing themselves and their partners a disservice. Your advisory committee is like your own personal Knights of the Round Table—a group of experienced professionals who are committed to your program and are ready to put their skills to work to ensure your success. Your committee members want to be true partners and help you work through your problems so that all succeed together.

Providing Opportunities for Students and Staff

While most advisory committees don't require members to provide experiential education opportunities for students as a condition for joining, it is a clear expectation and a smart thing for committee members to do. Like other employers, your committee members want to develop relationships with potential future employees and, in a larger sense, want to make sure the pipeline of future workers for their industry is full. Participating in work-based learning activities is one of the best ways to accomplish this.

In addition to working with students, advisory committees also can keep faculty and staff up-to-date on current practices in their fields. Committee members can make sure that educators have opportunities to experience the workplace firsthand through summer internships, site visits, professional development, and pairing with industry mentors. They can also share current trade publications and other resources.

TIP

Consider training new teachers and faculty members as part of their onboarding process on the role of the advisory committee, and working with committee members. You may consider an ongoing effort to have committee members connect with teachers and faculty outside of regular meetings, such as having the committee chair host an annual breakfast to talk with educators and get their feedback directly.

Advocacy

Your advisory committee members are able to say things that you may not be able to say, either due to modesty or regulations (such as advocating for bond issuances). As influential members of the community, they may also be able to speak to people you may not be able to reach directly. As such, they can be very effective advocates for your work, making people aware of your successes and highlighting the importance of ongoing support. In some schools or colleges, the advisory committee is expected to provide an annual report to a governing body. In others, school leadership, such as a dean or superintendent, sits on the committee to get direct feedback from community members.

Committees and Subcommittees

There is no single right way to set up your advisory committee. Depending on your needs, the size of your board, and your priorities, you may decide on having a single committee in which all members deal with all issues put before them; a large general committee and a small executive committee made up of a handful of program and advisory committee leaders; or a master committee with multiple subcommittees, either on a permanent or an as-needed basis, that focus on specific issues of interest to your program.

No matter which model you prefer, there are certain topics that you may want to assign either to a committee or to individual members.

- **Employer Needs** – Someone, or some group, should be tasked with continually gathering information on employer needs. This includes regional economic development trends, such as identifying growing industries and those being considered as recruiting priorities for the regional Economic Development Agency, professions in greatest demand in the program's field, and knowledge and skills that employers desire.
- **Experiential Education** – Advisory committee members should maintain a strong focus on identifying partners who can provide work-based learning opportunities as well as ensuring that standards are set for quality experiences.
- **Dual Credit/Articulation** – If the school has secondary or postsecondary partners, the committee should have a role in developing formal agreements to ensure alignment and, where possible, dual credit opportunities. If no such relationships exist, the committee can play a role in developing them.
- **Accreditation** – If a program is accredited by a professional body, the advisory committee will have a role in accreditation and should be involved in reviewing annual reports.
- **Curriculum and Instruction** – Since industry members of the advisory committees have a clear understanding of their workforce needs and also have experience in training current employees, they should be asked to play an ongoing role in the review of curriculum and instructional practices and offer advice on both. Many programs keep an ongoing "light touch" approach coupled with a periodic (perhaps every three to four years) intensive review to ensure alignment.
- **Professional Development** – While many CTE educators come with direct work experience in their industry of choice, the relevance of that experience fades over time as industry practices gradually change. One or more advisory committee members should maintain a focus on keeping teachers in touch with industry through direct professional development and/or through exposure to the workplace.

Committees and Subcommittees (continued)

» **Fundraising** – If there are fundraising needs, such as building a new facility or acquiring new resources or equipment, one or more committee members should play a supporting role in that effort. This person may also be involved in capital campaigns that require bond referenda.

» **Marketing/Recruitment/Retention** – Because most CTE programs are programs of choice (not required as part of a core sequence), marketing and recruitment are particularly important issues in attracting students. It is similarly important to build awareness of the program among prospective partners and community members to ensure support for experiential education and other efforts.

TIP

Delay discussions about subcommittees until your executive committee or the general group has set its goals and objectives. That will tell you what subcommittees you need.

Remember that many of your advisory committee members have professional skill sets that can benefit your program. You may have a marketing expert on your board who can apply their experience to building a plan for promoting your program to various audiences. If you recruit new members with specific skills in mind, you could very well end up with a multitalented committee ready to apply their professional skills to any number of challenges.

Advisory Committee Structure

When most people think about advisory committees, they assume that each pathway or CTE program has its own standalone committee, and that is often the reality. But in some circumstances, that can present challenges, particularly to your business partners. Suppose you're in an urban environment with multiple programs operating within the footprint of a major employer, and each program is asking that partner to take a seat on their individual boards. It doesn't make sense for an employer to sit on multiple boards to share essentially the same information. Or what about programs in rural areas, where there may be a limited number of industry partners in their service area?

In light of these examples, there is a strong case to be made for shared advisory committees that may involve programs among multiple schools sharing a single board (especially in urban areas), secondary and postsecondary institutions sharing a board (particularly in rural areas), or even a school hosting a single advisory committee that oversees multiple programs. (See the case study for St. Louis Park High School in Appendix 2).

TIP

Any discussion about shared advisory committees assumes that you have active relationships with other schools in your area. Make it a point to develop those relationships now, whether or not they ultimately result in shared committees—there are many other benefits.

Shared advisory committees between secondary and postsecondary levels have become more common over the past several years. Developing connections between secondary and postsecondary levels helps students graduating from high school to be better prepared to transition to a college environment. Having a single advisory board greatly increases the connection between these two levels and provides an excellent opportunity to think in terms of a continuous education model rather than thinking in terms of educational silos. See the diagram for examples of how committees can be structured.

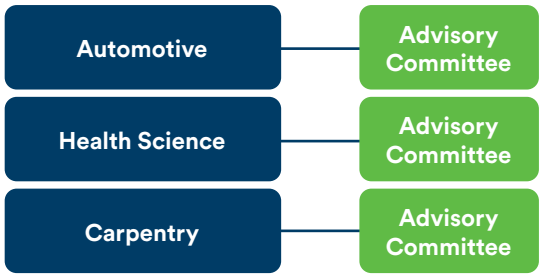
Many questions will come into play when considering whether to combine advisory committees:

- **Will there be scheduling issues for a combined committee?**
- **Can a single group meet and address all issues?**
- **Who or what voices may be missing from the group? (e.g., community members, Adult Basic Education (ABE), campus equity/diversity officers, service providers for disabilities, etc.)**
- **Is the program so unique that it does not have a counterpart at a different educational level?**
- **Is the area too large geographically?**
- **Is there competition among the programs?**
- **Would a combined committee provide a coordinated approach to meeting the needs of industry?**
- **Would it broaden the awareness of the program(s)?**

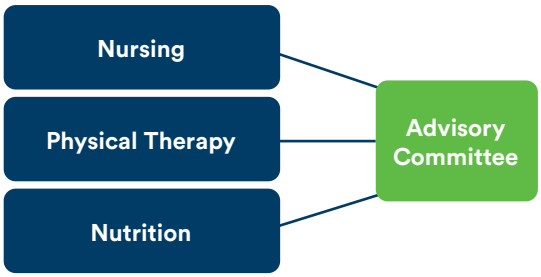
Because Minnesota has put a consortium structure in place that brings high schools and colleges together around a single Perkins V grant plan, every effort should be made to overcome these kinds of barriers. At the very least, informal sharing between secondary and postsecondary levels would be of great benefit.

Diagram: Possible Advisory Committee Structures

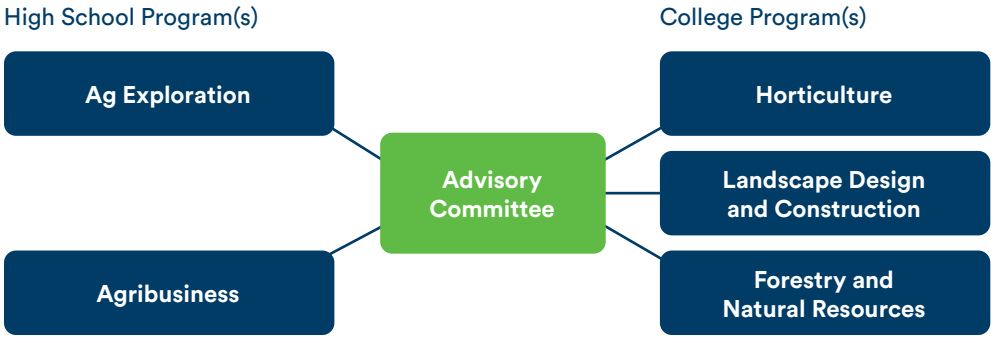
Option 1: Standard Model
College or high school programs with separate advisory committees



Option 2: Shared Model
College or high school programs with one shared advisory committee



Option 3: Combined Model
Combined college and high school programs with one shared advisory committee



Leadership Roles

The advisory committee should elect officers from its membership. Suggested officers include a chair, vice-chair, and secretary, with terms ranging from one to three years, though some smaller committees may simply have a chair and a secretary.

Chair

It is important that the chair be a person from industry whose opinions are respected. The chair sets the tone for the committee and often represents the program while out in the community, both of which require someone who is known and respected in their field.

The chair should possess skills and characteristics such as:

- Experience in the industry cluster or occupation that the program represents
- Ability to maintain focus on the purpose and objectives of the program and keep the committee's focus there as well
- Ability to manage meetings, plan and adhere to schedules, involve members in ongoing activities, and reach closure and consensus on issues
- Excellent oral and written communication as well as willingness to make appearances before the community to present, explain, and justify recommendations
- Ability to delegate responsibility as well as willingness to accept responsibility for the committee's actions
- Personality characteristics such as fairness, inclusiveness, tolerance, responsiveness to diverse perspectives, sound judgment, and attentiveness

Responsibilities of the chair include:

- Working with the school and community to plan and carry out the committee's program of work
- Developing items for the meeting agenda and assisting the secretary in handling details regarding meetings
- Leading meetings
- Keeping the group focused and on task
- Delegating tasks and follow-up work
- Engaging in planning/implementation/assessment of work as it relates to supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Appointing subcommittees
- Submitting and following up on recommendations to the school and other educational institutions

It is important that the chair be a person from industry whose opinions are respected.

Vice-Chair

The vice-chair should embody the same personal qualities and characteristics as the chair, support the chair in their work, and be ready to step into that leadership role when the chair is unavailable. In most committees, the vice-chair role is considered to be preparation for assuming the chair position in the following year.

Secretary

The advisory committee secretary oversees the administrative functions of the committee. The secretary could either represent industry or the school. Staff support from the school should be assigned to assist the secretary as needed.

The secretary's responsibilities include:

- Ensuring that minutes are taken at meetings
- Managing other administrative functions of the committee such as communication, including correspondence as needed
- Ensuring that the committee's work is recorded

Terms

Each advisory committee should establish its own criteria and guidelines for member recruitment, selection, appointment, and replacement.

Many committees, however, adhere to the following guidelines:

- The suggested maximum term for members is three years. It is recommended that members not be appointed to successive terms and that at least a one-year absence be considered before reappointment. A rotational three-year term of service allows for both continuity and change. One-third of the total membership would change each year, with new members being appointed as previous members' terms expire.
- The suggested term of office for the chair is one or two years. The chair should be allowed to serve more than one term as long as they maintain active board membership.

Committee membership, including the mix of members and the size of the board, should be reviewed and updated yearly to ensure broad-based representation of the industry and to ensure the work of the committee continues.

A rotational three-year term of service allows for both continuity and change.

Guiding Documents

Minnesota gives program leaders flexibility in documenting their activity. Some committees are formal, with a full set of written records on all committee activities; others do little more than keep meeting minutes. While you are not required to have bylaws, agendas, and written correspondence, understand that there are some compelling reasons for doing so.

Bylaws or Charters

While not every advisory committee has a written set of bylaws or a charter, they do provide some real advantages. By formally setting out the rules under which your committee exists, you reduce the amount of time you spend debating operational issues. (e.g., "How many members should we have?" or "How often should we meet?") You also reduce the potential for conflict when problems come up. (e.g., "Do we have grounds to ask a nonparticipating member to leave the committee?")

It is easiest to develop bylaws during the launch or re-launch of an advisory committee, but this work can be done at any time. Understand that this can be a long process, so take the time to do it right and make sure your efforts are inclusive, with all relevant stakeholders represented as you go forward.

TIP

Date your bylaws and keep a dated record of all changes that have been made to them over time so future committee members can see what was changed and when.

Readers will find a template in the appendix—keep in mind that this is just one example and that you should look at others and modify them to meet your needs exactly.

Agendas and Minutes

Experienced managers know that a published agenda can make the difference between a well-run meeting and something short of a three-ring circus, during which issues come up almost randomly, and nothing actually gets accomplished. The chair and the program lead should work together to develop a meeting agenda well in advance of the next gathering and distribute that agenda, along with any necessary support materials, at least a week or two prior to the meeting.

Minutes are a concise written summary of the discussions and actions that took place at a meeting and are important to help members remember what took place and provide the necessary context for upcoming meetings. They can also provide new members with a written history as part of their orientation process. They are distinct from meeting notes, which can be more expansive and free form, though they are often distilled from notes into a definitive record of discussions and actions. Minutes should be either written or approved by the secretary and distributed as quickly as possible after a meeting has taken place. They must also be archived someplace accessible to all members, ideally in both print and electronic formats.

Templates of both agendas and minutes can be found in the appendix.

Recruiting Members

When talking with CTE educators and administrators, one of the most commonly asked questions relates to finding business partners. All too often they feel as if they don't have enough contacts in industry and aren't sure how to approach them. If you feel that you don't know who to reach out to, how to contact them, or how to bring them into the fold, rest assured that you're not alone. This section will answer all of these questions, providing a game plan as you solicit advisory committee members and other business partners.

The Right Mix of Members

Advisory committees exist to allow industry to provide feedback and guidance to the CTE programs that serve their fields. As a result, it makes sense that the majority of your committee members should represent those professions and industries. Some, like the National Academy Foundation, believe that 75% or more of an advisory committee's members should represent industry; others think a simple majority would suffice. Minnesota does not require a specific percentage but confirms that the advisory committee structure should represent the voice of industry.

Many program leaders want to see an inclusive committee and ask representatives of multiple stakeholder groups to participate including students, alumni, parents, faculty, administrators, counselors, and representatives of other education agencies. Advisory committee members should also be representative of the learners served in your communities. There are ways of accomplishing this, such as seeking members who represent nontraditional careers, Black-, Indigenous- and People of Color-owned businesses, or service-providing organizations, for example.

All of the voices mentioned above should have some input into your program; however, you should think carefully about whether that input is key to providing a voice in decision-making and expertise not previously included on your advisory committee. Consider reserving committee membership to a specific group of people, with multiple opportunities for other stakeholders to provide input into their discussions through stakeholder forums, presentations to committees, and the sharing of survey results, etc. You can also consider setting up advisory structures for other stakeholders, such as periodic surveys or meetings. Just remember the primary purpose of the advisory committee—industry input into program goals and operations—and work from there.

Advisory committees exist to allow industry to provide feedback and guidance to the CTE programs that serve their fields. As a result, it makes sense that the majority of your committee members should represent those professions and industries.

What to Look for in a Member

When looking for advisory committee members, you'll want to keep an eye out for the professional characteristics that will provide you with an inclusive lens and broad view of the field, understanding of the impact on learners and communities, as well as personal qualities that can lead to an effective and collaborative body.

What to Look for in a Member (continued)

Professional Representation

As mentioned previously, there is certainly a place for educators, both from within your program and from other institutions (secondary or postsecondary partners, depending on your perspective), on your advisory committee, along with other select stakeholder representatives, but your primary focus should be on representatives from business and industry. Be conscious that when considering presidents and other senior executives, they may create an imbalance on your committee. Seek committee members who might represent marginalized people in your community, such as ethnic/race groups or individuals with disabilities. Consider seeking representation from the following segments of the corporate market:

- Large, established employers in key industries
- Small, fast-moving companies in key industries, including those who support hiring employees with disabilities
- Women-, American Indian-, and other Black-, Indigenous- and People of Color-owned businesses, contractors, or service-providing organizations
- Union representatives (trade, not teacher unions)
- Chamber of commerce, economic development agency, workforce development board, and/or women- and Black-, Indigenous- and People of Color-owned business associations
- Professional association or sector representatives, including those specific to women and other underrepresented groups, including individuals with disabilities
- Senior executive with board management experience
- Individuals with specifically needed skill sets, like social media expertise, cultural expertise with diverse communities, veterans, or services to disabilities, etc.

Personal Qualities

Beyond their professional affiliation, you want to attract a group of professionals who are positive, collaborative, and able to work together to make things happen for your program. Consider the following list of personal qualities to look for in members, recognizing that not every member has to exhibit every quality. (For example, you would be happy to find a member with a large network of contacts, even if they couldn't provide a significant amount of resources.)

- **Knowledge** – An understanding of their industry and the local economic environment
- **Experience** – At least five years of experience in their field (for those in a leadership role, even longer)
- **Network** – Personal and professional contacts who could be approached to support your program in some way
- **Resources** – The ability to provide funds, equipment, transportation, facilities, or volunteers (or all of the above!)
- **Interpersonal Skills** – You'll want every member to have some level of interpersonal skills, both for internal collaboration and for public outreach
- **Time** – You generally want to find busy people, since this indicates they're in demand and able to manage their time, but be wary of people who are too busy or perpetually overwhelmed
- **Passion** – Individuals who believe in your work and are energized by it
- **Responsibility** – Individuals who will honor their commitments

Finding Prospective Members

While many CTE program leaders feel that they don't have the contacts needed to build a strong and diverse advisory committee, they likely have more than enough personal and professional connections to do the job, even if they're new to the school or the community. Your processes and practices for recruitment should ensure intentional outreach to diverse candidates to serve on your board. These practices may include:

- Being conscious of your potential limitations in personal contacts that may unintentionally exclude persons or tokenize candidates as a "voice" for their diverse background.
- Recognizing your positionality (leadership level and associations) in terms of how others may perceive you or the advisory committee.

Consider the many connecting points listed below as a starting point for your outreach.

Teachers and Administrators

As a professional educator, you have regular access to your fellow teachers and administrators within your school walls, as well as a network of your peers throughout your service area. Whether they're CTE educators or not, they each have their own networks and may offer some leverage of these networks to help you. If you put out a call for partners, you might find a teacher or faculty member whose spouse works in the field, or a peer at another school who is willing to discuss a joint committee model.

DIVERSITY AND EQUITY

Imagine an advisory committee where each member brings unique experiences, strengths, and ideas to the table. We have a mutual responsibility to help ensure students are prepared to work in a diverse environment and collaborate with others who bring new and different perspectives. Leaders know that building a socially diverse team results in breakthrough discoveries, drives creative problem solving, and leads to better decision making.

Your membership should reflect the makeup of the community it currently serves as well as lay the groundwork for potential newcomers. Just as you would develop a new education program or product for the market to attract prospective students and new customers, building a diverse committee can also attract new members, increase membership, and result in strong and sustained partnerships.

- How are you designing your advisory committee to be more attractive to potential members?
- What creative recruitment strategies are you developing and employing?

Business leaders already know how to respond to the changing needs of the market. They regularly keep their eyes on the horizon and adapt to meet the diverse needs of their customers. Educators are the same way—continually changing and adapting to meet the needs of their students. How do you attract members from underrepresented populations such as women and minorities? Borrow marketing and recruitment strategies you're already using to increase your bottom line.

As committee members, the first thing to do is to make it a priority to increase your understanding of equity and diversity and the impact it has on education and the workplace. Take a look at your strategic plan or annual goals to be sure it is clearly reflected as part of your work. Conduct an analysis of your historical recruitment and engagement strategies. Your committee's effectiveness will be enhanced by the inclusion of multiple viewpoints and underrepresented voices.

Some schools, particularly those in urban districts, have hired equity coaches and poverty coaches to help staff understand the challenges and perspectives of underserved populations. These professionals can be leveraged by advisory committees to ensure an informed and inclusive approach to issues affecting teachers and students. Seek out these resources and invite a representative to address your advisory committee about these issues and ask them for guidance in building a more inclusive committee. Consider approaching professional organizations that represent underserved populations for guidance. These organizations will appreciate your interest and will likely be willing to work to help you address these challenges.

What to Look for in a Member (continued)

Vendors

Most CTE programs talk with local vendors on a regular basis, or partner community organizations may use vendors in your region that have diverse knowledge and expertise to offer. Did you ever consider that these vendors also serve businesses or service providers throughout your industry? They would be doing you and your prospective partners a favor by introducing you to each other. Vendors love to be in a position to help their customers.

Current Partners

There's a truism in sales that your current customer is your best customer, and that's certainly true in education. If you have existing business or service provider partners who are involved in other areas, ask if they would be interested in serving on the advisory committee or if they know of individuals either within or outside their organizations who would be good prospects.

Advisory Committee Members

Ask your current advisory committee members for referrals. Committee members have networks of colleagues who may be good additions to your board, consider the diverse organizations, self-employed professionals, and other potentially diverse talents (long-time volunteers, etc.) that can add new perspectives to the advisory committee.

Parents

Even if you're in your first year with a new program, you have a built-in network of contacts thanks to the dozens of students sitting in your room. Since CTE programs are often programs of choice, those students elected to be there, usually with their parents' permission or direct encouragement. Ask those parents for assistance—some might already be working in your industry and others might have contacts there that would be helpful. Consider the variety of other roles and ways that parents can participate, and be sensitive to those who may have limited access due to job hours, lack of transportation, language or accessibility needs, etc. Assess what they feel their strengths are and how they can contribute to the work and goals of the advisory committee.

Post/Secondary Partners

Most CTE programs and advisory committees already understand the importance of connecting with their secondary or postsecondary partners to ensure a seamless connection between the two. This is especially true in Minnesota with its consortium model. It would be worth discussing a shared advisory committee structure with these education partners or at least swapping leads on prospective members.

Former Students

If your program has been in place for a few years there are students who have graduated and entered the field. If you've kept in touch with these graduates, perhaps they can introduce you to other contacts within their new firms. As a graduate of your program, they serve as the perfect example of the value you provide, making committee service an attractive prospect.

TIP

If current students are asked to join the advisory committee, consider asking them to make a long-term commitment by remaining on the committee after they graduate. They are a valuable asset to the committee and provide great generational feedback and discussion input.

Personal Contacts

You're more than an educator, you have interests and connections throughout your personal life. It would be worth sharing your need for industry contacts with friends and others who share your interests. You never know who can connect you to the right person or people.

Established Networks

If your personal networks don't generate the contacts you need, consider the professional networks in your community, such as the Chamber of Commerce or the appropriate sector group. One of the primary roles of these networks is to connect members; let them know what you're looking for and ask them for introductions. If you're able, take an active role in some of their standing committees (most have education or workforce development groups), and ask if you can host a meeting at your location.

Making the Ask

Once you've got one or more connections in mind, it's time to reach out to them to introduce yourself and ask for their support. This isn't a cold call by any means. Remember that you have common interests and that you can provide them just as much value as they can provide to you. Follow the three steps below to gain a new committee member.

Introduction

If you followed the steps above, you're approaching a contact based on the recommendation of a friend or associate. If possible, ask that person to handle the introduction. The shared connection ensures that your prospective committee member will be willing to have at least an introductory conversation.

If you don't have someone who can introduce you, it's fine to make contact directly. Make the initial contact by email or phone (not letter), and keep your contact brief and to the point. Let them know that you've been told that they employ people in this field. Explain that you'd like to talk with them briefly because you prepare people to enter this same field and you'd like to get some guidance from them.

TIP

Invite a current advisory committee member, ideally your board chair, to participate in both your first and second meetings. Having a peer in the room will put your prospective partner at ease and demonstrate the importance this fellow businessperson places on your program.

First Meeting – Getting to Know Them

Once you've successfully made contact and agreed that you have enough shared interests to talk further, it would be wise to arrange a time to visit with them at their place of work. There are several reasons for this.

- By minimizing their travel and time commitment, you'll make it easier for them to agree to meet.
- Your prospective partner will realize that you're serious about developing a relationship.
- Whether you're able to pursue a professional relationship or not, going to their place of work will provide valuable real-world feedback on what's happening in the field.
- You'll have an opportunity to meet others within the prospect's company, building awareness of your program there and increasing your own network of future contacts.

During this first meeting, you should certainly share some information on your program, but you should listen much more than you talk. This is an opportunity to learn about your prospective partner, their firm, what's happening in their industry, and what they're looking for in future employees. Make it clear that you're there to learn and that you're sincere in your desire to build a program that prepares students for exactly the kinds of opportunities offered by this company.

What to Look for in a Member (continued)

This expressed interest should help your prospect understand the value that you can provide to them and make the next step attractive to them.

Note that some program leaders resist getting out of the office for site visits, on the notion that they don't have the time available given their other obligations. If you share that perspective, remember just what you're asking of your prospective partners—that they take time away from their own busy schedules to support your program. If you're not willing to invest that time, why should they?

TIP

Don't hesitate to ask people to join you. You can use the back of your business card or other outreach materials to list the ways in which you benefit industry, and/or the different types of experiential education with which you're involved. Rather than tell prospective partners what you need, ask the question: "Is there something you can help us with?"

Second Meeting – Getting to Know You

Assuming the first meeting went well, the next step is to invite your future partner to visit your program. Since you've already laid the groundwork by discussing your shared interests, most business prospects will welcome the chance to see your operation firsthand.

During the first meeting, you kept the focus largely on your business counterpart; during the second meeting you have an opportunity to share information on your efforts in much more detail, including offering a tour of your facilities. You should host such meetings during the school day so they can meet instructors and students and see your classrooms in action; there's little value to them in touring empty classrooms.

Once you've had a chance to learn about their operations and they've had the opportunity to experience yours, you should have established a rapport and enough common ground to discuss ways you might work together, including through participation in your advisory committee.

Clear Expectations

While it's wonderful to get a commitment from a new advisory committee member, your job isn't complete just because they've agreed to join you. Many advisory committees have lost new members because there were misunderstandings about the role or the scope of commitment, with newcomers quickly resigning upon learning more about the situation and what's expected of them.

To avoid this, make sure you give your new member a thorough and realistic assessment of the state of the program and its advisory committee. If there are challenges facing the program, such as funding issues, low performance, or high staff or management turnover, tell them that. Some will relish the challenge of righting a ship; the rest will at least be grateful that you allowed them to go in with open eyes.

Furthermore, do your best to set clear expectations for their role. Give them a job description of the advisory committee membership role. Let them know how long a term lasts, how many meetings they'll be expected to attend, other time commitments outside of meetings (such as subcommittee involvement), and whether members are expected to contribute to the program, either financially or in terms of volunteer hours or work-based learning opportunities. It's best to state these expectations in writing and provide a copy to all committee members. This won't guarantee their long-term involvement, but it will ensure that mismatched expectations will not be the reason for their leaving.

Orientation for New Members

The committee's success will depend, in part, on how well new members understand their roles and how quickly they can get up to speed. New and continuing advisory committee members should be regularly provided with information relative to the committee's purpose, function, structure, and goals as expressed in the committee's work plan.

To help new members become productive as quickly as possible, the committee should consider setting up a formal orientation process. New member orientation could include a review of the member guide, the committee's bylaws, and summaries of past accomplishments. Orientation meetings often involve tours of employer facilities and presentations about the program. Discussion of current issues that affect the program should be included.

Items in your orientation guide could include:

- Background on the school or college involved
- Admission policies
- Mission statement and other value statements
- Organizational chart
- Programs offered
- Career pathway overview
- Curriculum scope and sequence
- Facilities and equipment
- Staff biographies
- Roles and responsibilities
- Membership and governance issues
- Committee program of work and accomplishments

TIP

Ask experienced members to mentor newcomers.

A master copy of the orientation guide should be kept available electronically for easy distribution.

Typically, in addition to the orientation guide, new members may receive various resource materials, including course catalogs, class schedules, program brochures, student performance statistics (retention, placement, certifications earned, competitive performance), and local economic development news.

Advisory Committee Management

Once you have your advisory committee in place, with a clear sense of its purpose and goals (both of which are covered elsewhere in this handbook), your priority becomes execution—making sure the committee meets regularly and works effectively toward the objectives it has set. This chapter outlines effective practices in setting and running committee meetings and looks at the use of technology in board operations.

Meeting Logistics

Frequency

The frequency of the committee's meetings will be dictated by the committee's strategic plan—specifically, how much the committee wants to accomplish over the course of the year. Minnesota requires a minimum of two advisory committee meetings per year; however, many effective programs find that three or even four meetings per year has proven to be more productive for them. Program leaders may consider putting the number of meetings up for a vote among the executive committee or the entire group.

If you have subcommittees, they may plan additional subcommittee meetings during off months in order to tackle their specific objectives. Their progress is then reported to the full committee during their scheduled meetings. Subcommittee meetings may take place in-person or virtually.

Setting the times and dates for your meetings is much more of an art than a science. As a general rule, morning meetings are best, with people getting together before the start of the workday. This minimizes their time away from the office and prevents them from going to work and getting wrapped up in activities that would otherwise prevent them from attending. In terms of the date, the middle of the week works better for most people as does the middle of the month. It's best to ask your committee members what works for them and to consider the ebb and flow of work within their industry. In the retail automotive industry, for example, sales activity escalates at the end of the month and paperwork is due at the beginning of the month, meaning that the only time managers of auto dealerships can meet is the middle of the month.

Setting the times and dates for your meetings is much more of an art than a science. As a general rule, morning meetings are best, with people getting together before the start of the workday.

Setting

You'll need to decide where to hold your meetings and what you can do to draw people. There are different schools of thought among secondary and postsecondary programs, with secondary programs having much more success in holding meetings at employer locations and postsecondary programs reporting a strong preference among members to meet at the host college. In either case, you'll want to make sure you find a comfortable, distraction-free environment and ideally serve refreshments and snacks appropriate to the time of day. (Note that Perkins funds cannot be used for food or drink; consider asking your culinary department to provide refreshments or ask one of your members to sponsor coffee and donuts.)

Notice

Give your members as much advance notice of meetings as possible. They'll need plenty of lead time to block off the meetings on their calendars to prevent conflicts. Some programs set their meeting calendar for the entire year up front, meaning that members can schedule other things around your meeting rather than try to fit your last-minute meeting into their already packed days.

In addition to providing advance notice of meeting dates, work to provide relevant meeting materials to members well in advance of the meeting date, ideally two to three weeks ahead of time. This gives them the flexibility to review materials when it's convenient for them and come to your meeting fully prepared.

Agenda

Organized meetings are one of the keys to a successful advisory committee and having a published agenda is the most important element of an efficient and effective meeting. Your agenda should be set collaboratively by your board chair and head of the program. Depending on your priorities, items could include:

- Roll call
- Approval of previous minutes
- Introduction of guests
- Summarization of unfinished business
- Subcommittee reports
- New business and special reports
- Review of next meeting time, date, and location
- Adjournment

Agenda topics will be dictated by the committee's priorities and goals, but sample agenda topics could include:

- Academic preparation and support of students
- Labor market trends
- Impact of federal and state legislation
- Emerging fields and potential new courses and programs
- Curriculum development
- Instructional or staff development
- Facilities or equipment requirements
- Technical skill assessments
- Recruitment of students
- Marketing of programs
- Work performance of graduates
- Accreditation reports
- Program review processes and outcomes

See the appendix for a sample agenda template.

Note that programs involving accreditation may have specific requirements for advisory committee members, including documents that must be compiled and/or reviewed, board makeup, frequency of meetings, and inclusion of certain items on the meeting agendas. Consult with your accrediting body to determine what requirements your board should address as part of its efforts.

Having a published agenda is the most important element of an efficient and effective meeting.

Meeting Logistics (continued)

Running the Meeting

Meetings are usually run by the committee's chair, though in some cases there may be a staff person managing the meeting function. Committee chairs vary in their level of formality. Some may require formal processes such as using Robert's Rules of Order, while others may have a more relaxed demeanor. The most appropriate approach may be dependent on the size of the committee. In either case, you'll want to ensure that there is time for discussion but also that the meeting moves ahead efficiently so that it can end on time. Note that on-time completion is important to your business partners, who will have other obligations during the day and want to get back to their offices when expected.

When voting is called for, you may decide to go with a quorum (simple majority of elected members), a majority of members present at that particular meeting, or a vote of three-quarters or unanimous approval. This will be dependent on the sensitivity of the issue at hand, with proper procedures spelled out in your bylaws.

If you need to schedule votes outside of committee meetings, consider establishing rules for phone-based or email discussions and voting. You may decide that all such votes must be unanimous to be passed (as is current practice among many trade associations) or that you'll follow specific protocols to make sure each member has an opportunity to ask questions or share their thoughts.

Committee chairs vary in their level of formality. Some may require formal processes such as using Robert's Rules of Order, while others may have a more relaxed demeanor.

Minutes

All advisory committees and subcommittees must have written minutes. Minutes are the official record of the committee's activities. They help members understand the group's progress, concerns, decisions, and actions.

The advisory committee's secretary records minutes. It is not necessary to record all discussions. Minutes generally include a listing of those who attended the meeting (name, occupation, and organization), a summary of each issue discussed, and any decisions, assignments, or recommendations made.

Written minutes should be submitted to the committee chair for review and signature. The minutes should be sent out as soon after the meeting as possible. You may also want to include them a second time when you send out the agenda for the next meeting.

A record of all past meeting minutes and a membership roster should be kept at the school and possibly on the school's website. Note that consistent documentation of committee meetings can be used to support grant applications.

Leveraging Technology

Several years ago, using technology to facilitate committee meetings was a new concept. Today, however, with so much of our work life seamlessly integrated with online resources and tools, it is an essential element in managing the actions of your group. A few opportunities to consider:

- You should have a common online resource to store all committee documents, including bylaws, agendas and meeting minutes, new member orientation materials, contact lists, and resource materials (information about the program, brochures, press releases, etc.). Both Dropbox and Google Drive are commonly used free resources.
- Google also offers online word processors and spreadsheets allowing collaborative work on documents for virtual teams. When using online collaboration tools to work on sensitive documents, give some thought to data security and sharing privileges.
- Consider creating a website or a blog specifically dedicated to the advisory committee which would allow you to make the committee and its actions more accessible to the public and provide them with a way of contacting you. Blogging sites are generally free (e.g., Blogger.com), and a website presence could simply be incorporated as a page on the school or program website.
- Obviously, email is an essential tool for member communications and meeting announcements. If you want to keep an accessible record of communications for group access, you can also consider starting a Listserv or creating a bulletin board.
- Given that some board members may be traveling and unavailable for on-site meetings, establish a conference call line and share it so that those people are able to dial in for your meetings.
- If your members are spread out, there are concerns about inclement weather, or you're simply trying to reduce the number of on-site meetings you hold (a particular issue with subcommittees), look into virtual conferencing resources, like GoToMeeting, Webex, or Zoom. These provide conference call capabilities as well as the ability to view users' screens for presentations or document sharing.

TIP

Establish a protocol for people dialing in to on-site meetings. It's easy for those people to be forgotten since they're not physically in the room with you. Make it a practice to check with them to ensure they can hear the conversation and whether they have anything to add.

- If you plan to use electronic technology as a standard committee practice, consider addressing its use in your bylaws. This includes when its use is appropriate, how discussions and votes are handled, and what elements of your work will be included in the public record.

ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER

Each advisory committee will decide how formally they wish to conduct its business; however, many adhere to the standards and practices set by Robert's Rules of Order. When followed, these rules establish accepted protocols for all aspects of discussion and decision-making, removing concerns about preferential treatment and unfair processes.

» See robertsrules.org for an overview of these rules and how they can be implemented.

Advisory Comittee Goal Setting and Planning

Much of what advisory committees do on a day-to-day basis is operational or tactical, such as receiving updates on current activities, soliciting business support for work-based learning initiatives, or reviewing reports on program and student outcomes. Advisory committees can also play a strategic role, however, helping you to visualize the future of your program and chart a course for reaching it.

The Big Picture

It's easy for people to get lost in day-to-day activities, and that's especially true for educators. In addition to the time actually spent in class with students, there's planning, reviewing student work, meeting with parents, setting up employer partnerships, going to meetings, and much more. With all this, it can be hard to break away and think about the big picture. Sometimes it's difficult to see the forest because of all the trees.

This is why strategic planning is so important. All those activities are supposed to be a means to an end, and if you haven't revisited the vision for your program in some time, it's entirely possible that you and your fellow educators are working very hard toward the wrong objectives.

Fortunately, strategic planning isn't hard, as long as you're willing to take the time to do it—and it's also an activity ideally suited to collaboration with your advisory committee. Not only are they already removed from the minute-by-minute chaos of the instructional day, they're already in touch with what your program should be accomplishing and they can help you center your focus accordingly.

The key question is: why does your program exist? The answer seems obvious: to help students learn about a profession or industry and prepare to successfully enter that field; but to be actionable, you actually need to go down one or two levels. Consider the following questions:

- **To help students** – But which students? Has your student population changed, and does the new composition have a different starting point? Suppose you have traditionally taught English speakers, and the student body now attracts many who don't speak English as their first language. Or suppose your program has been traditionally almost entirely male, and the industry is very interested in attracting more female students to the field.
- **The profession or industry** – Is your information current? Do you know whether there's still demand for the kinds of positions you've been targeting and whether the set of knowledge and skills you've been focusing on are still current? Are there new opportunities in your industry of which you're not aware?
- **Preparing students** – Are you effectively preparing students? Are there new instructional strategies or work-based learning models that would be more effective in reaching students? Are you working with the right equipment? Is your curriculum aligned with current and projected industry needs? Is the curriculum equity-minded to better connect with diverse learners and attract those nontraditional by gender? Are your teachers up to date with their knowledge and skill sets? Do they have opportunities for professional development or have resources to engage and support special populations?

These are questions that you likely wouldn't consider in a day-to-day environment, but they are important—and a strategic planning effort is the solution for dealing with them.

Setting the Stage

A strategic planning session is different from a regular committee activity and it should be treated as such. It happens infrequently and requires preparation time for all involved. It should also be a more inclusive activity, with staff and committee members hearing not only from educators and industry partners but from other stakeholders such as parents, students, and administration.

Planning

There are two keys to a successful strategic planning session: focus and preparation. Focus is critically important, but fairly simple. You need to decide exactly what question or questions you're trying to answer through this process. It can be a grand-scale question, such as, "Are we aligned with the industry?," which brings into play several supporting questions, such as:

- **What positions are employers hiring for?**
- **What equipment and technology should students be proficient with?**
- **What workplace and technical skills should students have?**
- **What certifications should students pursue?**

And so on. Or you can focus on much more specific, and possibly pressing, questions such as, "How do we recruit more students into our program?," or "What resources or strategies do we need to ensure an equity lens for strategic planning, implementation, and evaluation of our goals?"

Your advisory committee chair and program leader should work together to define the focus and set specific outcomes for this exercise well in advance of the actual event, at least a few weeks prior and ideally more. You'll want a good amount of lead time so you can handle preparations for the working session, including gathering needed information and distributing it to meeting participants.

Setting the Stage (continued)

Think carefully about what kinds of information would be helpful in giving meeting attendees a full set of facts on the issues at hand. Certainly, you'll want data on student activity and outcomes and reports on any new regulations you're expected to follow (these could come from state or federal law, accreditation requirements, or other sources). You might want to consider gathering some new data on your own—perhaps a satisfaction survey of students and staff or interviews with employers on emerging workforce requirements in their markets. You might also consider convening some pre-planning sessions to have formative discussions, perform a SWOT (i.e., Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis, conduct an equity self-assessment, or perform other groundwork.

You'll also want to consider your invitation list. Do you only want advisory committee members there? What about faculty and staff, either for the full day as full participants or only to answer questions and provide firsthand insights during one segment? As a rule, the more inclusive you are, the better, as the people affected by your decisions will be more likely to support the committee's decision if they participated in the process.

The most effective strategic planning sessions are those where everyone comes prepared, having been fully informed of the challenge and given as much detail as needed to discuss key issues and make decisions. If you wait until the day of the meeting to distribute background information, you'll spend most of your day educating attendees on the issues. Discussions will be shallow, and decisions may not be as well-considered and firm as you would like.

Logistics

Ideally, your strategic planning session will take place off-site, far from the distractions of the school, but CTE programs face challenges in doing this. Aside from the time challenge, they are not allowed to use funds for refreshments, making it difficult to host an off-site event.

TIP

While an off-site meeting may be difficult to plan, given time and funding limitations, the benefits of getting away from the school or office and avoiding their related distractions are extremely helpful during strategic planning efforts.

There are ways of accommodating these challenges, however. Planning meetings can take place during the summer when year-end data will be more readily available and both businesspeople and educators have fewer obligations. One of your business partners may be willing to donate space for the meeting; another may agree to cover the cost of refreshments. The key is just to do what's possible, given the available conditions.

During the day of the meeting, make sure you have copies of all relevant documents and typical meeting materials such as pads of paper, pens, white boards or easels, markers, and sticky notes. You'll also want at least one person taking notes to maintain a record of the events and how the day's discussions led to your decisions.

Hosting the Planning Session

In order to get the most out of your session, consider establishing a formal agenda that takes you from a review of the purpose of the meeting through to decisions and plans. The following sequence may be helpful:

- **Frame the discussion** – Start the day by restating the key question(s) that brought you together. Make sure everyone understands the focus of the day and what you expect to accomplish. Make sure participants understand the voting model: you may decide to approve plans by a simple majority vote, or you may couch the end result as recommendations that will be taken back to the executive committee for fleshing out.
- **Review of market information** – There's no need to rehash all of the information that was disseminated prior to the meeting; instead, you'll want to lead a discussion on that information, asking people what they felt were the critical data points, and building a consensus on the facts that will influence the decisions you'll need to make. Be sure to include data that identifies equity gaps among student enrollment and industry demand as a part of the discussion of your CTE programs.
- **Discussions** – Much of your day will center on answering key question(s) in light of the available information. Depending on the size of your group, you can do this as a single body or in smaller groups that later report out for a second round of conversation.
- **Setting short- and long-term goals** – The solutions identified by participants may lack specificity; you'll need to turn those into a specific set of action steps in the form of short-term and long-term goals. Given the time constraints of a part-day or full-day meeting, this may be limited to deciding on a scope of action intended to build a full plan.
- **Planning a measurement model** – If a specific plan is developed, make sure you and your partners decide on how success will be measured and in what ways it is an inclusive and participatory process involving feedback from diverse groups. This may be quantitative or qualitative in nature (or both, such as with design thinking), depending on what you set out to achieve, but it's important to be able to determine if and when you've reached your objective.

Once you've held this meeting, it is important to share the results and act on the recommendations put forth in some way. People will want to know that their time and effort mattered, and by implementing an agenda based on their feedback you'll increase their level of support and engagement going forward.

SELF-EVALUATION OF THE COMMITTEE'S WORK

Goal setting and planning require you to look forward. You and your committee members may also find it helpful to look backwards as well, reflecting on the previous year and gathering lessons that may help future efforts. As noted on page 8, Minnesota State requires that advisory committees conduct regular self-evaluations of their efforts. Reflect on the past year as a group during a retreat or committee meeting, or on an individual basis through member surveys. Some of the questions you might ask include:

- **What new things did we do this year that should become a standard practice?**
- **How could we have avoided mistakes or missed opportunities?**
- **Have we been intentional about inclusion of diverse perspectives?**
- **What practices would have made us more effective or productive?**

Asking questions like these can produce insights that will help you perform better in the future.

APPENDIX 1: EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

One of the core elements of career and technical education is experiential learning, in which students get to experience firsthand, real-world applications of what they're learning through direct interaction with employers and professionals in their fields. This section outlines the various types of experiential education, explains the benefits, and explores the role that advisory committees have in ensuring strong and effective experiential learning components of the programs they support.

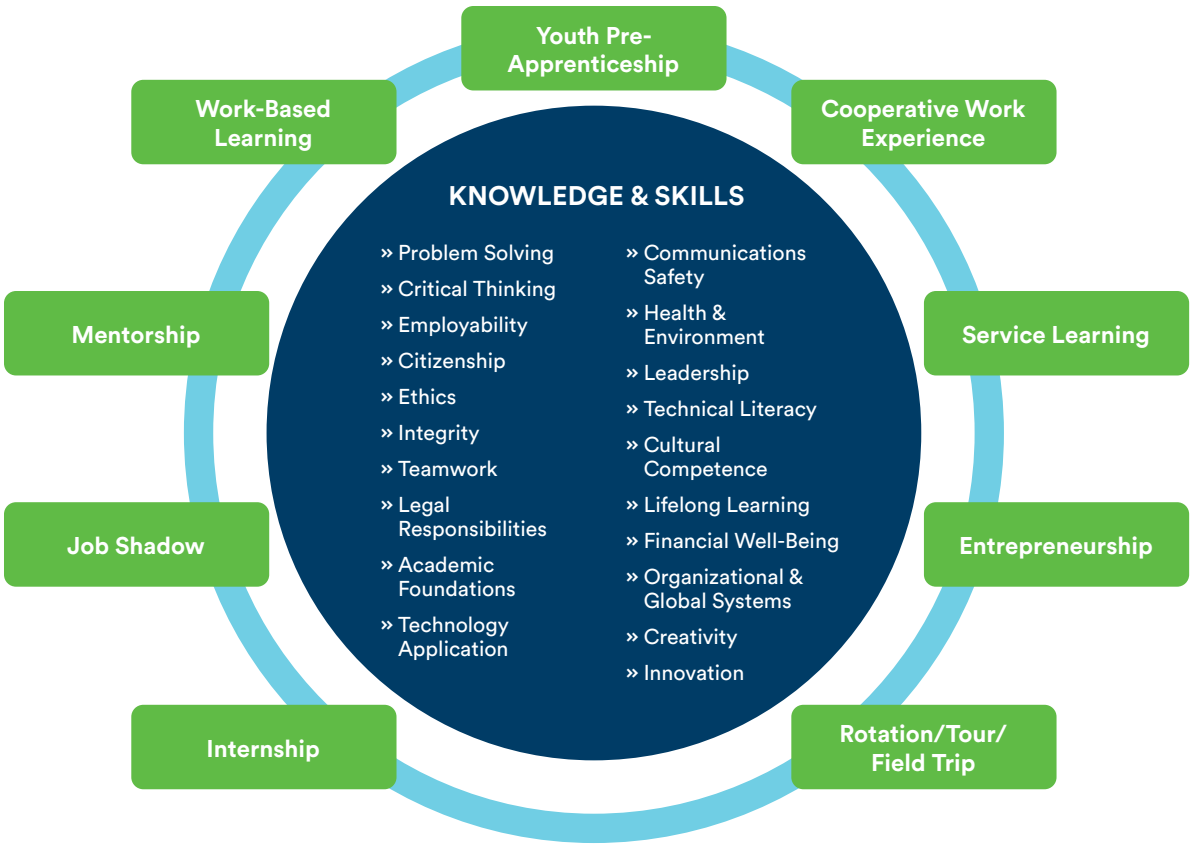
Types of Experiential Education

The information in this section was provided by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE).

Experiential learning is an educational tool designed to provide career and college preparation for all learners through real-world experiences. Experiential learning includes exposure to workplace skills as well as career information, exploration, experiences, readiness, and mentorship. There are many different delivery models for experiential learning, and this summary briefly describes some experiential learning opportunities that are occurring throughout Minnesota. This summary can also aid in the expansion and development of additional experiential learning models based on specific learning outcomes and engagement opportunities.

The Experiential Learning Opportunities model below illustrates the various experiential learning on-ramps for secondary students to both explore and develop their career development pathways.

Diagram: Experiential Learning Opportunities



Pre-Kindergarten – Adult Experiential Learning Opportunities in Minnesota

Pre-K – High School Experiential Learning is not a linear or hierarchal process or plan. It considers the individual learning process rather than individual types of experiential learning. These various learning activities develop students' knowledge, skills, and values from direct experiences outside of the traditional academic or classroom setting. Experiential learning combines learning through reflection on doing or applying knowledge and skills. Because experiential learning is student-centered, the types of experiential learning activities selected and contexts are uniquely constructed and led by the student's interests, aspirations, needs, and/or learning goals.

The center of the experiential learning opportunities model exemplifies important foundational qualities, skills, knowledge, and habits of mind which are essential for holistic and balanced work and career readiness. This foundational knowledge and skills are intentionally positioned in the center of the Minnesota Career Fields, Clusters & Pathways chart[6], and form the base from which to build career and college readiness. Sometimes called "soft skills" or more currently labelled as "employability skills," they are essential for success in careers and should get explicit focus from teachers who cultivate our future talent. The STEM field recognizes the value of work-based learning and experiential learning as a method to impart these skills to students. The 2015 report "Focus on Employability Skills for STEM Workers: Points To Experiential Learning" asserts that employability skills, "should be included in a student's educational experience of all learning levels starting in elementary schools."

To set the table for clarity of state collaboration, three state agencies, including Minnesota Department of Education, Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), and Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) have joined together to establish shared vocabulary/terms encompassing several common experiential learning labels and definitions. Additionally, to enhance awareness and understanding of what experiential learning occurs along the youth to adult learning trajectory, the state has identified each experiential learning type or skill acquisition stage within four categories which span both youth and adult experiential learning; career exposure, career exploration, career development, and career/work readiness.

Here are the commonly agreed upon definitions by category for the state of Minnesota:

Career Exposure Experiences

- **Expert Presenters** from community organizations, industry businesses, and postsecondary institutions visit classrooms and share information about their careers or areas of expertise, educational background, and personal choices that both prepare and facilitate their career success.
- **Tours and Field Trips** engage students to explore the knowledge and skills of different occupations within an industry cluster and develop basic awareness of employability skills in a number of different departments and career fields.
- **Entrepreneurship** provides students with a model and may offer opportunities to take a leadership role that demonstrates initiative, innovation, and ownership to organize and operate their own business or project in an alternative work program or as a part of course requirements.

» **To view the 2015 report, *Focus on Employability Skills for STEM Workers*, see:**
stemconnector.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Focus-on-Employability-Skills-Paper-1.pdf

Types of Experiential Education (continued)

Career Exploration Experiences

» **Job Shadowing** is a short-term experience that is intended to help students explore a range of career objectives and begin to identify a career field or pathway and to start toward a career plan. In job shadowing, students make brief worksite visits to spend time with individual workers learning what knowledge, skills, and education their job entails. The length of the job shadowing experience is based on individual career objectives designed and agreed to by the participating business or industry, student, teacher, and parent.

» **Service Learning** is a form of experiential learning whereby students apply content knowledge, critical thinking, and good judgment to address genuine community needs. Service learning is a way of teaching and learning that engages all learners in hands-on projects in the community to meet learning objectives and mutually benefit both the student as well as strengthen communities. For example, students in a high school CTE classroom may take samples from an area lake and examine them for information that could be useful to a local pollution control agency in addressing environmental issues.

» **Internships** are usually short-term work experiences but can last 40 hours or more. Internships extend outside the classroom to allow the job-seeker to build experience. Internships generally involve participants working in professional settings under the supervision and monitoring of practicing professionals. Internships can be paid or unpaid and may or may not involve academic credit. Strong internship programs will provide substantial, meaningful work assignments, training, necessary workspace and resources, and structured evaluation/reflection.

For the secondary education system, students can explore and gain experience in a specific occupation and acquire new skills or explore different aspects of a career field or pathway under an internship. As an extension of what a student has learned, internships have specific objectives to be reached which augment a career and technical education program and academic coursework. Internships are generally offered to 11th and 12th graders. The length of the internship is based on individual objectives that need to be defined in the agreement between the business/employer and the school. Students participating in internships must be supervised by a licensed work-based learning teacher. This type of agreement involves a written document and training plan between school, employer, student, and parent.

» **Cooperative Education (Co-Op)** provides students with work experiences related to the student's major, career field, or pathway goal. The typical program plan is for students to utilize both classroom study and discipline-related employment, thus gaining a year or more of career-related work experience before graduation. These co-op positions are either unpaid or paid and the vast majority involve some form of academic credit. This type of agreement involves a written document and training plan between school, employer, student, and parent.

Career Development Programs

- **Field Study and Practicums** engage participants to complete a project related to their chosen career and academic instruction at a worksite. Typically for students in higher education, a practicum allows students to demonstrate knowledge in a field and they may use equipment not available through an educational institution.
- **Career Fields and Pathways** include well-connected and transparent education, training, support services, and credentialing programs with many entry points. For example, Minnesota FastTRAC Adult Career Pathways programs include participant-focused education and training with contextualized instruction as well as integrated ABE and technical skills instruction.
- **On-The-Job Training (OJT)** provides participants the opportunity to learn the skills, knowledge, and competencies for a specific job within the workplace. Although OJT is typically provided by an employer, external providers can be used, especially with specialized equipment. Under OJT, participants are hired as employees of the company. In the context of workforce development, the training a participant receives under OJT may be funded by an outside entity. In this situation, the employer signs a contract outlining the training schedule, expressing desire to hire the participant in unsubsidized employment at the end of the OJT, and detailing reimbursement to the employer.
- **Customized Training and Incumbent Worker Retraining** are trainings designed to meet the specific needs of an employer or group of employers. They are typically conducted with a commitment to employ a participant or continue employing a participant (if provided to incumbent workers). Curriculum for this training is developed either by or in collaboration with employers and is typically provided by an academic institution or third party training provider. Training may be held at an academic institution, the workplace, or both. In the case of incumbent worker retraining, the training is used to teach new skills to existing employees of an organization, often to accommodate new technology.
- **Dual-Training Programs** are employment-based and are designed to provide employees structured on-the-job training and related technical instruction to ensure the development of occupational competencies.
- **Registered Apprenticeship** is regulated by the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry. These programs are employment-based and designed to provide employees structured on-the-job training and related technical instruction to ensure the development of occupational competencies. The structure and training of the apprenticeship is established in a "standards of apprenticeship." As workers increase their skills through a registered apprenticeship, they earn wage increases. At the end of a registered apprenticeship, the participant is considered a "journeyworker" and has a nationally recognized state-issued credential. Registered apprenticeships in Minnesota can last between one and six years, but must entail at least 144 hours of related educational training and at least 2,000 hours of hands-on training.

Types of Experiential Education (continued)

Career/Work Readiness Experiences and Programs

» **Mentoring/eMentoring** is a professional relationship in which an experienced person (mentor) assists another (mentee) in developing skills and knowledge that will enhance the less-experienced person's professional and personal growth. Mentoring can be used for both personal and professional development. For youth, mentoring can provide positive role models and help with career exploration. For adults, mentoring can provide insight into how to effectively navigate a career or workplace. Mentoring may take place in a short-term, structured program, or it may be a lifelong relationship and may be done through an eMentoring delivery system.

» **Youth Apprenticeship** is approved by the Career and College Success Division at the Minnesota Department of Education. Youth apprenticeships are paid experiences for 11th and 12th grade students. The youth apprenticeship requires a written agreement and training plan between school, employer, student, and parent/guardian and is governed by an industry-recognized checklist. In some instances, youth apprenticeships provide postsecondary credit and/or credentials. Youth apprenticeship students must be supervised by a licensed work-based learning (WBL) teacher in a state-approved WBL program.

» **Pre-Apprenticeship Programs** are designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in a Registered Apprenticeship program. Typically, these programs will include both workplace skills development as well as foundational work for specific occupational competencies such as applied mathematics, tool and equipment recognition, and safety training.

» **Community-Based Learning** experiences are activities not necessarily connected to education and may involve activities such as job shadowing, worksite visits or field trips, work in a business or management of a business, participation in a club or organization-based enterprise, and work in and/or operation of a school-based enterprise. These experiences may require a licensed educator to supervise the activity, depending on the connection to a school-based program.

» **Work-Based Learning** programs are approved by the Minnesota Department of Education. WBL students, if they are enrolled in a cooperative WBL experience, internship, or youth apprenticeship, must be supervised by a licensed WBL teacher in a state-approved WBL program. These programs describe learning which occurs outside of the classroom at a location where goods or services are produced. It involves learning experiences and activities that include actual paid or unpaid work experience, such as structured cooperative work experiences, internships, and youth apprenticeship.

See the table at the end of this appendix for the different levels of experiences for companies to develop and expand relationships with schools and organizations.

Benefits of Experiential Learning

There is a solid body of research pointing to the impact of career and technical education in general, and experiential education in particular. Some examples:

- **Work-based learning can keep students in school.** According to a 2006 survey of high school dropouts by The Gates Foundation, "81 percent of survey respondents said that if schools provided opportunities for real-world learning (internships, service learning projects, and other opportunities), it would have improved the students' chances of graduating from high school."[a]
- **Research compiled by the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) indicates that participation in career and technical education, with its emphasis on experiential education, leads to school-based outcomes such as higher graduation rates, greater levels of persistence, increased academic outcomes, and the development of problem-solving skills.** CTE participation also leads to work outcomes such as better understanding of careers and skills needed in the workplace, increased wages and earnings, and stronger academic, technical, and employability skills.[b]
- **Experiential education leads to increased student motivation and better decision making.** In 2010, an organization in the UK compiled a summary of the research on the ways in which students benefit from working with employers.[c] They found evidence of the following impacts:
  - There is evidence to show that employer engagement typically makes learning more enjoyable and interesting for young people. A 2008 Institution for Education Business Excellence (IEBE)-led survey of young people who had recently completed a work placement showed that 49 percent found it "very enjoyable" with a further 31 percent calling their experience "mostly enjoyable."
  - Professor Andrew Miller's in-depth investigation of the impact of business mentoring found that the "majority of students said that mentoring has affected their wish to do well at school. Three quarters of these said that mentoring has had a lot of impact on their motivation in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects." In addition, the best engagements of employers have "significantly enhanced [pupil] learning and enthusiasm for the subject" of study.
  - A 2010 survey by KPMG of 151 primary and secondary school leaders indicated that 75 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that involvement of employers in pupil learning specifically has a positive impact on attainment.
  - A series of studies in the UK indicate that there is evidence to show those young people who have had the most chance to interact with employers at school are better placed to make informed and confident choices about future careers.
  - Evidence suggests that there is an important link between employer engagement in education and ultimate social mobility.

a. docs.gatesfoundation.org/Documents/thesilentepidemic3-06FINAL.pdf
b. acteonline.org/uploadedFiles/What_is_CTE/Fact_Sheets/CTE_Works_Research_2016.pdf
c. educationandemployers.org/research/what-is-to-be-gained-through-partnership/

The Role of Advisory Committees in Experiential Education

Research compiled by the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) indicates that, "work-based learning helps students apply and extend classroom learning, gain motivation and understanding, and explore careers and develop critical understanding of the work environment."[7] Coordination and implementation of experiential education initiatives are not the responsibility of advisory committee members; they remain the responsibility of paid staff members. That said, there are several ways in which advisory committee members can support the work being done by programs.

Participate/Model

As noted elsewhere, most programs don't require advisory committee members to participate in experiential learning activities, but they do strongly encourage it. Members should make a strong effort to get involved in these activities and use their involvement as a model for others in their companies and in the community.

Prioritize

As they work on strategic plans and provide guidance into budgets and staff allocations, committee members should prioritize work-based learning and suggest it as a critical focus for the program. This may also involve establishing an experiential education subcommittee to maintain an ongoing presence in this area.

Set Expectations

To the extent appropriate, advisory committee members should advocate for the development of infrastructure, consistent procedures, quality standards, and assessment models to professionalize the program's approach to this function and gather data on student outcomes.

Lead

Many advisory committees assume direct responsibility for recruiting business partners, either assigning all members with the task or establishing a subcommittee to direct this function. While staff members actually implement the learning activities, it is the committee that finds the partners and placement opportunities.

Promote

As the program's independent advocates in the community, committee members should make experiential education one of their top messaging points, explaining its value on student, workplace, and community outcomes.

Table: Levels of experiences for companies to develop and expand relationships with schools and organizations.

Following are descriptions of the most common and effective career awareness/exploration/preparation opportunities that are a part of business and industry programs nationwide.

START SIMPLE

Introductory experiences for companies to build relationships with schools and organizations

- Guest Speakers
- Informal Talks with Others in Career Fields of Interest
- Resume Reviews
- Mock Interviews
- Info Sessions
- Informational Interviews
- Career Fairs/Career Expos/ Job Fairs
- Student Leadership Organizations

INCREASE ENGAGEMENT

Next-level experiences for companies to expand relationships with schools and organizations

- Advisory Committees
- Teacher Externships
- Job Shadows
- Speed Networking Events
- Career Days
- Career Workshops
- Industry Tours
- Hands-On Training

ESTABLISH LONGEVITY

Most engaged level of experiences for companies to solidify relationships with schools and organizations

- Cooperative Education/ Co-Ops
- Internships
- Mentorships
- On-the-Job Training (OJT)
- Pre-Apprenticeships
- Apprenticeships
- Registered Apprenticeships

Minnesota State College Southeast

Minnesota State College Southeast (MSCS), serving southeast Minnesota and western Wisconsin through its campuses in Winona and Red Wing, serves one of the most manufacturing-dense regions of the nation. Here, corporations such as Fastenal Manufacturing, 3M, Red Wing Shoe, Watlow, Benchmark Electronics, Winona Canoe, RTP, and numerous others operate in close proximity to both campuses. These manufacturers have a vested interest in the success of the Engineering, Manufacturing & Trades programs at Southeast. Local manufacturers realize their workforce is aging with many skilled and experienced employees approaching retirement age. In addition, they know that to encourage young people to remain in the community long-term, it's in their best interest to help provide high-skill and high-wage employment opportunities that allow for continuing growth. As such, they have become committed to and invested in the highly technical programs at Minnesota State College Southeast.

In order to establish a reinvigorated advisory committee, Travis Thul, Dean of Trade & Technology, sought out the local Chamber of Commerce, industry leaders, and regional stakeholders to fully understand employers' and communities' needs. These relationships yielded an outpouring of support from technical professionals willing to forgo their individual corporations' competition for talent, and instead collaborate toward building a modern and state-leading technical college. These partners knew that by inspiring and molding the students of today, they'd be building their companies' workforce of tomorrow.

This motivated, empowered, and rebuilt Precision Manufacturing Advisory Committee quickly became involved in numerous aspects of the manufacturing program at Southeast. Immediate contributions included overhauling curriculum, facility renovation, grant development, fundraising, internships, and serving on hiring committees. As a result, MSCS Precision Manufacturing programs evolved to align with industry standards and students gained experience working on recently donated state-of-the-art equipment. Further, advisory committee meetings would now be chaired by industry representatives in partnership with program faculty.

As the advisory committee deepened its commitment to the college and assessed credentials through the program review process, they identified equipment and laboratories which were not up to industry standards. This led to the largest fundraising campaign in the school's history, raising over $750,000 to overhaul training facilities, ultimately bringing the college into alignment with modern industry capabilities. In addition, they were able to secure a National Science Foundation grant for nearly a half million dollars, which would fund strategic manufacturing outreach partnerships with local high schools. This would include industry partners providing technical support and training for both high school instructors and college faculty to become more familiar with new and evolving Computer Numerical Control (CNC) equipment and technology.

One of the industry partners, Fastenal Manufacturing, even provides tuition reimbursement for students who are enrolled in Fastenal's sponsorship program and attend classes at Minnesota State College Southeast. Local manufacturing leaders have stepped up to not only ensure that they continue to have a pipeline of trained workers, but also to ensure that programs offered at Southeast are improved by enhancing the equipment, environment, and instruction at the college—a successful partnership!

Century College

Located in White Bear Lake, Minnesota, Century College is one of the largest two-year colleges in the state, serving more than 21,000 credit and non-credit students per year.

One of the programs offered at the college is Emergency Medical Services; according to past program director and current faculty member, Chris Caulkins, it serves hundreds of students in various capacities, and is the largest program of its kind in the state, and likely in the upper midwestern part of the country. In 2019, the program offered Minnesota's first Paramedic Firefighter AAS degree.

Depending on a student's interests and commitment, he or she can pursue certifications such as an emergency medical responder (EMR), emergency medical technician (EMT), paramedic, paramedic firefighter, or community paramedic. Paramedic students graduate with a diploma in Emergency Medical Services—Paramedic, an Associate in Applied Science degree in Emergency Medical Services—Paramedic Science, or an Associate in Applied Science—Paramedic Fire Science. All lead to careers that are in demand.

Graduates can end up in a wide range of fields; to ensure that this program successfully lines up with the needs of a diverse group of employers, they have built a large committee (62 members) that includes representatives from police departments, fire departments, emergency departments, ambulance services, governmental bodies, and hospitals. They expect more than 50 percent of committee members will represent the industry, and that an industry representative will serve as chair, with Scott Tomek of Allina Health EMS, a program alum, currently serving in that role.

In addition to these employer representatives, the board includes current students, graduates, faculty, administration, and even a former patient (cardiac arrest survivor resuscitated by graduates). It is worth noting that, in a field that often employs more men than women, the college makes a point of ensuring an equal mix of male and female student participants, who are selected by their peers within the program.

As one of the first paramedic programs in the country to pursue the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) accreditation, the Emergency Medical Services programs follow certain guidelines in terms of reporting and continuous improvement that align well with the interests and efforts of its advisory committee. Committee members regularly review the annual accrediting report and discuss it at length, reviewing prior outcomes and looking for opportunities to improve operations.

The committee meets three times per year, with the program director setting the agenda and the chair running the meeting. As Caulkins notes, "sometimes you've got to take your hands off the wheel and let someone else drive." They and the other advisory committee members feel that this is truly the community's program and strive to treat it accordingly, with as much transparency and employer and community input as possible.

One of the committee's primary areas of focus is continuous improvement, with a consistent focus on making sure curriculum and instruction line up with ever-changing industry needs. They talk regularly about what equipment and materials are being used in the field as well as current industry practices, which leads to efforts by committee members to procure industry-standard equipment and set up work-based learning opportunities for students. They are currently exploring the issue of diversifying the student body to ensure equitable access and to provide employers with the workforce they need (multilingual graduates are in particularly high demand).

St. Louis Park High School

St. Louis Park High School is a suburban school located in Hennepin County, immediately west of Minneapolis. It serves 1,400 students in grades 9-12, all of whom have at least some contact with career and technical education, given that every 9th grade student participates in an Information Communication Literacy class that provides critical college and career readiness information and introduces students to opportunities within the school's CTE program.

Unlike many schools, St. Louis Park has a single advisory board to oversee five different career and technical education (CTE) programs, including business, health sciences, engineering and technologies, law and public policy, and media arts and communication. The reason, according to Career & Technical Education Director Kara Mueller, is the overlap between programs: "Many of our programs strive for shared outcomes in terms of postsecondary readiness and employability skills, and several of our board members have expertise that applies to more than one program of study. We thought it would be best to bring all the programs together rather than risk a lot of duplication in our efforts."

While a board that averages between 35-40 people may sound unwieldy to some, Mueller says the board runs well thanks in large part to Carrie Jennissen, a parent who joined the school as a paid staff member and now serves as the Academy Advisory Board Coordinator. Jennissen's job involves recruiting new board members as needed and providing orientation, managing communications among board members (including the board's web page), and facilitating meetings. Meetings are run efficiently, with members gathering three times per year, and with each meeting offering time for group discussions as well as ad-hoc breakouts based on either program area or topic as needed. Aside from the board's executive committee, there are no formal subgroups in place.

The board's mandate involves advising and doing: While they are active in gathering information and reviewing the work being done within programs, they take a proactive stance by identifying and pursuing opportunities for improvement. This year's strategic initiative, a brainchild of the board chair inspired by discussions with school and executive committee members, involves looking at the customer experience offered by the school (specifically, with the student in mind as the customer). In previous years, the board has provided input into the school's strategic five-year plan (specific perspectives from business regarding Learning and Design) at the behest of the superintendent, and was instrumental in launching both the health sciences and engineering and technologies programs.

While hands-on participation in the school is not required of members, it is an unwritten expectation, and most participate in work-based learning activities by providing resources to various programs and initiatives. In fact Jennissen has identified the business partners already involved with the school's work-based learning efforts to be a primary source of new board members: Business partners already involved with the school have already proven their interest in the work being done there, and volunteers who agree to serve on the board tend to make a smooth transition. Other sources of new members include middle and high school parents, and community members as they have strongest motivation to engage and support students, as well as alumni and postsecondary partners.

Rochester Community and Technical College

Rochester Community and Technical College (RCTC), located in southeastern Minnesota, is the oldest two-year public college in the state of Minnesota, founded in 1915 at the urging of Dr. Charles Mayo. Today the college serves approximately 12,000 students annually in credit-based programs, with another 11,000 served in non-credit and credit-based workforce initiatives.

Included in the college's offerings are several programs for support and administrative professionals, including administrative assistants, medical administrative assistants, healthcare office professionals, medical editors, health unit coordinators, and customer service specialists. While the Administrative Office Assistant, Executive Office Professional, and Healthcare Office Professional Programs are distinct, they share many common elements, and as a result administrators and community partners agreed several years ago to form a joint advisory committee to serve these programs together.

The advisory committee has representation from several internal stakeholders including faculty, administration, advising, 4-year partner faculty, and current students and graduates. External stakeholders include key employers and employer representatives including partners from the Mayo Clinic, Olmsted Medical Center, the City of Rochester, employment agencies, and the Minnesota Workforce Center. There is a total of 18 external members as well as nine RCTC representatives. The board meets twice per year to support the associated programs. The primary goal of the advisory committee is to ensure that programs are relevant and of high quality. Members spend a great deal of time talking about current industry needs, both in terms of work skills and technology proficiencies and how the programs can meet ever-evolving industry needs. One of their greatest undertakings is a periodic review of the curriculum, an effort that takes place every three years, and involves industry surveys, job shadows, and focus groups with current employees and employers in the field. The most recent program revisions took place during the 2017/2018 academic year and were implemented in Fall 2018.

The new program revisions focused on the importance of work-based learning and the industry trend of hiring office professionals with a minimum credential of a high school diploma. The results of the revision were stackable credentials beginning with an Administrative Office Professional diploma, seamlessly moving to either a degree in Executive Office Professional or a Healthcare Office Professional diploma or degree. The FlexPlan, a mastery-based curriculum, was developed to allow for credit for prior learning opportunities for those already working in the industry.

Advisory committee members also focus on the importance of work-based learning with some ideas and opportunities presented to the committee by faculty and others formulated by industry committee members themselves. Since the advisory committee includes representation from some of the largest employers in the area, these committee members are well-suited to identify opportunities such as site visits, job shadows, and other real-world connections. Advisory board members continue to collaborate and help the programs grow by focusing on improvement by asking business leaders to share in leadership roles and increasing outreach to area secondary schools. This attitude, combined with the strong support the program receives through its employer partners, ensures that the programs will continue to succeed going forward.

Forest Lake Area High School

Forest Lake Area High School is located in Washington County, Minnesota, a suburban area 27 miles northeast of St. Paul, Minnesota. Serving more than 1,400 high school students, the school offers students a range of career and college readiness opportunities, including many career and technical education programs.

One of the school's more prominent programs is in the area of Agriculture Education, which offers concentrations in Animal Sciences, Plant Sciences, Life Sciences, and Leadership Development. Over 750 students participate in the Agriculture Education program at Forest Lake.

Mike Miron, Agricultural Education Teacher and Future Farmers of America (FFA) Advisor, says that the advisory committee supporting his program serves as a key source of support for some of the department's major initiatives. Committee membership varies from year to year, but the 2019-2020 committee consists of eighteen members; each member commits to a three-year term, and members can be reappointed after their term expires. The committee has strong representation from business partners coming from a range of agriculture-related industries, including dairy farming, landscaping, feed sales, and greenhouse operations, as well as non-industry voices including current students, teachers, the school's principal, and ex officio school board members. To ensure fresh energy and a fresh perspective, leadership roles are limited to one-year terms and are reserved for industry partners.

The committee has taken on a prominent role, first and foremost with its influence over the school's recent building development project. Committee members worked with school board members and program leaders to establish criteria for new facilities for the program, and were instrumental in advocating for the bond package that was required to pay for it.

The advisory committee provides input during curriculum review cycles and takes a lead role in identifying and providing work-based opportunities to students of the program (though this is not a requirement for participating on the committee). Miron says that there are areas that can be improved in their advisory process, but that having an advisory committee of trusted representatives is essential to supporting and developing programs that improve the lives of students.

This section offers templates for a series of official documents and other resources to help you professionally manage your advisory committee. In each case, brackets indicate where you should fill in your relevant information. Don't hesitate to alter other text as well. Remember that these forms should be tailored to your local circumstances and that your advisory committee will appreciate being a part of their development.

Sample: Bylaws

[CTE PROGRAM] Advisory Committee Bylaws

Article I: Purpose

The purpose of this Advisory Committee will be to advise, assist, support, and advocate for the [CTE PROGRAM NAME] on matters that will strengthen instruction and expand learning opportunities for students.

Article II: Members

Section 1. Members will be selected and appointed by the administration with input from current committee members. The current Advisory Committee may suggest potential members.

Section 2. Members will represent a cross-section of the industry or occupation for which training is provided and the community which is served by the program. This committee will include 50 percent industry representatives and 50 percent others, including faculty, students, education representatives, and other community stakeholders.

Section 3. Member terms will be three years, with one-third of the membership appointed each year. No member will serve consecutive terms. A former member may be reappointed after a one-year absence from the Committee.

Section 4. Membership terms will begin on July 1 of each year; members may be appointed mid-year, with the partial year not counting toward their full term.

Article III: Officers

Section 1. Officers will include a chairperson, a vice chairperson, and a secretary. These officers will be the Executive Council for the Advisory Committee.

Section 2. The duties of officers will be those commonly ascribed to these offices.

Section 3. The chair and vice-chair roles will be filled by industry representatives.

Section 4. Officers will be elected by simple majority at the final meeting of the school year and will assume their offices immediately following the meeting. Officers may be re-elected.

Article IV: Meetings

Section 1. The Advisory Committee will comply with Minnesota requirements and policies for minimum number of meetings. Additional meetings will be scheduled as necessary to accomplish the program of work.

Section 2. A quorum will consist of a simple majority of appointed members.

Section 3. Decisions will commonly be made by consensus. A formal vote will be taken when a decision is to be forwarded to the instructor or administration as a recommendation.

Article V: Subcommittees

Section 1. Subcommittees will be appointed by the chairperson as needed to accomplish the program of work.

Section 2. Subcommittees may be standing bodies or created on an ad hoc basis to address specific issues or needs.

Section 3. Subcommittees will elect their own chairpersons who will report to the chair of the Advisory Committee and to the board at large as requested.

Article VI: Amendment of Bylaws

These bylaws may be amended at any meeting of the Advisory Committee by a two-thirds (2/3) vote, provided that the amendment has been submitted to Advisory Committee members in writing at least thirty (30) days in advance of the meeting.

Bylaws adopted [DATE]

Bylaws amended [DATE] (most recent amendment date)

APPENDIX 3: ADVISORY COMMITTEE FORMS

Sample: Agenda

[DATE, TIME]

[LOCATION]

Call to Order

Approval of Minutes

Old Business

- Final accounting for capital campaign
- Program of work update
- Other

New Business

- Committee reports
- Establishment of subcommittee on middle school outreach
- Review of annual accreditation report
- Other

Next meeting date, time, and location

Adjournment

Sample: Minutes

[DATE, TIME]

[LOCATION]

Members Present: (List members present)

Members Absent: (List members absent)

Others Present: (List others present)

Call to Order: Chairperson [NAME] called the meeting to order. He offered his thanks and appreciation for the ongoing strong levels of attendance and participation at advisory committees. He stressed the importance of the committee's continuing support and assistance. New members were introduced to the committee.

Minutes: Minutes of the last meeting were approved as submitted.

Old Business: The committee discussed the need for more up-to-date equipment in the health lab. The committee felt that students should be taught on the kind of equipment they will be using in the workplace. [NAME OF COMMITTEE MEMBER] volunteered to do some research and convene a meeting between industry and school representatives to discuss the best approach; she will report her findings at the next meeting.

New Business: Chairperson asked that the committee look at and make a suggestion regarding adding more rooms for the lab. After a lengthy discussion, this issue was tabled for the next meeting.

The next meeting will be [DATE] **at the** [LOCATION] **at** [TIME].

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9 p.m.

Note that all letters should be on school stationary and, ideally, signed by both the program lead and the chairperson of the Advisory Committee.

Sample: Membership Invitation Letter

[DATE]

[NAME/ADDRESS]

Dear [NAME]:

[SCHOOL NAME]'s [CTE PROGRAM NAME] is committed to introducing students to [INDUSTRY], providing them with opportunities to explore the industry and preparing them for careers in this field. To help us achieve this goal, we reach out to business and industry partners, along with other community stakeholders, and ask them to work with us in an advisory capacity to make sure our program continues to be relevant and of high quality.

You have been recommended to us as a person who is interested in [CTE PROGRAM NAME] and as one who would make a valuable contribution to the program. We invite you to join our CTE Advisory Committee for a term of [LENGTH OF TIME]. By participating on this committee, you will have an opportunity to guide [SCHOOL NAME] in preparing students for success in your field.

The [NAME OF PROGRAM] Advisory Committee meets [#] times each school year. The first meeting will be on [DATE] at the [LOCATION]. The meeting will begin at [TIME] and end at [TIME]. Meetings are usually held on [DATE AND LOCATION]. In addition, calls to committee members are occasionally made as the need arises.

Please indicate your willingness to serve on this committee by confirming your interest in writing, either by email or in response to this letter at the address shown below. If you have any questions, or would like to discuss the committee's work further before confirming your decision, please email me at [EMAIL] or call me at [TELEPHONE NUMBER].

Sincerely,

Sample: Thank You Letter

[DATE]

[NAME/ADDRESS]

Dear [NAME]:

Thank you for your commitment to serving on the [CTE COMMITTEE]. Your cooperation and support are tremendously important in making sure our students have the opportunity to explore, and become prepared for, a career in [FIELD].

With your help and recommendations, we will continue to improve our efforts to serve these students and future employees. Our students and staff have already benefited from your guidance, and we plan to make other improvements resulting from your suggestions.

Please accept my sincere appreciation.

APPENDIX 3: ADVISORY COMMITTEE FORMS

Sample: Resignation Letter

[DATE]

[COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON]

[ADVISORY COMMITTEE/SCHOOL/ADDRESS]

Dear [NAME OF COMMITTEE CHAIR]:

This letter is to inform you that I must resign as a member of the [CTE PROGRAM NAME] Advisory Committee, effective immediately.

It has been my pleasure to serve on the committee for [TIME PERIOD]. However, I feel I have no choice but to step down due to [OPTIONAL EXPLANATION].

I wish the organization only the best for the future, and I regret any inconvenience my resignation may cause.

Sample: Dismissal Letter

[DATE]

[COMMITTEE MEMBER'S NAME/ADDRESS]

Dear [COMMITTEE MEMBER'S NAME]:

It is with considerable regret that I must inform you of the recent decision of the [CTE PROGRAM NAME] Advisory Committee to dismiss you from the committee as of [DATE]. As stated in our bylaws, committee members are required to attend at least one meeting per year and participate in student learning experiences at least twice per year. It has been noted that you have not met that requirement by other committee members. Thus, the committee considered and passed an action of removal at our [DATE] meeting.

We all appreciate your desire to assist with the work of helping our students and hope that you can find another way to make a contribution.

REFERENCES

1. revisor.mn.gov/rules/3505.1400/

2. minnstate.edu/board/policy/330.html

3. minnstate.edu/board/procedure/330p1.html

4. minnstate.edu/board/policy/330.html

5. revisor.mn.gov/laws/2013/0/Session+Law/Chapter/116/#laws.2.18.0

6. minnstate.edu/system/cte/programs/documents/POS-Framework-2019-one-pager-with-explanation.pdf

7. acteonline.org/cte-works/

MinnState.edu/System/CTE

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