

**Minnesota West Cosmetology Department
Pipestone Campus
Advisory Minutes
November 7th, 2007**

Members Present:

Millie Ljubisavljevic, Karen Schmitz, Aimee Barrie, Vikki Hahn, Vicky Felcyn, Kristin Zollner, Diane Gravely, Deb Anderson, Terry Dickman, Lorren Sankey (consumer), Mandy Garberding (student representative), Chris Schafer (MN West Pipestone Campus CEO), Jackie Lage (cosmetology instructor).

Members Absent:

Kristi Knutson, Barb Friese, Marsha Peterson, Peg Gorter

Introductions

2006 Minutes reviewed

New Business:

Enrollment

Chris updated the advisory board on what was happening at MN West. One of the topics for the cosmetology department was enrollment. It is always a struggle in our part of the state but something that we need to be concerned with.

One area where we could improve on is the overall cost of the program. We are looking at reducing the number of credits from 63 to possibly 54. That would help make our program more affordable and competitive.

The other area of concern is the length of time that it takes to complete the program. Right now we have a summer break built in, so it takes our students three semesters to complete. There was some discussion on the pros & cons of having the break. Loreen, who represented us as a consumer, is also our financial aide advisor. She reported to us that the financial aide for the summer session is very limited. What students need to do to cover the tuition for the summer, is budget for it. That is where the problem came in. Most have a hard time with the budgeting and therefore enrollment dropped off in the summer.

Fast Track – Math & Reading Requirements

Chris also reported to the board about the grant we received to do the Fast Track program. This program was free to any student who wanted to get their Accuplacer test scores up. It happened two weeks prior to the start of the fall semester. This then led into the conversation on developmental courses and if there should be minimum requirements for reading & math placed on cosmetology students.

We had a lengthy conversation on the minimum requirements needed in the cosmetology field. We deal with the public everyday and therefore our people skills need to be top notch. This brought up the topic of poor grammar, slang, and inappropriate language. The board wanted to make sure that we were addressing this in our classes and they were reassured that we were. Unfortunately it is a cultural trend.

It was unanimously decided that in order to be able to run a business in their future, they would need to have adequate math skills along with writing capabilities. The catch with this requirement is that if we enforce minimum requirements in these areas, would that turn some students toward the private schools that don't worry about their basic skills? Mandy, our student representative said that it would have probably influenced her decision.

There again lies the question; do we raise the bar, but risk losing students when our enrollment is already struggling? No one had an answer to that question.

Chris did lead us into conversation about possibly of having an entrepreneurial business course start in the future. This would be offered to any of our technical program graduates to help prepare them for business ownership. It is just in the "talk" stage right now, but MN West is looking at the idea. For cosmetologist, this would be something that they would come back to school for when they have fulfilled their hours requirement for their manager operators license.

Prior to our Advisory meeting, the majority of our board was kind enough to donate their time to come in for mock interviews. An area of concern was the cover letters and resumes. The board felt that they were not well prepared and there again came the question of our student's basic skills. Peg is the instructor for their job skills training and she was not able to attend the meeting. I did not have an answer for them on how they were prepared for this area.

Nocti Test

This is the first year that Cosmetology has participated in the Nocti Testing Program. This test is both a written & practical test that our soon to be graduated students take. The results of the tests are then compared to other students in the state. This will then give us an idea on how our students are comparing to others in the state.

Mandy participated in this test and gave the board an overview of what the test entailed. She thought that it was easy, so I hope that her confidence will reflect in our scores. We should hopefully see the results by December.

Massage

The question was asked about massage and cosmetology crossing over in their fields and if we were still planning on combining the areas together?

We do have cosmetology students, usually about one or two a year, that stay on another year for the massage program. But I can't say that it has happened that they went for massage and then came over to cosmetology.

As for combining the areas, Chris said that it would probably be in the not so immediate future. Getting the funding and having space open up next to the Cosmetology department would be two of our obstacles.

Retail Sales

This is an area that the board feels we need to improve on. In the field of Cosmetology, if retail sales are poor, it can make or break a salon; therefore it is vital that students are trained in retail sales.

We struggle in this area because it is hard to keep adequate back bar in place with the budget that we are given to work with. There is a lot of waste and what we tell them is only for client use only, gets used on them. It is a difficult area to police.

Terry had a few suggestions, one was that we should carry a smaller number of products so that maybe then we would have fewer items that would need to be put into back bar. He also said that we should try to solicit our supply companies more for donations. They should also be able to offer us some product knowledge classes or DVD's.

Terry suggested that we do contests and games about product knowledge. The board gave us some great ideas on how to incorporate this.

It was also suggested that we should bring in former students that have started their own businesses to share some of their expertise. We also opened it up to any board member who would be able to take the time to come and share their wealth of knowledge with our students.

Tip Reporting

Vikki wanted to make sure that we were training our students on the issues related to reporting tips. She had given us support materials to use in educating and informed the rest of the board about the crackdown taking place with salons.

Marketing

Finally, the last topic we discussed was marketing. How do we sell ourselves to our potential students? Everyone felt that the website would be an important factor. We talked about the limited population base that we draw from and our competitors.

Terry brought up a wonderful suggestion; he said that we need to make our students more aware of what makes us unique. Such as the college experience, individualized attention, experienced instructors, sports, etc. If we can't wow them something the private schools can do, we need to make sure that they know what we can do for them.

Those from our board, who were able to help with the mock interviews, said that they were very impressed with our students. Many were hoping to offer jobs to those ready to graduate.

We had a very good meeting with lots of wonderful feedback.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Wed. Nov. 5th 2008 at 4:45 p.m.

Submitted by Jackie Lage
Cosmetology Instructor –
MN West - Pipestone