



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

Published by the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) • College of Education • The University of Texas at Austin

A SIMPLE WAY TO ENCOURAGE EXCELLENCE

In 1995, the University of Monterrey (México) was involved in a reengineering project. Nine major institutional processes were identified, and all personnel expected major changes. The president and vice-presidents received thousands of questions regarding the project, including: Will a faculty development center be created? Will people be fired? Will the enrollment process receive some attention? The president was concerned about so much “negative energy” flowing through the campus and about so many people being nervous about the situation. The bottom line was that if people were thinking about the reengineering project and nervous about it, then they were not thinking about their tasks and achieving their goals.

So, the management team (the president and vice-presidents) created a forum where all these issues could be discussed. Usually called a “town meeting” in industrial or commercial companies, at the University of Monterrey it was called the “UDEM Reengineering Conference.”

The content of the conference was simple. The leader of each of the nine key processes being reengineered presented the progress made in that area to all the personnel (faculty, administrators, secretaries, and maintenance employees). Since a downsizing was ahead, the president addressed the issue, how the situation would be handled, and the future of the institution.

The meeting was a success. All of the employees were enthusiastic and positive; they were given information about what was happening on campus. Everyone was sharing information, greeting each other, and creating a positive environment. By mid-morning, people in charge of the event wanted to make the most of this positive atmosphere and suggested to the president that, in his closing remarks, he announce the commitment to organize a follow-up meeting. The best part was that employees were not only positive about everything, but were sharing ideas—wonderful ideas—about how

to improve the performance of the nine key processes.

Because the reengineering project was scheduled to continue over four years, the president committed to organizing a meeting the following year. The results were the same. All of the full-time employees (about 600) were present at the meeting, and about 50% of the part-time faculty (a total of 300) were present. One year later, at the “Third UDEM Reengineering Conference,” the content was not only the progress made in the nine key processes, but the results of 25 different improvement projects successfully implemented on campus, in such different areas as maintenance, teaching and learning, security, and fundraising.

By the fifth year, when the reengineering project was concluded successfully, the event changed its name to the “Fifth UDEM’s Congress of University Excellence.” By this time, the event lasted one full day, and the university shut down for the activities. The organization of the event was very simple: a message from the president; a lecture from a keynote speaker (from outside the institution); presentations of internal successful practices or improvement projects—12 offered simultaneously in three different schedules; lunch for all 900 attendees; three conferences presented simultaneously by experts in selected fields; an entertainment event; and a closing ceremony.

Now the event is considered a best practice at the University of Monterrey. It is all about recognition, communication, encouragement, and inspiration. People are always anticipating the next celebration—to learn from other colleagues, share ideas, meet new and interesting people, and celebrate the importance and nobility of the educational enterprise.

Benito Flores, *former Human Resources and Quality Director*

For further information, contact the author at the University of Monterrey, Av. Morones Prieto 4500 Pte, San Pedro Garza Garcia, NL, 66238, Mexico. e-mail: bflores@udem.edu.mx



PROJECT SUCCESS WEEK

Houston Community College System's (HCCS) theme for its Mission and Strategic Plan 2000–2003 is "The Power of Learning: Building a Learning College." As part of its mission, HCCS commits to providing personal enrichment opportunities and comprehensive student support services.

Project Success Week was introduced as one strategy for achieving these goals. During this week, each of HCCS's five colleges is charged with publishing a calendar of special events. Students pick and choose activities to attend, with the option of attending activities at any of the colleges.

At Central College, Project Success Week is celebrated each semester, beginning with a calendar of activities posted on the college's e-mail news. Faculty and staff are encouraged to share this information. Fliers are posted in the various buildings, alerting students to available activities. Student appreciation banners are displayed prominently in hallways for the entire week, thanking students for choosing Central College and congratulating them for their achievements.

Food is always a big draw, and refreshments are part of the week's activities. One of the most memorable of all Project Success Week activities is handing out cake, punch, or flowers to evening students, an especially exciting surprise for those who are coming directly from work, tired and focused only on getting to the next class. The expressions on students' faces when they receive these unexpected gifts are priceless.

Selected seminars/workshops are offered daily for day and evening students. They address such topics as:

- Learning disabilities
- Stress management
- Career assessment
- TASP
- Time management
- Self-esteem
- Test-taking skills
- College study skills
- Financial aid

Outreach plays a major role. Counselors and advisors visit departments, station themselves at tables in the hallways, and chat with students passing by. Students can ask questions, share concerns, and recommend services that they would like to see provided at the college.

HCCS students have multiple opportunities for personal enrichment and comprehensive student

support services throughout the year. Project Success Week's special focus is on making sure that students take full advantage of them.

Patricia Ugwu, *Counseling Chairperson*

For further information, contact the author at Houston Community College Central, 1300 Holman, Houston, TX 77004. e-mail: dpatriciaugwu@austin.rr.com.