

Doing More With Less

A Report from the NCCCAEA Spring Conference

Many pressures are creating us to do more with less. Budget cuts, folks questioning the value of education, a growing demand of a leaner and meaner government, increased service demands and more reporting requirements are all making us examine what we are doing. The most common factor is reduced budgets often followed by reduced staffs. Can we carry on the same level of service? No.

Our decision becomes to consciously decide what services we keep and which ones we let go. If we don't systematically decide, we will do it without thought and consideration of our core mission.

In any decision we make about services, our institutional mission statement should be our guide. We should ask ourselves questions like: *Which services are essential to our mission? Which ones help us fulfill our mission? Are there other services which would better help us fulfill our mission?*

While the mission provides our guide, our vision shows us what the end results should feel and look like. We should ask ourselves questions about our future in 5-10 years. Our vision paints the picture of our future. Ask questions like: *Who will be our customers? How will we interact with our customers? What will our customers needs and desires be? What role will technology play? How will training influence our institution and our customers?*

When we are asked to do more with less, our first reaction should be "Thanks for the opportunity!" We operate in a constantly changing environment. By readjusting what we do, we can maximize our impact on our customers. Most importantly, we are the best ones to determine how to do more with less. I would rather be making these decisions than someone making the decisions for me. Therefore my positive attitude about this change is the cornerstone for its success.

During the 1995 Spring NCCCAEA Conference, the workshop *Doing More With Less* was facilitated by Dr. Charlotte Weddle. We used the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis to identify our major forces.

Identified strengths of Continuing Education included:

- Flexibility / Innovative
- Dedication of personnel
- Expertise of personnel
- Affordability
- Community support
- Leadership
- Low cost programs
- Motivated staff
- Diversity of programs and course offerings
- Permanently located in our service area
- Positive reputation
- New vision
- Creativity
- Responsive to need
- Change agents
- We are "the college" to the community - our students vote
- Mobility of programs
- Networking with other resources
- Ability to work with "non-traditional" students
- We are the paradigm pioneers
- We support the mission of the college
- We can set prices for some of our courses
- Tailor programs to meet the customers' needs

Identified opportunities of Continuing Education included:

- Life time learning
- Contract / self supporting - ability to create local carryover money
- Partnership with other groups
- Off campus location / target groups
- Reduce paperwork
- Pin down accountability
- Fire / realign work. Restructuring staff
- Still a bargain
- Forces prioritizing
- Something for everyone of all ages
- Training in the workplace
- Tie programs to public education - taxpayers will pay!
- Create collaborative partnerships within the community to decrease duplication, increase cost effectiveness, ensure quality of delivery.
- To do more training in businesses and industry

Identified weaknesses of Continuing Education included:

- Regulations and bureaucracy
- Absence of full time faculty
- Paperwork, paperwork, paperwork
- Perceived value of Continuing Education within and outside the college
- Mandates imposed by Federal, State, etc. SACS
- Hidden agendas
- Lack of equal funding of curriculum
- Fragmentation of efforts: people responsible for varied resources
- Being all things to all people - lack of focus
- Marketing
- Not enough money
- Overworked and underpaid
- Worry about job security
- Centralization versus decentralization of CE within the college
- Our vision is focused only on CE not the entire college

Identified threats of Continuing Education included:

- New, private providers
- Corporations doing their own training
- Technology speed
- Lack of proper funding
- Limited staffing
- Lack of trained personnel
- Perception of value of programs
- Regionalization
- Loss of good staff
- Pressure from the top to "Be everything to everyone."
- Salaries not competitive
- Paperwork avalanche
- Congress / Legislature
- Accountability
- Lack of appropriate marketing
- Qualified instructors
- Added jobs
- Lack of technology
- Outside regulations that control us.

Now we can identify which of the SWOT items we have control over. As we address issues we have three choices: control, influence or change them. By picking the items we have control over, we can maximize our efforts and our success in fulfilling the mission of our colleges.

With the issues identified we can start to address them. We should brainstorm ideas that surround these issues. Gathering input and data will help us validate these ideas. Then we can create a change strategy or a new action plan. This process translates the SWOT items into reality.

Submitted by Fred Bayley