“COURSES TO CAREERS” RECAP

- Dr. Arthur Salido, Director, SACSCOC Reaffirmation
  - “Courses to Careers: What does that mean for WCU?”
  - Arthur posed two questions to the group for further discussion:
    - What does the ‘Courses to Careers’ topic mean for WCU? How will ‘Courses to Careers’ become uniquely ‘Western’?
    - What should ‘Courses to Careers’ include to promote professional development and soft-skills development?
      - Example ideas to consider for Courses to Career QEP:
        - Alumni data – what units are effectively using alumni feedback/data to improve their programs?
        - Pre-college opportunity – partnerships with high schools
        - Peer mentoring
          - By older students
          - By industry representatives / program advisory boards
        - Targeted recruiting, i.e., recruit for “grit”
        - Increase competencies online, before the first semester
        - Summer camps
        - Expand high-impact practices like learning communities

- GOLD GROUP:
  - Development of the Millennial campus might be a good opportunity to partner with the QEP
  - Our group likes the idea of a career or extra-curricular transcript
  - We believe that we should be focusing on developing student’s ADAPTABILITY compared to traditionally preparing students for one particular career path
  - The QEP should use certain points (undergraduate research, international experiences, community service, experiential learning, the high impact practice points) along a student’s time at WCU to develop and assess the student’s career development
  - When we develop the QEP program remember to keep under-served populations in mind and consider how our messages impact them
  - We feel that Global competency should be included in the career development of students as a skill set
  - When designing curriculum faculty need to keep career and co-curricular activities and growth areas in mind
  - We need to balance the need to develop students professionally vs developing students as well-rounded individuals (professional vs liberal arts focus)
  - The QEP is an excellent project for cross-curricular collaboration and should be utilized as such
  - There should be more support around student self-awareness and understanding of various career fields
The focus of this QEP is on the individual level – of developing the individual student

- **FUSCHIA GROUP:**
  - Alumni engagement is key, as mentors and potential employers. Jeff Ray offered an example—the Kimmel School is currently offering a series of professional development sessions for their students, including bringing in alumni to talk about topics such as “What did I want to know at my first day on the job?”
  - The group discussed the paradox of the strong emphasis on the “whole person” for high school students in the college admissions process—not just academic achievement, but also community engagement, leadership, hobbies, etc., but when they get into college the emphasis shifts to academics. Ideal employee prospect is a “T shaped” individual, with deep knowledge in their chosen field, but wide engagement in their personal lives. Life skills bring a whole new perspective that enhances workplace effectiveness. (Example of engineering firm hiring a 93-year-old woman for her unique perspective rather than an engineering degree).
  - We also talked about the many college students who believe in the myth that there is a magic combination of majors and degrees that will get you to your career goals, and noted that most of our group members had undergraduate degrees in a completely different field than the one in which they are currently working. The group felt that engaging faculty members in this conversation and asking them to help students realize that the academic path is not the only one would be an effective way to decrease student stress.
  - In addition to general career services, the group also believes that a targeted career training focus for groups with specific needs would be highly desirable. Such groups could include first generation college students, Hispanic students, students with disabilities, and transfer students.

- **GREEN GROUP:**
  - Can be a challenge – what to focus on/research/mission of WCU)
    - Hard to change the mindset to produce “taxpayers” instead of well-educated students/individuals
  - Don’t lose the engaged learning and it can be part of the current experience.
  - Inclusive of how college/units can help academic units find their fit
  - How do we not become a “trade” school?
  - Our location
  - Opportunities for millennial campus
    - What kind of careers are we looking for? Innovators? Order followers?
  - Entrepreneurship instead of “big corporation” type careers.
    - Directing towards the community, project learning
  - Articulate the value of arts (liberal studies)
    - Not just STEM discipline – but that Liberal Studies are preparing students as well
  - Professional skills
  - Soft-skills development can be planted early on (FYS) in educational career.
    - Career and Professional development (Theresa) host career fairs
  - Colleges need to look more specifically at what they are doing that fits this, what can they do more of to help?
    - Communication department – COMM 201
o Critical thinking/reading/lifelong learning
o Smaller group conversations to see what we’re doing, etc.

o Professional Development
  ▪ Faculty members – get to know your professors for references
  ▪ Create/develop a resume (maybe part of capstone/seminar)

o What are “future” careers going to look like?
  ▪ How are we preparing students for a rapidly changing job market?

• PURPLE GROUP:
  o What are we doing in terms of instruction to shorter time to a professional career?
  o Ties into political environment
  o Faculty helping students understand
  o Encourage faculty to include these ideas in their outcomes (documentation)
  o Integrate real world examples, visits before projects to help show how outcomes work in real world.
  o Case studies integrated into relevant classes
  o Target cc’s for potential true grit students
  o Look at student workers on campus – build more “real world” skills and also treat as “first job” experience – create network ideas.
  o Create an alumni “email mentoring” plan where senior students can email alumni in their area about the job market, how to apply, etc. Utilize Linked In.
  o Make sure all student jobs have full duties, “underutilized” could be “uniquely Western”
  o Some careers require advanced degrees – make sure students understand career path
  o Bring in more professionals to speak to students for insights
  o Career advice for working students: how to get the most out of current jobs.

• Additional Thoughts
  o Do we offer the support faculty may need to identify the outcomes?
  o Cocurricular transcript valid for student but someone will look at it – student should make more public
    ▪ Cocurricular transcripts help students write their resume (identify skills and articulate to employer)
  o Notion of grit – very action oriented students
    ▪ Better off sticking it out and making it work mentality
  o CFP harder to track
  o Career fairs communicate that regardless of major there are other jobs a graduate can go into.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact Arthur Salido salido@email.wcu.edu or x.3731.