

Category 9: Building Collaborative Relationships

Context

9C1 Key collaborative relationships

Mid-State Technical College's external collaborations have been developed to support the college's instructional focus and to assist in the cost-effective operation of the institution's administrative functions. Table 49 is a partial summary of the findings of the external collaborations inventory process.

MSTC has the second-smallest tax base and the third-smallest population of Wisconsin's 16 technical colleges. However, enrollment places the college twelfth, and in some years eleventh, in size. MSTC has had to become a leader or early adopter of

partnerships when designing strategic plans for MSTC. MSTC's participation in the National Science Foundation funded Pulp and Paper Technician Grant has had a significant impact on strategic planning. Because MSTC has traditionally served the paper industry in Central Wisconsin, the college was invited to participate in this coalition. MSTC is one of four technical and community colleges across the nation working in partnership with Auburn University to educate technical workers for new paper production processes. MSTC represents a twelve-state region. This partnership supports MSTC's mission; it has significantly impacted decisions on staff assignments and on future planning for the college.

Table 49 Representative group of more than 263 documented relationships from action project

Business & Industry	Community	Government	Higher Learning	Pre K-12
Clinical Contract (100+)	United Way	Workforce Development Board	"Red Apple Industry Partner"	SCING
Early Childhood Internship Sites (70+)	Portage County Literacy Council	PC & WC Transition Advisory Council	E-TECH	DPI – GED/HSED
Sentry Insurance	MSTC Foundation	DOT – Motorcycle	Lakeland College	Youth Apprenticeships
Wisconsin Manufacturing Extension Partnership	Literacy Council of Wood County	Governor's Work-based Learning Board & ancillary activities	NJCAA	Region II DECA Competition
Wisconsin Learning Center	AODA	Job Centers	UW Stout	Career Explorations

collaboration efforts among its partner technical colleges to manage administrative and instructional support costs. The Vice President for Finance was recently recognized by his national professional group for his leadership in developing an insurance consortium for Wisconsin's technical colleges.

External instructional collaborations relate directly to MSTC's learning focus. Mid-State Technical College has partnerships with area employers in business and industry, adult literacy and community agencies, local and regional governments, several private and public bachelor degree-granting colleges, and pre K-12 schools. The Wisconsin Learning Center, a collaborative effort between Mid-State Technical College, the Portage County Business Council, and the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point, is unique in that it is the only on-going collaboration of its kind between a WTCS college and a University of Wisconsin System campus.

9C2 Using collaborative relationships to reinforce the college mission

The leadership of MSTC considers the college's

Process

9P1 Creating, prioritizing, and building collaborative relationships

MSTC has a 40-year history of working with various partnerships in Central Wisconsin and across the state. The college creates a partnership group based on the overall goal of collaboration effort. On some occasions the college will initiate a partnership effort, while at other times MSTC is asked to participate to collaborate with a group that is being formed. The college publishes a handbook on managing Advisory Committees, and the relationship of MSTC to area high schools involves a defined set of procedures and practices, but no other standard, institution-wide resource or process exists to guide staff in creating, prioritizing, or maintaining partnerships.

Efforts to save operational overhead costs generally involve a coalition of other Wisconsin technical colleges. The WILM consortium for information management services and the WISPALS consortium (nine colleges) for the library's On-line Public Access Catalog (OPAC) are partnerships among colleges. The MSTC employee directly responsible for a function is

responsible for the development and maintenance of a college-to-college collaboration; e.g., the Vice President of Student Affairs and Information Technology is the lead person for WILM and the Library Services Manager is responsible for WISPALS.

Mid-State Technical College has partnerships with business, industry, and public service agencies in Central Wisconsin to support the college's occupational education focus. These partners provide clinical and other kinds of supervised work experience for students, hire the college's graduates, support MSTC with gifts of equipment, participate on occupational advisory committees, and donate to the MSTC foundation for scholarships. The Dean of the occupational program related to a particular group of employers is responsible for fostering successful collaboration with those partners; e.g., the Dean of Service and Health manages the collaboration with health care providers and the Dean of Trade and Industry manages the collaboration with the forest and paper products industry. This is accomplished through the development of a relationship with key representatives of the appropriate industry.

More and more students in the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) are expressing an intention to transfer from Technical Colleges like MSTC to a four-year college to complete a bachelor degree. Efforts are underway between representatives of the WTCS and professors of the University of Wisconsin System (UWS) to clarify the transfer of General Education courses from the WTCS to the UWS. MSTC staff is actively involved system-wide meetings and other efforts to foster this transfer credit recognition effort.

Some occupational areas at MSTC have clear counterparts at four-year institutions, and leaders of these occupational areas have worked with their counterparts in the disciplines of Nursing, Urban Forestry, and Information Technology to provide credit transfer recognition opportunities. In addition, MSTC has entered into transfer credit recognition agreements with a number of four-year colleges and universities (see Table 20 in Category 2 for a listing of these schools).

9P2 Meeting the needs of relationship stakeholders

Attention to partner needs varies from one collaborative relationship to another. Partnerships such as the WILM involve frequent and regular communication, while other relationships are much more episodic, or exist only for the limited life of a special project. At present, there is incomplete knowledge of the extent of the partnership relationships the college has. One AQIP Action Team

is gathering information on the impact of MSTC's external collaborations on the work of the college as part of an effort to identify and share best practices of collaboration.

9P3 Creating and building internal relationships

MSTC uses formal and informal strategies to foster professional relationships within the college. Informally, the offices of various instructional units tend to be a mix of various divisions, departments, and programs. This strategy is one dictated primarily by a need to provide office space at a reasonable cost, and by the small size of some campuses. None-the-less, the shared office space results in communication among various instructor groups that single unit offices would inhibit.

The college holds meetings at various levels of the institution (for instance, Faculty Inservice or Management Team) that bring people from across the district together. All college meetings include time to allow staff members to catch up with colleagues from other locations.

On a more formal basis, each academic division of the college holds regular staff meetings, the academic and student affairs leaders of the college meet twice each month as members of the Deans Council, college administration holds regular listening sessions during which various issues are raised and questions are answered, minutes of the MSTC Board of Directors are shared with any employee who requests a copy, the MSTC intranet has an extensive array of college policies, procedures, and forms, and the Human Resources office routinely shares information about retirements, resignations, and new hires via college-wide emails. College-wide in-service meetings occur at the start of each semester, college-wide management team meeting are held three times each year, and instructional divisions meet about three times each semester. The employees at Stevens Point and Marshfield campuses have monthly campus meetings. Each campus publishes a weekly calendar of campus events.

9P4 Measures for building collaborative relationships

The success of a particular collaborative relationship is judged on a case-by-case basis, without reference to a specific set of defined criteria. The judgment of the success or failure of a specific partnership is made based on how successful the relationship was in achieving its defined goals or in meeting some ongoing needs. The External Collaborations Action Team has constructed an Access database that classifies collaborations based on significant criteria and is a first step to developing a system process for

the evaluation of a collaborative relationship (see Figures 17 and 18).

Results

9R1 Results for building collaborative relationships

The External Collaboration Action Team performed an audit of MSTC's external partnerships. This audit includes an inventory of the current partnership relationships in which the college participates referenced in Table 47.

The audit process also involved the development of an Access database to enable the Action Team to classify MSTC's various partnerships according to characteristics that the Team deemed significant. This classification process will assist the Team in the identification of best practices among MSTC's partnerships. Figure 17 and 18 include screen shots of the elements of the Access database. The External Partnerships Main Switchboard (Figure 17) allows team members to view partnership data in three different formats. When Main Partnership Information is selected from the Main Switchboard the user will see the general partnership information (Figure 18). This information can be used to update or enter new data and will become the basis for future reporting.

The Qualitative Partnership Information and Yes/No Partnership Information options from the Main Switchboard give the user additional opportunity to view, edit, or input data related the qualitative aspects of the relationship and whether the relationship offers collaborative opportunities. As the External Action Team researches and documents the impact of the collaborative relationships MSTC will be able to prepare a fiscal analysis of the efforts. The use of the Access database as a tool to accomplish this task is an initial step in the process.

At MSTC, 42% of students come to the college to prepare for a job; 20% come to prepare for a career change. About 14% of students come to prepare for future education.

To support students whose goal is to further their education, MSTC has developed articulation agreements with four-year institutions (see Table 20 in Category 2). Transfer education is not a primary element of MSTC's mission. Students do attend MSTC, however, intending to transfer to a four-year college.

Students wishing to transfer to a University of Wisconsin campus can use the self service UW Transfer Information System web site (<http://www.uwsa.edu/tis/wizard/index.shtml>) hosted by the UW System to determine transferability down to

course level.

9R2 Comparisons to other organizations

At present, MSTC does not make comparisons between the college's collaborative relationship-building process and the processes used by other organizations. However, as more institutions within the WTCS become AQIP schools, the college anticipates that such collaborative data exchange will

Figure 17 Main screen, partnership database

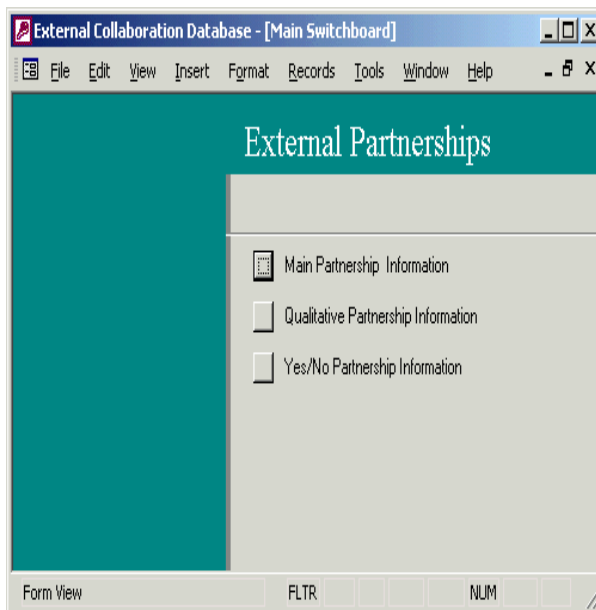
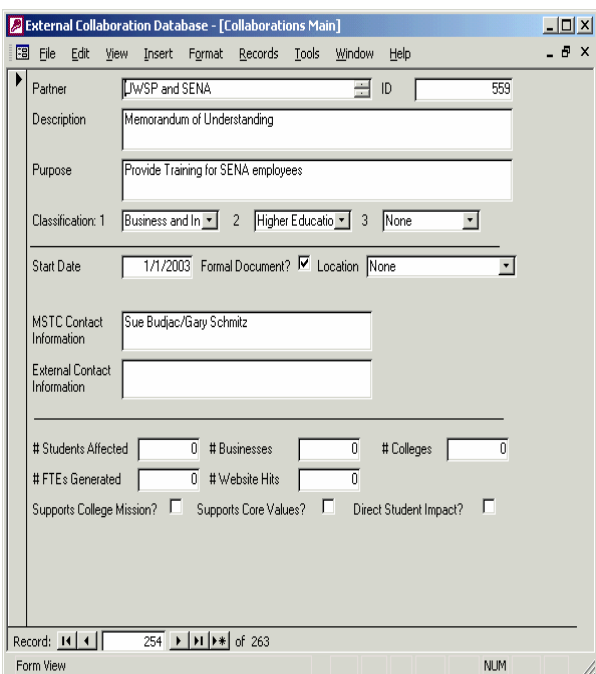


Figure 18 Partnership database detail screen



become more pervasive.

Improvement

9I1 Improving systems for building collaborative relationships

The Action Team has completed the process of the identification of best practices among MSTC partnerships and has written a first draft of a set of guidelines for managing partnership relationships. These guidelines also draw from the relevant professional literature on collaboration between colleges and their constituents. After the initial draft document is polished, it will be provided to employees of the college charged with the maintenance of MSTC's partnerships.

The inventory of MSTC's partnerships will be updated on an annual basis in order to maintain a current listing of the relationships that Mid-State Technical College has with the communities it serves. The Access database entries will be updated to reflect any changes in the inventory of MSTC's partnerships.

9I2 Setting targets for improvement

The MSTC best practices for partnerships document will enable the managers of individual partnerships to evaluate and improve the collaborations in which they are involved. In addition, this document will provide guidance to MSTC employees involved in the establishment of new partnerships. No such set of guidelines has existed in the past. The guidelines include suggestions on setting goals or drafting statements of purpose for collaborative relationships.