Business Advisory Council Meeting Minutes
March 21, 2014


Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 12:15.

Introductions: Alan Walker welcomed everyone and explained the purpose of the Business Advisory Council.

Dr. Greg Gillespie, Ventura College President, was then introduced and thanked guests for participating. He spoke about the value of the council’s input and that program relevancy is important to ensure students do well when enter the workforce.

David Keebler, Ventura College Vice President of Business Services, and Dr. Patrick Jefferson, Executive Vice President, were introduced and welcomed guests.

Introduction of all members: Debbie Newcomb presented purpose of the BAC and explained the future contact VC will have with the members. A meeting will be held each spring and meetings via email will be held each fall. The emails will be sent to solicit updates from members on changes in the labor market, skill gaps and changes, and feedback for program improvement. She gave a brief review of the current business degrees. Feedback from invitees who could not attend was then shared with the council (See Attachment).

Each individual attendee then introduced themselves and the company they represent.

Celine Park requested support from members for the Career Pathways Grant. She requested that participants support our grant application with recommendation letters. A sample letter will be sent by email to the participants.

Discussion: A round table discussion ensued. Members were asked to discuss industry trends, skills needed, skill gaps, and any other business concerns. Topics included the following.

- Communication is a key skill.
• Students need to learn how to speak with people other than their friends, such as supervisors, managers, customers, etc.
• Multi-tasking computer skills are needed, not just using software but adapting the skills to a variety of situations.
• Difficulty shifting and moving with the needs of the workforce or the company.
• When applying for jobs candidates should prepare by finding out about the company.
• Customize resumes and cover letter when applying for the job.
• At interviews, students should look employer in the eye and shake hands.
• Importance of internships, experiential learning to help students acquire jobs after graduation and networking
• Employers prefer to hire candidates with emotional intelligence.

Dr. Jefferson asked a question of the council about whether communication skills needed by employees changed over time? If so, how?

One member commented that he noticed the change in the 1990s (lower communication skills and entitlement attitudes). There was ongoing discussion of the root cause of the decline in communication skills.

There was also discussion of the differences in the generational cohorts. Is there a need for more flexibility from the institutions in how we teach, how we manager, etc.?

Suggestions given by the members included the following.
• Request for a conversational English course
• Teach students how to teach because that is what we do to continually evolve (like life-long learning)
• Teach students about the various types of industries are out there – such as non-profits, etc.
• Teamwork in class will help with the social skills, cooperating, communication, etc., that replicate what the student would do in the workplace
• Awareness about the multi-generational workforce
• Integrate case studies into curriculum
• Teach that there is a buyer and a seller – students need to know where they are in that deal.
• Employers in interviews look at what value the employee will bring to the workplace. Students need to know the value they can say they will bring.

Final comments: Members offered the following final suggestions and comments.
• Employers need to mentor promising employees.
• Students should decide where they might want to work (2 or 3) and keep going back – persistence – and express their value to that company.
• Students need to sell themselves in a job interview – know what they can offer.
• Employers may need to adapt to the new generation too because they will need these employees at some point.
• The previous image of the perfect employee may need to change or the employer may lose out on some valuable employees.
• Students can research what is coming in the next five years – predict what the future will be like to they are prepared.

Administrative Assistant AS Degree: Newcomb then explained the need for an AS Degree in Administrative Assistant. Members voted unanimously in favor of the AS Degree. However, a suggestion was made to consider changing the title to attract more men. Suggestions included the following.
• Use “Business” in the title
• Business Administration Assistant
• Management Assistant
• Business Associate

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 1:40 PM.
Report from Members Who Could Not Attend March 21, 2014 Meeting

Harriet Cohen (Training Solutions)

- What I find missing is a lack of reality and grounding. Students need to know about business and marketing plans as well as financial data. As an employer, I want someone who wants a job they can grow with and contribute to – not just a title.

- Even her graduate students at UCLA Extension have difficulty understanding why things can’t get done faster and why just because they suggest it, everyone doesn’t jump on it.

- To be truly validated in business, classes need to be up-to-date in terms of best practices – not just theory. Practical application, case studies and problem solving serve a much better purpose than book knowledge.

Clint Garman (Entrepreneur – Garman’s Pub)

- Skills students should take away from college: spelling, typing, writing sentences, and hold a conversation during an interview.

- Top 3 skills gaps: Speaking coherently, in simple English, and understanding the basics of the job they are applying for.

- Labor market outlook: Restaurants will always exist. They have been in business for 5 years and are looking to open a 2nd location.

- Business Program at VC: He received AA from VC. He has not had interaction with applicants that specifically went through the Business Program.