

Erie County Technical School New Program Discussion

As part of the 2014-2015 Administrative Retreat, administrators spent time discussing the addition of a new program to the Erie County Technical School list of programs. A new program has been 'on the radar' of the Joint Operating Committee (JOC) and administration for the past couple of years. There was some expectation that a program be chosen for planning during the 2014-2015 school year and then opening with its first class in the 2015-2016 school year. Hence, the administrators ensured the topic was part of the retreat.

Analysis

The administrators looked at several factors, including current programming, current enrollments, career interest data for Erie County students, regional and state high priority occupations, and space availability at the technical school. A similar analysis presented to the JOC in January 2013. A prioritization matrix plotted student interest with high-priority occupations. The conclusion from the January 2013 analysis (see attached) was that a new program in Health Science was the most promising program to add, in terms of meeting local and state employment needs and aligning with high student interest.

The administration came to the same conclusion during this year's retreat—that a new program in Health Science showed the most promise for success. Points that influenced the administration's decision included:

1. Our **current Health Assistant program has more applications than seats available**. For the 2014-2015 school year, the program had 41 applications for 20 open seats (see attached, February 2014 Enrollment). The 'customers' are already in place and we would serve students that already have an interest in a technical education.
2. Health sciences offers **a wide variety of 'pathways,'** more so than most occupational areas. Pathways like diagnostic services, health informatics, support services, and therapeutic services (see attached Health Sciences Career Pathways—O*net Online) contain dozens of occupations.
3. The Health Sciences also offer **employment in a wide variety of settings**, from hospitals, to long-term care facilities, to doctor's offices, to schools, to home health care, and more.
4. Another program in **health sciences would appeal to more females**, which are under-represented in terms of current ECTS enrollment. Male-to-female enrollment in October 2013 was 492 to 258. Almost 2:1.
5. Another program in health sciences **would also improve our non-traditional enrollments**, a measure monitored by PDE. Our current health program attracts a fair number of males and we would expect a new program to do the same.
6. Health programs tend to have **a lower 'start-up' cost** than other programs, primarily because of no large equipment.
7. The **ability to attract qualified faculty candidates** was also seen as a positive aspect, due largely to the number of people currently employed in health sciences.

Space—The Hindrance

The main hindrance to starting a new program at the technical school is the **availability of classroom and laboratory space**. There are programs like Computer Networking Technologies and Tourism and Hospitality Management that are currently under-spaced. Two locations in the building have either space available or under-utilized space. The Precision Machining lab has about 1,000 square feet of unused space. However, it doesn't lend itself to easy access—no separate entry. It is space that would need renovated or retrofitted for a program like Health Sciences. The Construction Trades lab is larger than what is needed for current enrollments. It faces similar issues as the Precision Machining space—access and retrofitting.

The administration did discuss relocating the Business Office to a temporary location (e.g. trailer) and renovating that space for a new program. Although not entirely ideal as a health sciences laboratory, it would be very similar in size to the current Health Assistant laboratory. A retrofit of the space would be minimal and would locate it next to the current Health Assistant program. The administration did not go to the extent of obtaining an estimate of the cost to renovate that space.

The administration did discuss an **off-site location for the new program**. Just based on our experience in working with programs located in the Skill Center building, it was deemed as **probably not a very viable option**. The 'connection' with ECTS is significant in the eyes of the students. An off-site location would virtually sever that connection. Transportation, communication, faculty and student management, and comradery were the biggest drawbacks to an off-site location.

Recommendation

In light of the enhanced interest and emphasis on a four-year plan to renovate the technical school, the administration is of the opinion that postponing the start-up of a new program until after the renovation is probably the most reasonable decision. It doesn't make sense to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to renovate one small space for one program, when it could be incorporated into a larger renovation project. If the larger renovation project does not go through, then the smaller project would be more feasible and stand the likelihood of being funded directly from district capital contributions.

Hence, the recommendation of the administration is two-fold:

- 1) Select Health Sciences as the occupational area of the new program.
- 2) Postpone the start-up of a new program until a decision is reached on the larger renovation project.