TO: The Honorable the Members of the Board of Regents

FROM: Thomas E. Sheldon

COMMITTEE: Quality
TITLE OF ITEM: Update on SED Leadership Academy
DATE OF SUBMISSION: March 11, 2003
PROPOSED HANDLING: Discussion
RATIONALE FOR ITEM: The Academy is key to ensuring well-prepared future Department leaders
STRATEGIC GOAL: 6
AUTHORIZATION(S):

SUMMARY:

At last October's Board meeting, the Commissioner announced the start of the SED Leadership Academy and introduced to you the 26 members of the charter class.

We have reached the mid-point of this first session. The benefits of the investment are already visible. Academy members are more aware of their own leadership strengths and development needs. They are confident in assuming demanding assignments because they are learning skills and strategies for leading. Equally important, they are gaining a deeper understanding of how the parts of USNY fit together through their work on departmentwide projects, which are a component of the Academy. Attachment 1 provides an overview of the program and Attachment 2 is a summary of the five application projects.

The Academy has become a key component of our succession management strategy. When the first class graduates from the Academy in June, we will need to find more challenging work and development opportunities to allow them to continue to enrich their skills and abilities. We also need to extend the opportunity to participate in the Leadership Academy to many other talented Department staff who would benefit. We have started to do this. The call for applications for the second Academy recently ended with the receipt of 50 applications. The Selection Committee is reviewing them and decisions will be made by mid-April, with the second session starting in May – even before the first session concludes.

Attachments

2
0
0
2

★

SED
LEADERSHIP
ACADEMY

2
0
0
3

THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
March 2003

THE PROGRAM

The SED Leadership Academy combines classroom education, interaction with Department executives, field leaders, practical application experiences, and an array of assessments into a ten-month professional development experience. The Academy is designed to enhance the leadership skills of colleagues who have both the aspiration and potential to assume more challenging leadership responsibilities throughout the Department. Any Department employee – regardless of bargaining unit, title, grade level or academic background – who meets the following criteria is eligible to apply:

- A strong track record of accomplishment throughout his/her career;
- The time, ability, and commitment to undertake a rigorous professional development program; and
- The endorsement of a Commissioner-level SED executive.

Education

The program begins with an *Orientation Session* where participants will get an overview of the program and talk with the Commissioner and the Deputies about their expectations. The cornerstone of the educational component is *Academy Week,* which is a five-day, non-residential classroom experience covering a variety of contemporary leadership issues tailored to the Department's unique culture and an education and government context. Topics covered during the first *Academy Week* included: Leadership in times of change and change management, organizational culture, emotional intelligence, and political savvy and networking. The week also included conversations about leadership with field educators and with the Commissioner, Chief Operating Officer and Deputies. The program also includes one full-day follow-up session each month to reinforce and build upon learnings from the *Academy Week.* Faculty for the program is a combination of SED executive staff, successful field practitioners, key stakeholders, and external experts. Instructional methods include case studies, presentations, small group work, and roundtable discussions.

Application Project

All Academy participants are required to complete an application project as part of a team. Each project is a challenging one which is USNY-wide in scope. Project topics for the first Leadership Academy are:

- Redesigning conceptually the vocational rehabilitation system;
- Developing strategies for better communication with parents and the public about K-12 education reform;
- Building USNY partnerships;
- Refining the Department's annual budget priority setting process; and
- Improving SED internal communications

For each project, the team is researching the issue, gathering ideas from key stakeholders, and preparing recommendations which are sound, practical and can be implemented in the near term. The teams work with a project sponsor -- typically a Deputy Commissioner or other SED executive -- to ensure the projects are well designed and to obtain guidance and support throughout the duration of the project. Additional information about each project is included in Attachment 2.

Projects are substantive assignments and will require an additional time commitment beyond the classroom sessions. How much time will depend on the scope of the project and the specific tasks each team undertakes to complete its project. Release time will be granted and all the Deputies are committed to ensuring that Academy participants have a reasonable amount of time to complete their course work and projects.

Assessments and Development Planning

Throughout the Leadership Academy, participants will be asked to complete several leadership-oriented assessments to track their professional growth and plan additional development strategies for themselves. The formats for the assessments will vary and include self-assessments as well as a 360° survey completed by peers, supervisors and/or subordinates.

PROJECT SUMMARIES

Project: Conceptual Redesign of the Vocational Rehabilitation System

Background: Since 1990, VESID has undertaken three phases of redesign. The goals of the redesign were to provide services to individuals as quickly as possible; to simplify the steps in which consumers of VESID enter the vocational rehabilitation (VR) system; and to provide the highest quality of services possible to consumers.

Phases I and II resulted in greater access to consumers and improved service for consumers. Phase III redesigned internal processes which resulted in greater efficiency. Yet, throughout these phases of redesign, the basic structure and process of the VR system have not changed.

At this time, the long-term fiscal viability of the State's VR system is of serious concern. VR services are increasingly in demand, but funding has not kept pace with inflation and the increase of consumers seeking services. Under the Rehabilitation Act, state VR agencies are required to implement an Order of Selection once it determines that resources are insufficient to serve all eligible consumers.

Objective: Develop recommendations to redesign the VR service delivery system to make it more cost efficient and productive with the goals of:

- increasing the numbers of consumers placed in jobs;
- avoiding the need to implement an Order of Selection;
- operating within budget and expected resources; and
- operating effectively with possible loss of staff due to retirement.

Project: Develop Strategies for Better Communication with Parents and the Public about K-12 Education Reform

Background: Feedback from parents and the public reflects confusion and lack of understanding of the purpose and nature of K-12 education reform. While there are examples of successful efforts within USNY and externally, there is no comprehensive, statewide approach for communicating with parents and non-educators on a consistent basis. There is no strategy to unify best practices of successful communications programs within USNY.

Objective: Develop a strategy for effective and timely communication from USNY to parents and other non-educator constituents about the impact of K-12 education reform on improving student achievement and closing the achievement gap. This strategy will:

- unify USNY communication efforts
- be responsive to constituents regardless of economic, geographic physical or language constraints
- provide for feedback and assessment
- include cost estimates
- and may have multiple components

Project: Building USNY Partnerships

Background: The Board of Regents governs the University of the State of New York, the most comprehensive and unified educational system in the nation. USNY includes public and private elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, proprietary schools, libraries, museums, historical societies and public broadcasting stations. In addition, the Regents oversee 39 licensed professions and vocational and educational services to individuals with disabilities.

Given the Regents broad mandate, SED is a diverse institution. In many ways, SED mirrors the diversity of USNY's constituents. SED, however, has no systematic process to ensure optimal use of the agency's diverse resources. Similarly, SED has no systematic process for encouraging partnerships among USNY members. Although partnerships exist, there is no common understanding of best practices, nor is there any formal mechanism for sharing these practices, or measuring success or ensuring continuity of partnerships. In fact, there may be cultural differences and barriers that hinder partnership formation and endurance.

There is an opportunity for SED's program offices to partner with each other towards accomplishment of the agency's mission. There is also an opportunity to build relationships among members of USNY towards improving achievement for all.

Objective: Identify and recommend effective mechanisms for engaging the diverse resources of SED to build partnerships internally and among members of USNY directed at improving achievement for all New Yorkers, pre-k to adult.

Project: Budget Priority Setting

Background: The Department's annual budget proposal ("Bluebook") includes base level funding and requested increases in funding. The document also includes requested increases that are statutorily driven. Each year, program area Deputies review the budget requests from the previous year's Bluebook *not* included in the enacted State Budget. From that list, they delete or add items based on programmatic needs. Each Deputy has a budget hearing with the Commissioner and discusses his/her proposed budget requests with his/her Regents Standing

Committee. When the final budget requests are established, each Deputy chooses one initiative to become a Regents Priority Budget Initiative.

Despite this well-organized budget development process aimed at containing the number of budget requests, the list of budget requests continues to grow from year to year. Items from the previous year not enacted are frequently carried over to the next year's proposed list. The Deputies and the Regents are faced with very difficult choices when they consider removing an item from the list. A uniform framework for priority setting and decision making is needed to reduce the number of requests from which the Regents Priority Initiatives are selected.

Objectives: Propose a decision making framework to help Department leaders prioritize budget requests and ultimately reduce the number of initiatives from which Regents Priority Budget Initiatives are selected. Recommend opportunities for enhancing the Department's budget development process, where appropriate.

Project: Improving SED Internal Communications

Background: Effective internal communication poses a formidable challenge, particularly in large organizations such as SED. Information from previous quarterly performance reviews and employee surveys suggests that there is a tendency for information to "silo" within individual program offices. Keeping all employees informed about department policy, as well as about program office-specific information, is a difficult and complex task. Communication has become even more complex as technology has become commonplace. As technology use has increased, the production and dissemination of information are occurring more rapidly than ever. Thus, it is even more important that employees across functional units are made aware of activities occurring around the Department. The ways in which organizational units share information can enhance (or impede) organizational efficiency as well as employee morale.

This project focuses on improving the ways in which information is shared within the Department. In analyzing the flow of information, the project team will emphasize two major types of information flow: 1) the flow of information across program offices; and 2) the flow of information across levels of the Department.

Objective: Advance recommendations to the Agency Leadership Group that will help improve internal communications. For this project, the definition of communication is limited to that of transmittal of information. This definition does not include aspects of the employee-employer relationship; however, it is expected to include issues concerning positive aspects of information sharing as well as organization structural factors promoting communication.