

February 23, 2007

Location: Omaha Chamber of Commerce, 1301 Harney Street

In Attendance: Carol Andringa, Vaughn Benson, John Blaylock, Mark Crane, Donna  
Dudney, Daryl Hansen, Kath Henebry, Laura Ilcisin, Brian Klausen, Linda Miller,  
Brad Schroeder, Bonnie Sibert, Trish Souliere, Dena Stevenson, Bill Swanson,  
Tom Upton, Erika Volker, Randy Vlasin

1. Introductions and Welcome – Randy Vlasin, Executive Director of FutureForce Nebraska, provided a brief background and description of the organization.
2. Omaha Chamber's Insurance Pathway Update - Tom Chapman provided an update on the insurance pathway. The full report is available upon request from Erika Volker, [evolker@omahachamber.org](mailto:evolker@omahachamber.org). Highlights are below.

Why target insurance?

Nebraska is home to several different insurance companies and has lots of good jobs available but we would like to attract more of the larger insurance carriers. In order to do so, we need to develop a deep pool of qualified employees by improving education and developing training programs that teach commonly needed skills.

Another reason to target insurance is that insurance companies are very interested in recruiting from Nebraska campuses, in part because they believe they can retain more employees.

What do employers need?

- High-level IT skills among all employees
- Insurance companies are built on math but also require employees with high-level communication skills. Because of that, they are looking for English type majors who have taken statistics.
- Insurance is the business of risk management, the idea of taking someone else's risk and pooling it together. Employers need applicants who understand that concept.
- Conflict resolution skills
- Public speaking skills
- Listening skills
- Ability to be productive from the first day
- Change management
- Ability to understand the effect of technology on processes
- Flexibility and ability to change processes as needed

The next step is to bring HR directors and educators together to look at the matrix of course offerings, formal and informal training and what employers' needs are. The next step is generating awareness among youth, letting kids know that there are jobs other than sales in insurance and showing them the pathways to take.

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3. Finance Pathways – Bonnie Sibert from the Nebraska Department of Education gave a brief explanation of the Career Connections website launched by the Department of Education to help all Nebraskans focus their career efforts. Through that website, finance has been identified as one of the top three areas of interest among high school students in Nebraska.

The Department of Education was asked to develop a white paper identifying the status of financial education in Nebraska public and nonpublic schools. They developed a report called “Making the Case for Financial Education in Nebraska Report” , which is available at <http://www.nde.state.ne.us/BMIT/pdf/FinancialEducationStBoardReport12-6-06.pdf>. The report concluded that 22% of our schools offer 3 courses in financial education and 64.4% offer two to four financial education courses. A total of 54 schools already require a financial education course for graduation. It is encouraging to note that local districts are already identifying financial education is essential curriculum needed by all students.

The charge from FutureForce Nebraska is to address each of the five finance pathways, which include Banking, Insurance, Accounting, Corporate Finance, Securities and Investments. MarkED’s Finance Career Cluster Report has already identified skills needed by employees. This report has been validated by focus groups with business and industry representatives in 29 different states.

The observation was made that some students who might be interested in Finance self-select themselves out early because math isn’t considered cool. The most pressing need is to help teachers in how they present math to kids from an early age. Teacher training is a critical piece of the puzzle. Teachers need to present materials in ways that are relevant and that allow kids to have success.

4. What skills do employees/high school graduates lack? Randy asked participants to identify the top three skills that employers and secondary educators wished that students possessed. The brainstorming session was followed by sharing and discussion about desired skills. The complete results are attached. The following is a list of the skills shared during the discussion.
  - Lack of basic math skills
    - Addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, positive/negative #'s, story problems
    - Math intuition – no concept of relevance or meaning, significance to problem
  - Lack of basic composition skills
  - Project management skills
  - Global business awareness
  - Attitude toward achieving a goal – not goal oriented; don’t see process
  - “Getting it right the first time” skills – not accurate, not polished
  - “Just getting by” attitude – only doing the minimum
  - Ability to work as a team
  - Lack of drive, enthusiasm, pride
  - Lack of intellectual curiosity
  - Productive computer literacy skills
  - Ability to create a spreadsheet, database, document, online learning

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- Especially people reentering the workforce
  - Time management
  - Think they can learn difficult concepts in 5 minute increments w/out multi-tasking
  - Basic professionalism skills
  - Dress
  - Ability to interact w/ people
  - Lack of problem solving, learning, and critical thinking skills
  - Presentation skills
  - Ability to research and share findings
  - Budgeting
  - Time management skills
  - Lack of understanding of capitalism
  - Communication skills
  - Ability to take information and develop an action plan
  - Reading skills
  - Enjoyment of reading
  - Social skills
  - Working w/ authority figures – ability to show respect
  - Study skills
  - Self discipline
  - Self navigation; self-directed learning
  - Total disassociation between disciplines – English skills in math class, math in English
  - No idea what authoritative sources are
  - Ability to research
  - Diversity of knowledge
  - Being able to write a two-page memo
  - Ability to distill a problem and solution
  - Email skills
5. Action Plan - The first step is to create a subcommittee for each pathway that will be responsible for identifying the specific skills needed in each pathway. Bonnie said she would like members from all five pathways to spend a day around the table with business people, high school teachers, and post-secondary teachers reviewing the “The Finance Career Cluster Report.” The goal of that meeting would be to design standardized finance course that could be used across the state of Nebraska in a way that facilitates articulation. Of particular importance is to make sure this is a statewide effort. Erika has reserved Friday, June 22 at Southeast Community College for this purpose.
6. Identify a champion - Traditionally, FutureForce Pathways have a champion to handle grant monies and disbursements. Metropolitan Community College has volunteered to serve that role for the Finance Pathway. Thanks to Daryl Hansen for accepting this role.
7. Establish future meeting dates and locations - The initial tentative plan is to meet once every two or three months for approximately two years. Todd Santora from AAA in Omaha volunteered to host the next meeting. At the conclusion of the meeting, he will facilitate a 30-minute session where HR representatives will share information about

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jobs, internships and possible networking opportunities for students. Todd will also provide a brief tour of the facility.

Next Meeting: Friday, April 20 from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at AAA, South 148<sup>th</sup> & F Street, Omaha. Optional Networking from 10:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Driving directions to AAA when coming from Lincoln on I-80 include: Take L Street West exit, proceed to 144<sup>th</sup> Street and turn left, take a right on F Street, take a right on 148<sup>th</sup> Street. You can park anywhere but enter through the front doors.