

LINKING WORK AND EDUCATION: FUNERAL SERVICE EDUCATION
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS' SUGGESTED GOALS FOR THE
FUNERAL SERVICE EDUCATION PROGRAM AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE
AT BISHOP STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

May 3, 2007

William H. Thompson, Director
Funeral Service Education
Bishop State Community College
1365 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue
Mobile, Alabama 36603-5362

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	3
INTRODUCTION	4
METHOD	5
FINDINGS	6
Program Goals	6
Advisory Committee Goals	11
Responses to Questions 4, 5, and 6	14
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	15
APPENDIXES	16

List of Tables

Table 1 Committee Members' Suggested FSE Program Goals Recorded on Planning Activity Survey Instrument	7
Table 2 Analysis of Committee Members' Suggested FSE Program Goals	9
Table 3 Committee Members' Suggested Goals for the FSE Advisory Committee Recorded on Planning Activity Survey Instrument	12
Table 4 Analysis of Committee Members' Suggested Goals for the FSE Advisory Committee	13

Introduction

Bishop State Community College (BSCC) is a state-supported, open-admission, comprehensive urban community college located in Mobile, Alabama. The College is part of the Alabama College System, the State-supported network of two-year community, junior, and technical colleges that serves the residents of Alabama. The cost of tuition is very affordable in comparison with other colleges. Day, evening, and weekend classes are offered at BSCC, both on and off campus. A variety of distance learning opportunities is available. For students requiring pre-college preparation, BSCC provides a comprehensive developmental studies program. Tutorial assistance is also available through the Learning Center. Financial aid is available to all qualified students.

The College works in a cooperative effort with local industries, businesses, and governmental agencies to prepare citizens in our region for employment. Students select BSCC to gain skills to prepare for employment, to upgrade skills in their current jobs, and to re-train to enter other employment fields. The College offers a comprehensive program that recognizes the individual differences of each student. The quality of BSCC's educational programs is evidenced by the success of BSCC graduates, both in the workplace, for those who complete occupational/technical programs, and success in four-year colleges and universities, for those who complete transfer programs. BSCC's future has never been brighter. *Commitment to a Program of Excellence* is not just a slogan at BSCC--it is a way of life that is performed through constantly adapting programs and services through continuous, planned change for improvement.

Advisory committees are important to the up-to-date maintenance of educational programs such as Funeral Service Education (FSE). An advisory committee is organized to advise educators about the world of work. The committee is composed of a group of persons with specific occupational knowledge and expertise. Changes in technology and in business and industry operations have increased the need for effective communication between education and the world of work. An advisory committee of interested, competent, and concerned citizens is the most productive and effective method for involving the community in education. The FSE Advisory Committee (FSEAC) is a vital link between the community and BSCC.

BSCC's FSEAC reorganized in 2003 and has held regular and special meetings beginning in 2004. The purpose of the FSEAC is to offer input to BSCC officials by advising on technology; equipment and facility usage; curriculum and instructional methods; recruiting and placement of FSE students and to promoting positive public relations with business, industry, and the community as well as to assist with program planning and evaluation. Four specific functions and responsibilities of the FSEAC are to: (1) review existing technology, equipment, facilities and resources; (2) serve as or arrange guest speakers; (3) suggest special projects; and (4) evaluate the quality of the FSE Program.

BSCC officials rely on input from the FSEAC to plan initiatives leading to improvement in the FSE Program. Although the FSEAC members' past attention focused on critical elements of the FSE Program, other areas have not received that attention. For example, FSEAC members' input has been heretofore silent regarding (1) establishing goals for the FSE Program and FSEAC; (2) the extent to which FSEAC members provide jobs for students and graduates of BSCC's FSE Program; and (3) the extent to which FSEAC members are interested in serving as guest speakers as well as their areas of speaking interests. FSEAC members' opinions regarding these matters are unknown and those opinions constitute a vital link that supports the community, the funeral service profession, FSE students and graduates, and the FSE Program and College's planning and evaluation activities.

The purpose of this descriptive study is to capture information from the FSEAC members for use in planning and evaluation processes supporting the FSE Program at BSCC. This study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What three goals would you establish for the FSE Program?
2. What three goals would you establish for the FSEAC?
3. How many graduates of BSCC's FSE Program are employed by the funeral home you represent?
4. How many students of BSCC's FSE Program are employed by the funeral home you represent?
5. Are you willing to serve as guest speaker to FSE students? If so, on what topic(s) do you prefer to speak?

METHOD

The FSE Program Director administered the PLANNING ACTIVITY survey form (see Appendix A) at a regularly held meeting of the FSE Advisory Committee convened October 26, 2006 at Bishop State Community College's Southwest Campus. The 11 Advisory Committee Members undertook the survey as an activity identified on the Agenda (see Appendix B) for that meeting. The FSE Program Director collected and later analyzed committee members' responses using qualitative procedures and frequency counts, as methodologically appropriate, that lead to illumination, understanding, and extrapolation to similar situations. Suggested goals for the FSE Program were analyzed using thematic analysis. Themes were chosen that reflect commonly used terms describing the form and function of community colleges. Suggested goals for the FSE Advisory Committee were also analyzed through thematic analysis. Three themes were chosen from the handout, *What Do Advisory*

Groups Do?, because information in that document is used to guide the committee's function. Responses to survey questions 4, 5, and 6 were analyzed through frequency counts.

FINDINGS

Program Goals

Of the eleven committee members present, 11 (100%) responded to the survey. Of these, each of 10 respondents suggested three program goals and 1 respondent suggested two program goals; therefore, 32 suggested program goals constituted the pooled data as depicted in Table 1. Through thematic analysis, four major themes emerged and were used as categorical headings reflecting the suggestions constituting the data. Those themes are: public relations and advertising; viability, curriculum and instruction; and student support. A fifth category, unclassified (n=4, 13%), was used to classify nonspecific or unmeasurable suggestions. Respondents recorded the fewest suggested goals in public relations and advertising (n=1, 3%) with the most recorded suggested goals in student support (n=11, 34%) followed by curriculum and instruction (n=10, 31%) and viability (n=6, 19%).

Further analysis revealed that the single goal constituting the public relations theme was "advertise, advertise, advertise." By sharp contrast, the student support theme consisted of 11 responses representing five suggested goals. Sub themes reflecting the student support theme included: students' job skills (n=6); knowledge acquisition (n=4); and community involvement (n=1). Respondents' job skills-related suggestions focused on two broad areas, assistance with apprenticeships (n=3) and funeral home-based mentors (n=3). Knowledge-based suggestions included establishing classes that support supplemental learning opportunities (n=2) and tutoring (n=2) for students. One respondent suggested to "encourage student participation in community projects in social groups, schools, etc."

The curriculum and instruction theme consisted of eight suggested goals. Of these, three targeted curriculum and five targeted instruction. Respondents' curriculum-related suggestions sought to establish goals to complete the FSE Program in 2 years (n=1) or 18 months (n=1), Instruction-based suggestions included the addition of on-line courses (n=3) and training on treating the remains of bariatric patients (n=1), mass casualty response (n=1) and on-campus embalming lab (n=1).

Respondents' viability-related suggestions sought to increase the number of graduates (n=1) and to increase enrollment (n=5). It is noted that *increase enrollment* had the highest frequency of occurrence (n=5) of any suggestion recorded by the respondents with *adding on-line* courses (n=3), *assisting with jobs/apprenticeships* (n=3), and *funeral-home based mentors* (n=3) coming in at a distant second place followed by *advise students* (n=2) and *establish*

supplemental classes (n=2). Each of the other suggested goals for the FSE Program received one mention (See Table 2 for a summary of Advisory Committee members' responses).

Table 1
Committee Members' Suggested FSE Program Goals Recorded on Planning Activity Survey Instrument.

Goal Statements

1. Increase enrollment
2. On-line courses
3. Move A& P into FSE program
4. Establish apprenticeship opportunities for students
5. Advise students in need of help
6. Enable students' completion of program within 2 years
7. Assist students with finding employment
8. Have Christian, Buddhist and Muslim clergy provide input to their services
9. Training for working with bariatric remains
10. Additional training for mass casualty response
11. Work closely with students
12. Advise students
13. Increase students' awareness of things that happen in funeral establishments
14. Increase enrollment
15. Increase graduates
16. Make the program more interesting
17. Make the program more available to students
18. Advertise, advertise, advertise
19. Increase enrollment

20. Establish group development classes for structured growing in knowledge
21. Encourage student participation in community projects in social groups, schools, etc.
22. Increased enrollment
23. On-campus embalming lab
24. On-line classes
25. Recruit students
26. Provide program (tutoring) to assist students in passing the program and ultimately the board
27. On-line courses to compete with other mortuary program that offer such
28. Help students find work with a funeral home
29. Have students in the program visit the funeral homes
30. Use funeral home personnel as mentors
31. Develop 18-month program
32. Train students to be the best at their jobs

Table 2

Analysis of Committee Members' Suggested FSE Program Goals

CATEGORY BY ITEM NUMBER	RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	CUMULATIVE FREQUENCY
VIABILITY (n=6) 1,14,15,19,22,25	INCREASE ENROLLMENT	5	5
	INCREASE GRADUATES	1	6
CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION (n=10) 2,3,6,8,9,10,23, 24,27,31	ADD ON-LINE COURSES	3	9
	MOVE A&P COURSES INTO FSE	1	10
	ENABLE PROGRAM COMPLETION IN 2 YEARS	1	11
CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION CONTINUED	DEVELOP 18 MONTH PROGRAM	1	12
	CLERGY AS GUEST SPEAKERS	1	13
	TRAINING ON BARIATRIC REMAINS		
	TRAINING ON MASS CASUALTY RESPONSE	1	14
	ON-CAMPUS EMBALMING LAB	1	15
		1	16

STUDENT SUPPORT (n=11) 4, 5, 7, 12, 13, 20, 21, 26, 28, 29, 30	ASSIST WITH JOBS/ APPRENTICESHIPS	3	19
	ADVISE STUDENTS	2	21
	ESTABLISH SUPPLEMENTAL CLASSES FOR TUTORING AND KNOWLEDGE ENHANCEMENT	2	23
	ON-SITE VISITS SUPERVISED BY FUNERAL HOME MENTOR	3	26
	ENCOURAGE STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY PROJECTS, SOCIAL AND SCHOOL GROUPS	1 1	27 28
PUBLIC RELATIONS & ADVERTISING (n=1) 18	ADVERTISE		

UNCLASSIFIED 11, 16, 17, 32 (n=4)	WORK CLOSELY WITH STUDENTS	1	29
	MAKE PROGRAM MORE INTERESTING	1	30
	MAKE PROGRAM MORE AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS	1	31
	TRAIN STUDENTS TO BE THE BEST AT THEIR JOBS	1	32
		1	32

Advisory Committee Goals

Of the 11 committee members present, 9 (82%) responded to the survey. Of these, 4 respondents suggested three program goals; 2 respondents suggested two program goals; and 3 respondents suggested one program goal; therefore, 19 suggested program goals constituted the pooled data as depicted in Table 3. Three major themes used for this component of the study were adapted from *What Do Advisory Groups Do?* Those themes are promotion, students, and curriculum and instruction. Respondents recorded the most responses in promotion (n=11, 58%) followed by students (n=6, 31.5%) and curriculum and instruction (n=2, 10.5%).

Analysis of the promotion theme yielded two sub themes, effectiveness (n=3) and interaction (n=8). Inspection of the effectiveness-based suggestions revealed committee members' concern for "identify[ing] challenges" and "do[ing] some real work" to "make the school the best we can." Inspection of the interaction-based suggestions revealed committee members' interest in interacting with a broad array of individuals including "faculty in different subjects, clergy, casualty responders, and other advisory committees." Respondents further indicated their desire for the FSE Advisory committee to "work closely [in] one accord" with that harmonious engagement facilitated through an "internet link used as a message board . . . to promote threaded discussions" and with meetings being held "4 times per year."

Analysis of the student theme yielded three sub themes, communication (n= 2), work (n=2), and academics (n=2). Inspection of the communication-based

suggestions revealed the committee members' emphasis on "listening to students [and having] more students involved with [the] committee." Respondents expressed the need to "help students get jobs [by] establishing a program for FSE students to work in funeral homes to benefit both the student & the funeral home." Furthermore, respondents expressed a desire to "be involved with students during classes" and to "recognize the problems students encounter in failing to pass the course."

Analysis of the curriculum and instruction (n=2) theme revealed committee members' recognition of their responsibility to "assist the school with student advisement on instruction, projects, etc." that could be facilitated through committee members and students open-forum discussion [in] FSE 101" (See Table 4 for a summary of Advisory Committee members' responses).

Table 3
Committee Members' Suggested Goals for the FSE Advisory Committee
Recorded on Planning Activity Survey Instrument.
Goal Statements

1. Do some real work
2. Help students get jobs
3. Make the school the best we can
4. Establish a program for FSE students to work in funeral homes to benefit both the student & the funeral home
5. Recognize the problems students encounter in failing to pass the course
6. Be involved with students during classes
7. Have more students involved with committee
8. Move meeting with faculty in different subjects so we can see all involved
9. Interact with other advisory committees to see what they are doing and what's working for them
10. Be together on one accord

11. Work closely with committee
12. Listen closely to students and hear what they have to say
13. Recruit clergy to give input
14. Recruit mass casualty responders to relate their experiences
15. Meet 4 times per year
16. Assist the school with student advisement on instruction, projects, etc.
17. Establish internet link used as a message board for FSE Advisory Committee to promote threaded discussions
18. Invite members to an open-forum discussion/presentation to FSE students (perhaps to FSE 101)
19. Identify the major challenges facing FSE programs and appropriate remedy

Table 4
 Analysis of Committee Members' Suggested Goals for the FSE Advisory Committee.

THEMES BY ITEM NUMBER	RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	CUMULATIVE FREQUENCY
PROMOTION (n=11) 1,3, 8-11, 13-15, 17, 19	do real work	1	1
	make best school	1	2
	meet different faculty	1	3
	interact other committees	1	4
	one accord	1	5
	work closely	1	6
	recruit clergy	1	7
	recruit mass casualty	1	8
	meet 4x per year	1	9
	Internet/threads	1	10
	identify challenges	1	11

STUDENTS

(n=6) 2, 4-7, 12	get jobs	1	12
	work cooperative	1	13
	success barriers	1	14
	class involvement	1	15
	committee involvement	1	16
	listen closely	1	17

CURRICULUM
AND
INSTRUCTION

(n=2) 16, 18	advise instruction/projects	1	18
	open discussion	1	19

Responses to questions 4, 5 and 6

Of the 11 committee members present, 10 (91%) responded to question 4. Inspection of responses to question 4 revealed that 5 respondents employed 1-3 graduates of Bishop State's FSE Program; 3 respondents employed no graduates of Bishop State's FSE Program; 1 respondent's dual response indicated I do not represent a funeral home and none while 1 respondent indicated I do not represent a funeral home. Responses to question 4 are summarized as follows:

4. How many **graduates** of Bishop State's FSE Program are employed by the funeral home your (sic) represent?

Response frequency	Options marked
3	none
5 - -	1-3
1	none and I do not represent a funeral home.
1	I do not represent a funeral home.

Of the 11 committee members present, 10 (91%) responded to question 5. Inspection of responses to question 5 revealed that 4 (40%) respondents indicated employing 1-3 students attending Bishop State's FSE Program; 3 (30%) respondents indicated employing no students attending Bishop State's FSE Program; 1 (10%) respondent indicated that I do not represent a funeral home; and 2 (20%) respondents gave dual responses. Of these, 1 indicated

employing 1-3 students attending Bishop State’s FSE Program and I do not represent a funeral home while 1 indicated employing none and 1-3 students attending Bishop State’s FSE Program. Responses to question 5 are summarized as follows:

5. How many **students** of Bishop State’s FSE Program are currently employed by the funeral home you represent?

Response frequency	Options marked
3	none
4	1-3
1	I do not represent a funeral home.
1	1-3 and I do not represent a funeral home.
1	none and 1-3

Of the 11 committee members present, 10 (91%) responded to question 6, Inspection of responses to the question “Are you willing to serve as guest speaker to FSE students?” revealed that 2 (20%) respondents indicated NO as to their willingness to serve as a guest speaker to FSE students. Eight (80%) respondents indicated YES as to their willingness to serve as a guest speaker to FSE students. Of these, 7 respondents indicated six preferred topics that are “anything/any; merchandising program; funeral home management; State of Alabama Laws; bariatric remains; and compassion – integrity in business.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

BSCC is a state-supported, open-admission, comprehensive urban community college located in Mobile Alabama. The College works in a cooperative effort with local industries, businesses and governmental agencies to prepare citizens in our region for employment, upgrading skills in their current jobs, and to re-train to enter other employment fields. Advisory committees are important to the up-to-date maintenance of educational programs such as FSE. The College’s FSEAC offers input to College officials that fosters improvement in the Colleges’ educational offerings as well as individuals and businesses’ economic and social development thereby strengthening the community.

This descriptive study identified through survey data FSEAC members’ previously unknown opinions regarding critical components of the FSE Program and the FSEAC. Methodologically appropriate qualitative and statistical procedures were applied to the data. Findings indicate that students’ job skills and knowledge acquisition are the major focus of the FSEAC suggested goal for the FSE Program. Findings further indicate that committee members suggested goals for the FSEAC involve not only interaction between its members but also between its members and community leaders, faculty, clergy, other advisory committees and FSE students. The FSEAC members frequent mention of students across the suggested goals for the FSE Program and the FSEAC

indicates that committee members are greatly concerned with students' success within the academic, work, and social environments.

Findings from this study are consistent with and supportive of the mission and purpose of the College, the FSE Program, and the FSEAC. Therefore, these findings should be considered for inclusion in planning and evaluation processes initiated through the College, the FSE Program, and the FSEAC. Enhancing planning and evaluation processes reflecting broad, community-based input will likely lead to improvement in education services provided by the College as well as to strengthen the community it serves.

Appendix A

PLANNING ACTIVITY

In conjunction with FSE Advisory Committee Meeting
October 26, 2006
Southwest Campus Cafeteria

1. Please give your name.
2. Neatly write three goals you would establish for the FSE Program.
3. Neatly write three goals you would establish for the FSE Advisory Committee.
4. How many **graduates** of Bishop State's FSE Program are employed by the funeral home your represent?
_____ none
_____ 1 – 3
_____ 4 – 6
_____ 7 – 9
_____ 10 or more
_____ I do not represent a funeral home.

5. How many **students** of Bishop State's FSE Program are currently employed by the funeral home your represent?

_____ none

_____ 1 – 3

_____ 4 – 6

_____ 7- 9

_____ 10 or more

_____ I do not represent a funeral home.

6. Are you willing to serve as guest speaker to FSE students?

_____ YES

_____ NO

If you answered YES, please indicate the topic(s) on which you prefer to speak. _____

Appendix B

AGENDA

FSE Advisory Committee Meeting
Thursday, October 26, 2006, 6:30 p.m.
Southwest Campus Cafeteria
Bishop State Community College
925 Dauphin Island Parkway
Mobile, Alabama 36605-3299

I. Call to order College Officials

II. Remarks College Officials

III. Repast

IV. Breakout

V. Call to order Mr. Thompson

VI. Approval of minutes from

- a. April 27, 2006 regular meeting
- b. May 9, 2006 called meeting
- c. October 3, 2006 Ad Hoc Committee –Hurricane Katrina Grant

VII.Planning session

- a. Identify goals for FSE Program
- b. Identify goals for Advisory Committee

VIII.Other business

IX. Adjournment