

# North Central State College

## PLANNING ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 6, 2009

Rm. 098-F

Members Present:    Ken Ekegren                      Jim Hull                      Bruce Sliney  
                                 Mark Monnes                      Tom Prendergast                      Sheila Campbell  
                                 Betty Wells                      Beth Price                      Peg Moir  
                                 Stephanie Kreisher                      Bob Robbins

Guest Present:            Bev Walker

Members Excused:    Teri Brannum                      Ken McCreight                      Brad McCormack

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Ken Ekegren greeted all present and opened the meeting.

While waiting for the consultant to arrive, Tom Prendergast explained briefly the duties of and the purpose for hiring a consultant to assist NC State in writing a Title III Grant. He first noted that the College last received one of these grants in the 1980's in order to establish the Comprehensive Learning Center (Student Success Center). He went on to say that these grants are very competitive, usually about 70 pages in length, and are very challenging to compose. There is no guarantee that a grant proposal, once written, will receive the requested funding. The College should express its intent to tie the grant funding into its Strategic Plan. It is important to evaluate the worth of the grant preparation in relation to the expense to the College.

Bruce Sliney added that in the past he has been a reader of Title III grants. He explained that as a member of the panel that assesses the grant requests, a rubric is followed. A scale of 0-100 is used and a number is assigned to each grant indicating its rate for success. Grant proposals that are awarded funding usually score ratings in the high 90's. He concluded by saying that the College must be very specific in all areas of the grant proposal.

Betty Wells made reference to NC State's eligibility in relation to Title III grants. She then introduced the consultant/grant writer, Hal Merz, President of Paraclete Funding Resources, LLC, to the council.

Ken Ekegren asked all council members to introduce themselves to Mr. Merz before beginning his presentation.

Hal Merz began by relating to the committee his past experience as well as his credentials. He continued by familiarizing the committee with his company and its most recent accomplishments.

Next Mr. Merz explained the following factors affecting the grant process:

1.     Cyclic Process: "Peak" season vs. "Low" season; The Title III program does not award the same number of grants every year. Last year was the highest point in the cycle, with 61 projects awarded grants. This year, there will be approximately 48 grants awarded.

2. Project Selection: A college must choose a project that:
  - a.) addresses a key issue that affects the College's ability to survive long-term, increasing the College's viability, remembering that the purpose of the grant program is to strengthen developing institutions;
  - b.) has metrics that easily can be established and monitored. Progress reporting and evaluation for Title III is based on tangible results of achievement of specific objectives. The goals must be measurable;
  - c.) is similar to previous projects of other colleges that have been supported with Title III grants. Projects must not appear faddish but merit a previously proven worth. New rage ideas are not easily salable.
  
3. Institutional Readiness: The College must demonstrate a state of readiness for conducting this major grant writing activity. In order to be ready a college must:
  - a.) either be in the middle of or recently completed a comprehensive strategic planning process that involves/d multiple constituencies (administration, faculty, staff, students, community);
  - b.) have access to reports, data and statistics regarding the key issue to be addressed. If not available, there should be an institutional capability to generate ad-hoc reports and statistics;
  - c.) be able to organize a team of several individuals who are committed to meet regularly for several months to strategize action steps for the Title III project and to review drafts.

Hal Merz advised that he has three levels of assistance in writing Title III grants:

- Level 1 = Consultant would serve as the head writer providing all narrative sections of grant request.
- Level 2 = Consultant would serve as a coach to grant writers from the College.
- Level 3 = Consultant would offer small amount of feedback at completion of grant writing by College writers.

Mr. Merz concluded by discussing different topics/themes for Title III grant requests and their levels of challenge and/or likelihood of approval by the panel assessing them, adding that, for example, student retention tied into IT would be a project worth exploring.

Peg Moir asked about the possibility of using a project that has already been implemented and one which is already committed to by the College. Mr. Merz replied that a project already begun could be a possible subject for a grant request as long as the award would be in addition to monies provided by the College and not intended to replace the current funding.

Betty Wells asked about a matching award. Hal Merz answered 20% or \$800,000.

Tom Prendergast inquired about a timeline and if the College status as an *AQIP* institution would prevent a grant from being awarded to NC State. Mr. Merz answered that the College should get started a.s.a.p., this month if possible. Bruce Sliney replied that he has never seen the topic of *AQIP* addressed by a Title III panel and that he was in agreement to begin the process a.s.a.p.

Bruce Sliney further advised the committee that it was important to write a specific grant proposal for a Title III grant award. Using a previous grant proposal with a new cover page would get little consideration by the panel.

Betty Wells reported that the President's Staff will be looking for a recommendation from the Planning Advisory Council right away.

Peg Moir commented that a grant proposal for student retention could also tie in mentoring, which was one part of the *Achieve the Dream* project.

Ken Ekegren asked the committee if there was interest in any other topics for a grant proposal besides student retention and all of its components. Bob Robbins replied that he would like to see better information provided to students receiving financial aid, especially in reference to repayment of student loans.

Jim Hull commented that a new title should be created for the grant request instead of using a current title already being used by College projects, such as *Achieving the Dream*. Mr. Merz agreed, stating that it would be too confusing to re-use a project title.

Mr. Merz advised the council that grants are not awarded for non-credit areas unless the topic is developmental or basic skills.

Betty Wells asked the committee for a recommendation that she could take back to the President's Staff. After brief discussion, Ken Ekegren announced that everyone was in agreement to move forward with this project; the College was at a point to proceed.

Ken Ekegren thanked Mr. Merz for providing the council with such wonderful information and offering the services of his company to the College. Meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by: Kathy Emmer