Chapter 6
Challenges to Working Collaboratively

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ABSTRACT

It is important to gain perspective directly from business and industry, and the service providers through their own words and experiences, to create a complete outlook regarding the project and program under consideration. The discussion in this chapter is the result of the research findings gained in 2015 by interviewing workforce practitioners in the areas of welding, auto mechanics, criminal justice, information technology, surveying, diesel technology, and applied technology. The chapter includes discussions from practitioners regarding: decision-making process, lack of knowledge, effects of business and industry on workforce programs, advisory committees, and best practices—a unique discussion offered by practitioners with years of experience, all of whom serve on advisory committees.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter has been added for the reader to get a first-hand account of what individuals currently working with advisory committees have experienced and the lessons learned from those accounts. The following is only a portion of the dissertation filed in 2015 that has been included to give the reader a clearer picture of what advisory committees are and how they function. Mainly included are the findings and recommendations from the participants.
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Of specific foci that are added to this discussion are the decision-making processes and the strategies used by stakeholders that readers may be able to incorporate within their own institutions.

The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of and experiences with advisory committees that community-college practitioners and workforce-education programs utilize. It focused on the specific decision-making processes and the strategies perceived to be best practices for enhancing collaboration among stakeholders. This study will contribute to the practice of higher education, and the body of knowledge used by community-college workforce advisory committee members to make informed decisions for workforce-education programs.

The participants were asked to focus on four specific questions that guided this study:

1. What do community-college practitioners and advisory-committee members perceive are effective practices and strategies in the decision-making process related to workforce programs?
2. What do community-college practitioners and advisory-committee members perceive as challenges to working collaboratively?
3. How do community-college practitioners and advisory committee members perceive the decision-making process of business and industry impacting the decisions made for workforce-education programs?
4. What recommendations do community-college practitioners and advisory-committee members have for collaborative decision-making?

The boundaries of this study were set by focusing on two community colleges located in the South Plains region of Texas. The participants included those involved in workforce-education programs at the two institutions, either as department chairpersons of a workforce program, or advisory members from business and industry. The inclusion criteria for the college participants were that they took part in programs that used advisory committees to make informed decisions for workforce programs; and that they had been employed within the community-college system in a workforce program in Texas for at least two years. This requirement ensured that the college participants possessed a strong background and familiarity with advisory committees and workforce-program requirements within the state of Texas. The second group was advisory member participants. The inclusion criterion for them was that they were currently serving or had served on an advisory committee.
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