

MAKING THE DIFFERENCE FOR STUDENTS IN NON-TRADITIONAL OCCUPATIONS

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Making the Difference for Students in Non-traditional Occupations

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
APPROVAL PAGE.....	1
TITLE PAGE.....	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	3
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	4
Introduction	
Statement of the Problem	
The Purpose of the Study	
Significance of the Study	
Delimitations of Research	
Method of Approach	
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	8
Advantages/obstacles of Non Traditional Occupations	
Women in Non Traditional Occupations	
Men in Non Traditional Occupations	
Retention and retention efforts and data at Gateway	
NTO Retention and Data at Gateway	
III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	20
IV. REFERENCES.....	22

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Colleges and universities give all students, female or male, the right to choose any occupational program they desire, not just those dictated by tradition. However, according to Dr. Hansen sometimes there comes a point in career planning when people are discouraged from following their dreams because their career choice does not fit in with traditional gender roles. Men are discouraged from careers in nursing, social work, and teaching while women are discouraged from careers in technology, science, and security. Men who are interested in "feminine" jobs are teased about their sexuality and women who are interested in "male" jobs are questioned as to whether they have the brains or stamina to perform (Hansen, R. 1996)

Non-traditional careers are jobs that have been traditionally filled by one gender. The US Department of Labor defines Non-Traditional Occupations (NTO) as occupations for which individuals from one gender comprise less than 25% of the individuals employed in each occupation. According to the University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee Center for the Study of the Workplace, it is advantageous for individuals to consider Non-traditional careers. They report that some of the advantages are salary increases, broader job/advancement opportunities, job satisfaction and economic self-sufficiency. However, according to the Pennsylvania College of Technology there are also challenges of a nontraditional career; such as finding mentors/role models, gaining support from family/friends, discrimination/harassment, managing the sense of isolation and obtaining necessary work skills.

While colleges are implementing retention initiatives, this study will examine if retention efforts are one size fits all or if Non-traditional occupations career students need additional support to address their unique challenges in school and in the workplace.

Statement of the Problem

Although research has proven that NTO careers provide job satisfaction, economic self-sufficiency, and opportunities for advancement, they also come with challenges. Such as finding mentors/role models, discrimination/harassment, lack of support, and isolation. These challenges can lead to remediation issues for colleges and in the workforce. Therefore, NTO students need support to help identify and manage the challenges so that they will be successful in school and on the job.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to provide a literature of work to address the support Non-Traditional Occupation students need pre- and post-graduation. According to the CA Perkins Joint Special Populations Advisory Committee, to support NTO students colleges could:

- Assist students in developing career knowledge – including in careers that are non-traditional by gender – and economic literacy through comprehensive guidance and experiential learning. (www.insightccd.org, or www.californiarealitycheck.com)
- Provide exposure to non-traditional careers at the earliest time possible; work with your middle schools to make their students aware of their own likes and dislikes, skills and interests, as well as non-traditional career options, life-planning and the belief (self-efficacy) that the students belong in college! (www.womenwork.org, www.fightthetype.org)
- Provide positive and diverse images of men and women of all colors and abilities in non-Traditional careers through books, media, posters, etc... (Hang this poster to start!)

- Provide opportunities for interaction with diverse non-traditional role models and mentors through Non-traditional career-days and job fairs, e-mentoring, job-shadowing, intern and extern-ships, classroom presentations, etc.
(www.mentoring.org)
- Infuse your curriculum – career technical and academic technical – with a variety of high-tech, nurturing, creative and challenging hands-on activities for ALL students that include all modalities of learning and ensure computer and technology competence (www.nrccte.org)
- Provide a complete range of support services including tutoring, transportation, childcare assistance, etc. If your school doesn't have these or other services, know where they are available in the community. Develop a ride-, housing-, childcare-sharing board.
- Ensure that your learning community is safe and students are empowered to identify and report issues of sexual-, religious-, or racial harassment, physical danger, etc.

Significance of the Study

At the institutional level, retention is a crucial economic and political issue. “For institutions, attrition represents a direct loss of tuition income and, all things being equal, a failure to accomplish their educational mission” (Bean, 1990, p. 170) In the current higher education fiscal environment, most institutions cannot afford to lose students - and their associated tuition revenues - due to attrition. Whether institutional revenue is derived directly from tuition revenue or indirectly from state governmental support, retention is a key element in fiscal solvency for many campuses. “Each student that leaves before degree completion costs the college. Both internal institutional needs and external governmental pressures surrounding

retention are growing in scope and importance. DeBerard explained the realities of this increasing pressure: or university thousands of dollars in unrealized tuition, fees, and alumni contributions” (DeBerard, 2004, p. 66). Furthermore, external entities (regulatory, legislative, advocacy) often scrutinize persistence rates and use this information to praise or criticize an institution. The research for this study will prove colleges/universities with best practices for supporting and retaining NTO students.

Delimitations of Research

The Research was only collected at Gateway Technical College over a 75 day period in the Summer of 2014 and 2015.

Method of Approach

This study will provide an extensive search of literature providing current and relevant research on NTO career advantages and obstacles for men and women, best practices for supporting students majoring in NTO programs.

CHAPTER 2
Review of Literature
Advantages/Obstacles of Non-Traditional Occupations

Non-Traditional Occupation is defined “as one where more than 75 percent of the workforce is of the opposite gender or conversely where less than 25 percent of the workforce is of your gender.” (Hansen, R. 1996) The Pennsylvania College of Technology Source shows that there are some advantages when you go into a Non-Traditional Occupation. Those advantages consist of the following characteristics:

- Salary

An increased salary is a common reason for individuals to consider a nontraditional career. This is especially true for women, as many trade, engineering and technological jobs (generally employed by men) boast a lucrative paycheck. Nursing is an excellent example of a nontraditional occupation for men that offer great financial compensation.

- Broader job/advancement opportunities

Nontraditional careers tend to have well stabilized paths for advancement, and are often unionized. These factors facilitate professional growth opportunities, leading to greater responsibilities and higher salaries.

- Job satisfaction

Selecting a career based on personal strengths and genuine interest will lead to greater job satisfaction. Now more than ever before, men and women are excelling and finding happiness in nontraditional careers. If you feel strongly about pursuing a nontraditional occupation, follow your intuition rather than shying away due to existing gender stereotypes.

- Economic self-sufficiency

New career opportunities are appealing in part to increase financial success and boost livelihood. Moreover, nontraditional careers often suffer from a shortage of qualified personnel, due to lacking resources from a particular gender. This can lead to enhanced benefits and job security for those who do enter such an occupational field.

- Opportunity to learn

A new career presents an excellent chance to expand your knowledge base, and a nontraditional career often stands as a great way to broaden your horizons. If you are the kind of person who enjoys learning something new, and are interested in being paid for it, look no further than a nontraditional career.

- Education/training/skill

Gaining hands-on training and expertise in a desirable field will make you a more valuable employee. In today's economy, you can never be too marketable, and nontraditional occupations include some of the most specialized and in demand skill sets.

- Paving the way for others

Some individuals enjoy pioneering and contributing to diversification that will benefit generations to come. If you feel at home setting a positive example and blazing a path of inspiration for others, a nontraditional career might be a perfect fit.

- Variety

With the vast assortment of available careers, you owe it to yourself to consider all avenues. What will make you happy? Don't limit your choices while searching for your dream career!

The Pennsylvania College of Technology concluded that there are some obstacles to face when you are in a Non-Traditional Occupational. Those obstacles consist of the following:

- Finding mentors/role models

Research shows that mentors can play a highly pivotal role in the successful pursuit of a nontraditional career. To this end, Penn College's Academic Success staff is here to guide you every step of the way. They will answer all of your questions and ensure you are prepared to begin your new career.

- Gaining support from family/friends

It may be difficult for your family and/or friends to understand why you have chosen a nontraditional career. They may have grown up with a strong understanding that specific genders should be responsible for certain types of work, and may feel a need to advocate this perspective. Above all, remember why you chose your career. Remember that this is your future and that not everyone needs to understand or get it. Do what's best for you; follow your heart.

- Identifying and Reacting to Discrimination/harassment

Actions of this kind are unacceptable and affect everyone within a given environment. This activity is serious and laws are in place to ensure offenders may be held liable for their behavior.

- Obtaining necessary work skills

Due to minimal prior real world experience, a lack of knowledge and/or skill may be a concern. Remediation can be found in training (Penn College's specialty!) or an honest effort during one's own free time. Look for books, clubs/organizations, informational

websites, online forums, or workers you may be able to shadow in a real-world setting. As with all things in life, practice makes perfect, and true passion will lead to success.

- Managing the sense of isolation

A feeling of isolation when entering a new job is common, and is made still worse when an individual does not have like-gendered co-workers. This anxiety generally fades quickly, however, as familiarity within a workplace is restored and employees get to know one another. There is no reason why women and men cannot work side-by-side in a professional setting, and evidence to the contrary is a sign that management should be called to action.

Statutes have been put in place for women to have the same rights men when applying for jobs. “President Obama is committed to ensuring equal opportunity and empowering women in the workforce. His commitment to women’s equality stems not only from his experiences as the son of a single mom, a husband, and the father of two daughters, but also as our nation’s leader, focused every day on strengthening our economy and maintaining our competitive edge in the world” (Ledbetter & Cecilia Muñoz, 2014, para. 4).

Women in Non-Traditional Occupations

Women are encouraged to step outside of the box and try occupations that they are not accustomed to taking. “As more women enter jobs that were once dominated by men, many jobs that were nontraditional for women in the 1988 were no longer nontraditional for women in 2008. Some of these occupations were purchasing managers; chemists; physicians; lawyers; athletes; postal service mail carriers; bailiffs, correctional officers, and jailers; and butchers and other meat, poultry, and fish processing workers.” (“Women’s Bureau (WB) -Nontraditional Occupations for Women in 2008”, 2009) There are more women starting to enter the work force.

They are no longer staying at home and taking care of the kids. Research proves that wage inequality still exists and it is on the rise. “Women still make just 77 cents on average for every dollar a man earns.” (Ledbetter & Cecilia Muñoz, 2014, para. 6)

According to (Mishel 2012), unions will continue to be the grass root for wage inequality in the following manner:

- The union wage premium—the percentage-higher wage earned by those covered by a collective bargaining contract—is 13.6 percent overall (17.3 percent for men and 9.1 percent for women).
- Unionized workers are 28.2 percent more likely to be covered by employer-provided health insurance and 53.9 percent more likely to have employer-provided pensions.
- From 1973 to 2011, the share of the workforce represented by unions declined from 26.7 percent to 13.1 percent.
- The decline of unions has affected middle-wage men more than any other group and explains about three-fourths of the expanded wage gap between white- and blue-collar men and over a fifth of the expanded wage gap between high school- and college-educated men from 1978 to 2011.

An expanded analysis that includes the direct and norm-setting impact of unions shows that deunionization can explain about one-third of the entire growth of wage inequality among men and around one-fifth of the growth among women from 1973 to 2007. It has been stated that “women should consider all the options available to them. As is true for any individual, female or male, one will have to meet certain qualifications for the career he or she is considering.” (McKay, 2015)

Men in Non-Traditional Occupations

It has been well documented that men have made their earnings occupying jobs where women are the minority. This trend is starting to change as males are looking to enter the occupations that are dominated by women. According to the American Mobile Healthcare® 2006 Survey of Men in Nursing, 85 percent of men surveyed were "mostly" or "very" satisfied with their jobs and of those, 82 percent would recommend nursing to other men." With time and effort men in Non-Traditional occupations will become the norm. Men will continue to apply for jobs that are dominated by women because they know that they can succeed. "As men move into what used to be female territory, they are doing very well; better than women in fact. In the 20 most common occupations for women, according to the Washington, D.C.-based Institute for Women's Policy Research, for example, the median weekly earnings for female social workers are \$798, while for men it is \$902." (Rivers, 2012)

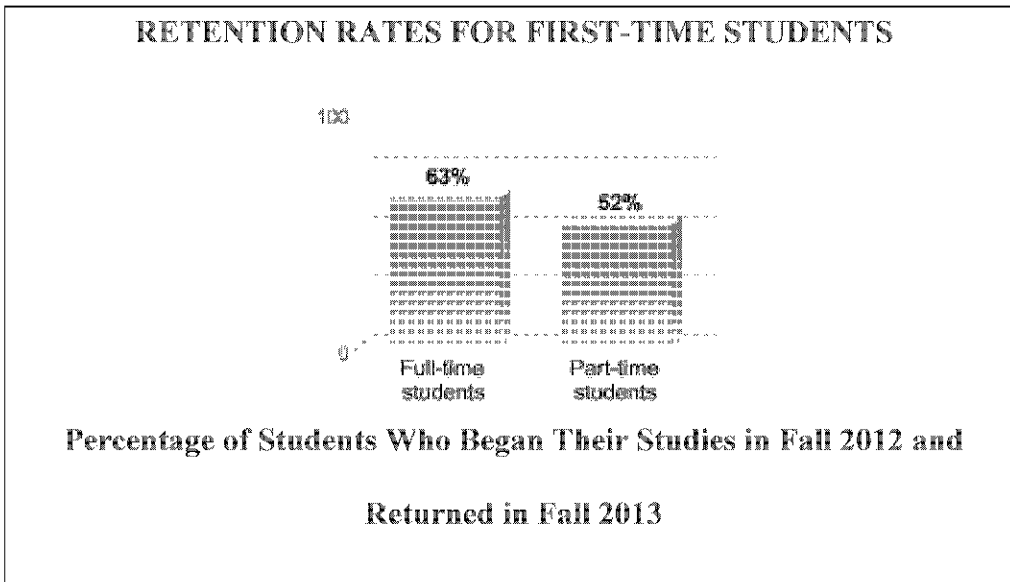
Keep in mind that it is not easy for men to take jobs that women normally occupy. "While women have broken into fields once dominated by men, such as business, medicine and law, men have been slower to pursue nursing, preschool teacher, or take jobs as administrative assistants." (Reyes, 2013) There is a reason for that. Author Crooks stated, "Among some of the other characteristics commonly attributed to men are ambition, pride, honor competitiveness and a sense of adventure. If those traits are not being exercised, then people tend to look at men like something is wrong with them." (Crooks, 2008)

Retention and Retention Efforts and Data at Gateway

According to the National Center for Education statistics, retention is defined as first-time degree-seeking undergraduates at degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by attendance status, level and control of institution, and percentage of applications accepted. "The loss of

students returning to campus for another year usually results in greater financial loss and a lower graduation rate for the institution, and might also affect the way that stakeholders, legislators, parents, and students view the institution” (Lau, 2003)

The table below shows the retention rate for Gateway Technical College measuring the percentage of first-time students who entered in fall 2012 and returned to the institution to continue their studies the following fall.

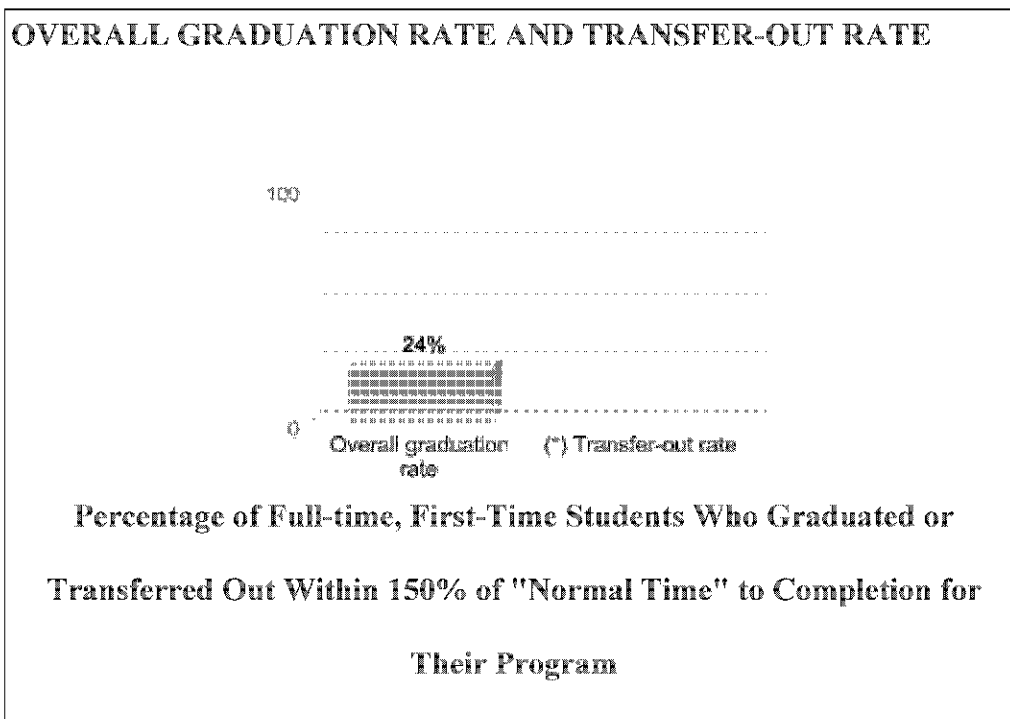


The overall graduation rate, as defined by Integrate Post-Secondary Education Data System (IPEDS), tracks the progress of students who began their studies as full-time, first-time degree- or certificate-seeking students to see if they complete a degree or other award such as a certificate within 150% of the normal time for completing the program in which they are enrolled. Some institutions also report a transfer-out rate, which is the percentage of the full-time, first-time students who transferred to another institution.

Note that not all students at the institution are tracked for these rates. Students who have already attended another postsecondary institution, or who began their studies on a part-time

basis, are not tracked for this rate. At Gateway, fifteen percent of entering students were counted as full-time, first-time in 2013.

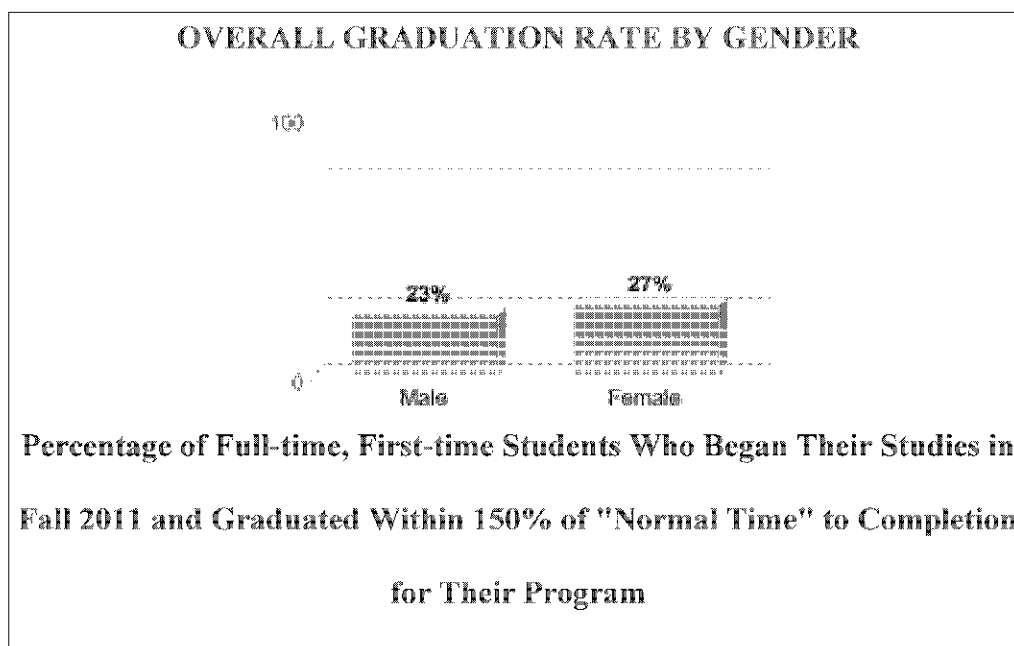
Graduation rates can be measured over different lengths of time. "Normal time" is the typical amount of time it takes full-time students to complete their program. For example, the "normal" amount of time for many associate's degree programs is two years. Not all students complete within the normal time, so graduation rates are measured by other lengths of time as well, including "150% of normal time" (e.g., three years for a 2-year program) and "200% of normal time," or twice as long as the normal time (e.g., four years for a 2-year program). ("National Center for Education Statistics," 2011)



(*) Not all institutions report transfer-out rates.

The chart below illustrates that there is a four percent difference in graduates when you compare them by gender. Females have a higher rate of graduation than males. Females are no longer staying at home, because they want to educate themselves and provide for their family

just like everyone else. Society must embrace this change and provide opportunities for them to succeed.



Gateway Technical College provides a variety of retention efforts to ensure students continue to choose Gateway as their place of study. Gateway offers emergency grants to students who are experiencing some financial difficulties that are keeping them from continuing their education. The college has implemented a retention alert system to monitor each student's academic progress. Gateway began to break the cost into four payments this year to make it even more manageable for students to pay for their classes. The college also implemented a number of personal outreach initiatives including personal calls when students are falling behind on their payment plan and calls to students before the semester even begins if they do not have a payment option in place and the call nights.

Students can receive tutoring and support services for free. All they have to do is go into a Learning Success Center and ask for help. "It has been increasingly documented over the years in the retention literature that in order for institutions to be maximally effective and realize their

mission, retention must be viewed as an ongoing, campus wide responsibility requiring everyone's participation and contributions. Indeed, it takes a campus to educate and graduate a student. The critical components that consistently have been shown to ensure student success and, therefore: institutional success include: (1) satisfied students and alumni; (2) competent caring faculty and staff; and (3) concerned/aware administration." (Codifications, Graduation, Definitions, Theories, Practices, Patterns, and Trends, & 2008)

NTO Retention and Data at Gateway

In addition to the services outlined previously, Gateway has Student Support Specialists that provide case management to special student populations. For the NTO program, additional weekly follow up is done with each participant through phone calls, emails, and Facebook posts. A quick call can lead to so much more. Each connection revealed successes students were experiencing as well as difficulties and barriers these students were facing. The Student Support Specialist was then able to connect students, as needed, to additional services. This intrusive case management kept all students engaged and 80% receiving a grade point average above 2.0, along with registering for the following semester. The Student Support Specialist saw an increase in graduates from the program this year. Twenty students graduated in May of 2015 from the program and were able to find employment. That number should increase by twenty percent for 2016. The Student Support Specialists utilize an open door approach in assisting students in the areas of academic and career planning, and also in social and emotional development. The Student Support Specialists make it a priority to participate in most of the college events. This allows the specialist to promote the NTO program and meet new students. The Student Support Specialist collaborates with faculty and staff to come up with a plan that meets the needs of

students in the college setting. The main goal as a Student Support Specialist for the Non-Traditional Occupations program is to make sure each graduate finds a job in their field of study.

“The National Women’s Law Center (NWLC) recognizes programs that have successfully raised the enrollment and retention of under-represented students in nontraditional courses.” Those best practices consist of:

- Implement research-based strategies for improving enrollment and retention of students in nontraditional CTE programs.
- Effectively identify and build strong education–community partnerships, interagency coalitions and business partnerships.
- Introduce students to role models, including professionals who have nontraditional careers and peers who participated in nontraditional CTE programs.
- Provide hands-on opportunities for students to learn about and apply skills.
- Centrally coordinate all the schools in a community college or secondary system.
- Build upon or cultivate an institutional commitment to gender equity and compliance with civil rights laws and use the program as an opportunity to train all staff about gender equity.
- Respond to the needs of the local labor market and feature high-demand occupations.
- Measure the outcomes and results of the project by collecting data about the students who participate in the program or benefit from the practice, including whether they have been retained in the field or continued their education in other areas.
- Collect testimonials and seek both positive and negative input from program participants to measure their enthusiasm for the program and make improvements where necessary.

Document the program in a manner that is replicable by others attempting to implement similar programs.

- Expand model programs to other under-served populations that have historically not participated in careers that are nontraditional for their race, disability or socioeconomic status.

Gateway's NTO program has implemented the majority of the NWLC strategies, and these strategies are helping with retaining and keeping students happy. The Student Support Specialist grew the program by partnering with faculty, staff and business partners. Once the program became noticeable, students started to participate. The Student Support Specialist began to collect testimonials from the students to increase the awareness about NTO occupations. The program has over 100 students participating, and that number is growing by the day. The future is bright for those who are looking to pursue a career in a Non-Traditional Occupations program. "The demand for NTO occupations is higher, but the number of graduates from such fields to fill the growing demand is not enough." (Khaopa, 2011) We must encourage students to consider looking into a NTO career. The program has some great benefits which can lead to a great career.

CHAPTER 3

Conclusions and Recommendations

Research proves that Non-Traditional Occupations provide job satisfaction, economic self – sufficiency, and opportunities for advancement but these opportunities also come with challenges. Those challenges include finding mentors/role models, discrimination/harassment, lack of support, and isolation. It is well documented if these challenges are not addressed, it can lead to remediation issues for colleges and in the workforce.

There is proven data on how important it is to having a program in a college setting that provides support to students who are entering an opposite gender dominated occupation. Research has proven that when students participate in the Non-Traditional Occupations programs, they successfully complete their program and find a job in their field.

It is not easy being the only person that is participating in a program dominated by the opposite gender. Each college has their own retention initiatives but that is not enough. There is still a large group of people that do not know about Non-Traditional Occupations program. The best course of action is to educate individuals about Non-Traditional Occupations and the support programs for these students so when they meet a student that would benefit from additional support they can refer them to the program.

Every student should have a chance to be the best they can be and not worry if there is going to be enough resources for them to be successful. There has been a lot of progress made to create awareness about the Non-Traditional Occupations Program at Gateway Technical College. The program is making a difference in students' lives; therefore, this program must continue to be available for students.

Recommendations

I would recommend that each college adopt a model to motivate and gain interest of men and women in Non-Traditional Occupations. Gateway's Non-Traditional Occupations program is similar to The National Women's Law Center (NWLC) program. It has been well documented that their program works. I would recommend that Gateway continue with the same practice. That model should include:

- Information about Non-Traditional Occupations career options.
- Eliminating myths about men and women working in Non-Traditional Occupations.
- Create exposure about the Non-Traditional Occupations program by attending all college events.
- Find positive role models that can help inspire and motivate new students.
- Encourage students to explore Non-Traditional Occupations.
- Provide a support system to assist with eliminating barriers students face.
- Attend meetings and participate in professional development opportunities to help educate faculty and staff about the Non-Traditional Occupations program.
- Job shadowing, exposure to people in NTO occupations.
- Bringing in NTO speakers
- Initiatives to make NTO careers more visible around the college.

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