

Title of the Presentation: **Moving from a Data Driven to a Knowledge Driven Institution**

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Proposal

Abstract (400 characters):

Colleges and universities are called upon every day to increase effectiveness and efficiency. To assist with this process, we will describe how Metropolitan Community College has been using Knowledge Management to collect data on retiring employees to retain institutional memory. The session will outline the procedures and explore specific applications as well as the benefits and pitfalls of knowledge management.

Proposal:

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Metropolitan Community College has been working on knowledge management projects over the last year. We presented on this topic at the annual Higher Learning Commission Conference in April 2012. This presentation would be an update of our work and information that covers the theory of knowledge management.

In a time with reduced resources and additional duties, colleges and universities are required to be as efficient as possible. Time and money are in limited supply thus our workflows must be as well-organized and cost-effective as possible. When there are problems that affect productivity, it has been claimed that 85% of such problems can be attributed to the processes and the remaining 15% falls to the people (Madison, 2005). The extent to which an organization can be efficient depends on how it applies available data, information and knowledge to the problem at hand (Brooking, 1999). There are a number of tools available both in the business world and in higher education that can help analyze processes. This session will focus on Knowledge Management strategies.

What is Knowledge Management?

Knowledge Management is the process through which organizations generate value from their intellectual and knowledge-based assets (Levinson, 2011). It is the sharing of knowledge and resources. Knowledge management brings together the three essential resources of people, processes and technology. It empowers the institution to use and share information more effectively (Petrides & Nodine, 2003).

In order to generate value from these assets, it is necessary to collect what faculty, staff, administrators and students know and sharing that information in an organized method in an effort to devise best practices. Not all information is valuable and it is up to the organization to decide what is considered an asset. Furthermore, knowledge is either explicit or tacit. Explicit knowledge is things such as patents, trademarks, theories, or plans. Tacit knowledge is the

know-how information that is harder to codify. An example of tacit knowledge is the problem solving strategies an expert uses that is difficult to explain step by step to a novice (Bellinger, 2004). Decision making relies on both explicit and tacit knowledge so the challenge is to make the right knowledge available to the people who need the knowledge at that point. “It is not what you know, but whether you can find it” (Saroch & Barmash, 2007).

Knowledge management is important to colleges and universities because they need to know where expertise is located across the institution and how to track and report on this asset. When an individual possess institutional knowledge, what happens when that person is not available, either by retirement, new position, or other work duties? This can hamper the flexibility and responsiveness of the organization (Kidwell, et al, 2001). It is necessary to convert the information that an individual owns and make it easily available to other members of the organization.

Knowledge starts with data which is raw facts and numbers. Data doesn't have any meaning until it is put in context and then it becomes information. When information is combined with experience and judgment, it is knowledge. Once organizations have knowledge, it is possible to use it for decision making. Another way to describe this is that information relates to the description, definition or perspective or the what, who, when and where. Knowledge describes the strategy, practice, method or approach or the how. Wisdom occurs when one understands the foundational principles responsible for the patterns of knowledge. It embodies the principle, insight, moral or archetype or the why (Bellinger, 2004). Knowledge management allows institutions to create a foundation for sharing the understanding of how all these pieces fit together and convey them meaningfully to its members.

There are a number of knowledge management applications in higher education. Some of these include: creating a robust intranet to facilitate communication, collaboration and resource management; creating communities of practice – informal, self-sustaining collegial bodies; redesigning a core business practice; catalog and evaluate the organization's current knowledge base such as the teaching, research and service activities of faculty; invest in systems and processes to accelerate the accumulation of knowledge; or improvement of student learning and outcomes.

The following are best practice steps for beginning knowledge management projects (Kidwell, et al, 2001):

1. Start with a strategic plan. What are the goals and outcomes of using knowledge management. How would it benefit the institution's processes?
2. Examine the organizational infrastructure. What are the supports and resources (human resources, financial measures, information technology) available to assist knowledge management?
3. Have buy-in from upper administration. Make sure there is an advocate that can champion the benefits of knowledge management.
4. Select a pilot project for knowledge management that has high impact but low risk. MCC began our project with discipline program review and then expanded to other areas.
5. Develop a detailed action plan and assess the results.

Benefits of Knowledge Management in Higher Education

When knowledge management is used in institutions, it can lead to better decision making capabilities. It can reduce product development time in items such as assessment, strategic planning or curriculum development, grants and technology. Knowledge management can improve and accelerate the dissemination of knowledge throughout the organization. It can improve academic and administrative service areas. Using knowledge management strategies can facilitate the usage and sharing of resources and experiences. Finally, knowledge management can reduce costs.

There are also a number of pitfalls and challenges involved when implementing knowledge management strategies. These will be addressed and suggestions given for overcoming these challenges.

This session will provide practical and useful advice on how to implement best practice knowledge management strategies. Participants will explore vital questions on applying these strategies at their own institutions. These questions include: How to keep knowledge management relevant to the organization, How to smartly focus knowledge management efforts, How to ensure results and improvements using knowledge management (Hariharan, 2005). Additionally, we will show how we used these methods during three projects at MCC: institutional memory interviews, discipline program review, and our HLC Improvement project.

This session would benefit anyone who works in a complex organization, such as multi-campus colleges, universities with many divisions and departments, and colleges that are spread across regions, that must organized and use vast amounts of data and information. The following learning outcomes will be expected after attending this session:

1. Participants will be able to define knowledge management strategies and how they are related to higher education.
2. Participants will be able to use knowledge management in a higher education setting to help with institutional effectiveness and quality improvement.
3. Participants will be aware of the benefits and pitfalls of knowledge management techniques.
4. Participants will identify knowledge market pathologies (monopolies, artificial scarcity, and trade barriers) and be aware of strategies to overcome these pitfalls (Davenport & Prusak, 2000).
5. Participants will have additional resources provided so further research can occur.