

ROGUE VALLEY PROFESSIONAL / TECHNICAL ACADEMY

DESIGN

The Rogue Valley Professional / Technical Academy is designed to address several of the issues that have evolved resultant of the past decade of social and educational reform. Not the least of these is the need for a quality professional / technical arts program that is not only recognized as relevant by the business world into which an increasingly significant population of students choose to enter, rather provides a forum through which business can become an *active* partner in the revitalization process. This active involvement is an essential ingredient of our governor's long-range business/education collaboration goal and one embedded in the structure of the current Oregon Business Plan.

Additional to that specific need, the Academy acknowledges issues occurring on a national level that threaten our future work force and resultant economy; diminishing school funding, closing the achievement gap, leaving no child behind, increasing crime rates at increasingly younger ages, gender and racial equity, drug related issues negatively affecting all aspects of our national culture, as well as changing family structures. These and other issues, including an evolving participation in the global economy, require that we as a nation recognize the need for quality training programs that address the broad spectrum of needs such issues generate.

OPERATION

The Academy operates a number of businesses at the site, each serving an integral role in the overall program and each managed primarily by the students, who range in age from 16 to 20 and are enrolled in the Academy for a period of at least one year. The residential aspect of the Academy provides for that element of our program intended to address another level of training; social, physical, and mental well being.

While the Academy is primarily a technical arts training center encompassing several of the areas recognized as vital to our economy, it also incorporates the core subjects and training in the fine arts. This aspect of the program is intended to acknowledge and address the fact that an interest in technical arts does not preclude the need for diverse subject competence nor an interest and ability to be creative. The program includes training in and ample time for creative application of the functional skills, relying on such masters of innovation as Frank Lloyd Wright and Max Escher among others. Recognizing the need for a global understanding of the business world, languages are also included in the training, as is an understanding and appreciation of world cultures.

Given its residential component, the Academy will provide training in the Food Service and Hospitality areas. One of the businesses operated at the site is what we refer to as our "Yelder Hostel," a youth hostel with a twist. Of those aspects we recognize as being vital and integral to our program is that which has been discounted at great cost to our society in general, social competence. Our design, as well as our curriculum, ensures that our students are exposed to and become thoroughly engaged in an understanding of how relevant social relationships lend to a strong and lasting *society*, and how those relationships relate to a strong and lasting *economy*. This concept is the fundamental tenet of our Academy and that upon which we base all aspects of training.

STAFF / STUDENTS

Recognizing the scope and intensity of our mission, the Academy staff is specifically selected and well suited to address the multifaceted needs of this population of students. We embrace the fact that while there are exceptions, students attending what has become our traditional school system across the nation are generally under-challenged relative to non-college preparation; we recognize that while intentions are well meaning, most miss the mark of providing today's youth with the technical skills required to even participate competitively, let alone succeed and advance with any degree of competence in our increasingly complex economic structure.

Our staff's mandate is to incorporate all aspects of what we recognize as essential in producing a well-rounded, healthy, quality citizen prepared to enter, engage in, and *contribute* to society. The Academy is open to all students, however, our primary interest is in providing for the increasing number of youth transitioning in and out of foster care and juvenile detention facilities. The students are required to participate in a wide range of both curricular and extra-curricular activities, including exposure to music, art, theater and other "social" graces. By design, our program exposes this group of students, students who would otherwise not have the opportunity of exposure, to aspects of life that will enrich their experience in general and enhance their potential both personally and professionally.

Additional to a rigorous technical training program and exposure to the fine arts, our students participate in an equally rigorous physical program. The connect between health and success cannot be discounted; our staff, indeed our program design, advances an appreciation of a life-style that recognizes the need to fully integrate physical, mental, and social health in order to not simply survive, rather to contribute to the greater good of the society we wish to promote.

IN SUM

Taken at face value, the Academy is a state-of-the-art professional / technical training facility, which is in-and-of-itself sufficient justification for its operation. However, at its fundamental level, it is the answer to what has become a *demand* for national reform and innovation addressing issues that have long-since undermined not only our education system, rather our society in general and its ability to maintain an efficient and competitive economic structure in an evolving global marketplace. It goes without saying that the support is there, both fiscally and conceptually, evidenced by myriad yet fragmented efforts put forth on a number of fronts by both business and education, not to mention the social service agencies; it must also be recognized that the need is there, alarming statistics relative to the youth of our nation abound.

What remains is the need for commitment, long term and consistent investment on both a personal and professional level, in a design that will provide a replicable model for the revitalization required if we are to maintain our place in the evolving global structure, a structure that challenges each and every one of us to be aware of and engage in more than simply what we know, rather what we have the potential to know.

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