

LS 710 Assignment One Essay

Personal Best: Marshall University Week of Welcome

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The Marshall University Week of Welcome was implemented in August of 2010. It is an opportunity in which all entering freshmen are asked to participate. The week is not actually a full week, but includes the freshman move-in day for resident students and two additional days of sessions, activities and seminars designed to acquaint the new freshmen with Marshall University, her expectations, services and opportunities.

Although I was not initially involved in the 2010 project, I was appointed to the committee in November 2009 when I became the Interim Director of University College. The ideas for the event were in the early stages of development within the Retention Committee established within Academic Affairs. Information obtained on campus and across the educational community indicated that students are more likely to stay in college when they find a connection to the college. As a result of these findings, the Retention Committee committed its resources to developing this opportunity for freshmen to build that connection to Marshall University. I became part of a small group who planned and formulated the direction of the program including the programming, scheduling, meal planning, facilities reservations, planning for attendance records, planning event registration needs, college-colored t-shirts for attending students, and many more tasks.

At the same time, the Retention Committee was planning to implement a new one-stop-shop service center for our students. This evolved into the Student Resource Center we have today. I had to recruit and hire a staff of four full-time resource specialists then adequately train them to answer a multitude of questions and deal with nearly any crisis in which students might find themselves. The development of this office was also in response to data compiled by the Retention Committee indicating that students needed a way to avoid the “run-around” of bureaucracy on the college campus. The office opened in August 2010.

In order to accomplish both the Week of Welcome and Student Resource Center tasks, I had to be extremely organized and diligent in my work. Because of my role in the successful implementation, I was later named co-chair of the WOW event for 2011 and I would consider this my personal best leadership experience.

The event in 2010 was hugely successful, but we knew that we still had challenges to overcome and opportunities to improve the event. I immediately began planning and executing tasks by implementing a master task list for every activity and service needed within the event. Breaking the larger tasks down into smaller tasks allowed us to better manage and systematically accomplish each assignment.

I organized frequent WOW meetings for status updates on each task. At most meetings, we would literally review the 19-page task list line-by-line and ask each person to account for their progress in their areas of responsibility. Daily, I would update and revise tasks as needed. I also made myself available and responsive to all of those involved in the development of the program. I made an effort to anticipate needs and make accommodations where needed.

The event in 2011 was successful and possibly more successful than the 2010 event. Once again, we were awed when the students began to arrive in the Henderson Center Arena for the kick-off session, the President's Freshman Convocation, and amazed when they returned on the second day for the freshman class photo and the second-day sessions. We believe we have succeeded in establishing a new freshman tradition on our campus.

In conclusion, I would like to say that organization and communication are two very important leadership principles. Without those skills, the task of implementing a WOW program would not be successful. Another lesson I learned is that you can't make everyone happy all the

time. Sometimes, there are going to be team members who aren't always as dedicated to the task as you are. You have to lead the committee or team down the path for the common good of the task and accept that there are those that might not like your direction.