College Project Award

Project Topic *(include a short project topic heading such as Establishing a Campus Food Pantry)*

Motivation: Knowing the Why

Optional: Chapters may attach up to three tables, charts, or photographs that illuminate their College Project. No more than three attachments are allowed per College Project entry. No additional explanation may be included in the attached table, chart or picture. Tables, charts or pictures should be explained in the body of the 1,600-word entry.

Optional: Chapters may attach up to three tables, charts, or photographs that illuminate their College Project. No more than three attachments are allowed per College Project entry. No additional explanation may be included in the attached table, chart or picture. Tables, charts or pictures should be explained in the body of the 1,600-word entry.

Optional: Chapters may attach up to three tables, charts, or photographs that illuminate their College Project. No more than three attachments are allowed per College Project entry. No additional explanation may be included in the attached table, chart or picture. Tables, charts or pictures should be explained in the body of the 1,600-word entry.

Briefly describe your College Project and what your chapter set out to accomplish with your college administration.

Before the project started, we met with the college president, who focused us on motivating students and promoting student success. We wanted to motivate students to complete a degree and to be successful in classes, even if without passion for a particular class. We also wanted to promote college resources which help students succeed: tutoring, career services, the student success center, and crisis intervention. As stated on the college website, the MCC community values are inspiration, connectedness, and passion. Each of these aspects has been challenged during the COVID-19 crisis, so it is essential to provide guidance now. One of our college goals is to "create accessible, high-impact student-focused services, interventions, and facilities that increase student engagement, completion, and career readiness." By promoting college services, students can more effectively cope during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our target audience consisted of current MCC students who are less engaged on campus or at risk of withdrawing from classes, those needing extra motivation. In collaboration with our administration, we decided to create videos to keep students motivated at McHenry County College (MCC).

We created three videos with three main topics: applying education to life goals, neutralizing self-sabotage, and finding motivation. These videos were distributed to students and faculty members. We generated content for each video by contacting alumni and college employees. In contacting alumni, we highlighted the effect of the COVID-19 crisis on student motivation: students are now more than ever questioning the value of their higher education. Alumni were asked to record a written or video testimony describing the best aspects of their experience at MCC or while pursuing higher education. College employees were asked to describe how their department resources can help students in these areas.

Describe the planning process in detail including who was involved in determining the project and who your chapter collaborated with to carry out the project. (It's perfectly acceptable to list individual job titles or departments/organizations rather than listing everyone by name.)

Our chapter first developed possible ideas for the College Project during chapter meetings, then shared these with administration. During our project planning sessions with advisors, officers, active members, and provisional members, we discussed project ideas ranging from mental health support to scholarship workshops. The chapter president, projects chair, and two advisors were present during the initial meeting with the college president. The president felt that all ideas were helpful, but that we would make the most impact by focusing on support systems rather than systemic changes. To aid in project selection, the college president forwarded our ideas to the vice president of student affairs. Advisors met with the vice president of student affairs and discussed research on student motivation. Research has shown that students need to know why and how the material they are learning connects to their next steps in life, including how general education classes prepare students in unexpected ways. We brainstormed ways to send these messages. Shortly after meeting with the vice president of student affairs, our campus was shut down due to the pandemic. We decided to continue with the project knowing that it would be relevant during and beyond the crisis. At a virtual chapter meeting, we planned a call out to alumni to ask for motivating personal testimonials. Chapter officers drafted an email request and a Facebook post to request testimonials. Finally, an advisor created a discussion board on our learning management system to solicit ideas from chapter officers and members. Members used these discussion boards to advance the project. One discussion board was used to facilitate a group session to write the communications to alumni and the Facebook posts. Another allowed members to view source material provided by alumni, organize the source material into common themes, and choose video clips from each alumni member. Sixteen members participated in project planning discussions.

How did chapter members develop their leadership and/or knowledge, skills and abilities needed for project implementation?

Prior to meeting with the college president, the chapter president and College Project chair met with advisors to discuss how to conduct oneself in the meeting. Topics covered were preparing ideas and notes before meeting, delivering the message, asking for help, and describing the goals and objectives of the College Project. The projects chair asked how to dress for the meeting, and dressing as professionally for virtual meetings as for in-person meetings was also addressed. In writing the call to alumni, students participated in the drafting and editing of email and Facebook posts. While collecting videos, students determined what was important and listed time stamps to send to the videographer. This exercise allowed students to practice clear written communication and organization skills.

<p>Describe in detail how the chapter collaborated and communicated with others before, during and after the project.</p>

At the request of the college president, we met with the vice president of student affairs and discussed research on scholastic motivation: students need to know why and how what they are learning will apply in the future. We brainstormed how to show the connection between education at MCC and future goals. As a result, we created multiple motivational videos that could be presented in multiple venues: freshman experience classes, the student success center, welcome days, and new student orientation sessions.

To generate video content, we first contacted chapter alumni. asking them to create a short video discussing how MCC has helped their personal and professional journeys. The alumni were given prompts but were also encouraged to share their own ideas on various topics, such as how required courses unexpectedly related to career activities, strategies for staying motivated and avoiding self-sabotage while in school, and finding motivation to keep going through personal challenges. We also asked each to share a lesson learned in college which is still relevant. Participants who replied were sent an instructional video on how to shoot a high-quality cell phone video. This instructional video was made by our marketing department for another purpose, but we were given permission to use it for our alumni. The contributions were collected in a Google Drive folder and shared in discussion posts. Then, members were able to determine common themes seen in the videos and select the most impactful comments from each submission. For example, one alumna discussed finding motivation by focusing on the goal of providing for her family. Another discussed how her speech class, though stressful and seemingly routine at the time, enhanced public speaking skills she will need in her career as a lawyer. One alumnus described how his experience at MCC enhanced his confidence to achieve success in his career. An advisor created a discussion board in our learning management system to organize these thoughts. Nine chapter members replied to the board, and two officers helped create a master list of high-quality clips and topics. Three basic themes emerged: neutralizing self-sabotage, applying education to life goals, and finding motivation.

After finding these themes and selecting quotes to use, we began to contact MCC employees to edit the alumni video clips. We asked specific employees to create more video content discussing how MCC employees can assist students. For the video on finding motivation, we contacted a learning and retention specialist who works in the tutoring center at MCC. She stated that tutors can help students with motivation, study skills, goal setting, organization, and executive functioning. For the video on neutralizing self-sabotage, we connected with the director of crisis intervention and prevention. When asked how students can stay positive and prevent self-sabotage, she encouraged students to reach out to counselors to obtain immediate help and referrals to local counselors and emphasized that asking for help is a sign of strength. Finally, for our video on applying education to life goals, we contacted the coordinator of career services. He discussed how career services can help students choose a career path, choose a college major, and identify strengths and weaknesses.

To distribute the videos, we collaborated with MCC employees and offices. With the help of the coordinator of student activities, videos were shared on the college's social media pages and played on campus televisions. The videos were provided to MCC faculty to share in the learning management system. Lastly, the videos were sent to the Career Services department so they could post the videos on their webpage and play the videos on the office televisions.

What were the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of your project, including the lessons learned

by your chapter members and others?

We produced three finished videos from the raw videos obtained from four alumni participants and three MCC employees. At the end of the year, we had a total of 21 views on the videos. While this number is small, we are encouraged, since the videos were distributed at the end of the semester. We are optimistic that they will be shared again when classes resume. Our videos were shared with course navigators, staff members assigned to helping students find appropriate resources on campus. The student navigators were receptive and said they would use the videos when working with students.

After reflecting on the project as a chapter, we identified several lessons learned. We found that having an email list for alumni is a good resource; staying connected with chapter members helps both the chapter and the alumni. We also learned of the impact isolation inflicts on a student's psychological, intellectual, and scholarly capabilities. Ultimately, we learned that it is challenging to stay positive when isolated from others. College employees liked our project, responded well, and engaged with our members. This participation greatly enhanced the project. A major lesson learned is that staying motivated throughout a complex project is challenging, but remembering why we are working on the project, such as a life or career goal, can serve as a motivator. Finally, we learned that it is acceptable to be unclear about life direction. Being comfortable with uncertainty and trying new things is essential, and there might not necessarily be a plan. Many of these lessons were intended for students to apply to college classes, but we also applied what we learned to our endeavors both in our chapter and our daily lives.