

Engaging Students – The Development of the Mount's Co-op SAC

Scott Daniels, Mount Saint Vincent University
Kirsten Somers, Mount Saint Vincent University

Agenda

- What is the SAC
- Why we developed the SAC?
- Outcomes
- Student Feedback
- Challenges
- Looking ahead
- Questions

What is the SAC?

- Co-op Student Advisory Committee
- Group of elected co-op students from all co-op programs
 - One on campus and one off campus student per term and per program
- Established in January 2009

What is the SAC?

- Meet once per month
 - Discuss student issues and concerns
 - Seek feedback on new/updated co-op policies and procedures
 - Discuss and attend upcoming events that are of interest to students
 - Address student feedback
 - Student representatives seek feedback from their cohort prior to each meeting

Why we developed the SAC

- There was already an official advisory committee for co-op faculty advisors/department chairs and employers, but not one for students
- “Adapt to meet the changing needs of students and promote their active participation in all aspects of the co-operative education process, thus ensuring co-op meets their diverse needs.”

Objectives

- Increase student engagement
- Maintain a finger on the pulse
- Provide clarification about co-op processes
- Discuss upcoming events
- Gain student perspective about policies, PD Sessions, etc.
- Ensure student participation at events
- Offer student leadership opportunities
- Have an official mechanism for input from students

Outcomes of the SAC

- Raised issues pertaining to NS Student Loan for co-op students
 - Advocated for change
- Brought forward ideas for student professional development
 - E-portfolios
 - Negotiating Salaries Workshop for Recent Grads
 - Employer Panel
- Assisted with promoting events
- Attended recruitment opportunities

Outcomes of the SAC

- Researched information about common cities where students relocate
- Provided input about co-op processes
 - New Co-op Employer of the Year
 - Reviewed final employer evaluation document
 - Suggested a new interview sign-up process
- Assisted with resume review workshops with new co-op students
- Made suggestions about communication methods with students
 - Friday e-mail bulletin

Student Feedback

Surveyed co-op students in Spring 2010 about the effectiveness of the SAC

- 73% of respondents felt the SAC allows for a better level of communication between students and our office
- 83% felt the SAC representatives addressed their concerns effectively
- 55% felt the SAC is effective in being an official mechanism for student feedback

Student Feedback...the good

- “The reps are definitely making an effort to keep in touch and this is a worthwhile committee.”
- “For me it has been a noticeable improvement on the communication level with the Co-op Office.”

Student Feedback...the bad

- “I didn’ t know there was one. I don’ t think many people are aware that this is going on.”
- “I feel as though the issues brought forward are taken seriously, however, as a third year co-op student some of the concerns raised in previous years are still being raised now.”

Challenges

- Creating awareness amongst students
- Student expectations about the role of the SAC
 - curriculum changes (i.e. course availability)
- Difficulty for the Co-op Team to receive a high level of feedback

Opportunities

- Develop strong relationships with the student representatives
- Call upon the reps for assistance with little notice
- Increased level of student engagement
- Student representatives begin to appreciate the level of apathy from students
- Feedback from student reps reinforces the reasoning behind co-op process changes

Looking Ahead

- Co-op Team and students see value in continuing with the SAC
- SAC is becoming a part of the co-op fabric
- Attempt to promote awareness of the SAC amongst the co-op student body
- Continue to bring SAC feedback to the academic department level

Questions?