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2004 UNOPA Proposal to SCC for development in Associate Degree In Edu. Office Administraion

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PROPOSAL

To Southeast Community College, Lincoln, Nebraska
For development of an
**Associate Degree in
Educational Office Administration**

June 26, 2004

Summary

Every educational institution employs office staff who perform a variety of functions. They serve administrators, faculty, students, families of students, government agencies, and the public--often all at the same time. Their work is dictated by a multitude of special regulations, deadlines, reporting requirements, and technology. Turnover is low in this occupational category, and most of the employees have adapted to many changes.

Data and reports about educators and students are widely available, but there is virtually no information about the thousands of non-certified staff who work in Nebraska schools. Representatives from the Nebraska Educational Office Professionals Association and the University of Nebraska Office Personnel Association undertook to evaluate the status and professional needs of this employee population. In cooperation with the National Association of Educational Office Professionals, these organizations provide leadership, recognition, and professional growth opportunities to educational office staff in public and private K-12 schools, service units, alternative educational institutions, district offices, and post-secondary educational institutions.

The study group concluded that, although these workers are making valiant efforts to keep up with changes in technology, student populations, and regulations, for the educational office professional it's a whole new ball game now. Higher-level technical and communication skills are required more than ever before. The group concluded that an Associate Degree program in Educational Office Administration would provide an opportunity for current professionals to update their skills and qualify for promotions, and provide opportunities for others to prepare for a rewarding career in the education field.

Increasing Role of Community Colleges in Educating Nebraska's Work Force

- Although overall enrollment in higher education held steady, State College and University enrollment declined by 2% and 13%, respectively, while enrollment in Community Colleges increased by 18%.
- In 1998, 27% of all students enrolled in postsecondary education (29,748 students) were enrolled in Nebraska Community Colleges. ¹

Education--A Growth Industry in Nebraska

- 327,160 students were enrolled in Nebraska K-12 schools in 763 different districts and systems, in 2002-2003.²
- 90,338 students were enrolled in Nebraska's 14 public colleges and universities, and 19,142 more were enrolled in private higher education institutions, in 1998.¹
- According to the most recent employment report, "A gain in Educational Services (+711) countered losses in Health Care and Social Assistance (-286), allowing Education and Health to post an increase once again in January, 2004. Education & Health Services was the only industry in first quarter that showed employment gains. This is the third consecutive quarter of growth for this sector statewide. The majority of this growth trend has been in Lincoln and Omaha, though other areas of the state have also shown increases."³

It takes more education than ever before to be competitive!

- Since 1990, participation in higher education in Nebraska [per capita] has regularly ranked in the top nine states. ¹
- In 2000, 31% of Nebraskans over 25 years of age had attained a postsecondary degree of some kind, compared to 26% in 1990. ⁴
- 24% of the over-25 population had some college, but no degree, compared to 21% in 1990. ⁴

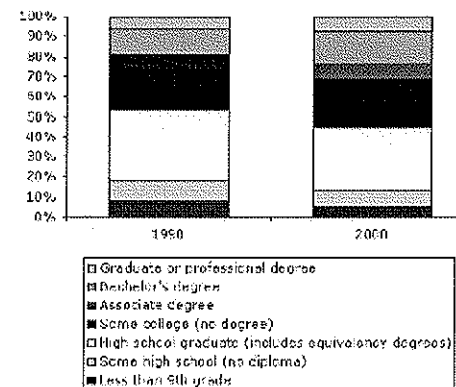
CensusScope

HTTP://WWW.CENSUS2GOPEL.ORG

Nebraska

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Educational Attainment, 1990-2000



The Census reports on the level of education attained by adults age 25 and older. As older, less-educated cohorts begin to fade from dominance, younger, more educated groups take their place.

Educational Attainment in Population 25 Years and Over, 1990-2000

	1990		2000	
	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total
Less than 9th grade	79,925	8.02%	58,376	5.37%
Some high school, no diploma	101,147	10.35%	87,485	8.05%
High school graduate*	345,778	34.71%	339,952	31.27%
Some college, no degree	209,872	21.07%	263,692	24.25%
Associate degree	70,665	7.09%	79,596	7.32%
Bachelor's degree	130,172	13.07%	179,181	16.48%
Graduate or professional degree	58,490	5.87%	78,959	7.26%
Total Population Age 25+	996,049	100.00%	1,087,241	100.00%

* "High school graduate" includes people with the G.E.D. and similar equivalents.

Source: Census 2000 analyzed by the Social Science Data Analysis Network (SSDAN).

Role of Educational Office Professionals

“As the reliance on technology continues to expand in offices across the Nation, the role of the office professional has greatly evolved. Office automation and organizational restructuring have led secretaries and administrative assistants to assume a wider range of new responsibilities once reserved for managerial and professional staff...The widespread use of computers also has enabled bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks to take on additional responsibilities, such as payroll, procurement, and billing. Many of these functions require clerks to write letters, make phone calls to customers or clients, and interact with colleagues. Therefore, good communication skills are becoming increasingly important in the occupation.”

--*Occupational Outlook Handbook*, 2004-2005, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Office Professionals' Salaries--A Major Investment of Public and Private Dollars

- Nationwide, the mean annual salary of all administrative support occupations was \$27,892. In July 2002, the mean hourly earnings of administrative support staff employed by state and local governments (including most educational office personnel) was \$13.79.⁵
- The mean annual salary for all administrative support occupations in Lincoln, Nebraska was \$26,436 (March, 2003).
- Administrative and business support staff make up one of the largest occupational groups in Nebraska, with 56,897 reported in Nov., 2003.³ Office positions are often the first to be cut during layoffs, but overall demand remains strong and slow growth is predicted to continue into the foreseeable future.

Statement of the Problem

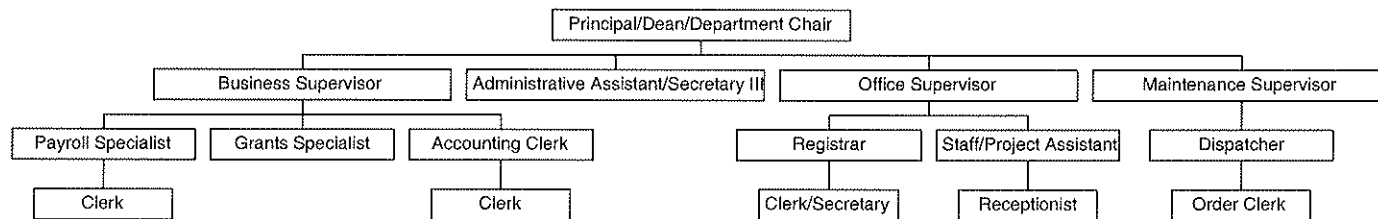
Training and education has not kept up with changes in duties and responsibilities, the work environment, and technology in the field of educational office administration.

Current Status of Educational Office Professionals

The current status of Nebraska educational office professionals is hard to define. Reports generally don't include information about non-certified staff, and no statistics were available regarding educational attainment of that population. Internal surveys and research yielded few facts, but among them were the following:

- 1) Education is a growing industry in Nebraska, and the population of current office professionals is aging (according to the Human Resources department, most of UNL's office staff are over 45 years old.) Many new employees will soon be needed to fill positions as long-term workers retire.
- 2) In Nebraska, career advancement for educational office professionals is extremely hit-or-miss. Some school districts and colleges have a professional development program for staff while others do not. The National Association of Educational Office Professionals administers a certification program for office staff; the program is recognized in some institutions but not in others.
- 3) Hiring criteria for entry-level positions are low, usually just a high school diploma and a year of experience. Organizational structures for educational office staff are typically very flat, having just two or three levels. Positions above entry-level usually require an Associate Degree (or equivalent combination of education and experience). Educational office personnel who like their field and want to advance in it, clearly need continuing education.

Typical Educational Office Staff Organization



Participation in Professional Development Depends on Institutional Support

- In general, Nebraska schools and colleges with bargaining units and those that recognize certification as a qualification for raises and promotions have high participation in professional development programs. Institutions and districts that don't recognize and reward continuing education have much lower participation, even if a professional development program is offered. A quick look at two sample populations working in the same city illustrates what the study group found:
 - The University of Nebraska-Lincoln employs 900 clerical-service employees.⁶ There is no formal professional development program at UNL for the clerical-service classification, and no recognized certification program. About 180 employees, or 20% of eligible employees, are members of the local professional association which offers a professional development program.
 - The Lincoln Public Schools District employs 315 office support staff. LPS offers professional development which can be tied to a national association-based program which qualifies them for an hourly stipend, dependent on the level of certification that is attained. 266 office employees, or 84% of eligible employees, are members of the local professional association and participate in the professional development program.⁷
 - Both populations have access to the same national professional development program through their local associations, but their participation rates are dramatically different because of the difference in institutional support.

Continuing Education of Educational Office Professionals

- Educational office professionals typically take a class when they need to learn something new to update their skills. We suspect that many office professionals are in the 24% of Nebraskans who have some college but no degree, which limits their opportunities for career advancement.
- We would like to change that!

Proposed Solution

- An Associate Degree program in Educational Office Administration would go a long way toward preparing workers for the educational office environment.
- Such a program would ideally be significantly more advanced than an Office Technology program, result in a degree (not a diploma or certificate), and aimed at people who already have clerical skills and want to qualify for advanced and supervisory positions. The program should provide focused training on systems, terminology, issues, and clientele unique to educational institutions.
- Graduates of the program should have a “big picture” view of the business of education, and be prepared to work with faculty, students, and constituents.
- Administrators should understand that support staff having the Educational Office Administration degree are uniquely qualified for higher-level and/or supervisory positions in their offices.

Recommended Curriculum

- Prerequisite: Microsoft Office Certified (MOUS) or BSAD 1010 & 1020
- Advanced MS Office Applications
- SPCH 2810 Business & Professional Communications
- ENGL 1010 & 1020 English Composition I&II
- BSAD 2010 Principles of Accounting
- BSAD 2370 Human Resources Mgt
- MATH 1180 Elementary Statistics
- EDUC 1310 Intro to Education
- HMRS 1320 Multicultural Competency
- SPCH 2100 Intercultural Communication or HMRS 1150 Communication/Assertiveness Training
- OFFT 1040 Records Management
- Educational Terminology
- Education Law:FERPA, HIPPA NCLB
- INFO 1311 Database Concepts
- VPUB 1132 Web Design or OFFT 1680 Web Page Support
- EIGT 1240 Publication Design or VPUB 1122 Page Layout
- Technology Concentration: 2-3 advanced courses in one of the following areas:
 - Financial Reporting
 - Publishing to Print & Electronic Media
 - Information Mgmt With Databases
- OFFT 2400 Organizational Procedures
- PSYC 2960 Life-span Human Development
- BSAD 2310 or PHIL 1060 Ethics
- PSYC 1250 Interpersonal Relations
- Principles of Management or Supervisory Skills
- Language: Either Spanish or American Sign Language

Conclusion

- We think that community colleges are the perfect vehicle for providing meaningful job training and a professional growth opportunity to educational office professionals in Nebraska.
- We think that educational offices--like legal, nursing home, and medical offices-- have unique characteristics and jargon which justify a focused program of education. The educational office professional is involved in a very fast-paced, constantly-changing, technology-driven industry. Their duties are complex, and they must be outstanding communicators. It's time to offer the tools they need to master these responsibilities.
- We think that offering an Associate Degree in Educational Office Administration would be good for Nebraska. This is an opportunity for Nebraska to be a leader in meeting the needs of an under-served population.

Acknowledgements

- The following people contributed directly to this proposal:
 - Herb Howe, Associate to the Chancellor, UNL
 - Dianne Dickey, President, Nebraska Educational Office Professionals Association
 - Lisa Morehouse, Immediate Past-president, Nebraska Educational Office Professionals Association
 - Jeanne Ann Kardell, President-elect, Nebraska Educational Office Professionals Association
 - Carol Bom, President, University of Nebraska Office Personnel Association
 - Christine Cary, Immediate Past-president, University of Nebraska Office Personnel Association
 - Barbara Anderson, Employee Concerns Director, University of Nebraska Office Personnel Association
 - Joy Suder, Secretarial Specialist, UNL
 - Linda Luedtke, Staff Secretary III, UNL

Sources

- ¹Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education, *A Factual Look: An Enrollment Profile of Higher Education in Nebraska*, August, 2003
- ²Education Support Services Nebraska Department of Education, *Statistics and Facts About Nebraska Schools 2002-2003*, March, 2003
- ³Nebraska Workforce Development, *Labor Market Information: Economic Trends*, January, 2004
- ⁴Census 2000 analyzed by Social Science Data Analysis Network, *Nebraska Educational Attainment 1990-2000*, accessed 4/9/04
http://www.censusscope.org/us/chart_education.html
- ⁵U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, *National Compensation Survey: Occupational Wages in the United States*, July 2002
- ⁶University of Nebraska-Lincoln Fiscal Affairs Office, November, 2003.
- ⁷Lincoln Public Schools Human Resources Office, November, 2003.

This proposal has been reviewed and endorsed by the
Board of Directors of the
Nebraska Educational Office Professionals Association.

Signature of authorized representative

Date

