

2013 Careers in Natural Resources Summit

Notes

Recap: Past Accomplishments and Current Activities

See attached PDF of PowerPoint Presentation.

Challenges & Opportunities Panel and Discussion: What are the challenges to and opportunities for engaging youth and young adults in Natural Resource Careers?

Megan Wilhite, Colorado Parks & Wildlife

Challenges:

- Recruiting from diverse backgrounds
- Hard to track success
- Send emails about job announcements but don't know who is on that list

Opportunities:

- 450-500 seasonal employees – these positions don't require a college degree
- Large job email distribution list
- Internship program for Department of Natural Resources - easier step for them to get into the door
- Currently targeting career fairs at middle and high schools; going to colleges with higher minority populations

John Hausdoerffer, Western State Colorado University

Challenges:

- The interdisciplinary nature of natural resources

Opportunities:

- Use the Gunnison Valley as a learning landscape; use real-life examples to teach concepts
- Currently have Environmental & Sustainability major programs (undergrad) and are working on a graduate level degree in Environmental Management. The graduate degree allows for distance learning opportunities and integration of a person's job responsibilities as part of their second year master's project.
- Train students to find unlikely partnerships and be entrepreneurial

Stephanie Dixon, Goodwill Industries of Denver

Challenges:

- Access to students (unless they are in the classroom, it is hard to access them)
- Students come from backgrounds where they experience mistrust and failure. If systems are not easy to navigate, they will have another negative experience.

- Because of agency turnover, there isn't continuity with one point person in natural resources to develop a relationship with over time.

Opportunities:

- Goodwill's Workforce Development Program works with 20,000 adults and youth representing 33 different schools.
- They also have a post-secondary retention program which follows students from high school through preparing for college and offering mentorships and then with the transition into college and during college.
- Try to create relevance for their students' education and connect it to their classes
- Staff of 50 career influencers (schools counselors are overworked so Goodwill can provide extra resources and staff)
- Agencies/organizations can adopt a class and work with them on career development/readiness on a weekly basis
- Need to create the connection of natural resource careers with success
- Many students are excited about nontraditional, post-secondary career pathways so there is a lot of opportunity for them in natural resource fields
- Working towards smaller, stackable credentials to help get a foot in the door at an entry level job or internship to build confidence

Chad Cookinham, Generation Schools (non-profit working with turnaround schools in the Denver Metro Area)

Challenges:

- Knowledge: students don't know much about the environment/outdoors; they don't know what the issues are, why they are important, why they should care. There is a passion there but no one has ignited it.
- The career feels so far away for them (high school + college = 8 years away). What are the small steps we can give them to find more tangible, immediate opportunities?
- The students he works with are set up for failure so we need to find ways to set them up for success. They need people in the natural resources field to tell them where the careers are.
- School counselors are able to help students who know what they want to do get to that point but not help students who don't know what they want to do explore careers in natural resources. Need more industry support here.
- Hard to find stories of people in natural resources that look like them and have a similar background.

Opportunities:

- Partnerships – leverage the expertise of others (i.e. goodwill workforce development, industries with career counselors, schools)
- Students don't see what is available to them and how to get to there. Career fairs are fine, but hands-on experience is best – getting them out, working, showing them opportunities
- Introduce them to natural resources careers early - can't just start in college

- Need more than a 1-time interaction
- Create multiple pathways to natural resources careers. Students are not always college bound so start them with some credentials (stackable credentials)
- Link high school contacts with agency opportunities
- Group mentioning

Federal Input from the Audience

- Vince Meyer, US Fish and Wildlife Diversity Coordinator
 - There are not many positions currently with the federal government
 - Federal agencies are looking for diverse employees
 - Link students/classes with agency outings or youth corps (work around USA Jobs)
 - HR determines the parameters for hiring before hiring managers sees the applications
- Susan Alden Weingardt, US forest Service
 - USFW Pathways Program: an internship program for youth in college or recent graduates.
 - USFW Job Corps Program: academic and vocational training; works to streamline job corps into careers.
- Mark DeGregorio, Rocky Mountain National Park
 - Recently worked with Eagle Rock High School to hire 5-6 GS-1 and GS-2 level positions that don't have to go through USA Jobs.
 - NPS has a nonprofit entity that helps to provide funding for interns to bypass the federal process.

Audience Questions and Discussion

- What does shadowing involve?
 - (Chad C.) – Shadowing provides students with hands-on experience. It could even be just one day. Seeing people working who are happy and enjoy what they do is the most important thing since they don't have much experience seeing that.
 - (Stephanie D.) – There is no right way to do a job shadow. Engage students in something cool that is naturally happening that the students can engage in. Enjoy lunch and a conversation with the student. Build a relationship with them doing something together rather than sitting and watching or explaining something.
- What about the family? Sometimes they don't understand these different career paths.
 - Parents are also important career influencers. How do we have parents/adult mentors as partners instead of unintentional adversaries?
 - Student and parent career night as part of the career fair was one suggestion.
- How do we get people from non-traditional backgrounds into natural resource career fields and retain them?
 - (Megan W.) – Need to build awareness about diversity, make people feel welcome once they are hired and possibly hold some inclusivity training for employees.

- (John H.) – WSCU has a peer mentoring structure where upperclassmen mentor underclassmen and get leadership experience as well. Conduct small projects that are manageable and relevant so they stay engaged.
- (Stephanie D.) – We need to create a community of support and be a part of their community instead of asking them to be part of ours.
- Students should be looked at as assets.
- Students are craving mentors; this is an opportunity to develop a relationship and access their passion.
- To reach nontraditional populations, we may need to reach them in nontraditional ways. For example, they may not have access to a computer.
- (Stephanie D.) – For the website, put it into language more appealing to youth. Goodwill and Generation Schools have staff and connections to many schools so they can help get our information to the right people. Bring volunteers/the community into the classroom and bring the classroom into the community.
- We need to work on building a sense of trust in the community so we are able to disseminate information without trying to make it feel like "we want to change you and make you like us."
- (Chad C.) – Work on creating a sense of community once we are there and keep them engaged; how to reach students (peers doing it is more effective); have students start seeing themselves as university students early.
- Natural resource careers go far beyond being a “park ranger.”
 - They can include HR, accountants, media, grant writers etc. in agencies/organizations that connect to natural resources. We need to define what careers in natural resources are and educate others (e.g. counselors) about the range of possibilities.
 - Older agencies have a certain entrenched culture -- how do we change this? The kinds of skills staff need go beyond what they were trained for (i.e. need to write grants, work with partners, etc.).
- General discussion on Career Fair:
 - Instead of conducting one event that captures a bunch of students, everyone could make a commitment to represent the initiative and volunteer a certain amount of hours (e.g., 16 hours a year) to mentoring students.
 - One concern is that we are doing this as chunked into natural resources; are there better ways to connect it into the bigger picture (i.e. tap into existing happenings/events)? (Chad C.): tap into schools/student organizations that have students that are invested already, job shadowing, mentoring, run a project with students. Generation Schools have connections already with students so we don't have to forge those new relationships – they can serve as middlemen to make connections.
- Context of this project (Jen Freeman):
 - CYCA in partnership with CAEE received a \$25,000 grant from the Walton Family Foundation to support this initiative. This grant has 3 firm deliverables – (1) a natural resources career fair, (2) a career guide and (3) an online portal. There are many other aspects of the careers in natural resources initiative and CYCA, CAEE and others are currently shopping for more funding for

those ideas but today we are going to focus on the three deliverables we currently have funding for.

- There is also additional research that is needed (e.g., what are impressions of natural resource careers; what do their parents think; what do career influences think; how do we message this career path; what are real numbers in terms of volume of jobs and pay).
- To clarify, this project also is not going to do programming. Hopefully this project will create some relationships and sparks which other organizations can run with.

Small Group Discussions:

Career Fair – Katie Navin, Moderator

- Discussed challenges (including student behavior and attention, getting students outside of West Generation High to attend) and successes (including interactive nature of most of the stations, post-fair evaluation) of last Career Fair.
- What age range should this year's fair target?
 - Get input from high school counselors
 - Focus on Sophomore/Junior year as they get prepared for college?
 - Don't discount 8th and 9th graders
 - Maybe separate into two events where we focus on internships for Juniors/Seniors and general awareness for 8th-10th graders
 - Focus on AVID students?
 - Include parents?
- Timing?
 - Fall may be better
 - Definitely before May
- What should our goal be – awareness/exposure or internship opportunities?
- Suggestions for next year's fair:
 - Provide a better link between the stations' message and where they go next
 - Don't use the fair as a way to get information out but rather to engage students and then give them information after we have them interested
 - Include a scavenger hunt for the different stations
 - Give students a set of questions to answer throughout the fair
- Should we try something other than a stand-alone natural resources career fair?
 - Most career fairs for nontraditional populations are ineffective
 - Look at the model of the CO Construction Career Days
- How will we measure success?

Career Guide – Scott Segerstrom, Moderator

- What should be included in the guide?
 - Federal job information
 - State job information
 - Private industry?
 - Nonprofits?
 - Should include broad scope of natural resource career tracks, not just high-profile positions (public relations, computer science, writing/editing, etc.)
 - Workplace competencies
 - Flow chart?
 - Should include relevant internships and service learning opportunities.
 - Manual should draw clear distinction between internship vs. service learning listed.
 - Include overview of expectations for internships (what are the deliverables of your term, what are the expected outputs)
 - Should include job-shadowing strategies
 - Pre-existing opportunities
 - How and when to request job shadowing
 - Should include volunteer opportunities
 - Should include “externships”: professional development opportunities for career influencers, etc.
 - Should include fundamental knowledge
 - Pay scale
 - Timing of applications
 - Hiring process
- Don’t reinvent the wheel
 - There are already guides to USA Jobs, etc so gather those first
 - See what already exists and how we need to adapt those to our audience
- Lay-out input/feedback
 - Include a glossary of terms
 - Include a library of resources as appendix
 - Include case studies to different faces of the careers, humanize them.
- Other ideas
 - An interactive game?

Online Portal – Stephanie Stephens, Moderator

- What could be included in the online portal?
 - Videos:

- Do a one minute video of partners with the initiative. Focus on the accessibility of careers and nontraditional populations.
 - USFWS videos
 - Videos on what hiring managers are looking for and tips for interviewing.
 - Create RSS feed between websites for jobs, the directory (do with CAEE website) and integrate it with getoutdoorscolorado.org website.
 - Show pathways to careers:
 - Interdisciplinary pathways (i.e. maybe have policy background but want to incorporate environmental focus)
 - Pathways for those that have college degrees- coming in a bit later
 - Make it a clearinghouse for jobs (including a place for youth corps to look and career influences to look)
 - Include sample resumes/descriptions
 - Currently there is no place to go to post your jobs where you get a big following. We have the opportunity to create a premier place to post websites for natural resources. This is a way for employers to post a job once instead of on a bunch of different sites.
 - Use Colorado nonprofit job board as example of site. Similar to that site, at the end of the year, provide a snapshot of the field including pay rates, type of opportunities, changes, challenges, etc.
 - Include filters to weed through positions (educational background, level – entry level, director position, etc).
 - Include criteria for posting a job (have a staff person that oversees the jobs that are posted)
 - Divide by Colorado regions- and then other for out of state postings (want to allow out-of-state postings?)
 - Collect info about job seekers using website- register- use as a way say this is the audience you are reaching
 - Use as a way to facilitate internal conversations?
- Funding:
 - Denver Foundation, BBVA Compass
 - Banner Ads
 - Google analytics grant?
 - Marketing: how do we market it to partners to use it and the public to access it?
 - Workforce centers, high schools/counselors, higher ed, career center websites
 - Career assessment about what their interests are will link to ways to tap into our website
 - Advertise on other websites – banner ads?
 - High school science teacher listserve- sci-co; CSEN; biology/earth science teachers

NEXT STEPS:

- Moving Forward – Kim Burgess, Dept. of Natural Resources
 - Applauded the energy in the room and ideas generated
 - Encouraged this group to take risks
 - Strongly supports our efforts
- Group Communication
 - Google and Yahoo! Groups were discussed but it was decided that we start with traditional emails to the group. Partners could send emails to Lisa Eadens (lisaeadens@caee.org), the new Career Development Coordinator, and she will ensure their relevancy and distribute to the entire group.
- Next Meeting: Get this group together twice a year; next meeting in second half of February? Include a student panel?