Skills for America’s Future

Case Study: Motorola Moments

Motorola Moments: An Introduction
As a commitment to Skills for America’s Future, Motorola Solutions joined the Choice Scholars Summer Institute at Harper College to provide lunch-and-learn opportunities, called Motorola Moments. Begun in 2011, these weekly lunches provide Choice Scholars students the opportunity to learn directly from Motorola Solutions employees.

Motorola Solutions employees offer Choice Scholars students industry knowledge on topics including critical thinking, innovation, marketing, communication, interviewing and lifelong learning. The Motorola professionals use examples from their work to help students connect class assignments with real-world tasks. They also instill confidence in students to pursue their future professions. With opportunities to hear from professionals in fields including chemistry, graphic arts/web design, nursing, and biology, Motorola Moments positively shapes students’ decisions about their career paths.

How the Program Works
For the past three years, Harper College, a community college in Palatine, Illinois, has operated the Choice Scholars Summer Institute, an academic and professional development program available to incoming freshman from communities surrounding Harper College. Choice Scholars invites students whose placement scores are just below the cusp of college readiness to a four-week program to help them develop skills in their identified areas of weakness.

The Choice Scholars Summer Program offers students an individualized study plan that will assist them in testing into college level courses. Students work with Harper College faculty and staff to gain technical proficiency and learn about various industries, culminating in a research symposium at the end of the four week program.

At the end of the program, students re-test on the college placement exams with the goal of placing into college-level courses and bypassing remediation. This program helps students avoid spending time and money on courses that will not count toward their college degree, and could potentially delay degree completion.

“This partnership is devoted to providing freshman with the fundamental skills they need to thrive not only in an educational setting, but also in a professional setting. We are committed to jointly guiding students to be better-equipped in a professional arena, making America more competitive on a global level.”

- Marianne Stanke, Director of Staff Operations at Motorola Solutions, Inc.

Fast Facts
• Four week summer program to boost low test scores and provide professional development
• Weekly job skill learning opportunities
• 30 students in 2011
• More than 75% improvement on reading/writing and math placement tests
• 95% regular course retention through Spring semester
A lot of times, you get discouraged because it seems like it’s so impossible. But when you get people to come in like this and say, ‘You can do it; I was in your shoes,’ it really encourages you. Now I see that if you’re really interested […] you’re going to go the extra step to be successful.”

- Brenda Escutia, 2011 Choice Scholars

Motorola Moments fits into the Choice Scholars program by adding a new dimension to the classroom experience, contextualizing the basic skills students focus on in the academic part of the Choice Scholars program. Students learn tips to help them get a head start in the work place, such as how to dress for success or how social media profiles can potentially hinder a job search. Students also get to see examples of work, such as graphic design projects, from Motorola Solutions employees and hear about how the development process works.

**Benefits**

Students learn directly from professionals about the challenges and rewards of various career paths, helping them develop a professional identity and make informed decisions about their future careers.

With this partnership, Harper College is able to offer valuable resources to incoming freshman, enabling them to prepare for careers before they even begin classes. The partnership also aligns the college with a major international company. As part of a community college network called Achieving the Dream, Harper College can use this partnership model to share strategies with other community colleges across the country.

Motorola Solutions employees who are selected to facilitate the Motorola Moments training sessions benefit from a new experience to share their expertise. The company as a whole has an opportunity to train and connect with potential future employees.

**Results**

Motorola Moments and the Choice Scholars Program measure student progress in four ways. First, Choice Scholars participants average 76% improved placement on the reading/writing college course placement exam and 80 – 85% improvement on math placement exams. Students will typically move up one level or test out of remedial courses altogether. Fall semester GPA is the second measure of success. The average GPA for Harper Students is about 2.59, where the Choice Scholars (2009, 2010) average GPA is 2.88. Semester retention, or the ability to retain the student without his/her withdrawing from individual courses or Harper College, was 95% for 2011. Finally, the rate at which students register for subsequent semesters until graduation after completing Choice Scholars from Fall 2010 to Fall 2011 is 91%. This rate well exceeds the college average of 50% for Fall to Fall persistence.

Harper College plans to expand the program by targeting 50 students next summer.

Skills for America’s Future is a non-partisan partnership of businesses and community colleges. Its purpose is to address the dual problems of high unemployment and the difficulty many employers face in finding workers with the right skills. Skills for America’s Future helps connect employers to community colleges and workforce partners so students are better equipped with the skills necessary to find and retain jobs.

For more information about how your company can partner with community colleges and Skills for America’s Future, contact Karen Elzey at karen.elzey@aspeninst.org http://www.skillsforamericasfuture.org