SENCAP: A YEAR IN REVIEW

The 2018-19 school year marks the eighth year the Southeast Nebraska Career Academy Partnership Program (SENCAP) has been part of Southeast Community College. This career academy program provides opportunities for high school juniors and seniors to become both college and career-ready by taking dual-credit courses, job shadows, field trips, preparing resumes, mock interviews, and connecting with professionals from around Nebraska.

During the past school year, SENCAP had 46 high schools participating in the SCC 15-county service area. SENCAP served 1,097 high school students who enrolled in 1,978 courses, and completed 8,205.5 quarter credit hours. SENCAP offers 13 different career pathways and 70 different college courses that transfer to other colleges and universities.

Since its beginning in 2008, SENCAP has grown from 16 participating high schools, with around 45 students involved with two career pathways (education and health), to 46 high schools and more than 1,000 students involved in 13 different career pathways and more than 70 college courses. SENCAP is one of the fastest growing programs at Southeast Community College.

SENCAP continues to search for ways to provide financial support for students who cannot afford tuition and books. Southeast Community College offers every student participating in the SENCAP Program half off tuition in any of the courses they take during their two years. In addition, the SCC Foundation offers up to 30 scholarships for $500 each to students who continue their education at SCC.

Southeast Community College and SENCAP are committed to helping high school students to be better prepared and focused on their lives after high school and college. When students take college-level courses while still in high school, they are better prepared to meet future challenges.

Career Preparation – Resume & Gallup Strengths Development

Each year SENCAP invites first year Academy students to a central location for an interactive workshop focusing on specific career preparation skills, traditionally called, “Professional Development Days.” With more students participating in one of the 13 Academy Pathways, the event was renamed “Career Preparation Days” and focused on resume building and Gallup Strengths Development.

“The Career Preparation Days” were divided up and distributed throughout SCC’s 15-county service area. During February, 12 regional sessions were held at seven locations: The Jack J. Huck Continuing Education Center in Lincoln, Southeast Community College's Beatrice Campus and at SCC’s Learning Centers in Hebron, Nebraska City, Plattsmouth, Wahoo and York.

Each session encouraged students from various academies to participate and engage in small groups while receiving

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mini-lectures presented by SENCAP’s regional coordinators. Director of SENCAP, Randy Nelson, explained the importance of the resume in today’s competitive job market, and how the Gallup Strengths can help shape their resumes. All SENCAP students take the Gallup StrengthsFinder assessment near the beginning of the semester to reveal their top five talents. Throughout the semester, they are assigned activities and reflections that encourage this strengths-based development by naming, claiming, and aiming these talents toward specific objectives.

SENCAP to SCC

In the fall of 2015 at Elmwood-Murdock High School, Kyle Huxhold had an opportunity to participate in SENCAP in the Welding Academy during his junior year of high school. “I decided to take part in SENCAP because I wanted to learn more about a career in welding while also earning college credit,” Huxhold said.

SENCAP allows students to enroll college-level, career focused courses within a program of study, and it also includes career exploration opportunities. “SENCAP gave me an idea of what college was like,” he said. “I was able to attend field trips and get an idea of the different careers that are involved in welding.”

Kyle had a passion for welding and when he graduated in 2017, he already completed 21.5 quarter credits worth of college credit towards a program of study. “I decided to continue my education at SCC because it was close to home, has an excellent welding program,” he said. “Because of SENCAP, I had a lot of my welding credits already completed.”

He graduated from SCC this spring with a degree in Welding Technology. He now works at Caterpillar NMC utilizing his welding skills, and they also awarded him full tuition assistance to continue his education in diesel technology. “SENCAP opened a lot of doors for me,” he added. “I was able to find something I love to do and enjoy learning more about it.”

SENCAP to SCC

Madison Ahrens knew she wanted to work in the health field, but wasn’t entirely sure what she wanted to do. In the fall of 2014, she had the opportunity to enroll in SENCAP at Weeping Water High School. This allowed her to begin taking dual-credit courses in the health pathway, attend field trips and job shadow. “I enjoyed my job shadowing experiences in the different health related fields,” she explained. “These were careers I thought I would be interested in, but quickly found out I wasn’t and it helped me rule out career paths.”

By the time Ahrens graduated from high school, she earned 16.5 quarter credits. “SENCAP allowed me to get ahead in college,” Ahrens said. “After I graduated high school, I initially enrolled at UNL and it put me an entire semester ahead of other incoming freshmen. I realized that UNL wasn’t a good fit so I returned to SCC and enrolled in the dental assisting program.” She said that was the best decision she’s ever made, “SCC was a great experience and I loved the small class sizes and the relationships I had with my instructors. When I walked into class my instructor knew who I was and it made it easier for me to seek help when I needed it.”

Madison graduated from SCC in March of 2019 and is now working as a dental assistant at Lincoln Pediatric Dentistry in Lincoln, “Between SENCAP and SCC’s health advisors, they helped me figure out what I wanted to do in the future. I love my job, it’s such a great office and I’m excited to watch the pediatric office grow and help patients.”

COORDINATOR SPOTLIGHT, in his own words.

I’m just finishing my second year as the SENCAP Coordinator for the Northern Region, which includes Ashland-Greenwood, Bishop Neumann, Cedar Bluffs, Mead, Yutan, Raymond Central and Wahoo High schools. Prior to my role as a Coordinator, I spent time as a high school teacher and coach, a high school assistant principal and finally as the principal...
at Fremont Senior High for 11 years.

As a high school educator and administrator, it was always a high priority for me to give my students real-life options regarding how they could apply what they were learning in the classroom to a productive future career choice. I’ve been extremely pleased to find the SENCAP program exceeds my expectations in this area and does a great job of serving the high school students who participate in SENCAP the opportunities to explore different career options, along with gaining valuable college credits. In addition, I’ve really enjoyed being able to work with a group of outstanding young adults as they complete their high school careers.

Two of my high schools offer a Certified Nursing Assistant Class once a year, and a third high school is exploring offering a class for the next school year. Students who completed these classes find good paying, part-time jobs in their communities as they complete their high school education, as well as getting a great feel for the health field. In addition, several of the schools provide SCC Welding instruction for interested students, which gives them a huge head-start on jobs in this high demand area in industry. Students interested in the Agriculture field have the opportunity to explore their interests in this area through online classes as well as classes taught at their schools for SCC credits. Other students are taking online courses in other SENCAP Career fields including Business and IT, Criminal Justice, Education and Energy. There is literally something for everyone!

In addition to the classwork, some amazing field trips, the students’ job shadow choices, and the Career Prep days, SENCAP students are receiving extremely valuable skills applicable to their future, as well as important exposure to a wide variety of career options. These students will be significantly ahead of their peers who do not have the SENCAP option. I’ve enjoyed my first two years as a Coordinator, and am looking forward to next year. I can’t wait to work with my new students and renew working with my returning students!

What’s New?

Since SENCAP’s inception, the program provides students with more opportunities to explore careers and college level coursework they may not have otherwise been exposed to. Next year, SENCAP will offer two new certifications to students in Health and Geographic Information Systems pathways. Students will begin working in an industry with a high demand for highly-skilled employees.

The Healthcare Services certificate is a 15-credit hour certificate providing students with entry-level skills needed to work in a medical setting. Careers in healthcare support and technical jobs are expected to be among the fastest growing groups during the 2014-2024 projections decade. These careers are expected to contribute the most new jobs, with a combined increase of 2.3 million in employment, representing one in four jobs.

The Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Technician certificate, is an 18-credit hour certificate in which SENCAP students have the ability to earn 15 of the 18 credits before graduating high school. Technicians in the field generate, analyze, interpret and communicate data derived by using GIS/GPS hardware and software applications. GIS-related employers have indicated a high interest in hiring a number of employees within the next three years, and the labor market indicates a healthy growth rate for GIS occupations. Through these certificate pathways, SENCAP hopes to provide students with more career opportunities and begin contributing to the workplace.