

# **ANALYSIS OF NONTRADITIONAL CAREERS**

Presented to

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Prepared by

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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Rhonda Still, Special Populations Coordinator  
Northwest Mississippi Community College

**FROM:** Tommy Watson, Civil Engineering Technology Instructor  
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**DATE:** March 14, 2008

**SUBJECT:** RECRUITING AND RETAINING NONTRADITIONAL CAREER  
STUDENTS.

This report concentrates on the recruiting and retaining a nontraditional (by gender) students into the Career Technical programs at Northwest Mississippi Community College. This report focuses primarily on female students in construction careers, but also discusses males and females in other nontraditional fields. It will recommend strategies and recommendations discovered in secondary research found in professional and scholarly journals.

Based on the findings of this report, I have concluded that there are biases concerning the hiring of nontraditional employees into the work force. These biases are passed onto our society as a whole and affects recruitment efforts. To insure that nontraditional students are recruited, trained and hired into their chosen careers, it is important to insure secure placement prior to a student's graduation.

It is important for us to establish good industry connections in order to secure future positions for nontraditional students as well as our traditional students. We must educate industry representatives in the advantages of hiring and maintaining a nontraditional career employee.

Please feel free to discuss this report with me at your convenience. I will be happy to assist any of our program instructors in implementing some of the findings in this report.

Sincerely,

Tommy Watson  
Civil Engineering Technology  
Instructor

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### Purpose of the Report

The purposes of this report are to : (1) explore why we have low numbers of nontraditional students in our technology programs, (2) explore why we have problems with the retention of nontraditional students, (3) explore the statistics of career fields formally employing nontraditional personnel in the state of Mississippi, (4) explore the positive consequences an industry will attain by hiring nontraditional personnel, (5) explore tactics to recruit, motivate and place nontraditional students, (6) persuade industry to hire nontraditional students; persuade students and employers to ignore stigmas.

### Recruiting an Retaining Nontraditional Career Students

Findings from professional and scholarly journals and Northwest Mississippi Community College's 2006-2007 District Summary Report, revealed a problem with the recruitment and retention of nontraditional career students. There is a stigma in nontraditional careers that is shared by employees and employers. It is time to put these stigmas away and convince students and industry representatives that they can benefit from choosing nontraditional jobs and employers.

### Recommendations for Recruiting and Retaining Nontraditional Career Students

The key to recruiting and retaining nontraditional career students is education. We must educate everyone involved in the recruitment, training and hiring process. To successfully recruit and retain quality nontraditional students, we must dismiss the myths and stigmas.

# **ANALYSIS OF RECRUITING AND RETAINING NONTRADITIONAL CAREER STUDENTS**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the United States of America as well as around the world, there has always been a stigma when it comes to hiring nontraditional employees. This stigma has been a factor as long as men and women have worked. Work has always been labeled as “men’s work” and “women’s work”. It has been the nature of our society and many others that there are certain jobs that have always been reserved and almost uniquely limited to one gender or the other.

Traditionally it has always been men’s work to conduct the harder or more dangerous activities required in feeding and protecting the family. As time passed and men started working for wages, these jobs were usually reserved for men.

It has also traditionally been women’s work to take care of the man’s home and children. The women has also been expected to not only to birth, but take care of the children and raise them in the man’s home. She was expected to perform all jobs related to children, from washing their clothes to educating them.

These stigmas span across time, space, generations, race and culture and extend to our working society today. It is important to educate today’s workforce against the stigmas of performing nontraditional jobs and hiring nontraditional employees.

As Career Technical Instructors at Northwest Mississippi Community College, we feel the direct effect of these stigmas. This has been brought to my personnel attention by a

short coming of retention of nontraditional students in the Civil Engineering Technology Program. The Civil Engineering Technology program, as well as many other Northwest career technology programs, suffer from the lack of recruitment and retention of nontraditional career students.

The purpose of this report is to understand that it is crucial for The Northwest Mississippi Community College Career Technical Division to reevaluate our methods of recruiting and retaining nontraditional students. We must support quality students to consider nontraditional careers when they choose a career. We must devise methods to insure these students complete their programs of study.

The goal is to: (1) identify reasons for low enrollment numbers of nontraditional students, (2) identify and adopt tactics to recruit, motivate and place nontraditional students, (3) identify retention problems of nontraditional students, (4) identify positive consequences of hiring nontraditional students and devise methods of educating industry employers, (5) develop tactics to encourage industry employers to hire nontraditional students, (6) identify stigmas and devise plans to educate nontraditional students and employers about those stigmas.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **Reasons for Lack of Recruitment and Retention of Nontraditional Career Students**

It is determined by this research that there is still a low number of nontraditional employees working in the job markets today. There are still many stigmas and myths related to males and females working in nontraditional jobs. I have discovered many

sources that support the facts for the lack of nontraditional employees filling the current job markets. Below are listed some of the major ideas that are supported by my findings.

- About.com(2008) The department of Labor for women's Bureau state that about half of the young women in the United States of America presently work in jobs that pay on an average of three hundred and thirty eight dollars per week. In these same jobs that are occupied by males, sixty percent of them make on an average of one hundred and ten dollars a week more.
- Iseek.com (2008) states that there are many myths about whether women can or should work in jobs that are considered nontraditional for them. This article also explores the facts regarding common misconceptions about women working in male-dominated nontraditional jobs.
- Hansen (2008) There's sometimes a point in career planning when people are discouraged from following their dreams because their career choice do not fit traditional gender roles. Men are discouraged from careers in nursing, social work and teaching while women are discouraged from careers in technology, science, and security. Men who are interested in "feminine" jobs are teased about their sexuality and women who are interested in "male" jobs are questioned as to whether they have the brains or stamina to perform.
- Career Prospects in Virginia (2008) Time for a change. Traditional gender barriers are bad news, not only for individuals who want to cross these lines, but for society as a whole. We all lose when talented people are locked out of jobs.

- MSCRN(2007) determines that nontraditional occupations include careers in computer science, technology, emerging high-skill occupations and other occupations which employ less than twenty five percent of one gender.

Below is a list of few nontraditional occupations for females in Mississippi in 2003.MSCRN (2007)

<u>Occupational title</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Average Annual Wage</u>
Civil Engineers	1,430	72	5.0%	\$64,000
Surveying and Mapping Tech.	410	16	4.0%	\$26,330
Construction Laborers	7,020	281	4.0%	\$19,900
Highway Maintenance Workers	2,640	53	2.0%	\$19,020
Heating and Air	1,920	38	2.0%	\$28,610
Automotive Body Repair	1,790	54	3.0%	\$29,010
Automotive Service Tech	5,620	169	3.0%	\$28,020
Tool and Die Makers	690	62	9.0%	\$35,450
Welding	6,510	456	7.0%	\$29,850
Electricians	5,320	160	3.0%	\$34,790
Small Engine Mechanics	130	4	3.0%	\$27,870
Sheet Metal Workers	1,570	79	5.0%	\$27,660
Conservation Scientist	490	39	8.0%	\$42,480
Truck and Tractor Operators	7,250	580	8.0%	\$22,940
Avionics Technicians	180	16	9.0%	\$42,170

Below is a list of few nontraditional occupations for males in Mississippi in 2003.MSCRN (2007)

<u>Occupational title</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Average Annual Wage</u>
Hairdressers and Cosmetologists	1,360	82	5.0%	\$21,310
Paralegals and Legal Assistants	1,720	155	9.0%	\$29,840
Child Care Workers	5,330	213	4.0%	\$14,320
Medical Records, Health Techs.	2,000	40	2.0%	\$23,250
Word Processors and Typists	650	13	2.0%	\$22,890
Registered Nurses	24,840	2,236	10.0%	\$45,590
Nursing, Home Health Aides	2,370	237	10.0%	\$16,910
Data Entry Keyers	2,610	313	12.0%	\$21,140
Office Clerks General	15,310	1,837	12.0%	\$20,120
Social Workers	1,770	230	13.0%	\$29,750

With the use of the information listed in all these references, we can apply this information to successfully improve our recruitment and retention goals at Northwest Mississippi Community College.

#### Consequences

The consequences of increasing the recruitment and retention of nontraditional students at Northwest Mississippi Community will affect us professionally and personally. Professionally we need to support equal opportunity, and it would be considered a greater

loss to society to not have talented people working in jobs that they were too afraid to consider as careers. Personally, it would also be a great disservice to our students if we did not recruit, place and keep Students in professions that could help make them more content in the workplace.

#### Possible Reasons for Low Enrollment of Nontraditional Students

Possible reasons for low enrollment of nontraditional students at Northwest Mississippi College is low recruitment. At Northwest instructors and administrators are all responsible for the recruitment of our programs. If we leave it only to the academic recruiters our programs may continue to be overlooked by some students as a viable education choice.

#### Techniques or Strategies to Increase Enrollment of Nontraditional Students

One of the most effective techniques or strategies to increase enrollment of nontraditional students at Northwest Mississippi Community is education. Recruiters and counselors must be educated about our programs. Recruiters and counselors must be made aware that our Career and Technical programs are “gender friendly”. They need be aware of what our programs have to offer new students, the nontraditional student, and to students that may be having trouble with their present career paths.

#### Possible Reasons for low Recruitment of Nontraditional Career Students

One of the reasons for low recruitment of nontraditional career students at Northwest Mississippi Community College is that we may not be approaching potential

nontraditional students in the correct way or not at all. Hill,McGlynn (2005) findings from “A Women in Construction”, states that they do not recruit women for the sake of it, only if they are the right person for the job, male or female. Also, they are actively trying to recruit women, but they are not offering any incentives to make their offers more interesting. MSCRN (2007) Men are usually directed into traditional careers.

I ask, do we naturally approach our recruiting the same way? No, we do not recruit nontraditional students for the sake of it, we recruit to support equal opportunity. Northwest Mississippi Community Colleges does not receive any incentives for recruiting nontraditional students nor do we offer any incentives to the nontraditional students that we recruit.

#### Techniques or Strategies to Recruitment of Nontraditional Career Students

Listed below are a few techniques or strategies to recruit nontraditional students to Northwest Mississippi Community College.

- Educate all recruiters and counselors as to what our programs have to offer and make them aware that our division encourages the recruitment of nontraditional students.
- Give incentives to those who recruit nontraditional students into their programs
- Give incentives to students who choose nontraditional career programs

When presenting nontraditional job options to women, make the following key points:

MSCRN (2003)

- Describe potential jobs in detail, indicating the entry-level wage and career

advancement opportunities, and describe the training necessary to obtain these jobs, the length of training, the cost, if any, support services available, and entry level training requirements.

- Explain the apprenticeship system. Most Americans, but women in particular, are unfamiliar with this method of training.
- Offer to put the student in touch with role models working in nontraditional jobs.
- Assist the student in overcoming math fears, if necessary. Many women are afraid of doing math, but once they start doing it again, as an adult, they come to enjoy it.
- Let a student know that if they choose a nontraditional career, they will receive more attention and job opportunities.

#### Possible Reasons for Low Retention

Possible reasons for low retention of nontraditional students at Northwest Mississippi College stem from many reasons. MSCRN (2007) Sometimes a nontraditional student may lack support from family, friends, classmates and even instructors. A student may feel isolated or experience sexual harassment in the classroom. There may also be cases where a student may lack support services such as transportation or childcare.

#### Techniques or Strategies to Increase Retention of Nontraditional Career Students

Some techniques or strategies to increase retention of Nontraditional career students at Northwest Mississippi Community college are:

- Mention the possibility of joining a support group for women who are in

nontraditional training and jobs. If the student is interested in pursuing nontraditional work, but is afraid her family and friends will not support her decision, let her know that other support systems are available.

- Identify successful and working nontraditional career role models.
- Insure that all students are educated about sexual harassment issues.
- Insure that the nontraditional student is participating in classroom activities.
- Create lesson plans that will involve everyone.
- Help students get proper transportation and child care.

#### Possible Reasons that Employers Do Not Hire Nontraditoinal Career Students

One possible reason that employers do not hire nontraditional students is that they simply think that they will do better business with a traditional employee. Employers are generally more concerned with the bottom line supporting equal opportunity. Employers are also discouraged from hiring nontraditional students due to their beliefs in the stigmas that one gender is better qualified than another.

#### Techniques or Strategies to Increase the Hiring of Nontraditional Career Students

Techniques or strategies that can be implemented to increase hiring of nontraditional career students are:

- Instructors must get involved in the hiring process.
- Instructors must make contacts in industry.
- Instructors should strive to have every student placed before graduation.

As time goes by, industry representatives will become satisfied with the quality of our

traditional students and there will be a good rapport. As industry representatives realize that we will send them good and qualified students, they will be receptive to hiring a nontraditional student upon our recommendation. These students will help their future employers dismiss the stigmas of employing nontraditional students.

### Myths and Stigmas Concerning Female Nontraditional Students

There are many myths and stigmas concerning nontraditional career students and employees. A few myths and facts are: MSCRN (2007)

- Myth- A woman's place is in the home, not on a construction site. Fact- in 1994, women accounted for 46% of the total labor force.
- Myth-Women will leave a job to get married and have children: therefore, the job should go to a man who will stay. Fact- Average women work thirty years over the course of their lifetime.
- Myth- Women are not strong enough to do heavy labor. Fact- Strength requirements for nontraditional jobs are often exaggerated. Due to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requirements, special equipment is required to lift anything that may be a physical hazard.

### Techniques or Strategies to Dismiss Myths and Stigmas concerning Nontraditional Students

Techniques or strategies to dismiss myths and stigmas concerning nontraditional students and employees is education. It is important to educate employers that the myths and stigmas are simply that. The best way to educate these employers is by example. We must place qualified and professional nontraditional students into these work places and

let them demonstrate that they can perform jobs as well as the traditional employees.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

It is the conclusion of this report that there have been many reasons identified that may be affecting the recruiting and retention of nontraditional students at Northwest Mississippi Community College. Many helpful sources have been identified and information to assist an instructor in resolving these problems have been listed.

As a community college in Mississippi, it is our responsibility to insure we support equal opportunity for all students. It is important that nontraditional students are recruited, retained and placed into the local workforce. These students will then represent themselves in a way that they will become a role model for other students and will open the doors for many new students.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations for aiding in recruiting and retaining nontraditional students at Northwest Mississippi Community College are:

- We must educate our recruiters about our programs.
- We must educate all students of job possibilities.
- We must educate our industry representatives.

## **FINAL WORD**

I believe it was Martin Luther King, Jr. who said: Excellence is the best antidote for racism. I think education is the antidote / vehicle for nontraditional students to break the barriers that exist in today's workplace.

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