



## ENHANCING MAJORS THROUGH ADVISORY BOARDS

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National advisory boards in numerous Defiance College majors are enhancing the academic experience for students. Bringing together DC faculty with experts from across the country to provide real-time and real-world advice ensures that the curriculum incorporates skills the marketplace is eager to hire.

Defiance College has recruited members to advisory boards who are prominent in their field. The boards include Defiance's own successful alumni as well as many non-alumni from local, state and national levels of their professions, from such corporations as Price Waterhouse Coopers, Intel Corporation, Cleveland Indians and the Detroit Tigers. The boards usually meet once a year, attending either in person or via phone or internet.

These outside experts are frequently people who do the hiring in their organization. They are utilizing their knowledge of the industry to assure that DC's curricula are providing the skills that the workplace is expecting in their work force. Today's foremost employers stress continuous improvement, and a career field can change during the years that a student is enrolled in college.

Lisa Marsalek, director of career development and assistant dean of students, notes that these boards provide a great opportunity for DC faculty to engage with experts in their professional discipline or program area. The professionals share the

latest trends in their fields, and discuss strengths and weaknesses they are seeing in college grads entering their profession. This in turn helps DC evaluate how on target the current curriculum is or how the college can better prepare students for their careers.

Dr. Marian Plant, professor of religious studies and ministry studies, is very enthusiastic about her advisory board. Her board is made up of outstanding individuals in their fields. "We knew the expertise and professional reputations of each person invited to be on the board and were thrilled when they said yes. Everyone was thoughtful about becoming a part of it," Plant said.

The committee met for the first time last fall. After providing an overview of the two programs and reviewing changes recently made, Plant fielded questions and received some good feedback on the direction the college is taking. "It was reinforcement of what we as professionals are doing." She added that it's good to know that she can pick up the phone and call members of the committee to run an idea past them.

Dr. Gregg Gunsch is also pleased with the interaction he has had with the digital forensics advisory board. He relates how it was an advisory board that established the digital forensics major at Defiance College – with the assistance of Gary Kessler, who set up the first digital forensics undergraduate program. Kessler continues to be part of the DF advisory board today. The board helped

set up the courses needed for the major, designed the syllabi, and even assisted in the search for faculty to conduct the program, which resulted in Gunsch coming to DC.

Although the program has evolved, most of the original members are still on the advisory board, with new people added. "A diverse cross-section of professionals in industry, academia, and law enforcement at the local and federal level. We have tool users and tool developers," Gunsch explained. The advisory board has also been able to provide field experience for students and, in fact, call Gunsch regularly to have him recommend graduates. A number of DC alumni have secured their first jobs out of college through this professional network.

There are approximately 25 members on the digital forensics advisory board, and they meet two times a year. "Last year we were looking at changes to the curriculum and surveyed these people on what the college is offering and what we were looking to do," said Gunsch. "They tell us what areas are important to them, and we take that to heart." Two new classes have been added along with an emphasis on report writing, thanks to this input.

Marsalek points to sports management as another program that successfully utilized its advisory board. Faculty connections with the members have helped line up visits to professional athletic venues and meetings with coaches and trainers.