By Mike Albright

Andrew Carnegie developed the opinion shown at left during the late 1800s as he forged a steel empire that reportedly made him the richest man in the world. Remarkably, Carnegie’s 19th Century philosophy on teamwork still holds true today.

At SUNY Orange, David Kohn doesn’t roam the halls and stairways of the Christine Morrison House quoting Carnegie, but the College’s director of Continuing and Professional Education has employed similar principles while overseeing a CAPE resurgence that has the College’s non-credit business booming.

Over the past two years, CAPE has witnessed a sizeable enrollment spike in non-credit courses, with nearly 8,000 students in classrooms annually. Contract training with local businesses, through CAPE’s Business Solutions and Professional Development division, has increased by 200 percent and enrollment in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes is up seven-fold. In addition, Kohn has streamlined the department’s business model and adjusted its organizational chart to create more efficient day-to-day operations.

“This department wouldn’t function without strong teamwork,” Kohn explains. “We’ve targeted four major areas that need to work together for us to offer the top-quality education, curriculum and customer service that our students expect and deserve.”

Kohn views the areas of programming, operations, sales and marketing as the core elements that, when clicking in unison, keep CAPE humming smoothly. “Without those four working together, we can’t generate the necessary revenue and deliver the quality products we are offering now.”

In addition to contract training, ESL classes and tuition-based non-credit courses, CAPE also offers state-mandated classes for drivers convicted of driving while intoxicated, manages the Institute for Nonprofit Leadership and Management, and delivers an array of workforce training opportunities for individuals and businesses.

In order to deliver top-notch programming while also meeting the demands of the department’s varied customers and clients, Kohn says CAPE relies upon a staff that is devoted to the department’s mission and objectives.

Don Green heads the Business Solutions and Professional Development division while Linda Gramm and Dorene Iacovino direct CAPE’s programming and operations, respectively. Along with Kohn, this foursome forms the nucleus of CAPE’s primary management team.

In addition, Rob Larkin coordinates the Drinking Driver program, Lou DeFeo oversees workforce development education and Debbie Horowitz manages the growing ESL curriculum. April Kinne, Alice McGeady and Charlotte Sobanski lead the administrative support team.
Teamwork Fuels APE Success
You need to have the right people in the right places, and I think we have that now,” Kohn says. “I give my staff latitude because I want them to have the responsibility and opportunity to do all of the things they need to do in order to grow their respective departments. When people take on a greater amount of responsibility, they get things done and you see the synergy of their combined efforts.”

Establishing a cohesive administrative team has helped CAPE move its programs forward, but Kohn insists another key to his department’s success is the relationships staff members have developed with their numerous instructors and trainers, those folks who most often are the public face of the department and the College.

“If our instructors and trainers don’t feel as if they are part of the team, they will go elsewhere. For us, our instructors are at the heart of the programs we offer.”

In two short years, Green has been able to elevate the quality of CAPE’s contract training by hiring exceptional trainers, listening to business leaders’ needs and developing targeted programs that address the demands...
of local CEOs. Word of CAPE’s burgeoning relationships with Crystal Run Village CEO Jim Lawler and Orange Regional Medical Center have percolated throughout the local business community, pushing demand for CAPE’s contract training services to an all-time high.

“We are now viewed as a high-end, customized training provider by those who have contracted with us,” Green says. “We’ve developed signature products and we’ve become a market-driven and client-centered organization where everyone is energized and passionate about what they do.”

Similarly, CAPE’s non-credit enrollment is thriving thanks to the combined efforts of Gramm and Iacovino, each of whom only recently joined the CAPE staff. Gramm, who previously worked for CAPE, is back following a stint with the College’s Records and Registration office.

“Both are extremely detail-oriented. Doreen is developing new and improved policies and procedures for our course development, which will allow us to better meet the needs of our students,” Kohn adds. “Linda’s personality, communication skills, understanding of our clients’ needs and knowledge of campus are invaluable.”

The CAPE staff is presently working on several new initiatives, including a Limited English Proficiency and Contextual Learning in the Workplace grant program and the Green Talent Development Pipeline Partnership with other colleges in the Hudson Valley.

Having built a strong internal team, Kohn is now looking to partner with colleges and businesses throughout the region to further broaden the scope and impact of CAPE’s available programming as his small community college staff seeks to continue producing uncommon results.