

Cheryl Broom (8s):

Hi, I am Cheryl Broom, CEO of GradComm and host of Higher Education Coffee and Conversation. This month I am joined by the president of Western, Nevada College, Dr. Kyle Dalpe. He comes from just an amazing background. He was a journalist, he was a Chief of Staff. He's been a Vice President of instruction amongst many other roles at community colleges across the nation, and he just brings a wealth of knowledge to how to promote your college, how to reach rural communities, how to build infrastructure at your college so that you can implement new and cutting edge programs without overwhelming your staff and faculty. And most of all, he talks about the need to really show up, to show up for your community, to show up for your students, and to show up for your faculty and staff.

Cheryl Broom (55s):

This is a great conversation. I took away so many ideas, and I'm really excited to have you listen to, to Kyle and pick up some ideas of your own. President Dalpe, I'm so excited to have you on the podcast.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (1m 9s):

I, I appreciate being here. Thank you. And you can call me Kyle. I'm, I'm very informal on campus and all around. Thank you.

Cheryl Broom (1m 14s):

Great, well, Kyle, thank you. Thank you so much for joining us today. You've had such a fascinating background and I'm really excited for you to bring your experience and expertise to our listeners. So before we dive into the conversation, tell us a little bit about yourself, where you come from and about your college.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (1m 32s):

Right. So thank you. Yeah, so it's, what's interesting is I find myself in the president role at Western Nevada College after more than 20 years in higher education. And that's a, an interesting roadmap, both career wise and then physical location wise 'cause I have moved across the country to different positions. Western, Nevada College serves six rural counties in Nevada, where main campus is in Carson City, which is the state capital. We have a, a campus in Fallon and in Minden as well. And we're doing, like every other college is doing, is trying to reinvent ourselves as we move into the next 10, 15 years. We serve about 3,800 students focused on workforce. Although it is not, community is not in our name.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (2m 12s):

We are a community college. We do have two, four year degrees, but, but we are a comprehensive community college with a, with a slight name change over the years. So I've been here about four years and previous to that, multiple jobs in higher ed. One of the things that if you, if people ask me where did you start? You must have been, you know, tenured faculty and all of that. I, I, I appreciate everything tenured faculty brings to the table. I actually started out as a part-time faculty member at a school in Texas after transitioning from a job as a print journalist. And so for those of you watching who remember print journalism, the, the time to graduate and enter that workforce was not in the mid to late nineties when the

internet showed up, which is where I was. And so I needed to find a, find something a little bit different.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (2m 53s):

And I come up out of, I was actually a photojournalist, so I have photography and journalists, you know, writing skills and that act that transitioned to a position at a junior college in Texas working in public Relations, marketing, photography, all of that blended together, that skillset. And then 50% of my time was teaching. And I found that I really liked the teaching and I was doing classes like journalism and yearbook and the things that had been part of, you know, what I, what I did for newspapers. And so that kind of morphed into wanting to teach more and to be able to teach more under accreditation, had to get a master's degree. And so I worked my way up the academic ladder and into more administrative positions. I, I still like to, to teach when I can.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (3m 33s):

It's a little bit not, it's not possible right now in my current job. It's, it is, it does take a a lot of time, but I like to maintain a connection to the classroom. But as I moved up through my career, out of public Relations and communication, and then, then as colleges were changing those offices to advancement and fundraising and adding that on there and then the marketing and then it all came together into, into a job at, of chief of staff at one of the institutions I was at working for, directly for the president. And then when that president departed, because I was right, right there with her, you know, every day working side by side, I was put in, in an acting role as president, which is in our code. You can, you can do the acting role but you can't apply. So I said, well, let me try it out and see if it works.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (4m 14s):

And, and I liked it. And then a few years later, after moving up through, going back to the academic side as, as a Dean over CTE areas, and then moving into a Vice President of Instruction and then finally a president role based on availability of jobs within the area where I'm living right now. So it's kind of a rapid fire resume, but working your way up. And I always encourage my, my graduate students and anyone who asks me for career coaching, if, if any, any industry, any sector, but in higher education in particular, especially if you're in that, one of those offices like public Relations or marketing where there's always a variety going on. And we, we kind of live and breathe the same workspace where it's always changing. You have your to-do list, you do 10 things that are not on that to-do list every day, but anything you can grab for experience as you move up your career ladder is good.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (5m 1s):

So if you get asked to serve on a committee or can you come up with a mock-up for this kind of campaign, all of that'll help you progress your career eventually down the road. It may not seem like it at the time. So, so that's kind of it right there. That's

Cheryl Broom (5m 12s):

A fantastic background. And you and I share something in common. I was a journalist in the nineties, but I was in television, so I watched my newspaper friends rapidly decline as I stole their stories every night for the five o'clock newscast.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (5m 28s):

It, it became faster, faster and faster. And, and we have to embrace the, the new technology. And so now it's, everything's happening in social media. Interesting enough, when we talk about reaching student populations, you know, high school students seem to get a kick now out of, Hey, I get something in the mail. And now it's like, we're back to that because there's so much noise in the electronic market space, but it needs to be all encompassing, kind of like the, the, you know, the old days we did billboards, mailers, radio ads, now we're doing social media, maybe a mailer and then some other, you know, new things. So

Cheryl Broom (5m 59s):

Yeah, Well, I really wanna talk to you about some of the tactics that you've used because your enrollment is doing great on your campus. But before we get there, you had mentioned that you were chief of staff for president and I talked to a lot of presidents across the nation at community colleges, and very few have that position. And I think it's a, a very important position and I'd love to hear more about what you did and how that position helped the president and the college.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (6m 26s):

Yeah, so, and what's interesting about that is it is an important position, and I don't have a chief of staff in my current position, and I wish I did. And the reason is, is because it's, it gives a high level advisor more so than than another vice president. It gives the president a high level advisor and somebody who can stand in multiple meetings working side by side. And I, when I did that job, the president would come into meetings with me and, and say, meeting with a group of community people and say, I, you know, I'm not gonna be available, but, but Kyle and I will meet and he speaks for me when he comes back to this meeting, or vice versa. And that helps, that helps the president be able to be in multiple places at once. Because right now I'm spread very thin.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (7m 6s):

If I have to go to my, you know, my second largest campus, that's a 75 mile trip. And I would, you know, I I I try to, you know, recruit staff to say, "hey, you wanna go with me?" And then they can drive and I can check email on the way, you know, but it, it gives the president another person that's really close, that's not a person that's over any one division at the college, because I, I know viewers will find this shocking, but our higher ed environment is highly political. And so, and so when, when somebody's over like instruction and I was there as a vice president of instruction or somebody's over student services or finance and administration, they, they live and breathe those divisions, whereas the chief of staff doesn't sit above it and those person report, but it sits above the decision making and saying, let's, let's help the president balance out decisions for the college as a whole, not just any one division.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (7m 53s):

And, and again, not to, not to slight anybody who's in those positions, but when you're in that level of position, you tend to be, you, you should be thinking about that division because there's, you're thinking about each piece that belongs to the college and the president's responsible for teaching or for president's responsible for how all those pieces fit together at the top. And the chief of staff helps with that.

Cheryl Broom (8m 12s):

I had always thought that maybe I would wanna move into a college presidency role until I served part-time as a chief of staff, as part chief of staff, part marketing director for my college president. And I realized what his schedule was like and decided, Hmm, maybe this isn't the career that I want.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (8m 30s):

Yeah, it's, it's pretty intense in that, yes. And that does help having people that you can deploy out. But again, the vice president level group and the executive team do, we do split up. We do split up, you know, duties and, you know, and then, and then something happens where you might have to, like recently I took off, had to take off some last minute time for a personal matter. And you have to juggle things. And we know how it is today. I mean, I, I, I felt bad having to go do this, this thing, you know, with one of my kids. And I felt bad that I had to juggle our executive staff meeting 'cause it takes so long to get everyone's calendars aligned. Of course everybody's understanding. But it's, it's, it's tricky to be in multiple places at once. And the chief of staff position helps with that. The vice president position helps with that. As we roll into, you know, 4th of July over the summer, there's parades and all kinds of things.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (9m 13s):

So, so the chief of staff position is good to watch a president to see if you want to do that job, like you said. And then I did the acting president role, which was an option through our board of Regents to do the president role while they run a search. They, they put an acting in there and that person's not a, at a competitive advantage, but you're, you're restricted from applying. And I knew that, but I said, Hey, let me try this out. And it was, it was tough. It was not, you know, a caretaker position. This was human resources and legal counsel came into my office the next morning and said, "Now you're in charge we've gotta solve these problems." And that's, that's when your hair turns a little gray and stress starts,

Cheryl Broom (9m 48s):

Well not all your hair is gray yet, so you must be having the stress. Okay. Well I know your college has had great success. When we were chatting before we hit the record button, you had mentioned that you're actually in a financially better place post covid than the college was before covid. Tell us why that, why that is what's happened.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (10m 12s):

So there's been a lot of transition in our marketplace. We have a couple of large manufacturers that have moved in to, to diversify our economy, is what the goal was. 'cause 'cause Nevada's a gaming, tourism, hospitality, and over the years it's been figured out the hard way. And, and you know, you would expect when there's a downturn in the economy, our economy goes south and then we have legislative sessions that, you know, can't figure it out. But, you know, there's no money to disperse. So we've started to diversify our economy and it's been more in the manufacturing, applied industrial technology, those kind of places, robotics. And so we've started to build up different ways to, to train people for those positions. And when I started in, in, as vice vice president of instruction back in 2019 at at WNC, we, we already were talking about in the fall of 19 about how to provide access to students to train for those careers in remote places.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (11m 1s):

And so we've done that a couple of different ways. So provide, providing access to students in, in remote places. And when I say remote, I'm, I'm saying it, it takes an hour and a half to drive to campus. So if you do the math on that, it's one class per, you know, class time per week is your commute time for one class doesn't make any sense. You could be on the road for three hours. So we started using video technology. We started, we did have an archaic system that kind of, you know, looked like the moon landing. But now we're, we're looking, we're looking at remote video and ways to do it, looking at what some other places had done. And we, we actually wrote a grant, it started in the Fall of 19, writing a grant to the, the Federal Department of Agriculture, US Department of Agriculture for, for, for a program that would use Zoom technology of all things to deploy out classwork.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (11m 43s):

And then, then when we rolled into the pandemic and in Spring of 20, we were already looking at, we, like, we already had a price sheet on buying the technology. So when the Herf money came down, we were able to, you know, purchase things right away, provided we could get it So, it, it, I don't wanna say it worked out for us because the pandemic was a horrible thing, but it, but the, the, the, the forward thinking worked out for us. And we were, we were there because we were looking to provide access. And at the time I remember saying, we want, we don't want students to have to drive. I mean, we have some serious concerns. The weather could be bad people, I mean, there's wild horses walking across the road. There's all kinds of things. But at one point we had said, well, if somebody gets sick, they could still beam into a class and not miss a lecture. Or if we have a snow day, which we had the biggest snow in decades last year, and we were able to flip the switch again and say, let's just do remote.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (12m 29s):

So, so we were kind of ahead of the technology, which, which makes me feel good because then when we were able to, to actually start buying the pieces, we could put them together a lot quicker than other schools. And, and a lot of people have asked, you know, how did you do it? How, what, what could we do best practices? And we've shared all of that. But students have come back, come around to embrace the more of the hybrid class I I, you know, where it's not, not hybrid. Like some students are online and some are in the

classroom that is actually a heavy lift on it, on faculty. And I didn't realize that that's one of the pitfalls. I was saying, you know, this would be great if we had five students online and five in the class and let's do this. But we found out with that it's, it's, it, it ends up being like two class sections. You have to prep twice 'cause you have an online core. But if we could do something like, for example, our EMS and Paramedic program where one of the, the Tuesday lecture is online and everybody tunes in on Zoom, but then when they do their hands on on Thursday, they come in, then that person who's out in, in, you know, a couple hours away only has to come in one time.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (13m 22s):

That's a huge, that's a huge benefit. And so we've embraced that. So our school in fall of 20 was down like every other school in the nation, but we were only down two to 3%, whereas everyone was down double digits. And then as we came into the next couple of years, we were one of the only schools, we were the only school in Nevada to be up in spring of 20 because we built some momentum. And that's that a lot of that is about the access and how to get instruction into the hands of the remote population. But also a lot of it is about what those communities needed and how we told them about it and, and it, and got them engaged in it. Because we can't just roll in and say, this is what we're doing, what do you think? We have to engage with them and let them know what what we're doing and let them come to us and say, okay, I'll take that class, or I'll take this class.

Cheryl Broom (14m 4s):

Well I love the fact that you, that you looked at what the barriers for enrollment and persistence and retention are for students. And in your case, a big barrier is transportation and access. So rather than going out and just trying to recruit a whole bunch of new students through marketing, you actually said, okay, how can we solve this problem for students and make this more accessible and easier for them to complete? Which I think is reflected in your numbers.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (14m 32s):

It is. And I, and I'll and I'll confess, I I do, I do not come from a business marketing background. And I don't know sometimes if some of the things I say makes sense, which I think they probably, at some level they do. But one of the things that I've read in the marketing business, marketing books is it's a lot easier to recruit a current customer to buy more things than it is to go out and find a new one. And so for us, we wanna find the new ones because that's our access mission, but getting them through their program is our success mission. So getting them to the finish line is the current person. So when we talk about things like stop outs and there's a couple students out in, you know, one of our towns like Fallon or Hawthorne or Yerington and, and they have gone off the grid, but they took 12 credits, how do we get them back?

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (15m 15s):

And that's not just, hey, come back, we don't have the bandwidth to call every student, even though we don't have, you know, we don't have large numbers of students, we also don't have large number of staff. So how

do we reach them and say, Hey, come back and what's the benefit? So, so from a marketing standpoint, it's about, it's a mix of, yeah, we need the new people, which we can, we do a lot of work with with dual enrollment in the high schools. So that gives us essentially an army of school district people to help sell it for us. And we reinforce it with parents on the outside with other marketing and collateral materials. And then the success piece is the one of getting them to the finish line and getting them either through a class, through a skills certificate, program certificate achievement all the way up. We do have the two bachelor degrees, but getting them some sort of credential so they can get into the workplace and what's the value of that as we, and as we move forward, that discussion of what's the value of a cred credential is getting, it's getting tougher to message.

Cheryl Broom (16m 4s):

Speaking of stop outs, you've done some successful work with re-engaging students who didn't complete a degree of certificate. Tell me a little bit about the work that you did and, and what the results were.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (16m 14s):

Right, so, so stop outs are an interesting group and because e every, every, every school has stop outs. Those are students who just either go off the grid, they, they go away. And so what we did is we, and and anyone can do this, you go in and you pull a list of students who were enrolled last semester but didn't show up this semester or enrolled two semesters ago. You don't wanna go back to the beginning of time because as you go further back, likelihood of them coming back is, is a little bit slimmer and you don't have the resources to do it. So the immediate past, which is I would say one to two years, if you pull a list of students who are enrolled back even to like fall of 21 and said, you know, are, and they're not here anymore, what happened And they didn't complete and they didn't transfer and you can't find them where, where are they? And those are your stop outs.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (16m 55s):

And grab that list and then start marketing to them and telling them the value of coming back, putting in front of them the promotional materials of what, what it'll, what it would take to get, get through your degree or certificate, what's left or what it would cost, how new scholarships are available, job demand. And so we've done some, some work on that where we pulled the list and, and I don't remember how many were on the exact list. But, you get, you get about a 10 if you get a 10% return. That's huge. And so we had about 120 students come back and they enrolled in a certain level of credits. And when I look at the, the math on that, I look at, you know, we spent about maybe 24, 20 \$5,000 on a campaign to outreach to these students. That was email social messaging. And then we'd even did some mailing.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (17m 35s):

We were able to bring back about 120 students and when we do the, the, the data dig on that we get, we get that those students through registration fees came in at about \$85,000. So spent 25, got 85, that's a great great ROI but the other piece that I speak to our board about is we've got 120 more students back into the

pipeline who have not have finished. And, and that that completion goal is actually more valuable because they'll get to the finish line and we can tell employers that. And so when I talk to different groups, you know, we, we want to do the right thing for students and say, come in and, you know, find your way and get that classes. But at the end of the day, we have to run the organization financially responsible.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (18m 16s):

And so if we say we spent this and we got this return on investment, that's great because it all, all we wanna do is break even. But getting those students in the pipeline and getting 'em to the finish line is actually more important.

Cheryl Broom (18m 25s):

Yeah, that's a great example of two things. First of all, if you want to do marketing well, you do have to spend money. I mean that's, so at the end of the day, things cost money. But secondly, you were able to really show a good ROI and that's something I think a lot of marketers in higher education struggle with is how do we show that our efforts are actually paying off? And I think that's really important to do projects like this so that you can come back with the data to show your president and your board, Hey, you spent money and it's, and it's worth it.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (18m 57s):

Yeah, no, I agree. And, and my, you know, my advancement team, my marketing team are pretty excited that I come from that background 'cause I understand it, but we don't spend money haphazardly either way, but we do invest in it. 'cause you have to invest in, in marketing, you have to invest in Communications. You have to tell people the, the, the, the quote or the saying best kept secret is, you know, that is not what you want to be and that's only great for those people who know the secret. And that's not a way to, to scale up for, and this last year, I mean I've been, the campus I'm at has has seen some downtimes with fin-finances and they've struggled to keep it going. And we've been able to rebuild. And even before the federal stimulus money, we've been able to rebuild, put money into reserves. But one of the things I noticed on campus was you drive up and there's nothing, I mean there's no, like, there's a, there's a sign but there's not anything really engaging.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (19m 43s):

And so we actually dropped a, like a 12 foot by 18 foot banner on one of our buildings that just says welcome with a picture of a student graduating. And so that's one of my goals going into the next year is visibility. And that's very tough to get an R O I on. I can talk about credit hours and I can talk about money in the bank and I can talk about how much we're spending on campus refresh. But to, to actually quantify or get put an ROI on the, the visibility piece is tough. But the idea that we, you need to, to sell yourself as an option for people and they need to feel good about it. If you go to go to any of the, you know, you look at the, the four year schools, the R one schools, all of that. You go to these university grant, you know, land-grant schools and you're on campus, you're standing there and you're looking around and every, every light post



has a banner with the logo of the school where you are.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (20m 30s):

So you're there and it's already, it's like, why, you know, why do we not do that? We can take those best practices at community colleges and say, let's, let's brand this campus as much as we brand a car, as much as we brand a business card or anything else. And brand the campus. So when people are there and they're taking pictures and they're happy, that all gets thrown out on your social media. So you have to invest in it. And I drifted a little bit, but the idea is you have to invest in marketing at all levels to the extent you can because that's the only way you make yourself aware for people to show up. Otherwise it's a, even now, especially in the online space, it becomes more and more hard to differentiate which school to go to. There's so many options.

Cheryl Broom (21m 1s):

Yeah. And we always hear like, oh, community college is the second choice, or it's the last choice or last chance college and investing in the experience and the visibility helps to start changing those narratives so that there's pride around going to that school that, you know, pride that you can share with others. Right.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (21m 21s):

And so, and one of the things I'll to to piggyback on your, on your comment, I I, I know there's a hierarchy in higher education and one of the things I'm extremely proud of and everybody who works in community colleges should be proud of is that students who walk onto your campus, if they don't come to you, chances are they're not going anywhere. And if our goal as a society is to get people into programs and get them to the finish line with credentials, whether it's a four year degree, a two year degree, a doctorate degree, anything, they have to start somewhere. And so we have to make that environment as not only friendly, but user friendly so they can come in and find their, find, find the, the resources they need to get through it. Because I can, you know, I've, I've seen students who walk in and I've, I've heard the stories and I've used it kind of in a more of a, this could happen.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (22m 6s):

But then I've now, I've actually seen it happen over the last, you know, 10 years or so where students come to campus and if they can't find where they're going, they will, they will turn around and never go anywhere. And so if they're coming to us, chances are that's their last stop. And and that's what we do. And so that, that also throws marketing Communications into a different space. 'cause a lot of people talk about, well we've gotta be doing TV ads and we've gotta do social media, we gotta do, yes, you have to do all of that But, you have to do the signage, you have to do the training with facul, with faculty and staff. You have to, the, the person who's out shoveling snow has to be able to direct people in or they will go away and not come to ever come, come back. And so, you know, one of the things we're looking at is a lot of schools do this and it's not like it's new and businesses do this. We're looking at, you know, how do we give the logo apparel to our faculty and staff?

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (22m 48s):

How do we, you know, have signage that makes sense. How do we, we've built these buildings haphazardly. They're phase one, phase two, phase 10, you know, where, where's admissions Now we have to be able to get people, but we can do ambassadors, we can do work like that. But all of that is part of your branding marketing as part of your campus climate. And that all blends together. You don't wanna send somebody a really, you know, expensive, awesome looking view book and then they come on campus, they can't find anything. There's photocopied, you know, application packets, you know, it just, it it diminishes the value to them. But at the end of the day, community colleges being an entry point for, you know, in our, in our state alone, I know 50% of our undergraduate credits, I think at least if not more, I haven't done the math on it, but are at community colleges and some of the, the national trends, we're seeing national skills coalition groups that we, we listen to are saying that, you know, half of our jobs in the state, 51% in the state of Nevada and really about 50% nationwide require more than high school, but less than a bachelor degree.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (23m 42s):

That doesn't discount what the universities do. It doesn't discount higher level degrees. It just basically says that the jobs that are out there and emerging, and even now more so because of the graying in retirements are gonna be jobs that can be attained with just a little bit of college. And, and we're the place where a lot of people are getting, getting, especially the technical training.

Cheryl Broom (24m 1s):

I, I think what you bring up about campus climate is so important, and I see this as a central role for a college president, is how are people treated when they get to campus? Or do they feel welcomed? Are they supportive? Does everybody on campus realize that they have a role to play in an individual student's life? There's a, we just did a secret shopper project about a year ago for a college that's very large in Southern California. And our secret shopper made 26 phone calls and either got voicemails that said the voicemail's not set up or got a voicemail saying to email them. She never got one phone call back, never. And then she went to campus, she showed up on campus, she was directed to the wrong buildings.

Cheryl Broom (24m 42s):

She felt like she was rushed. And at the end of the day, her takeaway was, if I was actually a student, I don't think I would've felt welcome enough to enroll here. And and it's true what you say for a lot of students, this is the only place they're gonna go. So they need to feel special, they need to feel welcome. They may need a little bit more help than you, than you expect them to. And that's okay. Right?

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (25m 4s):

And, and they need, and and there's, there's a lot of, there's a lot going on there too. There's, we, we at community colleges are often very thin staffed and even more so now we are losing people to job opportunities elsewhere. But to build that campus climate and say that's important. This is how we do it, to

put systems behind it that makes sense and not say we're gonna buy this program because everyone else is using it, but what actually makes sense? What's our business process that needs to be tweaked and let's invest in software, some online scheduling or online, you know, I don't wanna say online phone tree 'cause everybody hates that stuff. But, you know what I'm saying? Some way that we can make sure those messages get caught to make them make them feel, feel welcome. One of the things that I find, and I, and I, you know, again, we probably would fare just okay if you know on the, on the secret shopper too.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (25m 49s):

But it's, one of the things I find is that our current students who have been able to navigate are, are the ones we use for peer support on chats and things like that. And I hate part of part of that saying that it's, well they figured a way to figure it out when we haven't really made it that streamlined. But that's really what it is. I mean, we're so resourced thin that we need to find new ways to get people into finding, finding their way on campus, finding their way into programs and our current students who serve as peer advisors or serve, you know, as in student workers and offices help us quite a bit on that and, and very valuable. So, but yeah, that's, that's a reality. We, the resources are just so thin and people are spread so thin. I hate to bring any project on campus and initiative without taking a look and saying, okay, you know, one of the things that we do in community colleges is we ramp up and we serve people who otherwise would not be served.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (26m 36s):

And we are willing to go to the ends of the earth to create a program. One of the things we do really bad is pull back programs that don't make sense. And so we tend to spread ourselves so thin. That's a tough decision. But as president along with the executive team, we have to say, you know, this is important and gimme something else that we're gonna slow down because, because we need to move resources into that, into a new particular area.

Cheryl Broom (26m 56s):

That's great. I know because higher ed is full of thinkers and dreamers. Yeah,

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (27m 1s):

Exactly. And you'll

Cheryl Broom (27m 3s):

Take all day, you need someone to be like, can we actually do this? Like, it's a great idea, but can we do it?

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (27m 8s):

And one of those, you know, I'll give you an example. One of those logistically financially we, we solved the problem of creating a mobile classroom. So we actually have a, a large, large trailer that's pulled behind like a, a big pickup. It's not a, it's not an 18 wheeler, but it's a, a mobile lab. It's a kinda a boxy looking billboard thing. We use it in parades too. But we're, we're able to, through the support of major employers, the state

and private donors we're able to bring that out into remote communities with, with robotics and automation training in it. And people, we, we don't have to build a classroom out there. We just rolled us into town for two weeks and, and do the training out there. Oh cool. But the logistics behind that is tough. And we found out, you know, if anyone's watching and, and needs some shortcuts, call me because we, we found out things like the gross weight of the vehicle's over this, which means we need to have somebody who has a C D L driver.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (27m 54s):

We can't just send an instructor with it, even though it's not as big as somebody's rv. You need hookups, you need to worry about heating, you know, all of that. So there's logistics behind it, but it's a great idea and it's working. We actually got it working. It took us a little bit of time, but we've got it working to help those rural populations with hands-on equipment so they don't have to come here. But it's one of those initiatives that you look at it and you say, now that we've done it, let's let's share it with other people so they can get to the, the, they can get from point A to point B a lot faster than we did. So

Cheryl Broom (28m 20s):

Speaking of rural communities first, I, you made a comment earlier in the podcast about wild horses crossing the road. Yeah. That's something I've never seen being from San Diego. So,

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (28m 31s):

So that, it's funny is that's one of those stories I hear our students say and, and every now and then there's unfortunately a car wreck or something. 'cause there are wild horses that cross Highway 50 and other. And then like, after being in Nevada for more than 20 years, I think it was in the last two months, I'm, I'm outside of, of Silver Springs and everybody comes to a halt in the middle of the road and I was like, what is going on? I'm two three cars back and sure enough it's a herd of horses come walking across the street. Oh. And so it's, it's dangerous but it's also, you know, one of those things we just, you know, it's one of those things, I mean it could have been a deer on some people's backyard, but for us there's wild horses. So that's

Cheryl Broom (29m 5s):

Really cool. It's really special. And it speaks to how rural, I mean you said that the drive between campuses is, is 75 minutes. How have you served and grown enrollment in these rural areas?

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (29m 16s):

So the, the rural areas, there's, there's two pieces going on in our rural communities. One is the access and getting the word out. The other piece is the infrastructure to support it. So we can say, you know, all day, Hey, we got classes online, you don't have to drive. And the students will turn around and say, Hey, that's great, but I don't have internet at the house. And so the, the state is working on, with the providers on internet, we have had students during the pandemic who have had to drive to the next biggest place, which might be no more than 5,000 people, but there happens to be a fast food restaurant that has wifi and they sit

in the parking lot to submit papers. I mean, we have students who are in that kind of environment. We have also reached out by, especially when we had the federal money, to give people routers to loan out routers and hotspots so they can submit and do work.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (29m 59s):

But reaching those communities is a different story. And I've worked in two institutions now that are rural. I've actually worked at one that was even more rural than we are now. So, so they get in and do marketing in the rural communities means you need to know those communities. And I think it's important for anybody, not just the president oversees the entire institution, but especially the, the people that work with the communities that are, you know, your advisors, your marketing people Communications to know, know that each community has its own culture, but don't go in and and think, you know, that culture. And so if you're driving through a small town and you say, wow, there's a billboard. I bet you it'd be great for us to have that billboard. Let's buy that billboard. And then you slap up a message and the community's like, well you shouldn't have bought that billboard.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (30m 39s):

You should have done this, you should have done that. I mean, you gotta get to know the people there, which is your faculty and staff that work there, or the community leaders if you don't have dedicated staff there. So, so like, you know, the, the, the school district people, the, the city council people, the, especially the school people with the K 12. 'cause they'll, they'll tell you, they'll tell you pretty straight up, you know, this is how you can reach our students. We don't want brochures, we want this or we do want brochures. So know that there's a culture, but how to reach that culture and how how people live in that culture is, is something nobody will know unless you actually move to that place. And so there's, there's respect there, but there's also knowledge there. And then, and then maximizing what we can do 'cause 1, 1, 1 size does not fit all. So what works for me and Carson may not work in Fallon, vice versa, Douglas County.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (31m 19s):

That's, that's a different environment. And so we have to look at different messaging, different tactics and we rely on the communities to help us with that. Yeah,

Cheryl Broom (31m 28s):

That's right. And I love the idea of reaching out to your faculty and staff who come from those communities because it can be as simple as a conversation with some of them. You know, what are you seeing? How do you think we should communicate what messages are relevant? Could give you a lot of information to be more successful.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (31m 42s):

Yeah. In particular we are, it'd be interesting to ask compares with other schools, we are about 34% of our head count is dual enrollment students in the high schools. And that's a big number. It makes me a little bit

nervous with this demographic cliff that might show up. But, but, but that means that those students, we have to be talking to the counselors and part of that is, is, you know, if they have a career night or college night and you're not at that event, doesn't matter how much other marketing you spend, you have to be at that event. And so you have to be at that event and you have to look like you belong at that event. And when you look at other schools that have, you know, higher marketing budgets and you say, wow, all their tablecloths, match, match, you know, and so we need to, you know, not just piece things together. We need to make it really look good and make a, we used to call it Booth in a box, you know, where you can give somebody the tablecloth and, and they go and they drape a table and they sit and everybody's got polo shirts on and it looks like you, you're there to play the game of recruiting them to higher ed, which is what you're doing.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (32m 31s):

And they may pass up your booth to go off to somewhere else and say, Well, I, Well, I'm gonna go off to the whatever. But they may come back. And so you wanted to make sure that they know and their parents know you're an option. So you have to, you have to get into that space and, and talking to people there and when those events are is very important. Great.

Cheryl Broom (32m 49s):

Well you've given just so much advice and so much tips. I really appreciate your time and your expertise and I wanna encourage our listeners to go to your website, 'cause I went to [wnc.edu](http://wnc.edu) before you and I spoke and I love the way you've laid out the website, how you talk about short-term certificates right on the front page along with transfer options. So you're doing so many things well and really wanna commend you Well

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (33m 12s):

I. Appreciate that. And that is one of those marketing initiatives I put in place last year. So if we had done this a year ago, it would've been a whole different website. So we just completely redid our website and continue to do so. And it's, but I appreciate you looking at it and, and the comments. Thank you.

Cheryl Broom (33m 25s):

Yeah. Well we will be following W N C seeing what you have in store next and I want to thank you again for your time.

Dr. Kyle Dalpe (33m 32s):

Yeah, no, I appreciate it. Thank you. It was great talking with you today.

Cheryl Broom (33m 38s):

That wraps up this month's episode of Higher Education Coffee and Conversation. I hope you enjoyed the discussion and learned something new. And if you like the podcast, I would love it if you would leave us a review and make sure to take a screenshot and email me or hit me up on LinkedIn and I'll send you one of

our fantastic GradComm shot glasses and a little something, something to go with it. On behalf of all of us at GradComm, thank you for listening and thank you for working hard to make higher education a reality for students across the nation. Until next time!