Sharing the Aid Awareness Challenge: How to Reach Diverse Groups in Urban and Rural Settings

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Session Summary

Providing college <u>access</u> and college <u>awareness</u> programs present challenges whether they are in highly populated and diverse urban settings or in sparsely populated rural areas.

- What are those challenges common to both?
- What challenges are unique?
- What strategies are used to overcome these?

What is College Access?

Programs and services designed to open the doors to postsecondary education by providing:

- College, career and financial aid information
- College visits
- College and career guidance
- Application assistance
- Tutoring
- Test preparation courses
- Last dollar scholarships
- Parent awareness activities and more

Why College Access?

- College-going rates among low-income, minority students is still far below an acceptable level.

- Good middle-class jobs increasingly require the additional skills gained through higher education.

- Unemployment rates for high school grads is four times that of college grads.

- Our country's future depends on an educated workforce.

College Access Needs: Urban Students

Indicators of need:

- More than 63% of DC public school students come from families with total incomes less than $50,000

- More than 95% 0f DC public school graduates are members of under-represented minority groups

- In some sections of the city, less than 12% of adults have completed a four-year college degree

Challenges for Urban Families

- Lack of knowledge about college planning processes and resources
  - Misinformation about college costs
  - Unfamiliarity with financial aid programs
  - Limited access to college preparation programs and resources
  - High case loads for school-based student services staff

Low Level of Academic Achievement

- Low scores on standardized tests
- Fewer course offerings for AP classes and challenging electives
- Higher drop-out rates

Conflicting Opportunities for Students

- Jobs (may be expected to contribute to family resources)
- Family responsibilities
- Gangs, parenthood, etc.
- Multiple programs competing for same students

Low Levels of Parental Involvement

- Parental involvement decreases as child ages

- Limited English proficiency

- Lack of familiarity with college planning and need for family support

- Long work hours – often in multiple jobs

- Lack of knowledge of resources and support systems

High Numbers of Out-of-School Youth and Adult Learners

- Need for additional academic and financial resources to meet specific needs

- Family/work responsibilities conflict with school

- Concerns about college costs vs. family living expenses

Other Issues

- Immigration and residency issues

- Non-traditional families (broad range of official and unofficial guardianships, family situations)

- Conflicting family values – work vs. education

Successful Strategies

- Community-based College Resource Centers
  - Open to everyone
  - Walk-in, 'as needed'
  - Advising and application assistance are key services
  - Minimal registration, participation requirements

Successful Strategies

Why do community-based centers work?

- Welcoming environment for students of all ages
- Focus is on providing information – helping families understand and successfully navigate the processes
- Housed within the communities they serve

Postsecondary Encouragement Program

- **Financially Fit for College**

  - Combines financial literacy with college planning
  - Focuses on middle school families
  - Expands view of college as a family investment
  - Helps families develop individual plans and strategies for college and introduces them to other resources who can assist with specific issues

Postsecondary Encouragement Program

- Kids2College

  – Pairs middle schools with colleges
  – Encourages interaction between current college student and middle school students
  – Emphasizes academic skills
  – Provides follow-up activities through high school
  – Stresses community involvement

Successful Strategies from Session Participants

- Programs, services that have been successful in your area?

- Promotional, recruitment ideas that have been effective in encouraging families to participate?

- Feedback from families that can inform others about successful activities?

College Access Issues: Rural Students

- Family incomes low statistics (e.g. Western MD income)
- Lack of opportunity-lack of motivation
- Resources are limited to the dedicated few
  - Overwhelmed counselors
  - Travel distances

- Role models

- Reduction in program of interest

- Other responsibilities stats on births + underage

Rural Families

- College costs~average income

- Overwhelmed with the process

- Expectation to help

- Student may be expected to contribute to family income

- Culture shock

Programs

- GEAR-UP follows 2001 6th grade cohort
- Early Intervention – community college programs
- Career and Me programs
- Career Fair sessions
- High School Nights/Days
- Open Houses

Employment and Family Income
Household Median Income Rank 2000

County	1998	1997	1996	1995	1994	1993	1992	1991	1990	200
Allegany	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	33.
Garrett	23	23	23	23	23	22	22	22	23	33.
Average	23.5	23.5	23.5	23.5	23.5	24	23	23	23.5	33.4

Employment and Family Income Government Payment as % Personal Income 2000

County	Ranking	% of Income
Allegany	17	30.0%
Garrett	20	23.8%
Average	18.5	26.9%

Education Outcomes % of Population with High School Diploma 2000

County	Ranking	% of Pop 2000
Allegany	17	71.0%
Garrett	20	68.4%
Average		

Education Outcomes % of Population with Bachelor's Degree or Higher

County	2000 Ranking	% of Persons	1990 Ranking	% of Persons	1980 Ranking	% of Persons	1970 Ranking	% of Persons
Allegany			19	11.4%	19	9.30%	15	6.70%
Garrett			24	9.5%	24	7.9%	23	3.90%
Average								

Employment and Family Income Unemployment Rank by County 1990-1997

County	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Allegany	2	3	2	3	3	5	6	4
Garrett	4	2	1	1	2	2	2	1
Average	3	2.5	1.5	2	2.5	3.5	4	2.5

Public Health – Children Under 18 Living in Poverty

County	Ranking	% in Poverty Income
Allegany	3	25.5%
Garrett	5	22.5%
Average	4	24.0%

Public Health % of Births to Mothers Under 20

County	Ranking	% in Poverty Income
Allegany	5	15.1%
Garrett	11	11.5%
Average	8	13.3%

Public Health of Population Enrolled in Medicaid, 1996

County	Ranking	% in Poverty Income
Allegany	2	25.5%
Garrett	2	22.5%
Average	2	24%

Population Trends – % Change in Population 90-97

County	Ranking	% in Poverty Income
Allegany	19	4.95%
Garrett	23	13.5%
Average	21	9.2%

Statistical Resources

- http://researchtools.choosemaryland.org/Comparison/index.asp?FA=3

Technical Assistance

e appreciate your feedback and comments. We can be reached

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