

Participation of Rural Youth In Higher Education: Factors, Strategies, and Innovations

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Attaining a college education can greatly impact a person's future. College graduates typically have rates of employment that are greater, jobs of higher status, and earnings that surpass people who do not have a college degree (Gibbs, 1995). Despite these advantages, people in rural areas are much less likely to earn a college degree than residents of urban areas. Only 11 percent of rural adults hold a baccalaureate degree, compared with 18 percent of the adults that reside in metropolitan communities. The disparity is highest in southern states, including Texas, where only 8 percent of rural residents over age 25 have a college degree, compared with 16 percent of the residents in urban areas (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1999).

Rural parents in one study reported that lack of financial aid was the most important reason why their children decided *not* to attend college education (Institute for the Local Government Administration and Rural Development, 1992). In Texas, direct state support of public colleges and universities fell from 56.9 percent in 1993 to 49.7 percent in 1998, while tuition and fees nearly doubled. Texas also made a very limited investment in financial aid for low-income families, many who live in rural areas with distressed economies (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2000).

This report provides an overview of factors that affect participation of rural youth in higher education. The report also identifies strategies that have been used to overcome barriers to higher education as well as innovative projects that have been field-tested in communities throughout the United States.

Factors Affecting Participation In Higher Education

A comprehensive survey of books, documents, and research articles reveals that four sets of factors influence rural youth decisions to pursue higher education. The first set is identified in this report as *systems factors*. Despite strengths, rural school systems often have fewer resources to prepare students for college than do urban school systems. Rural high school students have access to fewer college preparatory courses, and they are usually less informed about career options and opportunities in higher education. The relative cost of a college education is a barrier as well. Rural students who attend college often leave for financial reasons before attaining their degrees.

Community factors also influence decisions by youth to pursue higher education. Rural youth are less likely to have contact with college-educated role models, and relatively few jobs in rural communities require a college education. Peers often discourage rural youth from attending college, because they do not see much benefit in higher education, or they realize that their friends will probably not return to the community after college. Better paying, higher-skills jobs requiring a college education are more available in urban communities than rural communities. Rural youth also face geographic barriers to higher education; half of all rural high school students live in counties without colleges.

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Family factors are influential as well. Findings from numerous studies indicate that parental expectations, encouragement, and support strongly influence youth decisions to pursue higher education. Rural youth are less likely to have college-educated parents than urban youth. Rural parents who have a college degree, or perceive college as beneficial, are more likely to encourage their children to go to college. Rural parents often do not have access to timely information about opportunities in higher education for their children or about the process of applying to college. Many rural families also reside in communities with distressed economies. College may be unaffordable, or parents may lack information on financial planning for college.

Finally, there are *personal factors*. Rural youth often lack confidence in their ability to compete successfully at the college level, or feel intimidated by negative stereotypes of rural life. Their educational and occupational aspirations tend to be lower than urban youth, due to limited exposure to information about career opportunities, job market trends, and available jobs that require a college education. Gender and ethnicity are influential as well. Women in rural areas tend to marry earlier than women in urban areas; they transition into marriage after high school rather than into college and a professional career. With the exception of Asian/Pacific Islanders, rural ethnic minority students are under-represented in college-bound classes. They are often “tracked” into high school courses that do not prepare them for college. Finally, many rural youth are accustomed to life in small, close-knit communities. They sometimes experience culture shock when they attend large universities in urban communities.

Strategies To Remove Barriers To Higher Education

Numerous strategies have been developed to overcome barriers to higher education for rural youth. *Systems strategies* include efforts to increase student access to college preparatory courses. Academic advising, tutoring, and preparation for college aptitude tests have been developed as well. Other strategies include college workshops for high school faculty and guidance counselors, career and college information centers, and college courses in rural high schools. Scholarships and financial aid programs are provided to improve the affordability of higher education for rural youth. To succeed, systems strategies typically require collaborative agreements between rural high schools, community organizations, colleges, and universities.

Community strategies involve local citizens, groups, and organizations in the effort to overcome barriers to higher education. Mentoring programs have been tested in many rural communities. College-educated members of these communities provide role models to rural youth, mentoring them throughout high school and college. Local business owners and local professionals explain career options to rural youth, provide internships, and occasionally give scholarships to encourage them to attend college. To reduce geographic barriers to higher education, some communities use video-conferencing technology to link high school and college campuses, enabling rural youth to take advanced placement courses and to earn college credits in proximity to home.

Family strategies engage parents of rural youth as facilitators and supporters of higher education. Workshops provide information to parents on ways to encourage their children to attend college, on career opportunities through higher education, and on college preparation. Early and on-going involvement of parents in financial planning for higher education of their children is a common strategy as well.

Personal strategies vary greatly. Workshops and internships familiarize rural youth with strategies to reach career opportunities through higher education. To prevent culture shock, several projects introduce rural youth to college life early, form support networks among rural students on campus, provide intensive academic support, and involve rural students in campus activities.

Best Practices

Many innovative projects have increased participation in higher education. Ten rural-based projects are presented in this report as well as 12 urban-based models that have high potential for replication in rural areas. The three projects highlighted below as “best practices” share three key characteristics. First, the projects employ multiple strategies to remove complex barriers to higher education for youth. Second, the projects depend on broad-based community partnerships for their success, including local school districts, community organizations, and institutions of higher education. And third, the projects have significantly improved the chances of youth in attaining a college education.

The Rural Community College Initiative involves the Ford Foundation, local school districts, nine community colleges, local businesses, and community organizations. Project intervention strategies include scholarships, mentors, video conferencing, workshops for parents and teachers, academic support, career counseling, and college advisement (Eller et al., 1998).

The Gulf County College Counseling Project involves parents, business owners, and teachers in two high schools as well as faculty and staff from a local community college and the University of Florida in an effort to increase rural youth participation in higher education. The project provides “earned” cash scholarships for college; workshops for high school teachers; parent seminars on planning and financing a college education; campus visits for students; information on college and career opportunities; and activities to strengthen student test-taking skills (Dalton & Erdmann, 1990).

Project Choice is a joint project of the Kaufmann Foundation, Kansas State University, and selected high schools in Kansas City, Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri. Intervention strategies include college scholarships; tutoring and academic support services in high school; an on-campus college enrichment program; mentors; workshops for parents; and college support services after youth enroll in Kansas State University (Sims, 1997).

I. FACTORS AFFECTING PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In order to increase the participation of rural youth in higher education, factors that influence decision-making must be identified and understood. A comprehensive search of literature shows that four sets of factors—systems, community, family, and personal—affect decisions by rural youth to get a college education.

A. Systems Factors

Academic Preparation

Rural youth tend to be less academically prepared for college than urban youth. They generally have lower SAT scores and less access to advanced preparatory courses, which deter them from attending competitive colleges. Rural students who do attend college often have difficulties attaining high academic achievement, even though intellectually they are no different than their urban peers (Gibbs, 1995).

Low achievement scores among rural youth is chiefly due to limited high school course offerings and poor preparation for college (Brown, 1988). Rural students often state that their high school coursework was not challenging and did not prepare them adequately for college (Knisley, 1993). High school faculty and guidance counselors voice similar concerns (Herzog, 1996).

College and Career Planning Information

Rural high school students often lack information about career and college opportunities (Hodes, 1995). The Appalachian Access and Success Project (1992) conducted a survey of school personnel in Ohio to identify barriers to higher education for rural youth. Teachers and guidance counselors reported that they do not receive adequate and timely materials to inform students about college and career opportunities. Being informed about these opportunities helps rural youth plan for a college education (Conroy, 1997).

Cost of Higher Education

One factor that prevents many rural students from attending college is affordability. The Institute for the Local Government Administration and Rural Development (1992) found that although 80 percent of the 1,553 high school seniors surveyed said they wanted to attend college, but only about 30 percent of these students actually went. Parents of rural students reported that lack of financial aid was the most important factor influencing their children's participation in higher education.

Paying for college is a challenge for many families living in rural regions with distressed economies. The poverty rate, highest in rural America, has a great impact on educational outcomes (Haas, 1992). Rural students who attend college often leave for financial reasons before obtaining their degrees. Due to difficulties in obtaining financial aid, rural students often must work while going to college, making it more difficult for them to succeed academically (Brown, 1988).

In Texas, direct state support of public colleges and universities fell from 56.9 percent in 1993 to 49.7 percent in 1998, while tuition and fees nearly doubled. Moreover, Texas made a very limited investment in financial aid for low-income families. Only 13 percent of state grant aid was targeted to low-income families as a percent of Federal Pell Grant aid to low-income families, compared to 106 percent for the top states in the nation (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2000).

B. Community Factors

College-Educated Role Models

The community plays a large role in shaping student attitudes and expectations toward higher education. Youth who are encouraged by college-educated members of their community to attend college are more likely to pursue higher education. Since relatively few jobs in rural communities require a college education, rural youth are less likely to come in contact with college-educated role models than youth in urban areas (Gibbs, 1995; Smith, Beaulieu, & Seraphine, 1995).

Rural students who do attend college tend to have a higher attrition rate than their urban counterparts. The difference has been attributed partly to social expectations in their home communities. Rural students who have fewer college-educated role models and perceive that they have few career opportunities in their communities are less likely to finish college (Swift, 1988).

Community and Peer Support for Higher Education

Community and peer support also affects a student's decision to attend college. Rural residents without a college education often do not see the benefits of attaining a college degree. As a result, they may not support a student's decision to pursue higher education. Some community members are reluctant to encourage students to attend college because they assume students will leave town to pursue career opportunities rather than stay in the local economy (Gibbs, 1995). High school seniors from rural Vermont were surveyed to determine the differences between students who planned to pursue college and those who did not. Most respondents felt that their home communities offered few career opportunities. Students who planned to attend college reported that the support they received from community members—especially clergy and school personnel—had a positive influence on their decision to attend college (Knisley, 1993).

Peers relationships also influence student participation in higher education. Rural youth that decide to go to college usually have friends with similar plans. Conversely, youth with close friends that do not have plans to attend college are less likely to pursue higher education (Yang, 1981).

Geographic Barriers

Youth in rural communities face greater geographic barriers to higher education than urban youth. Half of rural high school students in the U.S. live in counties without colleges (Gibbs, 1995). The presence of a two-year or four-year college near a person's home increases the likelihood that he or she will pursue higher education. Living near a metropolitan area increases the access of rural students to colleges and their exposure to a college-educated work force (Gibbs, 1995).

Rural students usually attend rural colleges. Even though only 20 percent of the institutions of higher education in the United States are located in rural areas, 53 percent of rural students attend rural colleges and universities. Rural students also are more likely to attend public colleges and universities than private ones, and are less likely to attend competitive schools than their urban counterparts (Gibbs, 1995).

Because rural areas have a limited number of high-paying jobs that require a college education, rural students are less likely to attend college (Smith, Beaulieu, & Seraphine, 1995). Rural students who choose to pursue post-secondary education are usually forced to leave home to attend college. Because there are a limited number of jobs that require a college education in rural areas, these students are less likely to return home (Hass, 1992). Better-paying, higher-skilled jobs are primarily found in urban locations. Thus, the decision to attend college for many rural students means they must permanently separate from their home communities.

C. Family Factors

Parent Expectations

Some experts believe that parent expectations is the most influential factor affecting youth decisions to pursue higher education (Esterman & Hedlund, 1995; Smith, Beaulieu, & Seraphine, 1995). Parents that perceive higher education as beneficial usually encourage their children to get a college degree. Parental encouragement has a positive influence on youth decisions to attend college, even when families live in a poor economic area, or have no college-educated role models (Gibbs, 1995).

Parent Education

A related factor is parent level of education. Rural youth are less likely to have college-educated parents than youth in urban areas (Smith, Beaulieu, & Seraphine, 1995). Rural students who have a college-educated parent, especially those with college-educated mothers, are more likely to attend college (Yang, 1981). In a survey of factors that influenced the educational plans of rural students in Vermont, students indicated that their aspirations to attend college had been influenced by the encouragement of their college-educated parents (Knisley, 1993). Another survey in North Carolina found that rural students felt no pressure to attend college when parent expectations and parent levels of parent education were low. Study participants whose parents were not college educated said that their parents did not understand that higher education would benefit their children (Herzog, 1996).

Knowledge of Resources

Parents of rural students often lack information about available resources for college (Institute of Local Government Administration and Rural Development, 1992). Parents also are often confused about the process of applying to college. Giving parents information about college encourages them to support their children's plans for higher education (Hodes, 1995).

Financial Planning

Rural high school students and their parents are often unaware of actual costs and ways to budget effectively for college. They frequently overestimate the cost of tuition and conclude that college is not affordable. A survey by the Institute of Local Government Administration and Rural Development (1992) found that rural students usually have little knowledge of their parents' income and savings, and assume their parents cannot help them pay for college. In addition, because rural students and parents often have limited knowledge about the cost of higher education, they tend to overestimate expenses. Parents and students need information on how to plan and save for college, and how to apply to scholarships and financial aid (Hodes, 1995; Institute of Local Government Administration and Rural Development, 1992).

D. Personal Factors

Student Confidence

Students who feel confident in their ability to succeed in college are likely to pursue higher education (Yang, 1981). Unfortunately, many rural students doubt that they are capable of competing in a college environment. One study found that rural students perceive that they receive only limited encouragement to attend college from their parents, teachers, and guidance counselors, and that they tend to have less confidence in their ability to succeed in college than urban students (Smith, Beaulieu, & Seraphine, 1995). Students who are placed in non-collegiate tracks in high school also exhibit low confidence in their ability to succeed. "Tracking" students imparts the message that they are not intelligent enough to take advanced classes, downplays the importance of academic achievement, and discourages them from applying to college (Alford, 1997).

Many rural students feel intimidated by negative stereotypes of rural life. Rural students at Western Carolina University reported that faculty and other students treated them as if they were ignorant or uneducated (Herzog, 1996). Another survey conducted by the Institute of Local Government Administration and Rural Development (1992) reported that 26 percent of rural students rated themselves as not being intelligent enough for college. Rural students that encounter negative stereotypes and do not feel confident in their abilities are less likely to pursue or succeed in college (Conroy, 1997).

Student Aspirations

Rural students often have low educational and occupational aspirations. This is partly attributed to socioeconomic status. Rural students in low-income families tend to have lower educational aspirations than economically advantaged peers (Haas, 1992). In a study of occupational goals among rural adolescents, students of higher socioeconomic status aspire toward careers with higher pay and more prestige than students from less advantaged backgrounds. Many rural students have unrealistic career aspirations, because they are unaware of the educational requirements of different careers or current job market realities. Their salary expectations are often much higher than the amounts those workers actually earn in specific careers (Conroy, 1997).

Gender Issues

Women in rural areas tend to marry earlier and are less likely to attend college than urban women. The decision to marry early and not attend college correlates with parent expectations and socioeconomic status (McLaughlin, Lichter, & Johnston, 1993). College-educated parents and parents of higher socioeconomic status usually expect their daughters to attend college (Knisley, 1993). Women whose parents do not expect them to attend college are more likely to marry early after high school than aspire toward a career. Gifted female college students in rural Georgia report that parent expectations strongly influence their career plans (Grant, Heggot, & Battle, 1995).

Socioeconomically disadvantaged females sometimes marry early for financial reasons. Economic opportunities for rural women are often limited. Marriage can be economically advantageous, especially in the short-run. However, not having a college degree usually limits their earning potential to low paying jobs, and increases their long-term dependency on men for financial support (McLaughlin, Lichter, & Johnston, 1993).

Ethnicity

There is a strong relationship between youth ethnicity and college participation. Only 4 percent of African American youth and 4 percent of Hispanic youth in rural areas get a college degree, compared to 11 percent of White youth and 26 percent of Asian/Pacific Islanders (U.S. Census Bureau, 1999). These discrepancies are partly related to high school "tracking." African American, Hispanic, and Native American students with the same test scores are less likely to be placed in advanced courses and more likely to be tracked into less challenging curricula than white students and Asian/Pacific Islander students (Alford, 1997). Yet African American and Hispanic parents rank college as a higher priority than do white parents (Immerwahr, 2000).

Culture Shock

Many rural students experience culture shock when they attend college. They feel overwhelmed by the size of the college and its culture (Roe, 1997). Feelings of alienation and homesickness are factors that lower retention rates of rural students in college (Swift, 1988). Leaving friends at home, making new friends, and adjusting to college life—especially in an urban setting—presents formidable challenges to students that grew up in small, close-knit communities (Hemmings, Hills, & Ray, 1997; Herzog, 1996).

A study of gifted, college-bound, rural students reports that they prefer to remain close to family and friends in their home community. But they recognize that they must move to an urban area to access higher education and better paying jobs. The conflict of having to choose between their home culture and a “foreign” environment creates a great deal of stress for them (Howley, 1997).

II. STRATEGIES TO REMOVE BARRIERS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

This second section presents an overview of strategies that can be used to remove barriers to higher education for rural youth. These strategies divide into the same categories—systems, community, family, and personal—as the four sets of factors discussed in the first section of this report. Some of the strategies have been field-tested in rural settings, others in urban settings.

A. Systems Strategies

Academic Preparation

College Preparatory Courses and Untracking

Rural students need advanced preparatory classes for college. The Early Academic Outreach Program in California targets students from groups who are under-represented in colleges and enrolls them in preparatory courses. Students also are provided with activities that inform them about college preparation and opportunities (California State Postsecondary Education Commission, 1996). Similarly, the Advancement Via Individual Determination Program in California is designed to motivate minority students to pursue a college education. Students who have been tracked in low-level curricula are moved to college preparatory classes (California State Postsecondary Commission, 1996). Students who are academically prepared are more likely to pursue higher education.

Support Services

Rural students need support services to prepare for college. In California, the Alliance for Collaborative Change in Education in School Systems provides support services to students in grades seven through twelve. Students receive tutoring, academic advising, SAT preparation, and problem-solving skills to improve their chances of getting into college and doing well (California State Postsecondary Education Commission, 1996).

College and Career Planning

Workshops for School Personnel

Rural school personnel need timely and accurate information to prepare their students for higher education. The Gulf County College Counseling Project in Florida organizes college workshops for teachers that show school personnel how to encourage rural students to attend college. The project creates college information centers, teaches SAT preparation, and organizes campus visits for students (Dalton & Erdmann, 1990). Similarly, the Rural Community College Initiative sponsors the Title IV TRIO Program. The program works with principals, counselors, and parents to encourage rural students to pursue higher education (Eller et al., 1998).

Campus Visits

Many innovative programs use campus visits to familiarize rural students to higher education. The College Reach-Out Program in Florida, for example, organizes a two-week program with student visits to local colleges (Medina & Drummond, 1993). Northern Kentucky University is a host to campus visits for junior high and high school students to explain the importance of college preparation. A group of college students shares information about their college experiences, class schedules, and financial aid to visiting high school students (Stewart, Griffin, & McDonald, 1993).

College and Career Information

Rural students need information about college and career opportunities. The Gulf County College Counseling Project committee established college centers in high schools for this purpose (Dalton & Erdmann, 1990). Saginaw Valley State College in Michigan sends representatives to high schools to share information about financial aid, admission, housing, course selection, and adjustment to college life (Abel et al., 1994). The California Student Opportunity and Access Program provides information to high school students about academic preparation needed to pursue different careers in college (California State Postsecondary Education Commission, 1996).

Scholarships and Financial Aid

Many youth need scholarships and financial aid to afford higher education. Several programs have implemented strategies to address this need. The "I Have a Dream" (IHAD) program provides scholarships to students for college tuition. IHAD scholarships usually do not exceed \$5,000, but awards vary depending on student needs. Wealthy families have sponsored sixth grade students, promising college scholarships if they attend college (Kahne & Bailey, 1999). The Quantum Opportunities Program (QOP), funded by the Ford Foundation, encourages students to attend college by offering financial incentives. High school students in QOP receive stipends ranging from \$1.00 to \$1.33 per hour. After students complete 100 hours of service, they receive \$100 to invest in a savings account for college (Hahn, 1995).

B. Community Strategies

Mentors

Mentoring programs provide college role models for students. The Rural Community College Initiative helps colleges develop mentoring programs with local high schools. The Southeast Scholars Program at Southeast Community College in Kentucky matches eighth-grade students with mentors. College faculty and community members introduce these students to college programs, help them identify career options, and encourage them to prepare for college (Eller et al., 1998). The Preparation of Minority Educators provides middle school and high school students with mentors in the teaching profession. The mentors make a long-term commitment to serve these students until they complete their college education (Gutknecht, 1992).

Community Involvement

Community involvement has a positive influence on youth decisions about college. Area businesses are involved with the Mathematics, Engineering, and Science Achievement Program in California. Owners and employees help students identify career options in math and science, and encourage them to attend college (California State Postsecondary Education Commission, 1996). The Faculty Alliance for Education in Newark links high school students with local businesses. Companies sponsor internships for students and offer them savings bonds as an incentive for college (McGrath & Van Burskirk, 1997).

Video Conferencing to Access College Courses

To improve access to college courses, the Rural Community College Initiative at Southwest Texas Community College uses video conferencing to make courses at main campuses available at several regional centers. The Initiative also collaborates with Texas A&M University to deliver graduate courses to rural students in proximity to their homes (Eller et al., 1998).

Outposting College Faculty in High Schools

School districts in New York form partnerships with local colleges to offer advanced placement courses to rural high school students. Some school districts hire adjunct professors from local colleges to teach advanced courses in high schools, or allow rural high school students to take courses at local colleges. These strategies encourage rural youth to continue their education after high school (New York State Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, 1995).

C. Family Strategies

Parent Involvement

Rural students are less likely to attend college when their parents do not have a college degree or do not expect them to pursue higher education. In the On-Track Program, faculty and students from Edinboro State University of Pennsylvania help parents understand the importance of a college education. The program also teaches parents to set education goals for their children and orients them to college life (Cowher, 1994).

College Information

Rural parents need information about college programs and the college application process. The "I Have a Dream" program conducts seminars to provide information to parents about programs of study at different colleges. Parents also learn about the challenges their children may face during the transition from high school to college (Kahne & Bailey, 1999). The Gulf County College Counseling Project invites representatives from area colleges to speak to parents about college preparation and the college application process (Dalton & Erdmann, 1990).

Financial Planning

The Gulf County College Counseling Project deploys financial aid staff from Florida State University and the local community college to speak to high school parents about financing a college education. Parents also receive financial aid information and are taught how to complete application forms (Dalton & Erdmann, 1990). The California Student Opportunity and Access Program—a collaboration between California State University campuses, area colleges, and local school districts—teaches school counselors to advise parents and students about financial aid (California State Postsecondary Education Commission, 1996).

D. Personal Strategies

Student Support

Rural students need self-confidence to attend college. The Rural Education Advisory Committee of New York found that students are more confident in their abilities when adults working in the college system support them. Accordingly, some rural school districts organize field trips to local colleges to meet with faculty and students. College representatives help rural high school students recognize that they can succeed in college and teach them to prepare for the experience. The Upward Bound Program targets eighth and ninth graders who are the first members in their families to attend college. In this program, students work two or three days each week with representatives from local colleges. They mentor the students, build their self-confidence, encourage them to attend college, and help them succeed academically in school (New York State Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, 1995).

Career Exposure

Rural students need realistic perceptions about career and job market opportunities. The Middle College Program, a collaboration between two community colleges and school districts in California, promotes academic and career development in high school students. Students receive academic, career, and personal counseling to help them realize their potential. In addition, the program offers internship experiences to inform students about different career opportunities and current job markets (California State Postsecondary Education Commission, 1996).

The Rural Education Advisory Committee in New York has learned that local businesses can play a role as well. Business leaders provide students with practical experience, such as job shadowing and internships. They also participate in career day events in high schools, sharing information with students about their jobs and the level of education they would need to pursue similar careers (New York State Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, 1995).

Untracking

The Advancement Via Individual Determination Program in California encourages ethnic minority students to succeed in high school and pursue a college education. Students are removed from lower-level classes and placed in higher-level classes with college-bound peers. Students also receive tutoring from college students who assist them with the college admission process (California State Postsecondary Commission, 1996).

Culture Shock Prevention

College Faculty and Student Support

Students often need support to adjust to college life. The College Posse Scholarship Program at Vanderbilt University provides first-year students with a supportive environment. Students arrive one week before fall classes begin to become familiar with the faculty and campus. Former students and faculty provide support to these new students. Program participants meet weekly during the first six months of college to develop a cohesive support network. The program also promotes involvement in campus organizations to help students feel connected with the university (Innes, Cunningham, & Sanders, 1993).

The North Carolina State University Transition Program (UTP) helps rural students make a smooth transition from high school to college. Staff members address student needs during their first few months of college. Course sections in mathematics and English are restricted to UTP students, who also receive career counseling and academic advising. The students attend Personal Development Seminars, and meet regularly with graduate assistants from the Counselor Education Program to discuss personal issues (Lee, 1997).

College Exposure

Rural youth can benefit from exposure to college life. Project Choice provides a three-week enrichment program to students entering tenth grade. Students live in dorms at Kansas State University, take college classes, and discuss college life (Sims, 1997). The On-track program at Edinboro State University in Pennsylvania also exposes tenth through twelfth grade students to college life. Students visit the campus on weekends and stay for one week in the summer. They receive college orientation sessions on career development, study skills, and extracurricular activities (Cowher, 1994).

III. INNOVATIONS TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Many innovative projects have been developed to increase participation in higher education. Most of the projects address multiple needs of youth simultaneously, involve community partnerships, and report data on project outcomes. Ten rural-based models are presented as well as 12 urban-based models. The urban-based models are included in this section of the report because they have high potential for replication in rural areas.

A. Rural-Based Models

1. Rural Community College Initiative

Background

The Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI) is designed to improve rural student participation in higher education as well as to promote general economic development in rural areas. Sponsored by the Ford Foundation, the pilot project began in 1995 with nine community colleges. The initiative received technical assistance from MDC, Inc., an organization that focuses on economic development in local communities. Community colleges working in the pilot project first assessed their roles in community development, then formulated plans to assist community colleges in economically distressed rural areas to develop their own projects (Eller et al., 1998).

Strategies

➤ Scholarships

Scholarships make it financially possible for rural students to attend college. Southeast Community College in Kentucky collaborates with local school systems to encourage students' college participation. Students are selected in eighth grade and supported by mentors throughout their high school years. They receive funding for college if they choose to pursue higher education.

➤ Workshops for School Personnel

RCCI forms partnerships with secondary schools to discourage students from dropping out of high school and to motivate them to attend college. Hazard Community College works with high schools to develop entrepreneurship training programs for students and to provide workshops for parents and educators. Students are encouraged to consider college as an option after high school. Alabama Southern Community College designed a Title IV TRIO Program that works with principals, counselors, and parents to encourage students to pursue higher education. The program has increased the number of rural students enrolling in college.

➤ Mentors

RCCI offers mentoring assistance to rural students. Southeast Community College in Kentucky formed a partnership with three local school systems to establish an early intervention program for eighth graders. The Southeast Scholars Program selects 16 students each year and matches them with mentors. These mentors are faculty or community members who provide students with information about college programs and careers and encourage them to succeed in school.

➤ Video Conferencing

Access to college can be improved for rural students through modern technology. Southwest Texas Community College uses video conferencing between the primary college campus and local centers. The college also has an agreement with Texas A&M University to deliver graduate courses. Integrating recent technological advances with college course offerings allows rural students who have limited educational opportunities or transportation problems to attend college.

➤ Student Support

RCCI offers support services. College retention rates have improved by building self-confidence, overcoming academic deficiencies, and providing career and college counseling. The Alabama Southern Community College offers faculty counseling, advising, and tutoring as support services to students. RCCI provides day care and early childhood programs to young parents who want to enroll in college.

➤ College Information

RCCI shares information with parents about college opportunities, application processes, scholarships, and financial aid.

Results

RCCI was evaluated over a three-year period. Site visits, interviews, focus groups, and field observations yielded both quantitative and qualitative data on pilot programs at nine colleges. Factors that appeared particularly effective in improving rural student participation in higher education were community partnerships between schools and businesses, academic preparation, and support services to address educational and personal needs of students.

2. Gulf County College Counseling Project

Background

The Gulf County College Counseling Project in Florida is designed to raise the educational expectations of rural students and encourage them to pursue higher education. The program was implemented in two high schools in 1988. Parents, business owners, and educators in Gulf County work together as partners to increase the availability of college counseling to local students. Project organizers also conduct community workshops, raise money for student scholarships, and advertise the project to gain community support (Dalton & Erdmann, 1990).

Strategies

➤ Scholarships

An incentive program encourages students to succeed in school by means of “earned” cash--or scholarship--rewards. Points are awarded for student attendance, academic performance, and standardized tests as well as parent participation in college workshops. Students receive a maximum of 112 points for academic achievement and 30 points for other accomplishments. Student points are totaled, then multiplied by a number representing a value assigned to the postsecondary institution the student wishes to attend, ranging from a multiplier of one for a vocational school to 20 for a private four-year college. Student points are then translated into college scholarship money, provided by the duPont Fund and the community.

➤ Workshops for School Personnel

The Counseling Project provides workshops to show teachers how to encourage their students to attend college. These workshops involve teachers in the college counseling process and in preparing students for the SAT. As a result of the workshops, teachers have created college centers at high schools, organized bus trips to colleges, and produced videotapes and brochures about the college counseling program.

➤ Parent Involvement

The high schools have developed partnerships with the local community college, the University of Florida, and other postsecondary institutions to provide information to parents about planning and financing a college education. Financial aid directors from Gulf Coast Community College and Florida State University speak to parents in the community about financing and preparing for their children’s college education. Parents also learn to support and prepare their children for college.

➤ College Information and Campus Visits

The Counseling Project helps rural students prepare for and adjust to college life. Students participate in college centers, where they explore educational opportunities. They learn the importance of standardized tests and develop test-taking skills. Bus trips are organized for student visits to college campuses.

Results

Project success has been determined by calculating differences in percentages in high school attendance, dropout rate, graduation rate, and postsecondary participation. Over a four-year period, the high school attendance rate of rural students increased by four percent; the high school dropout rate decreased from 3.4 percent to 1.9 percent; the high school graduation rate increased from 90.5 percent to 98.1 percent; and student enrollment in college increased from 50 percent to 80 percent. Parents reported that they were more comfortable with the college financial aid process, their children were more willing to take difficult high school courses, and the community was more aware and supportive of college preparation programs.

3. The Rural Education Advisory Committee

Background

The New York State Legislative Commission on Rural Resources established the Rural Education Advisory Committee in 1990. The goal of the commission was to identify strategies that motivate rural students to succeed and to increase their educational opportunities (New York Commission on Rural Resources, 1995).

Strategies

➤ Video Conferencing

Several rural school districts have developed partnerships with local colleges to offer advanced placement courses to high school students. Distance learning technology makes advanced placement courses available to these students. High schools use video conferencing technology to broadcast college courses into their classrooms. Earning college credits in high school encourages rural youth to continue their education, and eventually saves them money in college tuition fees.

➤ Outposting College Faculty in High Schools

Other rural school districts provide college-preparatory classes to their students by hiring adjunct professors at a local college to teach advanced courses in high schools. Some schools also allow students to attend classes on college campuses nearby.

➤ College Exposure

College visits introduce students to college life and help them learn to prepare for college. Some school districts offer field trips for students to visit local colleges and meet with faculty and college students. This is especially beneficial for rural high school students who do not believe they can succeed in college, or who will be the first member of in their family to attend college. Rural high school teachers also give tours at the colleges they attended. Representatives from colleges visit local high schools, explain programs of study, and assist rural students and parents with the college application process.

One rural school district works with the Upward Bound Program to introduce eighth and ninth graders to the idea of college. Students work with representatives from a local college two or three days each week, receive tutoring, study skills instruction, and information on careers and college opportunities.

➤ Community Involvement

Some rural school districts mobilize communities to encourage youth to attend college. Community volunteers work with students, discuss career opportunities, and provide practical work experiences. Two districts utilize a program called CHOICES, which provides employment opportunities to students and teaches them about real life situations, such as the cost of living. Business leaders in the community also participate in career day events. They visit high schools, talk about their businesses, and discuss the kind of education a student needs to pursue a career in their field. The School and Business Alliance provides students with mentoring, job shadowing, internships, and work experiences. Some businesses also offer college scholarships to students.

4. Consortium For Minorities In Teaching Careers

Background

The Consortium for Minorities in Teaching Careers (CMTC) recruits high school ethnic minority students into the teaching profession. Nine institutions, primarily colleges with high populations of African American, Hispanic, and Native American students, participate in the consortium (Siddens, 1997).

Strategies

➤ Mentors

Ethnic minority high school teachers support, encourage, and teach CMTC students how to pursue careers in teaching. They also teach these students to prepare curricula as well as teach younger students. As mentors, these teachers also demonstrate the benefits of teaching and help students plan for and apply to college.

➤ Career Exposure

The program helps students develop teaching skills and gives them opportunities to practice being teachers. Saturday and summer institutes provide students with additional instruction in academic subjects and give participants opportunities to tutor other students.

Results

The University of Iowa evaluated CMTC sites at California State University, Fordham University, University of Wisconsin, Xavier University, University of Louisiana, and Morgan State University. Seventy-six participants were interviewed. Eighty-seven percent reported that the program had positive effects on their motivation to become teachers, and 75 percent stated that the program motivated them to go to college.

5. University Recruitment Programs For African-Americans

Background

Programs to recruit African-American high school students into college have been implemented by Northern Kentucky University, Denison University, and Cincinnati Technical University. African-American college students assist with recruitment by organizing campus visits and providing college information (Stewart, Griffin, & McDaniel, 1993).

Strategies

➤ Campus Visits

Northern Kentucky University serves as a host to campus visits for African-American students in junior high school and high school. They learn the value of doing well in school and the need to take college preparatory classes. The university also implemented the Education Caravan, a traveling group of college students that informs high school students about the challenges they may face as minority students on campus, and on ways to overcome such challenges. The Education Caravan also gives advice on financial aid, housing, class schedules, and support services at the university.

Denison University established Alpha Outreach in 1986, a community service project offered by the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity. Alpha Outreach targets African-American high school students who may not be considering college. The program invites them to stay overnight in residence halls and gives presentations on the college admission process.

Cincinnati Technical College hires college students to assist admission officers with recruitment on high school campuses. These students conduct campus tours, seminars, and college fairs to visiting high school students.

➤ Career and College Information

Denison University, Northern Kentucky University, and Cincinnati Technical College have developed publications that address the particular needs and interests of African-American students. Information is provided on topics such as multicultural activities, admission, registration, financial aid, scholarships, and career planning.

Results

Officials believe that these strategies have enabled the university to attract qualified African-American students, but no research studies have been conducted to measure outcomes.

6. North Carolina State University Transition Program

Background

The North Carolina State University Transition Program (UTP) assists disadvantaged students with the transition from a rural high school to an urban university. Developed in 1985 in response to affirmative action, the program provides academic and personal support to help students attend college and complete their degrees (Lee, 1997).

Strategies

➤ College Faculty and Student Support

Basic courses in mathematics and English sections are restricted to UTP students. Career counseling and academic advising help college students select and register for courses, apply for financial aid, and set realistic career goals. The Counselor Education Department in the College of Education and Psychology offers a two-semester orientation course, and provides opportunities for students to meet with graduate assistants to discuss personal issues.

Results

UTP was evaluated through student interviews, observations, and program records. Focus groups were held with college freshmen three times a year. Program staff members also were interviewed. Participants felt that assistance with course selection, registration, and financial aid was highly beneficial. They also felt that restricting course sections to UTP students was helpful, and appreciated faculty support during their first few months on campus.

Between 1985 and 1995, approximately 545 UTP students entered the university and 235 students graduated. The degree-completion rate of 43 percent was similar to the degree-completion rate of minority students who entered the university without UTP. To improve the program, UTP identified the need for more positive reinforcements from faculty members. UTP also recommended that more help be provided to students making the transition to crowded residence halls and coping with homesickness.

7. Preparation Of Minority Educators (Premier)

Background

Preparation of Minority Educators (PREMIER) attracts and retains minority students in the teaching profession. PREMIER is a collaborative effort of a local community college (Florida Community College at Jacksonville), an urban school district (Duval County Public Schools),

and an urban university (University of North Florida). The primary goals of the program are to (1) improve relations among the three levels of education in order to increase the number of minority students entering the field of education; (2) recruit minority students into college and provide them with mentors and counselors who support them in college; (3) help these students develop basic academic skills; and (4) and provide field experiences in education (Gutknecht, 1992).

Program Development

The planning team who helped develop the program consisted of three faculty members and two staff advisors from the University of North Florida, three representatives from Florida Community College, and two district representatives from Duval County Public Schools. The team met once each month to discuss recruitment and retention of minority students. A group called the Professional Support Network--comprised of representatives from financial aid offices, minority recruitment programs, academic skill centers, and student activity committees--also met to discuss recruitment issues. Their purpose of the group was to identify school resources that could be used to achieve program goals.

Strategies

➤ Partnerships

Partnerships between schools ensure a smooth transition for students from high school, to the community college, to the university. Students and advisors from these institutions develop an individualized program for students in the field of education. This program allows students to fulfill pre-requisites of the university during their two years at the community college. Students then transfer to the university to earn a baccalaureate degree in the field of education.

➤ College Faculty and Student Support

The retention-oriented advising program provides a variety of support services. Advisors assist students in outlining graduation requirements to complete their degree in the most efficient and timely manner. They also help students develop support networks with faculty and other students.

➤ Academic Support and College Preparation

The Learning Resource Center on the community college campus provides services to strengthen student skills in reading, writing, and mathematics. Students also learn strategies for critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective decision-making. Individualized academic plans are developed for students in the teacher preparation program.

➤ Career Exposure

Field experiences immerse students in real-world teaching activities. Bi-weekly seminars and field experiences at elementary and secondary school sites are provided during the first two years of the program. Public school teachers act as mentors, and supervise student field experiences.

➤ Mentors

Students in middle school and high school that are interested in the teaching profession are provided with mentors. Mentors support them until they enroll in college. Mentors must have five years of teaching experience, knowledge of supervision, and a willingness to participate in mentor training.

Results

No evaluation results are available on the outcomes of the program.

8. College Reach-Out Program

Background

The College Reach-Out Program (CROP) is an educational program designed to motivate high school students to pursue a college education. The project targets racial and ethnic minorities, low-income students, and educationally disadvantaged students who are most likely to drop out of high school. CROP is funded by the Florida legislature and is a collaboration among two Florida community colleges and an urban university. Representatives of middle schools, school boards, community colleges, the university, and the community-at-large planned the project (Medina & Drummond, 1993).

Strategies

➤ Campus Visits

To familiarize them with the college environment, high school students are brought to community colleges and the university for campus visits. One community college has a two-week daytime program for the students. Another community college hosts the students for a two-week overnight program. Students also can stay overnight at the four-year university. Community volunteers serve as role models during the visits.

➤ Academic Support

CROP students take courses on basic academic subjects, test taking, and study skills. The courses help students overcome deficiencies in academic subjects and skills needed to succeed in college.

Results

Seventh graders in the program were given the School Attitude Measurement (Wick, 1990) and the Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory (Battle, 1981). Students in CROP developed more positive attitudes towards education and more confidence in their abilities to succeed in college than non-participants. Eighty percent of the students said they wanted to get as much college education as possible, and seventy-six percent stated that a college education would provide them with a better life.

9. Saginaw Valley State College

Background

The goal of Saginaw Valley State College in Michigan is to increase minority access to higher education, specifically in the field of education (Abel et al., 1994).

Strategies

➤ College and Career Information

The Office of Admissions and the College of Education send representatives to area high schools to discuss college life and financial aid. College nights and open house events are hosted at community locations throughout Michigan to reach minority high school students. The Minority Student Service Office also sends college counselors to visit high schools, community colleges, churches, and Indian reservations to promote the program. These counselors discuss issues with students such as financial aid, admission, housing, course selection, and adjustment to college life.

➤ Scholarships

The college offers scholarship money to minority students. The Bilingual/Bicultural Education Program provides funds for tuition and books to students accepted in the bilingual education program. The Kellogg Foundation provides scholarship money to minority students who want to teach courses in mathematics or science.

➤ Partnerships

The Delta College Program is a partnership between Delta College and Saginaw Valley State College. The program helps students obtain teaching degrees. Students complete the first 62 credits at Delta College, and then finish the program at Saginaw Valley State College. The program offers support from faculty and counselors at Delta College.

Results

College officials believe that the program increases recruitment of minority students, but no research studies have measured the outcomes.

10. Rural Education Initiative At Edinboro State University Of Pennsylvania: On-Track Program

Background

On-Track is a rural education initiative at Edinboro State University of Pennsylvania. The goal of the program is to provide educational resources and services to motivate and prepare students for college. On-Track targets students in grades ten through twelve. The program is staffed by a

faculty supervisor, graduate assistant, and work-study student. Faculty and students at the university serve as presenters, counselors, and mentors (Cowher, 1994).

Strategies

➤ College Information

Information about the program is sent to school counselors, principals, superintendents, parents, teachers, and community leaders in rural areas. Students also learn about the program through telephone calls, newsletters, and media announcements.

➤ College Exposure

Students become familiar with college life by visiting the university on weekends and staying on campus for one week in the summer. College orientation sessions are provided throughout the year, and presentations are given on career development. Other activities for students focus on career and personal assessment, diversity, financial aid, extracurricular activities, study skills, and time management. Parents receive an orientation about college life, and learn to help their children set educational goals.

➤ Mentors

Faculty and student mentors provide emotional support to students in transition from high school to college.

Results

Ninety-five of the 100 participants in the On-Track program attended college. Students and parents reported that the program motivated rural students to attend college and prepared them for academic success.

B. Urban-Based Models

1. “I Have A Dream” (IHAD) Program

Background

The “I Have a Dream” (IHAD) program provides financial, academic, and social support to sixth grade students attending public inner-city schools. These students are given sponsors--typically wealthy families--who promise college scholarships when they graduate from high school. Sponsors hire a project coordinator who works with volunteers and AmeriCorps members to provide students with academic and social support services. The primary goal of IHAD is to increase graduation rates from high school and to facilitate the transition of students into college (Kahne & Bailey, 1999).

Strategies

➤ Scholarships

Sponsors provide funding for parochial high schools and college tuition. Scholarships usually do not exceed \$5,000 and the amount depends on the funding needs of students. Sponsors hire project coordinators and support staff, personal and career counselors, and pay for field trips.

➤ College Exposure

Students visit colleges on weekends and school breaks.

➤ College Information

Students and parents attend seminars to receive information about private high schools and colleges. They also learn the college application process and the challenges that students face transitioning from high school to college.

➤ Support Services

Students receive tutoring and counseling services. Parents receive information on family, health, and social services in the community. Assistance is provided to families in financial crisis.

➤ Mentors

Project coordinators provide personal support to the students and help them develop mentoring relationships with parent and teachers. Students are contacted by phone or meet with their project coordinator at least once a week. Mentors help parents to understand the importance of a college education to their children's future.

Results

The success of IHAD programs was assessed in case studies of La Familia and Project Success, both located in Chicago. The case studies, begun in 1995, followed tenth and eleventh graders for two and a half years through high school graduation. Student academic records were used to compare achievement of program participants with that of two control groups. Graduation rates were compared, and interviews were conducted with students and staff.

The high school graduation rates were 71 percent (La Familia) and 69 percent (Project Success). The rates were twice as high as the two control groups (37 percent and 34 percent, respectively). Sixty-three percent of the La Familia group entered college, compared to 20 percent in the control group. Sixty-seven percent of the Project Success participants entered college, compared to 18 percent in the control group.

The total cost per student in La Familia was \$1,203 per year, excluding the cost of tuition for private high schools. The amount spent on the program over a six-year period was \$383,292, and \$88,855 was spent on parochial schools. Student cost in Project Success was \$1,284 per year, excluding tuition for private high schools. Over a 6-year period, \$277,256 was spent on the project, and \$333,827 was spent on parochial schools. The success of these projects was attributed mainly to the supportive and long-term relationships formed between students and project coordinators. Strong, supportive relationships with college-educated role models motivated students to succeed academically and socially.

2. Project Choice

Background

Project Choice motivates inner city youth in Kansas City to complete high school and pursue a college education. The Kauffman Foundation offers a college education to students who avoid disciplinary problems, have satisfactory grades, and graduate from high school with their class. Kansas State University and selected high schools in Kansas City, Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri participate in the project (Sims, 1997).

Strategies

➤ Scholarships

The Kauffman Foundation pays college expenses for students in the project, including tuition, books, room, board, and support services.

➤ Academic Support

High school students attend Saturday School, where teachers provide individualized instruction and attention. Students also receive tutoring services. Counselors familiarize students with life beyond the inner city and provide career training. Other academic services include resume building, applying to college, and financial compensation for the ACT test.

➤ College Exposure

Students are introduced to college life through a three-week enrichment program offered by Kansas State University. The summer before their junior year in high school, they are given the opportunity to live in dorms, take brief college classes, and explore issues such as cultural diversity, sexual responsibility, independence, and time management in college. Project Choice students continue to receive support services after they enroll in Kansas State University, including assistance in choosing classes, participating in social events, and coping with homesickness.

➤ Mentors

Project Choice provides a supportive network of faculty mentors, program staff, and peers.

➤ Parent Involvement

Project Choice encourages parents to participate in their children's education. Meetings and workshops strengthen parent skills in communication, decision-making, and stress management. Field trips keep their children busy and out of trouble, and family picnics strengthen bonds between parents and children.

Results

Ninety-two percent of Choice students enter college. By year 2001, when the first class of Choice students will graduate from college, the Kauffman Foundation will have spent more than \$22 million on tuition, books, room, board, and support services at both secondary and post-secondary levels. Approximately 80 percent of the budget is spent on support services. A 1995 cost-benefit analysis shows that each class of Choice students will contribute \$3 million more to the tax base than peers not participating in the project.

Students reported that mentors and support services helped them to succeed in the program. Financial support was necessary, because their families did not have funds to spend on college. Students also recommended that the program do more to prepare students academically and to prepare them for culture shock in college. Faculty at Kansas State University recommended that the program target younger students.

3. Quantum Opportunities Program

Background

The Quantum Opportunities Program (QOP) serves disadvantaged youth in families that receive public assistance. The goals of the program are to increase high school graduation rates and post-secondary education attendance as well as to improve academic and life skills of students. Initiated in 1989, the pilot program involved 25 young people in five sites (San Antonio, Philadelphia, Saginaw, Oklahoma City, and Milwaukee). The Ford Foundation contributed \$1.3 million to the project. The Opportunity Institute and the Learning Opportunity Center designed QOP, and the director of the Urban Poverty Program directed the project. Each pilot site was supported by an affiliate of Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America, Inc. (OIC), a community-based organization (Hahn, 1995).

Strategies

➤ Scholarships

Students receive hourly stipends ranging from \$1.00 to \$1.33. After they complete 100 hours of service, they receive a \$100 bonus; another \$100 is invested in an account for students to use for college or advanced training programs. QOP staff members also receive bonus pay as an incentive to keep students in the program.

➤ Support Services

QOP participants receive up to 250 hours of academic support annually, including computer-assisted instruction, peer tutoring, and homework assistance. They also develop career, college, and family planning skills. Students participate in community service activities as well.

➤ Mentors

Caring adults serve as mentors to QOP students.

Results

Brandeis University evaluated the pilot program over a four-year period. Outcomes were based on test results in six academic areas and five functional skills as well as student involvement in post-secondary education.

The QOP pilot project was deemed a success. Forty-two percent of QOP participants pursued post-secondary education, compared to 16 percent of the control group. Sixty-three percent of QOP participants graduated from high school, compared to 42 percent in the control group. Performances in all eleven academic and functional skill areas were higher for QOP participants. Average academic skill levels increased more than three grade levels for 27 percent of the experimental groups, compared to 14 percent of the control group. Average functional skill levels increased by 20 percent in the experimental group.

Program participants also were more involved in community service, more hopeful about the future, and more likely to feel successful. A cost-benefit analysis concluded that for each dollar spent on the program, \$3.68 will be gained after QOP participants finish their college education. Even if only one-third of the students finished college, \$3.04 will be gained for every dollar spent on participants.

4. Advancement Via Individual Determination

Background

The Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program was initiated in San Diego, California in 1980. The program motivates underachieving minority students to perform well in high school and to pursue a college education. These goals are achieved by untracking low-achieving students and placing them in higher-level academic classes with high-achieving peers. To qualify for AVID, participants must be low-income, linguistic minority students with average-to-high scores on the California Test of Basic Skills, but low grades in junior high school. AVID was created in 1980 in response to San Diego's desegregation decree.

Minority students are bussed to predominately white schools and placed in college preparatory classes. By 1991 several schools in the San Diego area had adopted the AVID program (Mehan, 1992). In 1995, legislative funding expanded the program throughout California. The AVID Center (a non-profit corporation), California Department of Education, and 141 school districts participated in the program in 1995 (California State Postsecondary Commission, 1996).

Strategies

➤ College Preparatory Courses and Untracking

Students who would normally be tracked in a less challenging curriculum are placed into college preparatory classes with high-achieving peers.

➤ Parent Involvement

Once high-potential but low-performance students are identified, their parents receive advice about the program. Parents who want to enroll their children in the program must sign contracts agreeing to support their children's participation. Involving parents in the program helps them understand the importance of school achievement and college attendance.

➤ Academic Support

Students are taught and supported by the AVID coordinator. This person is trained in writing techniques and collaborative teaching methods. Tutoring is provided by college students and former AVID students. Students also receive help to prepare for college admissions, placement tests, and career preparation.

Results

In 1991, college enrollment rates of 144 AVID students were compared to the college enrollment rates of all students from San Diego City Schools and to the national average for college enrollment. Fifty percent of the AVID students enrolled in four-year colleges, 42 percent enrolled in two-year or junior colleges, and 8 percent were working. The AVID four-year college enrollment rate was 50 percent higher than the local average and the national average. AVID sent nearly one third more students to four-year colleges than local and national averages would have predicted. Ninety-two percent of AVID students enrolled in a two-year or four-year college, compared to 54 percent of the students in San Diego City Schools who pursued a college education.

The AVID program was re-evaluated in 1995. Ninety-one AVID students completed a college preparatory curriculum, compared to 32 percent of students statewide. Ninety-eight percent of AVID students enrolled in college in 1995, but only 55 percent of students in San Diego County attended college. Sixty-three percent of AVID students entered a four-year college or university, compared to 18 percent of graduates in San Diego County (California State Postsecondary Education Commission, 1996).

5. Alliance For Collaborative Change In Education In School Systems (Access)

Background

The Alliance for Collaborative Change in Education in School Systems (ACCESS) is a collaborative effort of the Lawrence Hall of Science at the University of California, Berkeley and public school districts in the Bay Area. The purpose of the alliance is to increase college attendance among high school students in the area (California State Postsecondary Education Commission, 1996).

Strategies

➤ School Reform

The University of California at Berkeley has formed partnerships with Bay Area school districts to assist them with school reform. The university assists school personnel with curriculum development, and provides technical assistance to strengthen mathematics, English, and counseling programs in area high schools.

➤ Academic Support

Students in grades seven through twelve receive tutoring and academic advising. Tutors help students develop problem-solving skills and assist them with SAT preparation.

Results

Fifty-seven percent of ACCESS graduates attended college in 1994. This was higher than the state average of 53 percent for high school graduates and the 43 percent average for comparable groups with low rates of participation in college.

6. College Posse Scholarship Program

Background

The College Posse Scholarship Program is a partnership between Peabody College of Vanderbilt University and metaNetworks, an organization for young people in New York. The program is designed to increase cultural diversity at Vanderbilt and to help minority students succeed academically at the university. Staff members at metaNetworks identify high school students in New York that have high potential for leadership. Faculty and admissions staff at Vanderbilt University interview candidates and select Posse members (Innes, Cunningham, & Sanders, 1993).

Strategies

➤ College Faculty and Student Support

Posse members meet weekly during the first six months of the program to strengthen leadership and academic skills and to form a cohesive support network. Posse members arrive at Vanderbilt a week earlier than the fall semester to meet faculty and to become familiar with the campus.

Posse members participate in campus activities. As a group, they have formed new organizations on campus, including the Hispanic Student Association, an African-American gospel group, and an African-American theatre production group. Involving Posse members in activities on campus helps them feel connected to the university and reduces student attrition rates.

➤ Scholarships and Financial Aid

Posse members receive scholarships and financial aid to reduce financial barriers to higher education.

Results

Overall, the program has met its goals. Of the 21 Posse students attending Vanderbilt, only two left the program, both for family reasons. Some Posse members have had academic difficulties; others have experienced culture shock in a university environment that is much different than their communities of origin.

7. California Student Opportunity And Access Program

Background

The California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP) is a partnership between the California Student Aid Commission, 36 school districts, 23 independent colleges and universities, 14 California State University campuses, and several community-based agencies. The goal of the program is to encourage students from under-represented groups in college to pursue higher education (California State Postsecondary Education Commission, 1996).

Strategies

➤ Campus Visits

Campus visits familiarize students with the college environment. Summer residential programs also are offered, allowing high school students to stay on campus and experience college life.

➤ Academic Support

Students participate in workshops for test preparation. Tutoring services prepare them for the rigorous academic curriculum of college.

➤ College Information

The program assists high school counselors in their advisement of students and parents about college programs, university life, financial aid, and college application processes. Information is also presented about college and career opportunities as well as academic preparation needed for different careers.

Results

Seventy-one percent of Cal-SOAP participants enrolled in California colleges and universities after high school graduation, compared to 53 percent of their peers.

8. Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement Program

Background

The Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement Program (MESA) is a collaboration among the University of California and California State University systems, four independent colleges and universities, two community colleges, 69 school districts, and local businesses. The program strives to increase the number of African American students and Mexican-American students pursuing a college degree in engineering. The program serves students in grades seven through twelve. Preparing students for college and introducing them to math-based fields increases their eligibility for competitive college programs (California State Postsecondary Education Commission, 1996).

Strategies

➤ Career Exposure

Students learn a variety of possible career options by talking to people working in the private sector in math-based careers, such as engineering. Representatives from colleges and universities teach requirements the students must meet to enter a math-based field.

➤ College Preparatory Courses

Representatives also help secondary schools develop appropriate college preparatory courses.

➤ Academic Support

Students receive academic support through organized group study, and receive academic advising.

Results

The completion rates of advanced courses (indicated by a grade of C or higher) were 49 percent in advanced mathematics and 43 percent in physics at the time of the evaluation study in 1994. This was higher than statewide rates of 44 percent in mathematics and 22 percent in physics. Seventy percent of the seniors in MESA planned to pursue a math-based major in college. Fifty-three percent of MESA graduates enrolled in college, compared to 43 percent for other students with low college-attendance rates.

9. Early Academic Outreach Program (EAOP)

Background

The Early Academic Outreach Program (EAOP) is a collaboration between the eight general campuses of the University of California and 131 public school districts. The goal of the program is to increase student eligibility for college by increasing the availability of college preparatory courses in high schools. EAOP targets student groups with low rates of college attendance, including rural students, low-income students, and minority students (California State Postsecondary Education Commission, 1996).

Strategies

➤ College Preparatory Courses

School districts and universities collaborate to provide an academic program to prepare students for college, beginning in the seventh grade and continuing throughout high school in some school districts. Students enroll in college preparatory courses and receive support to develop their academic skills.

➤ Parent Involvement

Activities for parents inform them about college preparation and opportunities for their children.

Results

One-third of the EAOP participants earned grade point averages of 3.3 or above in college preparatory classes. This level of performance automatically qualified them for admission in California universities. In 1994, 52 percent of EAOP participants were eligible to attend college. The proportion of EAOP seniors who were eligible to attend state universities was four times higher than the state average of 12 percent. Sixty-eight percent of the EAOP graduates subsequently enrolled in college, compared with 53 percent of graduates statewide.

10. Middle College Program

Background

Middle College Program is a collaboration between two community colleges (Contra Costa College and Los Angeles Southwest College) and two school districts (Los Angeles and West Contra Costa Unified School Districts). The goals of the program are to deter students who are capable of attending college from dropping out of high school and to increase their rate of college attendance (California State Postsecondary Education Commission, 1996).

Strategies

➤ College Preparation

The program is available through community college campuses, where high school students receive instruction from school district faculty. Collaboration between local high schools and community colleges offers students a comprehensive, accredited high school, while concurrently introducing them to a college environment.

➤ Career and College Information

Students receive career counseling. They are offered career internship experiences as well. Students learn the benefits of pursuing a career that requires a college education. Their introduction to a college environment and different career opportunities motivates them to succeed in high school and to attend college.

Results

Seventy-one percent of the students in the program attended college in 1994. This was higher than the statewide rate of 53 percent for high school graduates and 43 percent for graduates with low rates of college attendance.

11. Chicago State University's Program For Student Retention

Background

The Chicago State University's program for student retention was developed in 1989 in response to low college retention and graduation rates, especially among low-income students. The program recruits and prepares for college, retains students through academic programs and support systems, and provides opportunities for career and professional advancement (Cross, 1992).

Strategies

➤ College Preparatory Courses

Chicago State University provides academic programs in the summer and on Saturdays as well as advanced placement courses for students in Chicago public schools. Staff development efforts include in-service training for high school teachers and collaborative activities with community organizations and agencies.

➤ College Faculty and Student Support

Admission staff and faculty of Chicago State University contact more than 2500 students during the summer to address questions and concerns about the university. Students who have finished their freshman year are also contacted to determine if they are experiencing problems that might prevent them from returning to college.

Faculty and community volunteers also are involved in retention and support efforts. Faculty members advise students and encourage minority students to pursue graduate work. Incentive Grant Awards are offered to faculty who develop new projects that support students, such as research and tutoring programs. In addition, the Council of Community Volunteers involves professionals and retired teachers in tutoring.

➤ Academic Support and Financial Aid

The university consolidated the Office of Admissions and the Financial Aid Center. The Office of Academic Support monitors student progress and provides academic support services. Students having academic difficulties are assisted immediately. Weekend and evening classes and childcare are offered to students with who might otherwise drop out of college.

➤ Career and College Information

After graduation, students are given opportunities for internships, cooperative education programs, and graduate school. Minority students participate in recruitment programs in fields where minorities are underrepresented.

Results

The freshman second-year retention rate at Chicago State University improved from 55 percent in 1989 to 63 percent in 1991. A 40 percent increase in university enrollment also occurred during this period. The freshman mid-semester withdrawal rate dropped from 25 percent to 3 percent. However, the program was costly. Over one million dollars had to be reallocated from administrative resources to support student retention efforts. Many officials believe that the cost in dollars was worth it, providing opportunities and support for minority populations who have been underrepresented in college.

12. The Newark Faculty Alliance For Education And Systemic Educational Reform

Background

The Faculty Alliance for Education in Newark (New Jersey) encourages at-risk high school students to pursue a college education. The alliance was developed by Newark Educational Partnership, one of the 16 collaborative projects in the Ford Foundation's Partnership Program. Faculty from Rutgers University, New Jersey Institute of Technology, Essex County College, Malcolm X Shabazz High School, and Central High School in Newark participate in these projects. The Ford Foundation, Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, American Council on Education, and local supporters provide funding (McGrath & Van Bursuk, 1997).

Strategies

➤ Partnerships

Collaborations among faculty and transfer counselors improve transitions from high school to the community college and to the university. Faculty members develop a coordinated curriculum to facilitate these transitions. They form discipline teams to discuss ways in which students can transfer classes in the content areas of English, mathematics, science, history, and business/accounting. Faculty teams discuss course content, syllabi, and tests as well. Students are prevented from having to repeat similar courses when they transfer to the university. Counselors assist students with transfers, following them through their college experience at Essex to ensure they are taking the necessary courses to transfer to Rutgers University.

➤ Mentors

University students serve as peer mentors in high schools. They help high school students prepare for college and provide academic support. The "Pizza and Problem Solving" program brings high school and college students together with faculty on the college campus to improve math skills and to socialize with peers who share interests in the content area.

➤ Community Involvement

Local corporations familiarize high school students with the business world. One company sponsors internships, pays for business attire, and gives a \$1000 savings bond to each student that pursues a career in business. High school students participate in a business law course, where they receive college credit.

Results

Faculty members reported that more high school students attended college as a result of the program. The transfer rate from Essex County College to Rutgers University increased from 96 transfer students to 171 students over a four-year period.

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