

Pre-College Scholars,
Their Parents, and the Sites that
Serve Them

Donna L. Enersen, Ph.D.
Matthew D. Pistilli, M.S.Ed.
Purdue University
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Site Survey

- 14 support sites serve over 61,000 Scholars, 6-12th grades across Indiana
- An on-line survey was guided by 2 of the study's questions:
 - How do Site Coordinators view their efforts of assisting low-income students in the process of accessing higher education?
 - What are the priorities of the work done by the Regional Sites?

Results

- The Site Coordinators (SC) believe *relationship building* to be the most important aspect of their work with the Scholars.
- SCs believe that parental support and involvement are vitally connected to persistence in the program and eventual success in entering college. They wish parents knew how important they are to their children's success.
- SCs are concerned that funding cuts have reduced their ability to connect with Scholars and parents.

A Few Quotations....

- We have found that a one-to-one relationship with an adult mentor has the biggest impact on students.
- Building relationships with the Scholars and their parents is the number one key element to building trust with them and keeping them connected.
- It is relationships that will change the lives of these families and make a difference in the world.

A Few More.....

- Some parents do not participate in any programming with their students, so they do not know what their Scholars are experiencing. Most of the time these parents are the ones who call too late, wondering why their Scholars missed the deadline for something or how the programs work. Be involved!
- Wish parents would understand the importance of attending events even if there is no food involved.
- How much we could help them if they let us!

Concerns....

- SCs are concerned that funding cuts have reduced their ability to connect with Scholars and parents.
 - The number one thing that makes a difference is relationships, and its hard to build relationships when you do not have the time and staff to spend with Scholars and families.
 - Loss of personnel has led to less school involvement. There's no time for personal one-on-one with students.

Scholars and their Parents/Guardians

- 10 focus-group interviews of 3-11 respondents
 - 123 Scholars, ages 13-18; 1 former Scholar
 - 112 parents/guardians
 - Caucasian/White; African American/Black; Latino/Hispanic
 - Evenly distributed regarding males/females
 - Groups based on those who attended voluntarily in response to invitations

Results

- Three main categories – not discrete, but highly connected to each other:
 - Relationships
 - Making the unknown known
 - Self-enhancement
 - And a 4th category of positive statements about the program and advice to improve the program

Relationships

- Relationships are the driving force behind pre-college Scholars accessing and persisting in the program.
 - Parental involvement
 - Interaction with the SC
 - Parents' interaction with each other
 - Social interaction for parents and Scholars with positive peers

Relationships: Parent Involvement

- Parents take the lead enrolling their students; although they may not understand it all, they are more aware than their children, who are often not at a developmental place to perceive the benefits of the program.
 - I signed my daughter up. There wasn't a lot of talk between us; she brought the application home and I filled it out. I didn't really understand all we'd be getting out of it. I said I want her to go to college and this is going to help us out in some way. Over time we found out the extent of help. It gets better and better.

Parent Involvement...

- If you tracked the successful students, I think you'll find that parental involvement is the key. It's a sacrifice to go every month, go to meetings. When we encourage them, we really are the fire behind that child being successful.
- You have to recruit the parents' involvement just as much as you recruit the children.

Relationships: Interaction with SC

- Any service that allows us to build personal relationships with Scholars. This is done best during our college visits or during summer programming activities.
- This is a partnership.
- The support group, they're outstanding. I mean, they don't put you off at all. If they don't have the answer they'll get it and get back to you. It's just so good.

Interactions with SC....

- Whenever I see [the SC] she's like, "You ARE going to college." Sometimes I say, "I don't want to do this activity," and she'll say "Yes, you are!" If you get a bad grade, you'd better take summer school because she checks everyone's GPA and you'd better be doing well or she gets on you.

Relationships: Peers

- **Parents' peers:** And because we are all in the same position, we don't feel alone. There are all these other parents, and the support we get from each other is great.
- It's kind of like a parent group; parents helping parents. I see a bond with all the parents because they are all involved in their kids' lives and that's good.

Relationships: Peers....

- **Scholars' Peers from parents' view:** And another thing, they're around positive people. If you're here, there's a goal. This program puts them around positive like-minded people of their age group.
- My son [can be] a male around other males that are doing positive things, and he can be around girls that are doing positive things. So it's the like-mindedness of this program; that there's a focus each year that you come.
- It given them a sense of belonging – they have a place in the program. That's important, especially because today there are a lot of wrong places you can belong, but this is positive.

Relationships: Peers.....

□ Scholars' Peers from Scholars' view:

- When I first joined, I was intimidated by people, and then I made new friends and new relationships, like when I went on college visits. When trips got cancelled, I was disappointed.
- It's good because you get to meet people, like a **lot** of people, a lot of other kids like you.
- You can live in one area for 17 or 18 years and not go outside of it, and all you know is that region and the people there...so going to events supplied by the program, you meet gobs of new people.

Making the Unknown Known

□ The program makes the unknown known to Scholars and their parents

- Opens Scholars' and parents' eyes to opportunities and possibilities that exist for them
- College trips the most helpful as Scholars try to picture themselves at college
- Anxiety is eased about how college will be affordable for them
- The program calms Scholars' and parents' feelings of excitement and nervousness about college

Unknown-Known: Opens Eyes

□ This is one of the most pervasive attributes of the program; that it opens futures to Scholars that simply had not been in their vision before.

- And it opened the boys' eyes to the different kinds of opportunities that are available. It made a big difference for them and for us.
- It made them think on a higher level. They started thinking like Notre Dame, or I can be an engineer. They didn't have these role models; they didn't know people personally who have those titles. They no longer talk about IF they go to college; with the help of the program, it's WHEN and WHERE. It's an accepted thing.

Unknown-Known: Opens Eyes

- This opens her eyes. It doesn't seem so unattainable any more to think about college.
- It opened my eyes (Scholar) to the things you have to get done if you want to be successful.
- I would say, it gives you hope. You can see what's ahead of you; it gives you a glimpse of the outside; it's worth it's weight in gold to open your eyes to that.
- My family's never gone to college before, so I can't ask them for help. This opened my eyes to how to do it all.
- It's opened me up and given me a broader view of what I can do and made me want to work hard towards a goal, stay in line, and not stop.

Unknown-Known: College Trips

- The school visits that we have been on have opened our eyes, and it opens doors.
- We got to walk on campus, see where they eat and where they do their laundry. We went to classes and the library. We talked to students. It was good to see all of that.
- I mean, it opened his eyes! He learned that college costs a lot of money and that we have to work hard. I'd been saying that over and over, but now he got it.

Unknown-Known: Financial

- It's such a relief as a working person; it's a relief to know he can go to college. To know that the system is supporting the working class.
- It's a very respectful way for working parents to have a child go through school and not feel like you can't provide for him. I've worked all my life and still I can't send him to college, no matter what I do.
- It has relieved a lot of pressure. You don't have to worry about the future as much.

Unknown-Known: Nervousness

- One of the hardest things for my daughter will be to adjust from the high school environment to the campus environment where she is responsible for every aspect of her life – getting up on time, laundry, attending classes, homework, studying for tests, budgeting for her living expenses, making wise decisions.
- I worry about her always making wise decisions. She is used to us making a lot of decisions for her, or at least being there.

Unknown-Known: Nervousness

- College is such a different environment and it's very overwhelming at first, especially when you're from a tight little community and then you go to this huge campus and everything.
- Her safety (worries me). If she lives on campus, I'll have her call every night; she's very trusting.

Unknown-Known: Nervousness

- (from Scholar) Nervous and excited – 10 times more than anything I've ever felt before. The nervous is not knowing exactly what's going to happen.
- I worry about getting good grades – college is a lot harder.
- I worry about getting a horrible roommate.
- You're losing your community. I'm losing my church and my family and my neighborhood.

Self-enhancement

- The program provides opportunities for self-enhancement for both parents and Scholars – through the relationships built and the unknown becoming known
 - Parents see the program as a collaborator with them in parenting

Self-enhancement: Parents

- The parents believe the program has helped them be better parents – through information and support. There is a quality of “standbyness” that one parent named, wherein the program staff stand with parents to give them help.
 - This program in a sense empowers parents to be active for their children.
 - I had no clue about college at all and they have helped me get information.

Self-enhancement: Parents

- Applying for college is an overwhelming task, but the program has been very helpful in outlining what we need to do and how to meet the goal.
- They help us to learn about things that we didn't know about. It's like us going to college; it helps us so we can help the student more.
- (The program) doesn't let them down. Because once you hook up with a child, you don't let them down. You monitor them. You are behind us parents.

Self-enhancement

- Scholars expect a lot of themselves, even when others do not
- Scholars feel they are different from peers

Self-enhancement: Scholars

- My counselor told me I was not good in math, that I just couldn't do it at all. So I walked in a year later, and she said, "You did so well," and I told her, "You are the one who told me I'm not going to do anything! Well, I took summer school and I passed it!"
- If you really want something, you're going to work for it, so I think if you really want to earn your scholarship, then you can get there. Just use the resources of tutors and budget your time.

Self-enhancement: Scholars

- Sometimes I sit in math class and the kids are messing around, and I'm like, "Isn't this math class?" And then they wonder why they don't get their work done; and the teacher just sits down at her desk, and she totally doesn't care.
- Some kids just don't care, but I know I can do (the math) and I want to do it.
- I hate the class when you try to raise your hand and all the kids are like, "Be quiet."
- We have a few students who go in there and mark down anything just to get done; they don't care. They ruin it for the rest of us.
- I always work on my grades and make sure I have well-rounded extracurriculars. I educated myself.

Self-enhancement

- Scholars internalize parents' desire for them to succeed beyond their parents
- The pledge and commitment are important and help Scholars stay focused
- The start of high school seems to be a critical time for Scholars' own commitment

Self-enhancement: Success

- My kids want a better future than what we had. They want to accomplish something.
- She wants to do something with her life, I know she does. She doesn't want to get stuck.
- They want to go to college as much as we want them to go.
- He doesn't want to do what I did for a living.
- I'm like, I want you to get out there and see and do things that I'm not able to.

Self-enhancement: Pledge

- I think the pledge should not just be for the program; I think it should be a pledge for everyday life because the more you follow the things in that pledge, the better your life will be.
- It gives us a standard and goal.
- It keeps it organized, and it makes me do right things.
- It helps me stay focused.

Self-enhancement: Pledge

- It has instilled a certain set of values in my child, in what kind of conduct and what kind of person you should be.
- They're standing in front of people saying what they're going to do. And that gives them something.
- Sometimes parents can only say so much to a kid to encourage them, but the pledge keeps her focused. She's like a teacup with information just running over. I love it.
- It's empowering to a child. She is earning her scholarship by keeping that pledge.

Self-enhancement: High School

- Although parents often take the lead in enrolling scholars, comments suggest there is a point where scholars must make a personal commitment to stay involved. It seems to be at the start of high school – a potentially sensitive period regarding persistence and attrition.
 - Some people care about the program and some don't. Some are just in because their parents put them in, but they need to choose to be in.
 - My daughter probably didn't care much at the beginning; it took her a while, entering high school, that is when she really did catch on; now she really appreciates it.

Recommendations

- Provide more time and resources to SCs to build relationships
- Expand college visits and seminars
- Use older Scholars to speak to younger Scholars
- Use technology more advantageously
- Emphasize collaboration
- Develop programs to enhance hardiness
- Develop broader options for those not ready for traditional 4-year college experience
