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Twenty-first Century Scholars, Their Parents and Guardians, and the Sites that Serve Them

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2008

Abstract

Indiana's Twenty-first Century Scholar program aims to increase access to and success in college for low-income students around the state by providing an array of pre-college support services for income eligible students and their families. In exchange for keeping a pledge of good citizenship, students enrolled in the program receive eight semesters of public college tuition (or the dollar equivalent thereof at private institutions). This qualitative study focused on seventh through twelfth grade students enrolled in the program, their parents and/or guardians, and the staff who work in each of the 14 Twenty-first Century Scholar Support Sites. Staff members completed two online surveys, while 123 Scholars and 112 parents and guardians of scholars participated in focus groups. Three interconnected categories related to the services provided to Scholars and their parents/guardians by Site staff members and how those services met the needs of the Scholar population were revealed by the study. The first category centered on the relationships formed between parents, scholars, Site staff, schools, and scholar's peers. Second, researchers found that the program helps to clarify higher education by making the unknown aspects of college known. The last category focused on the self-enhancement opportunities provided by the program that lead to a development of personal hardiness. A fourth area of comments revolved around advice and praise for the Twenty-first Century Scholar program as a whole.

Twenty-first Century Scholars, Their Parents and Guardians, and the Sites that Serve Them

Introduction

Having a post-secondary education is “widely considered the key to achieving economic success and social mobility in American society” (Engle & O’Brien, 2007, p. 11). Further, Fitzgerald and Delany (2002) note that access to postsecondary education should be available to any American who wants it, irrespective of their ability to pay for it. For too many, though, an education beyond high school never becomes a reality, often because of the costs associated with attending (Heller, 1997). And, even when they enroll in college, low income students have historically been less likely to persist to degree completion than their peers from more affluent families (Mortenson, 2007).

Legislation enacted in 1990 created the Twenty-first Century Scholars Program in Indiana with an aim to increase access to higher education for families in the lowest income bracket (St. John, Musoba, Simmons, & Chung, 2002). The program has two main components, the first of which is financial aid. Students who sign up in sixth, seventh, or eighth grade pledge to graduate from an accredited Indiana high school with at least a 2.0 grade point average, complete college application and financial aid paperwork on time, and remain free from criminal activity. In exchange for maintaining the pledge, the state will provide 8 semesters of tuition at any public Indiana institution of higher education or the equivalent amount at a private university. The second component is comprised of support services provided to both the students enrolled in the Twenty-first Century Scholar Program and their parents (Evenbeck, Seabrook, St. John, & Murphy, 2004; St. John et al., 2002). Some support services offered to students include workshops on filling out college and financial aid applications, visits to college campuses,

tutoring, career exploration exercises, financial planning as well as workshops for parents interested in pursuing higher education themselves.

Initially, sixteen support sites were created around the state to serve as nexus points for geographic regions, but in 2005, the number of sites was reduced to 14 because of budgetary constraints. Staff in the offices work to recruit sixth-through-eighth grade students into the program, and then provide a myriad of services to the students once they have enrolled.

According to a 2007 policy brief compiled by the Indiana Commission for Higher Education, over 61,800 students are currently enrolled in the Twenty-first Century Scholars program across Indiana. Thirty-two percent of these students are racial minorities and sixty-eight percent are Caucasian. Fifty-eight percent of all Twenty-first Century Scholars who maintained their pledge (and thus were eligible to receive the scholarship) are first generation students, and forty-nine percent of the same group comes from single parent families. Twenty-first Century Scholars are more likely to graduate from high school and go to college than their low-income peers, and, once in college, they are more likely to graduate than Pell recipients who did not take part in the Twenty-first Century Scholars program. (Indiana Commission for Higher Education, 2007).

Research Design

This portion of the study utilized a phenomenological summative evaluation design with the intent of understanding how effectively the program is meeting its goals from the viewpoint of those taking part in the program. At the pre-college level, the program involves students, their parents, and the Regional Support Sites. An on-line survey gathered information from the Site Coordinators; focus group interviews gathered data from Scholars and their parents. The questions posed to all participants asked for their experiences and for stories about what they felt was working well and what needed to be improved.

The first step for the researchers was to learn from the Site Coordinators what services were offered to Scholars and their parents, and how they viewed the success of these services in helping students prepare for college. The second step was to ask parents and Scholars how the services met their needs as they moved through middle school, high school, and through the process of accessing higher education. The overarching research questions were:

1. How do Site Coordinators view their efforts of assisting low-income students in the process of accessing higher education?
2. What are the priorities of the work done by the Regional Sites?
3. How do the Scholars view the Twenty-first Century Scholar program?
4. How do Scholars' parents view the Twenty-first Century Scholar program?

Methods

Student Access, Transition and Success Programs (SATS), a department within Enrollment Management at Purdue University, put together the initial research team for the pre-college portion of the broader Twenty-first Century Scholars study. The SATS department works on several programs devoted to college student success and access to college, including hosting one of the 14 Twenty-first Century Scholar Support Sites. Two SATS staff members worked with two faculty members in the College of Education to coordinate the study. The faculty members recruited two current graduate students and a graduate of the program who had recently received her doctorate in school counseling to serve as researchers and focus group leaders.

The evaluation of the pre-college Twenty-first century Scholars program began with an on-line survey completed by 14 Site Coordinators (SCs). Their protocol asked them to comment in as much detail as they chose about the services their Site provided, which ones they believe

are the most beneficial to the Scholars and parents, their views on topics such as parents' participation, Scholars who drop out of the program, and the use of Site resources (see protocol in appendix A). The responses were gathered by a graduate assistant who removed names and other identifying information, organized the data according to questions, and forwarded the data to the researchers.

Focus group interviews were held at ten of the sites. Effort was made to choose sites of varying demographics. Parents and Scholars were invited to participate through several methods by the SCs. In some cases, email or mailed invitations were sent to families in geographically reasonable areas; in other cases, invitations were given that coincided with activities already planned by the SCs. Although a random sample of Scholars and parents was desired, such a sample proved difficult to obtain. All focus groups were based on those who attended voluntarily in response to the letters of invitation sent by the SCs. Scholar and parent groups were held the same day/evening, at different times, except one group that was held with Scholars and parents together.

Across all of the groups, the focus groups included the following: 123 Scholars (aged 13-18: 75 Caucasian/White, 46 African American/Black, and 2 Latino/Hispanic); and 112 parents of Scholars (91 Caucasian/White, 20 African American/Black, and 1 Latino/Hispanic). Although we did not collect data on sex, overall the groups appeared to have been evenly distributed regarding males and females. The focus groups ranged from 3 to 11 members.

The focus groups were moderated by three researchers who had been hired and trained during the early summer. All three researchers had qualitative methodology experience, were in the field of education, were deemed to be able to build rapport with young people, and attended a training session that included conducting a supervised practice focus group interview. The

researchers contacted the Sites and made arrangements to travel to the locations to hold the interviews. They met with nine of the groups, moderated the group interviews using a prepared protocol and digital recorders, and transcribed their recordings. The tenth group was moderated and transcribed by one of the researchers.

The Scholars' protocol explored questions about why they joined the Scholars, how the program benefited them, their thoughts about going to college, and ways they would like to see the program improved. The parents' protocol asked similar questions from their point of view. (See these protocols in appendices B & C)

Data were analyzed by Drs. Donna Enersen and Heather Servaty-Seib with input from the three researchers. The data were read repeatedly, patterns were noted, and the data were coded. The numerous codes were further analyzed into larger categories. Definitions of key terms were created, quotations from the data selected for their representativeness or articulation, and interpretations were made.

Results

The data clustered around three main categories; however, these categories are by no means discrete, but are connected to each other. Broadly, the categories are relationships, making the unknown known, and self-enhancement. Additionally, a fourth set of comments fell into a category best described as positive statements about and advice for the program. Each category is represented by an overarching assertion supported by a series of sub-assertions that develop it. The supporting data quotations were chosen represent the comments most heard in each category, or to tell a small story that illuminates the assertion. Many quotes are included so that the voices of the participants are heard.

Relationships

Relationships for the Scholars, their parents/guardians, and the SCs take on many interrelated forms. Just as the overarching categories are not discrete, the seven sets of relationships described below work together to broadly provide the educational and personal support the Twenty-first Century Scholars program offers. These seven areas that will be depicted below include those between parents and scholars; parents and sites; scholars and sites; scholars and peers; scholars and schools; sites and schools; and, scholars and colleges. Taken as a whole, these areas allow us to make our first assertion: **Relationships are a driving force behind pre-college Scholars accessing and persisting in the Twenty-First Century Scholars program.**

Relationships are broadly defined as those that exist between parents and Scholars, parents with each other, scholars with each other, parents and scholars with site staff, etc. Making up this large assertion are a number of sub-assertions. We offer these sub-assertions with interpretations and end this section with an overall statement regarding the importance of relationships for all of those involved in the Twenty-First Century program.

Supporting Assertion A: Parents and scholars alike indicated that parental involvement is the key to Scholars gaining access to the Twenty-First Century Scholars program.

Parents describe taking the lead in enrolling their children in the program and suggested that although they may not have had the best sense of all that was involved in the program, they were more aware than their children—who were often not at a developmental place where they could perceive the potential benefits of the program.

1) I don't think most of the children had a choice. I think they were enrolled. I don't know of anyone who told me that their child entered through a voluntary kind of thing.

2) *When we first signed up it was just information in the mail. I think the parent program became effective because it helps the parents and the students. They [students] don't always recognize the opportunity. The reason that we say the parents sign them up is because the parents recognize the opportunity, whereas, the students, they see it as just a little piece of paper to them. They don't make the connection between that and the opportunity that's being offered.*

3) *I just signed my daughter up too. There wasn't a lot of talk between us, she brought the application home, I filled it out just in time and at that point did not really understand what we would be getting out of it. I said I want her to go to college and this is going to help us out some way. I did not know the extent because I probably didn't read all the information, or didn't understand all the information, but I had her signed up, and I thought we were going to get some help; that's fine, we're going to get something so we're going to do it, whatever it is. And over time we found out to what extent it actually is, so it's just been getting better and better.*

The scholars also acknowledged how their parents actually signed them up.

1) *Actually, it [the paper] was in my backpack; it was crumpled up in my backpack, and my mom saw the paper and joined up for it.*

2) *My parents kind of told me to do it. They signed me up for it (laughter).*

3) *Same here. My mom said like I had to sign up for it so I did. But I'm really glad because...just like the scholarship and the money it provides....it will help a lot.*

4) *Originally my mother made me.*

Other Scholars reported the ways in which their parents had prepared them to consider anything that would help them reach their future goals. It is significant that they were open to the information about the program when it was presented to them.

1) When I joined it...back whenever I was in middle school, I was looking you know just, I tried to look ahead. Mom had instilled, my parents instilled in me that I'm going to college no matter what so I was just, you know, looking for all the types of aid that I could find to help me out, so, why not?

2) My parents are always asking me like, what do you want to be when you grow up? and I used to always change my mind, but in the past few years I said I want to go to IU medical school to study some sort of medicine. So they said, we need the help.

Supporting Assertion B: In a similar vein, parents indicated that parental involvement is the key to Scholars persisting in the program.

Parents described the importance of parents attending events and spending time with their children engaged in program activities. As the conversations continued, it became clear to the participants just how much impact parents have on their children's motivation.

1) If you tracked the successful students, I think that you will find that parental involvement is the key. If the parents here today are the parents who are involved with kids who have succeeded, you will see some type of parental involvement. It's a sacrifice to go every month, drive to wherever the meetings are. It's a sacrifice to go to these events. When we encourage them, we really are the fire behind that child being successful.

2) You have to recruit the parents' involvement just as much as you recruit the children.

3) *I know....I haven't been able to attend a lot of events but I have, I've decided that this year I am gonna make more time, and if that means cutting my schedule back at work , I'm, that's something I want to do. You know I feel like this is the time for me to be as close as I can ...and just get everything down so, you know, so I'll know what is going on, and then I think that it is definitely going to encourage him as wellthat I do get more involved.*

4) *I think that it's because of the commitment on both sides - myself and the daughter also - that we both committed to this thing.*

Some parents continued by talking about how focused they are on guiding and supporting their children outside of the program. They work with them on goal-setting and spend time discussing issues related to college. The program gives parents who may not have attended college themselves the opportunity and information they need to have these discussions.

1) *If they're giving them the opportunity to do their best, we're giving them support. They know that if they do their part. It's there, I can't send them to college, they can't see the total picture, and I can't afford to go, so they are just in school. I have that opportunity to send them now.*

2) *If I would hang with her and guide her as much as I could through the program through her education, at the end of high school, that at the end, we both knew that her college is there waiting on her and that's what TC has given me, is a kind of a pride in knowing that if I did these things, then they would help me at this point and time to be able to see that she got to where I felt like she needed to go.*

3) *The triplets, they communicate about what they want to do, but they don't know the path. It's like getting from a to b - they don't know the path, you have to keep telling*

them that this is what they need. And this is what they need - their parents to get from a to b. They're teenagers and they have sports, and I have to cut the sports out to ensure they get the grades in, and at the school they tell them they can play if they have a D, but I think a D is the same as an F, so I tell them that the lowest grade they can get is a C, but if they can do better then they have to do better. If that's the best they can do, then a C is like an A, but if they can do better, then they should do better. D's and F's are unacceptable. So sports get cut out some time. They say they want to go to college and they want to do this and that, and I have to help them get from a to b. I have to redirect them and keep them on task so that they can get the grades that they need in the subjects that they need.

4) That's the key to any child's education. The more the parents get involved, particularly since we are the first teachers.

It is possible that this kind of close monitoring and engagement with the children existed before the family became part of the Twenty-first Century Scholars program, but it is evident that the program gives those parents more to talk about with their children. They have co-opted the goals of the program into their support and encouragement of their children.

Supporting Assertion C: The site coordinators provided further confirmation of the importance of involved parents. They believe that such support and involvement are vitally connected to persistence in the program and eventual success in entering college.

The site coordinators do all that they can to provide ways for scholars and their parents to be prepared, be more familiar with the settings and paperwork, be more ready to move into college – but if parents and scholars do not attend, the activities can not do what they are

designed to do. The coordinators report that some parents are uninvolved and less than appreciative of the many helpful options offered by the sites.

1) *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!*

2) *[I wish they understood] that we do not OWE them the services we offer and they should be grateful for all the program offers. Wish parents would understand the importance of attending events even if there is no food involved.*

3) *How much we could help them early on if they would just let us!*

We categorized these statements about parental involvement as part of the *relationships* that are crucial for Scholars' access and success. Positive and healthy parent-child relationships are vital, and the program's format and goals work together to develop these healthy relationships.

Parental "buy-in" to the program appears to be crucial to student enrollment and persistence in the program. It is important to note that our sample was not random so these interviews were done with parents who by and large were very involved in their children's lives. They sometimes spoke of other parents who are not involved and do not seem interested in helping their children; they found this "tragic" and "sad."

Supporting Assertion D: The site coordinators believe *relationship building* to be the most important aspect of their work with the Scholars.

Although site coordinators are concerned about the lack of parental involvement, they believe that they must do all they can to foster the building of relationships with the scholars and

their parents. They indicated that building relationships with the scholars and their parents is crucial in fostering persistence within the program.

They define relationship building as a key element in keeping students in the program and making the transitions possible for the students. They put the most focus on the overall levels of Scholar and parental involvement and any activities that allow for personal connections between staff and family members. They believe the following are facets of relationship-building: spending one-on-one time with students and/or their parents at the Sites; having time to spend with the families on trips; being in the office to answer calls (having a toll-free line); offering help in many ways to the students, parents, and school personnel; and providing one-on-one or very small group tutoring for academic improvement and remediation. Following are three statements representative of most sites' responses:

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

Some sites mentioned their particular situations that lead to relationship building.

- 1) *Our regional office is located in a high school so we have day-to-day contact with the students, which allows us to build relationships easier. We have students stop by every day to see us. We also hand out mints (because they are worth a mint to us) when they stop by. A mint starts a conversation about how their day is going and many more*

conversations. That may be the only time all day that someone has asked them how their day was going.

2) Any service that allows us to build a personal relationship with Scholars. This is done best during college visits or during the summer programming activities. 3) We have found that a one-on-one relationship with an adult mentor has the biggest impact on students.

Site coordinators mentioned parental involvement and relationship building when they were asked specifically about services that are most effective in fostering access to and success in higher education.

1) Involving Scholar parents in everything.

2) The college cost estimator and building relationships. Between the two of them, you can convince families that they need to go on to higher education and that they can afford to attend.

3) We offer encouragement to students and parents in every interaction we have with them.

Supporting Assertion E: Site coordinators are concerned that funding cuts have reduced their ability to connect with scholars and parents.

Cuts in budgets have curtailed or limited – or at least strained - their capability to maintain these important relationship-building activities. Most report that their staff members (including the office manager) have stepped up to be responsible for additional areas of programming, but that there really are not enough people to cover everything effectively. Others report losses of activities and relationship-building:

1) *The number one thing that makes a difference in the life of scholars is relationships, and it's hard to build relationships when you do not have the time and staff to spend with the scholars and their families.*

2) *We have not been able to build the personal relationships that we desire in order to have the greatest impact.*

3) *Loss of personnel has led to less school involvement. There's no time for personal one-on-ones with students. Programming cuts = less activities/events. Staff is often stretched thin with the amount of activities we'd like to do.*

In fact, when asked what they would do if unlimited funds were available through the program, site coordinators indicated that they would use additional resources to focus on relationship building. They would hire more staff and provide more ways to contact the Scholars and their parents. In those contacts the goal is overwhelmingly for building relationships.

1) *More one-on-one relationships. It is relationships that will change the lives of these families and make a difference in the world.*

2) *More staff who would provide increased one-on-one or small group tracking and mentoring of our 6,000 scholars in our region.*

3) *Wow...more support staff so we can be in more constant contact with [parents and Scholars].*

4) *Enough staff to have mentoring and tutoring groups in EVERY school that we service.*

Supporting Assertion F: SCs wish that parents knew just how important their involvement is to the success of their children.

The program offers activities for parents and also for parents and their Scholars to take part in together.

- 1) *They must be active Scholar parents; this is a partnership.*
- 2) *All of the workshops/services that we provide for Scholars in their schools are also provided to parents in the evening in their community (where possible on a local college campus). Parents are always included in all other projects that we offer Scholars and all campus visits.*
- 3) *There are a variety of ways that parents can get involved, through parent meetings, parent conferences, college visits, special events targeted just for parents, and personal phone calls to build a relationship with them.*

Supporting Assertion G: Parents in the focus groups reported highly valuing their relationship with the sites and site coordinators.

Those who have been active in the program activities and parent meetings have built positive relationships with the site coordinators. They describe the site supervisors as being supportive and available.

- 1) *The wonderful staff at the Twenty-first century scholar's office, who always go out of their way to make sure the parents and scholars receive important information on upcoming events and about their scholarships, their willingness to help whenever needed, and their openness to new suggestions and ideas to make a fantastic program even better.*
- 2) *The support group over here, they're outstanding. I mean they're, they don't put you off at all. If they don't have the answer they'll get it and get back to you. I mean it's just so good.*
- 3) *I guess I like the security of knowing there's people I can call if I have questions. To me it's kind of a foggy thing....knowing what all you gotta go through to get a kid into college and all the paperwork that's involved and everything...it's...it's just nice to know*

thatthat you can call somebody that has an understanding of it. It's eased my mind by knowing that the help is there if you need it.

Supporting Assertion H: Although less prominent in the scholar groups, there were stories that scholars reported in reference to specific site coordinators and the importance of the information and encouragement offered by those specific site coordinators.

In most cases, the SC spoke to the Scholars in a familiar manner that made the Scholars feel that they were being watched and cared for through their classes and activities. There was some mild teasing that had a strong message of care and confidence in the Scholars. One SC was spoken of this way:

Well my mom works here, so whenever I see [the SC], she's like you are going to college, and she will go on and on about college. Yeah, sometimes I say, "I don't want to do this" and she is like "yes, you are." She's like, you better promise you will be there, you had better promise me. And like if you get a bad grade, you had better take summer school, because [the SC], she checks everyone's GPA and you had better be doing well or she gets on you.

The relationship between the site coordinators and the scholars and their parents is highly valued, particularly by parents and the site coordinators. The site coordinators believe that it is the most important aspect of their work and this idea is confirmed by the clear appreciation parents expressed for the support they receive from the site supervisors. The sites need continued and increased resources to build relationships with the parents and the scholars. Resources are broadly defined as staff to be available to spend time with Scholars and their

parents, on site, at schools, on the telephone, and during activities such as the college visits and also funds for incentives, travel, etc.

Supporting Assertion I: Parents value the opportunities they have to interact with one another and to support one another.

It does not appear that parents begin to attend Twenty-first Century Scholar activities and parent meetings with an expressed goal of making friends or building relationships with other parents. For those parents who become regular participants, however, the relationships become a certain benefit. A majority of the parents have had no experience with higher education, so they tend to feel some intimidation as they approach the program. Knowing there are others who are feeling the same way is comforting.

1) 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.

2) It's nice, you get to interact with other different parents and find about their kids with our kids, and they all go to different schools so it's really kind of fun to interact with different people.

In one instance, a former Scholar, who is now through college and teaching, had this to say about her observation of the parents:

I also think it's, as far as the parents go, it's some bonding time for them too. Because my mom, and [she indicates another woman] I can call her my second mom, and her [another woman] my second mom too. I've gained a lot of moms! But not only that, I see the bond that my mom has with these ladies in the room. And it's good, it's kind of like a parent group, parents helping parents. I think that's really good, I can see a bond with all the parents that are in the program because they're all involved in their kids' lives

and that's good. Most parents aren't, but they can and it's official. But not only that, it brings you guys closer, on the trips with the kids, and it's just a bond, it's kind of inseparable that you can't break.

Supporting Assertion J: Parents highly valued the social opportunities the program offers for the Scholars to interact and build relationships with positive peers.

Parents know that their children have relationships with peers that are both positive and negative. They feel that the Twenty-first Century Scholar program brings together healthy activities and more positive students. This is a combination that the parents like; they want their children to have friends who are focused on the future and on doing something valuable with their lives.

- 1) *And another thing, like we were talking about, they're around positive people. If you're here, there's a goal. You're around people who, when you get a 13 or 14 year old to come here two weeks before school to do homework or class work, you're focused. You may not think so but they're focused. They're focused. So this program puts them around positive like-minded people of their age group, which is very tough, so you've sorted out all those that may not be. When my daughter heard she couldn't be in Twenty-first Century because of our income, she was still focused. But now with my son, because now that we're in the program, we can, he can, as a male be 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.*
- 2) *He's an only child and he likes being around people and, you know, doing different things so he likes it, just to get away from mom I think (laughs). No seriously, he enjoys them. He really does.*

3) *When you start doing these things you'll be meeting other people. You'll get called out of class for different things and they'll be talking to you about things, and they'll be like "why are you doing this?" and then they will, you know, want to jump on the band wagon. Which is fine - you know, talking to everybody - but you will start meeting people with like minds and nothing helps your student like like-mindedness.*

4) *Well, it gives them a sense of belonging. They belong to this program, you know, they have a place in it. And I think that's real important, too. Especially today, there are a lot of wrong places you can belong.*

5) *I like that sense of belonging, too, because that's a need that everybody has. It's a good group to belong to.*

They value that positive interaction because they have a sense of the negative peer pressure that their children experience. The Scholars, like all young people, are surrounded with messages that run counter to the positive ones the parents want for their children. The relationships they want for their children are with peers who see the value in the Scholars program, Boy Scouts, church, and other organized programs. They also know that being a Scholar means the children will be challenged by their peers who are not participating.

1) *And that's what I was saying because his friends....they run wild.....and their parents don't care what their grades are and that has been very frustrating for me. I can't understand that mindset, and I haven't been with somebody that really wants to help their student [until this program].*

2) *Yeah, there's challenges every day because.....just like with him being a Boy Scout now he's got friends that are not Boy Scouts and they're always "Oh you don't have to*

do that... why do you have to be a Boy Scout?...what's so great about being a Boy Scout?" But, then they're always watching him to see whether he will waver.

3) There's peer pressure from kids, other students, you know, that they go to school with, friends, you know, [begins to imitate a question from a peer] "why you going to that, you know you could be doing other things out, you know, ride your bike or you know, do other things, be with us." You know, that's a big challenge for a kid that's you know, a freshman in high school. That's a lot of peer pressure, you know, why are you going to that program, why stay in school when you can do other things?

4) Peer pressure from his friends to do things that would get him into trouble, alcohol, sex; I haven't heard too much about drugs yet.

Supporting Assertion K: Scholars also appreciated the chance to connect with positive peers and to build their social skills.

The Scholars gave similar responses to their parents' comments about the benefits of the program in terms of being with positive peers, but the message was spoken even more clearly by the Scholars themselves.

1) Meeting new people. When I first joined I was intimidated by people, and I made friends and new relationships, like when I went on the college visits. I liked doing stuff with all the people. When a trip got cancelled, I was disappointed.

2) Yeah, we'd talk to each other, we'd get used to each other, and stuff like that. And tell everybody about yourself, what you want to do.

3) The ability to make new friends and understand people a little more.

4) *I think it's good because you get to meet people, like a lot of people, a lot of other kids like you.*

5) *It improves your social skills around other people.*

6) *It's really fun. You get to meet new people...so the experience is worthwhile.*

7) *Yeah, definitely because like my brother said, 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 this you can meet gobs of new people.*

Supporting Assertion L: The parents observed their children building social skills through their involvement in the program.

Relationships are developed and enhanced as the Scholars become more adept at using positive social skills. The program provides many opportunities, structured and casual, for these skills to be honed.

1) *Helping to interact with other students and not be afraid to speak, like his mother.*

2) *It has helped my granddaughter be more outgoing.*

3) *He's pretty shy, but now he's more outgoing and talks with other kids.*

The relationship theme is echoed throughout the transcripts. The emphasis differs from one group to another, but the parents, Scholars, and SCs all see relationship building as paramount to the success of the program goals and to the success of the Scholars themselves. There is strong confirmation of its importance at all levels. However, it is not easily quantifiable; there is no formula that can be applied. To assert that were these things to be in place, important relationships would be developed is not enough. It is more nuanced than that. It is personal connections at all points of contact. For instance, more activities may allow these relationships to be built, but the relationships are probably not inherent in the activities themselves. It is in the

personalities and dedication and skills of the people involved. However, again, it is also certain that the *activities* provide some of the best opportunities for relationships to flourish.

Relationships take time and personal contact, and the activities, particularly the college trips, provide the time needed. With that thought, and the knowledge that funding has been reduced, it must be said that funds are crucial for these opportunities to be provided.

Making the unknown known

This category encompasses all of the ways the Twenty-first Century Scholars program provides knowledge and insight into topics for scholars and their parents that allows them to better understand the social, physical, and cultural realities of college and college preparation. It involves the program's activities, the possibilities that are open for the families, the reality of college life made known, the information offered, and the benefits gained through participation.

As such, our second assertion stemming from this study is that **the Twenty-first Century Scholar program makes the unknown known to Scholars and their parents.**

Through participation in events sponsored by the various support sites around the state, things that are unknown become known, they become more familiar, easier to enter into and navigate, particularly as the Scholars and parents experience them. There is no substitute for the actual experience. No college brochure can show a Scholar what it will feel like to move about a campus, live in a residence hall, sit in a classroom, do his laundry, or balance her studying and social life. No set of directions can be as helpful as someone personally assisting a parent apply for financial aid. The program strives to give Scholars and their parents as many first-person experiences as possible to reduce the anxiety and make the entry and transition to college doable.

The program blends the informational aspects (how to fill out forms, who to talk to for information, how to sign up for the SAT, etc.) with the more nebulous, but perhaps more crucial

factor of the experience itself. Many of the responses spoke to *information* – the content of events – and the *experience* – how it moved the Scholars and parents from not knowing to knowing.

Within the broad assertion of making the unknown known are four subparts that help to make clear exactly what is unknown and how it is being brought to the fore with Scholars and their parents. These four areas are the opportunities and possibilities the program opens; the overwhelmingly most mentioned program activity – the college visits; the insight into college life; and how this program helps Scholars and parents to understand the elements of college life that may be particularly challenging.

Supporting Assertion A: The program opens Scholars’ and parents’ eyes to the opportunities and possibilities that exist for them.

This is one of the most pervasive attributes of the Twenty-first Century Scholar program: that it opens futures to Scholars that simply had not been in their vision before. It includes, but is more than preparation for careers that were not considered before. It puts some options within reach that did not seem possible before.

In many instances, these scholars are the first in their families to attend college. There is no “storyline” of higher education in the families. How to think about being in college – what goes on there, even the ideas of what benefits higher education bring, are all brand new to the scholars and their parents. Without role models and support from families, scholars do not see themselves as college students. The Twenty-first Century Scholar program opens up new opportunities and possibilities to whole families. Parents had these kinds of perspectives on the eye-opening quality of the program:

1) *And it opened the boy's eyes to the different kinds of opportunities that are available. It made a big difference for them and for us.*

2) *Well, helps them succeed in life. They will have a skill and a career as opposed to a job at McDonald's. (laughs) There is nothing wrong with McDonald,s but it will give them a career. They will be happy. They will have the opportunity to do something, to be trained to do something that they find enjoyable and be successful, a successful, productive member of society.*

3) *But, they enjoyed it you know, they really enjoyed it. And, that did make them think on a higher level, because they start thinking like Notre Dame, or I can be an engineer, because some people think they can't be an engineer, you know because they don't have those role models, you know, and they don't know people personally who have those titles. I can be an engineer...I can be a teacher or I can be a whatever, you know. So, it has been a good experience. They no longer talk about if you're going to college , with the help of the program its when and where you're going to go, all those options, almost an accepted thing .*

4) *And, it also gives them a chance to see the world, it lets them know that the world is bigger than [home town]. It's bigger than the schools that you're in now, but there's kids all over the world who are doing the same thing you are doing and you're seeing achievers, you're around people that are using their mind for positive things, and guess what? It's okay because you will meet up with them and you will eliminate the bad actors. They'll be there. They'll be there as adults, they'll be on the job, they'll be everywhere, but you will be able to handle it.*

5) *But you know the other thing too is, it doesn't make it seem like it's so unattainablelike it used to be.*

6) *The rites of passage, it just makes it smoother. Because it's not so much unknown territory.*

7) *And it gives them a chance to see the world, it let's them know that they world is bigger than (home town); it's bigger than (Scholar's high school).... It helps a young man say, "I do care. I do care about my future," and for a young man, that's crucial. It's crucial if you want to have a positive map for the future, you gotta give it everything possible.*

Scholars also saw the benefits of this new horizon:

1) *It has given me options. I live in a rural area and we just don't have much options there.*

2) *Basically, it opened my eyes to all the things you have to get done if you want to be successful.*

3) *I would say that it gives you hope, you know, that helps, and like I said before, the incentive to do it the right way in school, and the other things that you know through the resource center, that they offer, the different presentations. It's easier for kids in a smaller town just to see what's ahead of them, to see the bigger picture. So every opportunity they had to bring somebody in to give you a glimpse of the outside so to speak is just worth its weight in gold.*

4) *Not only would it help me to afford college, it would help me with my dream, to be able to go to college and to get an education.*

5) *It is giving me options and choices....and it also provides information on things we didn't know because nobody in my family has ever gone to college before and so I can't ask them for help on what to do, like how to fill out this form, and it is an opportunity to learn about different programs also.*

6) *It's opened me up and given me a broader view of what I can do, and just the incentive has really made me want to, want to like work hard towards a goal like that and stay in line with it and not stop.*

Once the seed of possibility has been sown, there are many questions and some fears. The program uses activities at the sites to introduce scholars and their parents to preparation for, access to, and success in college. The sites offer many activities that range from programs to prepare scholars for interviews, to build pride in their heritage, to make a difference in the world, to spend time on college campuses. Those college visits are, by far, the most mentioned when students and parents are asked about the activities they think are the most meaningful. Scholars spend time touring a campus, visiting classes and residence halls, speaking with Scholars who are students there, talking with counselors, and even staying overnight to get a taste of college life. On the way to and from the college, site coordinators and chaperones get to know the scholars and build important relationships with them. They hear what the scholars have to say about the visits and learn what fears, needs, and dreams they have.

During the focus groups both parents and Scholars were asked to name three of the best parts of the program. The college visits topped the lists in all groups. Parents had these types of responses:

1) *The school visits that we have been on have opened our eyes....it has been really helpful to have that experience. It opens doors.*

2) *It would give her tools that she would need to prepare her for college and hopefully assist her through college. She sees what living with other girls would be like. It wasn't a full college experience, because, you know, they still had counselors watching. Making sure they got up on time. But it was a lot different than being at home.*

3) *It helps them in their decision-making process to where they would like to go, and helps them in their start in life.*

Scholars had these types of responses:

1) *So I went on some of the college visits (tell me about one). Well, we got to walk on the campus, see where they live and where they eat, and where they do their laundry. We went to a couple of classes, to the library. We talked to some students. It was good.*

2) *Campus visits because you get to go to colleges that you never heard of before.*

3) *It opens things like if you wouldn't go to college then you wouldn't have gotten a great job like a doctor instead of working for a janitor or something.*

4) *You get the experience from going to a college campus. It opens up more opportunities for like less fortunate people who don't have money to go on trips and to see campuses or just going to college period.*

The college visits opened the Scholars' eyes to some of the realities of college. Parents came to rely on the program to make plain the very messages they had been saying to their children for a long time: College means responsibility! Parents had these types of responses:

1) *I wouldn't count on mine saying a whole lot of anything because he's shy. But, I think, we just went to IU on Saturday and I mean it opened up his eyes. First of all, mom was there to make sure he concentrated, but it really...when we got home I said "what did you learn today?" He said, "I learned that college costs a lot of money and that we have*

to work really hard.” Those were the two most important things that mom had been saying over and over and over again ...and the fact that it’s his responsibility. Those are the three things he learned, and again I’ve been saying those things forever.

2) It takes the responsibility and places it on them.

3) You’ve got to do this, and to do this, in order for this to happen. Without us having to monitor them so much. You get to the point where we can’t monitor – you go to elementary then middle- it’s a change. You don’t have somebody to hold your hand. You start having to be independent. You have to make the right choices. This is just another thing that makes you accountable for your choices without me having to stand over you and say, “You already know what it is you gotta do, and if you mess this up, you did this.” It’s kind of like, your consequences, right. Yeah the choices. It makes them responsible.

4) So for \$195.00 tomorrow she goes to the dorm and checks in for two weeks, and they get to go to Indianapolis Speedway, they get to meet with professors, they get practical residential life experiences, and they have evening activities, so that tour enabled us to encounter and experience a whole new opportunity.

6) It’s helped me by getting him to as many campuses as possible, because I couldn’t have done that on my own.

Supporting Assertion B: From the Scholars’ point of view, the college trips were by far the most helpful as they tried to picture themselves at college.

The experiences gave them eye-opening understanding of how it would be to go to college.

1) The college trips because normally people don’t get to go out of their area.

- 2) *You get to go to these colleges in different cities*
- 3) *Get to see the variety of schools, the colleges that are out there and the opportunity to go on to college*
- 4) *They've helped me realize what it's gonna be like in college. Now I see like all the little things my mom was telling me like pick up your clothes or put them in the hamper or make sure you wash the dishes....that this is what I'm going to be doing in 4 years....whether I'm with a roommate or not. So now I kind of get a feel for what college is gonna be like.*
- 5) *Helps you get used to being on a college campus.*
- 6) *Got to see some of the colleges I want to go to like Vincennes and a couple of other places.*
- 7) *We also learn stuff we're able to use in the future reference about what to do in college.*
- 8) *It helped me see what all colleges have to do like majors, and what campus life is like, the size.*
- 9) *Helped me to see all the careers that are out there.*

Supporting Assertion C: As parents and Scholars learn more about the program, their anxiety is eased about how college will be affordable for them.

Parents and Scholars who are beginning to consider the possibilities of college quickly come up against the most daunting of all hurdles: the cost of a higher education. It is here that the Twenty-first Century Scholar program makes what seems impossible become possible. Nearly every participant, Scholars and parents alike, talked about the financial aspect of the program.

“Relief” and “less worry” are how most of them characterize their feelings as the impact of the program on college costs is explained to them. Parents responded in these ways:

1) *Twenty-first Century gives you that key thing that you don't have to worry about. It's a big load off. I know [my son] can go to school. I know he can go to school. It's such a relief as a working person. It's a relief to know he can go to college. Because I've worked all my life you know, I've worked. And to know that the system is supporting the working class. You know there are very few systems that support the working class. Like you said, unless you're the academic achiever, which is good, you get a scholarship. But, if you're in that blue collar, in the middle and your child is a B student or maybe a B/C student, which he can still go to school and graduate from college, you know not everybody's a straight A student that goes to college. If it was, college wouldn't, you know, there wouldn't be colleges. But, that middle group there now has an opportunity to go to school.*

2) *It's true and so I think that's what the Twenty-first Century does, 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. Like I've worked all my life and I still can not send him through school no matter what; they can say I make too much money, but I can not, you know, I can't do it and, because were trying to live.*

Scholars echoed their parents' obvious relief.

1) *My mom thinks it is the best thing that ever happened to me because I can go to college. Basically, everything is given to you, you just have to work for it.*

2) *It has relieved a lot of pressure. You don't have to worry about the future as much.*

3) *Sort of a sense of relief.*

4) *My parents are just excited they don't have to worry about money for college.*

Supporting Assertion D: Scholars and parents report feelings of excitement and nervousness about the prospect of college.

There are many aspects of college that Scholars believe will be challenging, but overall, they report feeling a mix of excitement and nervousness as they anticipate attending college.

They mentioned moving out of their comfort zone, living away from home and being independent, increased academic demands, peer-related decisions, and, from the parents, safety concerns. The parents shared these kinds of responses:

1) *I think 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 at that point – getting up on time, laundry, attending classes, getting homework done and studying for tests, in addition to taking financial responsibility for herself in making sure she budgets money for living expenses and that she makes wise decisions.*

2) *My major concern is having enough money. And if she be wanting to get a job, how you gonna get a job? She have to hold down the classes and stuff, and having a job and doing classes too. That's my major concern.*

3) *Getting into the habit of studying. High school has been very easy for both of them. I think they know college classes will be harder but I don't think they realize how much more rigorous it will be. It will be an eye opener I think.*

4) *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.*

5) *Also I worry about them getting involved with the wrong crowd. I do think they will have good judgment on that...but you hear a lot of stuff you know and that is a worry, that they don't get involved in the wrong crowd.*

6) *College is such a different environment and it's very overwhelming at first especially when you're in a little tight community and then you go to this huge campus and everything.*

7) *And then with stuff going on like at Virginia tech, the possibility of something like that happening; wake up one morning and seeing the news and seeing your child's college, I'm like, definitely that worries me, yeah.*

8) *Safety and making sure that they are okay.*

9) *Her safety, if she lives on campus I will have to call her every night, she's very trusting.*

The Scholars feel excitement and nervousness too. Several of them used those exact words as they responded to questions about how they felt about looking ahead to college.

1) *Nervous and excited – times ten anything I've ever felt before. The nervous is not knowing exactly what's gonna happen.*

2) *I worry about getting good grades in college because everything – college is a lot harder.*

3) *I worry about getting a horrible roommate.*

4) *It's like you're nervous that you might, well, I know everybody will struggle probably because that is what you do in college and, but you're excited at the same time.*

5) *I think balance because I know when I first get there I kind of have the feeling, I'm kind of worried about meeting new people because like you said, I can be kind of shy*

sometimes, but once I become friends with someone then I would rather, you know, hang out with them all the time and I would rather not study.....and so I will need balance.

6) Something that kind of bothers me is that you sit there for 18 years living with your parents and most of the time in one spot, unless you move around a lot or every once in awhile, but we've been living in the same house, so when it finally comes to graduation, if I move off to college to Purdue or somewhere further away it's just gonna be really weird. I've haven't been, I've never been on my own.

7) You're losing your community. Because I'm like losing my church and I'm like losing my family and my neighbors andit's gonna be hard because you don't know anybody.

8) It's kind of like you have a sheltered life right now, when you get to college you won't have your parents there cleaning up your room you know, or cleaning up, or just there to help you with stuff you need help with.

9) And not only that but, like financially, with the stuff like that. Not that I borrow money from my parents all the time, but it's just all of those things that they tell you about.

10) Basically you have your comfort zone.

Yeah.

(lots of agreement around the table)

Yeah. I mean like our parents pay for all our clothes and like extra supplies and stuff....and all that we use our money for is like enjoyment, entertainment, whatever.

A lot of money balance, like if you have a job it's like I need to get this and this and save the rest, and that's gonna be hard.

Yeah. Because you just have to, we're going to be moving up into different responsibilities, a whole new area than what we have been.

Maybe just like the different situations you're going to have to face also....like without your parents saying "no don't do that."

Yeah. It's just like deciding you know, your parents have always been there to tell you what's right from wrong, but when you get to college you're all by yourself and won't know. You have to wing it....you have to like adjust.

It's gonna be making a schedule and remembering to put stuff down on my planner or calendar or something and then remembering to check it constantly.

11) They've helped me realize what it's gonna be like in college. Now I see like all the little things my mom was telling me, like pick up your clothes or put them in the hamper or make sure you wash the dishes....that this is what I'm going to be doing in 4 years whether I'm with a roommate or not. So now I kind of get a feel for what college is gonna be like.

12) All the stuff you hear on TV like the Duke lacrosse players who had a party and then it got too out of hand, or Michael Vick, remembering all your morals and staying true to yourself...and then bringing that to real life that you're not there to do all those things. You can have fun but be in control.

13) It's like jumping into something new. It's like you know, growing up in a small, a small community, you know everybody and everybody knows you and you have very small classes, going someplace completely new that worries me, you know if I was going to be able to make friends and all that kind of stuff.

14) *It's just that, your parents have always been there to tell you what's right from wrong. But when you go to college, you're all by yourself and won't know. You have to wing it. You have to, like, adjust.*

15) *The hardest part will be to stay focused. You stay focused and do what you're supposed to do and you'll be fine. You get distracted, which is very easy to do, and you start to fall back.*

16) *One thing that worries me a lot is, I want to be great, you know? And it's really hard to say that because when you go to college there's so many, it's so diverse, there could be anyone that's so much better than you.*

The Twenty-first Century Scholar program has as one of its main goals to open the way for more students to experience higher education. It is obviously doing this well. The Scholars and parents feel that everything the program offers increases their knowledge, their familiarity, their comfort level with the prospect of going to college. The information and the experiences, the relationships and the connections all help to make the unknown – and daunting – known – and possible.

There were a small number of responses that indicated that some Scholars were not interested in attending a traditional college, others planned to enter the military, others were considering taking some time off before deciding. There were also a few parents who thought that their children were not ready for college. It was outside the parameters of this study to investigate reasons or to explore what other options of higher education might be more appropriate and meaningful for them. It is also interesting to consider what the SCs and other site staff might be able to learn about these children that would help them provide other options for them. We see this as part of the relationship-building aspect of the program. If time and

resources were available, perhaps the site staff could help these Scholars find an avenue more suited to their interests and keep them in the pipeline of their education.

Self-enhancement

The third category of comments focus on the way the Twenty-first Century Scholars program enables Scholars to do a better job of maturing and succeeding in their endeavors and parents to do a better job of parenting. Put in more concrete terms, this is defined as self-enhancement, but within this are the concepts of hardiness for each population.

Hardiness is broadly defined as “the interaction between self and world [with regard to] commitment, control, and challenge” (Kashoba & Maddi, 1999, p. 106). Maddi (2005) further describes this concept as the manner where, “[i]n everyday life, and even when stresses mount precipitously, a hardy person remains involved with the people, things, and events of life, continues to try to influence ongoing outcomes, and learns by the resulting experiences in order to grow in capability and wisdom for the future” (p. 308). Both Scholars and parents exhibit aspects of the concept of hardiness – challenge, commitment, and control. Both groups described an attitude of viewing life as a challenge; a challenge that they are capable of facing. This attitude appears to be *a priori* to their involvement in the program. However, it is possible that the program has enhanced this aspect of their personhood. The program offers to those individuals open to the challenge the opportunity to make a commitment regarding their future – particularly in connection with the pledge. Although less prominent in the comments made by the scholars, parents displayed a belief that their actions could/would lead to positive life changes. The parents seem to model this concept of personal control for their children, particularly through advocating for their children’s needs. These concepts, taken as a whole, allow for the third assertion of this study, that **the program provides opportunities for self-**

enhancement for both parent and scholars. This outcome appears to be facilitated by the relationships built through the program and by the process of the unknown becoming known for these families.

The parents also believe that being connected to the Twenty-first Century Scholar program has helped them be better parents—through information and support. There is a quality, as stated by one parent, of “standbyness” on the part of the program, wherein program staff stand with parents to give them help. Not only does the program provide help to the parents, but it also provides crucial information on the college process to parents – information that is beneficial to parents with or without their own personal experiences with post-secondary education. The parents believe that the program allows them to guide and encourage their children more meaningfully. Parents shared these thoughts:

- 1) *The information you receive from the program, a lot of times you send your children to school and you assume that they're getting what they need. I think the parents are not aware of what's required in the college years, like going to the school, what they're short of, what they need in order to come to the schools. Getting prepared. As parents at home, you just assume the school should know. A lot of times they're not getting what they need. And I think that comes from the fact that we are involved in this program. This program in a sense empowers the parents to be active for their children, and make sure they get the right classes and everything. I think this parent program has helped them.*
- 2) *It seems like whenever we come to one of these seminars we learn something even though we don't think we're going to. We have a daughter who's a Junior in college and we both went to college, but we do....we learn something. And that's what I think is a real plus because you know you just realize ...oh there's more to learn (laughs).*

3) *When I was in school we didn't start talking about college until junior year. But, it is obvious we need to start right now, he's entering 8th grade and if we didn't; without the program I don't think I would have realized that. We would have waited until his junior year and then we would have started thinking about it.*

4) *And I would have to say resources. I mean resources, I mean, there is so, so much I did not know. I mean like I said before I just, I had no clue about college at all, you know, I just, I didn't know. I didn't know one thing, and so like I said, we're both learning a lot...and so that's what I really love. I love information, you know, even with my job, I just love it....any information that's gonna help me.*

5) *Applying for college is an overwhelming task but Twenty-first Century Scholar has been very helpful in outlining what they need to do and how to meet that goal in how to get into college*

6) *They help us to learn about things that we didn't know about, that we can go back and look on also and we can get information. So it's like us going to college and getting information also. It helps parents so we can help the student more. It's a real good program. Hands on is a lot better than reading it in a book, if you explain something hands-on, it speaks a lot for itself.*

Supporting Assertion A: Beyond the idea of information, and closely connected to the whole area of relationships, parents view the Twenty-first Century Scholar program as a collaborator with them in the parenting of their children.

1) *Because you don't let them down. Because once you hook up with a child you want to monitor their progress, so that's what I believe, that you don't let them down. You don't just say "okay, I've signed you up for a 21st Century scholarship" and that's itand*

*then you don't hear from the 21st Century people until they get ready to hit college's door. That's not a good way. I like the way 21st Century does it because you kind of monitor the children and see where their progress is, and you send letters stating that you're going to be monitoring their progress. You tell the child that their grade average has to be so and so ...like 2.0 or 4.0, and then you state there will be mentoring programs to help those that are kind of falling in the cracks, that need your help, so that's why I say this is the reason why 21st Century is one of the better college-informed scholarships because there's a lot of scholarships out there, but most times the scholarships only lean toward those who have that 4.0 or 4.2, and the rest of us that are struggling with our children to keep them on the line, we don't get that help. But, the 21st Century Scholarship it's like **you're behind us parents**, this is what we can help you with your child to achieve his goal and we won't let you down as long as we are all working together as one. And that is what a community needs, someone there to help to keep the child focused.*

2) And just like this young lady was saying about her son....she knows that he's a good boy, and that's what every mother expects, and with them having a goal like with the 21st Century thing, we know that it's not just us, the mothers, because I'm a single parent household, because their daddy is out there but he don't give a hoot. But, it's not just all that pressure on the mom to keep that male child on the straight path. Somebody else is helping by saying "okay, now you know you gotta get your education now." Because, this is what is required.

3) Yeah. That's what I mean by that. It's like having me right beside you 24/7 and, and you don't have time to waver. You know, another thing I thought of too, my children, they

need that monitoring. They, they know, they feel monitored, people are watching them, people care about whether they are successful or not and whether they go to college or not, and they'll say, "they called me to the office and"oh what was the name....somebody from this outreach building had sent a form for them to fill out. "I thought they forgot about me" But, it felt...I think it feels good that they know that someone other than the parents are monitoring them and are encouraging them and care about their future. You know they get tired of hearing it from us.

4) And then, then for my children to know that there's other people than me, just telling them the same thing that I'm telling them and they receive it. They seem to receive it better from other people sometimes than they do from me, so I'm real grateful for this place.

5) I'm a single mom and this has been an encouragement to me, giving me help and direction.

6) I know it's gotten me more involved with him, being a single parent and working and I go to school as well. It's been tough. It's been really tough, but I do think that because he has this, it does cause me to get more involved in, you know, what's going on with him in school and what have you.

Hardiness is a general construct within the psychological literature that has been found to be positively associated with many aspects of well-being. As noted earlier, it consists of three core components – challenge, commitment, and control. In this next section, we describe each component and offer how that component is reflected in the qualitative data collected from both scholars and their parents during the focus groups.

Challenge

Both parents and scholars displayed an attitude of challenge—a view that life changes are challenges that have the potential to lead to growth.

Supporting Assertion B: Scholars expressed an attitude of challenging themselves—of expecting a lot of themselves even when others may not perceive them as capable.

1) *I like math, but I am a little slow in math, but I apply myself and when I was in the 6th grade and I saw someone doing harder math, I was like “How do you do that?” I like to do complicated things, and when I watch a movie and I see someone writing on a chalkboard and it looks like Calculus, I’m like “That looks cool!” So I kept trying to do harder things in math, and I can do it. And I think 21st Century Scholars does a good job in encouraging us to do harder math.*

2) *I don’t like math but I am still trying. And you know you have to pass ISTEP and that’s cool, I keep on trying.*

3) *My counselor told me I was not good in math, 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 nothin’, well I even took summer school and passed it.*

4) *Like if you set yourself low, you may not have a good teacher, but in the honors classes, if you set your goals high and take academic honors classes, you can have better teachers.*

5) *You know if you really want something you’re gonna work for it so, I think if you really want to earn your scholarship then you can get there, just use your resources of tutors and budget your time.*

6) *There's other schools around our area that offer higher classes like, the highest we go for math is pre-calculus. (another school) goes to calculus; you can take that. At (this school) you can take that class, but other schools go up higher.*

Supporting Assertion C: Related to the idea of personal challenge is the view scholars have that they are different from their peers in their desire to challenge themselves.

1) *Sometimes I sit in math class, and math class is only like 45 minutes long, and kids are messing around, and I'm like "Isn't this a math class?" And then they wonder why we don't get our work done, and the teacher just sits down at her desk, and they totally don't care and expect us to get A's on our test*

2) *Math is my favorite subject and some kids just don't care, but I know I can do the math, and sometimes the teacher doesn't care because the kids are like sitting there and saying "I don't have time for this," but I do. I like math and English, but I got switched into an easier math class.*

3) *They switched my classes, so I was in the 1st hour math class, and all the kids were like "You are going to hate that class" because all the bad kids are in there. I hated that class because the teacher was just sitting up there talking, and you try to raise your hand and ask the teacher a question, and all the kids are like "Be quiet." So I switched back to my old math class, which was harder, and I got a B in it.*

4) *What she was saying, about a lot of people don't like math, but sooner or later they have to look at the big picture because you might be the most popular person in school but, when you get out in the real world, and you go back to your class reunion, you might look like the bum because you didn't care about math and doing well in school.*

5) *At my school we have a few students who go in there and it takes them 5 minutes to do the test because they mark all of them A. They don't care, they'd be spelling people's names, and that's it. It'd take them 5 minutes to go through the whole thing. So you know they just randomly responded, they didn't give it any thought.*

6) *...and I always worked on my grades and made sure I had a well-rounded extracurricular activities and I really looked into and educated myself on the different schools.*

Supporting Assertion D: The scholars in the focus groups also viewed themselves as different from their peers from within the Twenty-first Century Scholar program who do/did not challenge themselves and often dropped out of the program.

1) *Like, I came up to some of the kids in my school because they were supposed to be in the program, and I'm like, "You know we have a meeting tonight." They're like, "What meeting?" "21st Century Scholars" "I'm in that?" They don't even know.*

2) *Some of the children in high school think - most of them don't even know they are in the program.*

3) *Some people know they just ain't gonna go to college, so they just stop coming. [to program activities]*

4) *Well...one dropped out just because he wasn't looking to go to college; he just didn't want to do it. A couple others, they didn't really care, they were just going through the motions, but it didn't really matter to them.*

5) *You gotta keep up your grades and you gotta participate on field trips and discussions that they have for you, and lets see, people counsel you in case you fall back, and I*

always get together with the staff if I need it. Like, if you need help or can't make it, so I always keep in touch.

6) The only thing about lowering the grade standard is that people are going to be slacking off saying alright it changed from 2.0 to like 1.5, so they say alright I can slack off, I can slide with a 2.1 or something. It's not giving them something to kinda push themselves to do better. If they're having trouble they can just slack off and say hey I got a 2.1 or 2.2...a C average...you know they're still in the program but they're slacking.

Supporting Assertion E: Parents also see their children challenging themselves within and outside of the program.

1) The challenge....and it gives hope and opportunity....to better yourself.

2) Mine likes the challenge and knows that college will do that for him

3) Then you've got students, I've seen students who when I go to meetings and stuff, students that are real smart students, you can tell they smart, but they've got them in the slower class which is good to pick up, but after they get out of that class, move them to something higher. Challenge them with things. Then you won't have a lot of problems in class, a lot of problems with students. They'll know that you care about them and that they are moving up they'd be proud of themselves and the teacher'd be proud of them. But some counselors don't care and if the teachers don't care, they say I'll just sit and watch and listen.

Supporting Assertion F: Parents also encourage the process of their children facing challenges on their own—offering support but letting them handle the challenge.

1) Very positive about that because like I told him on the way over here today. He says "Mom I'm not gonna know anybody there and so I'm a little bit afraid." And you know

what I told him? I said "You know what...your mother was 40 years old when I stepped into the Ivy Tech doors and I didn't know a soul in the classroom and it was up to me to make friends and not sit there like a bump on a log." At first I observed, I observed who's doing the right thing and who's doing the wrong thing and that's how it started out because, like I told him when he gets to 9th grade there is gonna be a whole lot of people there he has never seen before and if he lets people frighten him away from his goals then he's not gonna succeed. He's gotta keep in his mind, you're not there to make friends, you're there to get an education and then move on because if somebody wants to be your friend they're gonna be your friend anyway, but if the whole classroom doesn't wanna be your friend, that's not your goal for being there. Your goal is to learn and then go on to the next grade and then the next grade and actually get out of there and say "I did it!" And that's what my goal was for him in the beginning. Like I told him the other day, I said "you know what? when you were born I prayed to the Lord just let me see his 18th birthday and then you can have me." But he said "Mom, I want you to live forever" and I said "that's not in the program because I asked God to just let me see your 18th birthday and then he can have me because I figure by that time I have taught you everything you need to know and then you are a man...and the you can make decisions for yourself and you would have already graduated from high school."

2) My worry is that my daughter, she's away on the summer enrichment program, I don't want her to get homesick and want to come back home and don't want to stay. Because once you're locked into that semester you can't just go home. So, she called when I dropped her off, it was so funny. She's the main one who said "I can't wait to get out your house, I can't wait to go far away to college." And then she called me like five times

and said “I’m kind of scared.” And I said, “Scared? What are you scared of?” and she said “I don’t know.” And I was like, “You don’t know what you scared of, but you scared?” And there was a tear in her eye, and that’s the first time I ever really saw her cry unless she’s upset. She was like, “I don’t know how it’s going to be. I don’t know if I’ll make any friends here.” I was like, “Well, you have to focus on what you’re here for. You’re here to get an education. You have to do the rest, and treat everybody the way you want to be treated. And you have rules you have to follow.” And so she called me, I gave her a prepaid phone in case she needed anything. She called me everyday. I was like “Not every day!”

3) I was the same way. I wanted to come home. I was like, “I’m taking the greyhound home!” You just have to, basically, just encourage her to stay. Just be like, “Hey, there’s gonna be times when you have to make the decision to stay away. You’re not going to be coming back home to find a career. You need to get out and get experience.” You gotta put it that way. My mom was like, “Don’t come home.” She just told me don’t come home. [This is a quote from an older sibling who was in parent focus group.]

4) She’s like, you’re out there on your own. You need to make your own decisions, you know. If you need anything, you know I’ll always be here. But you know, you’re branching out, you’re getting older. Just make the best of it. This is your life, you’re living it, not me. She just gave me a lot of encouragement, because I was the same way. My mom, when I cried, “Come back and get me, I wanna go home!” After the first year, I was like, “Man, I don’t wanna go home, I want to come back to school.” [This is a quote from an older sibling who was in parent focus group]

5) *See, I've told her, you can't ever count on being married because it might not last. You need to get a good education so you can support yourself no matter what happens. Because I won't be here forever. It's a hard lesson to learn, but you can't always count on me. I want her to go to college. I want her to do what she wants to do, but I want her to have a college education. For both my girls. And now, my youngest one sees my oldest one going here and going there, and now she wants to do it. Now she wants to get good grades, which she does anyway, but she wants to come here. Oh yeah, she wants to do all the stuff you guys do. And, see, my youngest one was always in trouble, always fighting in school, and all of sudden she's not getting in trouble no more. She's straightening up. She wants to do all the right things so she can have fun, too.*

Supporting Assertion G: Also related to challenge, parents expressed how they want more for their children than they had and the children have internalized those ideas as well.

1) *I want him to go, we have to encourage our children to go to college to get a better life than we had.*

2) *My kids want a better future than what we had. I mean they want something that they can look back on when they get to be my age and think they've accomplished something. I mean they've lived through some pretty rough times and financially and they don't want that, but even my 6th grader, she 's getting ready to go to 6th grade she's like, when can I get into the scholarship program? She knew what she wanted to do in kindergarten and she's waiting to get in, you know.*

3) *Because she wants to do something with her life, I know she does. She doesn't want to get stuck. She sees a lot of her friends that are doing nothing with their life.*

4) *They want to go to college, as much as we want them to go, they want to go just as much, they understand that this is an opportunity to go to college.*

5) *He don't want to do what I did for a living.*

6) *For her to get to see the things that I wish I could have done besides get in trouble, so for me, I like to see her broaden her mind, to see what's out there for the future and to also help her not be like her older sisters and to show her little sisters that you don't have to have the troubles, you know the things they do, they like to follow each other. They go to school, and they constantly talk about the things that they do for us like when they're with the big sisters they're like 'when should I do this? what should I not do?' so now they like, compare and that helps them come to a solution on their own and they don't come to us about it, you know what I'm saying? So I'm like I want you to get out there and see things I'm not able to see.*

Commitment

The commitment component of hardiness pertains to individuals having the ability to become significantly involved in or committed to activities in their lives.

Supporting Assertion H: Scholars and parents both identified the pledge and the scholars' commitment to the pledge as important aspects of the program that enhance scholars' ability to stay focused and to aspire.

Scholars spoke about the pledge in these ways:

1) *I think taking the pledge, you just say to yourself, I took the pledge and I'm making it. I think the pledge should not just be a pledge for the Twenty-first Century Scholars, I think it should be a pledge for everyday life because the more that you follow the things on that*

pledge, like not being an alcoholic and staying drug-free and wanting a 2.0 grade point average, you should want a 2.0 grade point average because that is better than average.

2) Also I think it's good because it makes us, you know, we're expected to keep a certain level of like, you know, moral, a certain moral level as well as an academic level. It's like you know it helps you to, you know, think about that stuff more.

3) And I have one more comment, about the pledges, when I signed that pledge card, I said, "I can do this, I already have the grades, and I can be drug-free and smoke-free." But my junior year, that all changed, that is where the pressure came around. It was one Friday night, and my friend told me "If I'm busted, I lose my scholarship; I lose my chance to go to college." So one of the reasons why I never used alcohol was because I wanted to achieve my goal more than anything, and that pledge, and the next few years, that was going to be tough, but I knew what I wanted in my future.

4) I like what you said because my freshmen year was a disaster, I ended up getting a "D" in one of my classes, and I did not understand the GPA system, and I thought I lost my fellowship, I lost my scholarship, and I went home crying, and I went to my counselor's office, and she said, "No, it is your overall GPA" and I thought I really have to buckle down now, I can't get another one of those. I have to get B's and A's to go to college, and that really does drive a lot of decisions that I made.

5) And, kind of giving us a standard and goal to keep our grades up because without our grades we won't graduate.

6) Keep us organized, and the pledge and stuff, can't smoke, can't fight, can't get arrested, and makes me do the right things.

7) *Yeah, just the financial help is nice. It is very nice and just, you know, keeping the moral obligations. There are a fair number of them. You know you aren't allowed to be caught with any drugs or anything like that in school, and so that's just another incentive to do good.*

8) *I think behavior wise, because you have to maintain good behavior and you have to keep your grades up and so, it's helped me stay focused.*

Parents had similar comments:

1) *You know one thing, like you said about missing the pledge thing. I know they have it because [my child] went through it, is that they're standing in front of people saying what they're gonna do. It's not just ,oh give me that piece of paper and I'll sign it. They're there you know what I mean? And that gives them something.*

2) *It has instilled a certain set of values, with the pledge, in what kind of conduct and what kind of person you should be*

3) *It offers positive influences keeping kids off of drugs at least getting your high school diploma.*

4) *I think the first thing, that they have to do the pledge, and when they pledge, you know, say what they're gonna do, no drinking, no smoking and all of that, they know that they have to stick to that. They also know that they have to stay on, the road I guess you'd say, because if they don't make their grades its gonna be just on them and if they don't make them, then they know they're not going to college.*

5) *I think the guideline the program sets for the students, even just makes them that much more able to see themselves be a positive adult. I can do this and this and this. So the negative aspects that would come into play here would not because they have something*

at the end to gain. They have that reward. Not just at home, they have a reward through education, and then through adult life. So we've talked and talked and talked about it, and I think it sets them up to be very positive.

6) Yes, and I know it works because my brother's wife's down here as well, and like I said he graduated in '97 and that pledge still sticks with him. His friends will ask him to do things and he's like "nope." It sticks.

7) But without that encouragement from my mom, on top of that. Sometimes parents can only say so much to a kid to encourage them, but with something else like the Scholar's pledge it's like "Hey, don't fall off track, I got to keep this 2.0, I got to stay drug free, I have to get ready to apply to a university or to a college." It just keeps her focused, all she talks about is the activities and how it's helped her become a better person and how she's learned about her culture and other people's culture. But like I said, she's like a teacup with information just running over. I love it.

8) Well, it's helped my daughter get better grades. She has something to aim for now. I mean, before the program I took her on campus when I went to college and I thought that was good enough. That wasn't good enough; that was just a starter. I took both my kids with me when I could. But, just [the SC] having them go to the college campuses, being there when [my daughter] needed someone to talk to instead of, when she won't listen to me. That's helped. And going and helping you; that was the best thing I ever did, having her go and help you at Notre Dame.

9) As well as, I think it's empowering to the child, not just- well I said the financial is really helpful for college, but that's just the background- it's empowering them to maintain, stay drug free, keep that grade point average up, so that really empowers them

and builds their self esteem, and they're earning the money. It's not just there, they're doing things to earn it.

10) *That gives them an incentive knowing that they are in the Twenty-first Century Scholars. He wants to make those good grades because he knows that he could go and do other things in life knowing this program is here for him, he knows he has to keep that grade point average up and that keeps him going.*

11) *Just getting a better job so once he graduates from high school he can look forward to having confidence in himself to get a job, because they like to have a job right after high school, even though they want to go to college they still want to have a job. And with Twenty-first Century scholarship behind them, and other parts of the program, it gives them more incentive to complete what their goal is so they can write that on their resume - I'm in the Twenty-first Century scholarship program.*

12) *The pledge and what he has to honor to stay in the program, he talks about that a lot.*

13) *I think that the fact that he signed his name, he took it seriously.*

14) *I think that it's because of the commitment on both sides, myself and the daughter also that we both committed to this thing.*

15) *With me it gave my child a chance to make a commitment and be willing to stay with that commitment; it gave me a chance that if I was willing to help her to see a better future.*

16) *I think too, what's a big help is the kids can, it gives them another reason to stand against some of the peer pressure you know and to try to do something with their life when they know kind of what's at stake, and so they try a little harder.*

Supporting Assertion I: Although parents often take the lead in enrolling scholars in the program, comments from scholars and parents suggest that there is a point where scholars must make the personal commitment to stay involved. Our sense is that this point in time is at the start of high school – what we view as a potentially sensitive period regarding persistence and attrition.

Quotes from scholars:

- 1) *I think that some fill out the application and want it, but you have to do it yourself and that will teach a skill later on in life that not everything comes right to your door, that you need initiative to push –*
- 2) *Some people care about the program and some people don't. Some people just are in the program because their parents put them in, but they need to choose to be in.*
- 3) *I thought that, because at first it was kind of like a push from your parents, but after awhile you get to high school you're not sure, so that's why they stop coming.*
- 4) *I also, I was too young. My mom signed me up for it and I think it has just opened a lot of opportunities for me.*
- 5) *I know that down the line that like if I were to opt out of Twenty-first Century Scholars, I don't wanna down the line see all my friends, senior graduation year getting ready for college and me sitting at home doing nothing. Or, I might be not be able to go to college because I wasn't able to get a sports scholarship, or maybe we didn't have the money. And I don't wanna...I don't want to feel like the last one out.*

Quotes from parents:

1) *My daughter at that time when we signed up probably didn't care too much, one way or another, it took her a while, entering high school, that is when she really did catch on. And now she really appreciates it.*

2) *But, his friends are out running wild and having fun and nobody seems to care about their grades. So that's what we struggle with, is the important part so now he's at the point where, okay in order for me to stay in this program and to help with college, and the trip to IU made him understand that, how much it's gonna cost, and they aren't going to just fork it over if he doesn't meet the requirements.*

3) *I agree with like what she said when the mail comes and they see their name on there, that makes them feel important because they say "wow somebody addressed this to me, not mom and not dad...but me." They're in that stage between 14 and maybe 13, they're in "who am I?" and when they see mail coming just special for them and it's not those little highlighter books and stuff like that, it's actual mail and they can open it and read it, because he read it to me because I was busy cooking supper, I think, and he said "Mom, this is something we gotta do," and then a little bit later mine came and it was the same.*

4) *I think this is one thing that is good about that because you can go and you make them feel important. There is nothing like for a 14 or 15 year old, they're a man, to feel his net worth, you know, I'm worth something.*

5) *I was involved with some other women, they had really encouraged me to encourage my son to go to school. And, so that was something I started with him when he was little and even through the years he let me know it was something he wants to do so, he heard about the program and got involved.*

Control

Individuals who possess the control component of hardiness believe that they can control and influence their life experiences. They seek opportunities to act and they follow through on those opportunities.

Supporting Assertion J: The control component was more apparent in the words of the parents than in the statements made by the scholars. However scholars did describe a few situations where they took action to get their needs met.

1) *I remember my freshmen year, I was in regular algebra, and I told my counselor I wanted to be in honors math classes. And she told me, "You can't do this, you are not good enough" and I told her "I want to do this." I pushed her for like a week to get into that class.*

2) *What irritates me is for every student that has pushed through that there are probably ten students who have not pushed through. And they are not here to represent them, maybe 20 students for every one who pushed through.*

Parents of scholars saw their children taking the kind of action that displayed control:

1) *I do know one thing I will say, he had a schedule the other day and he said, "You gotta go talk to my counselor because she's got a problem." I said "Why?" "Because she put me in business math. I already passed geometry so why did she put me back in business math? I can do better than that." And, I thought "cha-ching!"*

2) *My son makes friends with every politician he meets [laughs], he's even gone to the mayor's office without my permission to try and get to be an intern.*

They also appreciated the control-related aspects offered through the Twenty-first Century Scholar program:

1) *I think it sort of gives the child a feeling of being in control if they do things they're supposed to they have the control to make it, and before it's like we had no other way, we had no clue how to have a chance to go to school so it really has given our son goals to shoot for.*

2) *Offers you choices, it offers your child choices.*

The following more extended quotes all offer situations where parents worked with their children/grandchildren to advocate for their children's needs. These guardians modeled the control component of hardiness by modeling for their children the idea that we all have the ability to act in our own best interest and to get what we need in life.

1) *But I think also when it comes to math classes, especially in public schools, they're not doing what they are supposed to. And I know my daughter took honors math because I pushed her to because I thought she was going to need it because the basic math is not going to be enough. She wanted to take honors math because she knew in basic math, the kids are not even paying attention. You're not going to learn anything in that class. So she just took honors because in honors all the kids that are in the class actually want to learn. And we had trouble all through high because the better classes, the honors classes or the AP classes, I never even heard about that. They were never offered to us, they were never suggested to us. As a matter of fact, they always suggested the lower and the minimum. I always felt like we were up against the school, up against the counselors on trying to get her into the more advanced classes. The entire time that we were in high school, that was the case. I always felt like we were working against them, not with them. It was like they were not promoting the better, they were promoting the meager, the lower, the mediocre/get-by, and we all knew this was not going to be enough for college.*

So we had to fight against it. We had to demand and put our foot down and say, "You are going to put us in this class and we are gonna take this class."

2) I have a problem with the counselors. But at the high school, the principal is excellent, I like him a lot. And I now know the teachers by name, I know everyone pretty much by name, because I'm up there. But what I had to do, freshman year, I had to go up there and talk to the counselor. I think we were in her office for a good two hours, maybe three. But I had to actually plan my daughter's classes and try to gear her towards the classes that would be appropriate for her to try to get into college. Because home ec and gym, those don't count when they get ready to venture your child into college. They take those classes out and then they calculate your grad point average. So if you're not where you need to be, then you're not going to get into that college you had your heart set on. I think that is sad, too, but they had classes that she needs to graduate that they did not have on her schedule. When I went up there, and I looked at it on (unclear) and I know the lady's probably tired of me, but I want to make sure my daughter's prepared for school. My younger child, she was going to a public school and I took her out of a public school and put her in a Catholic school. And I'm sure I'm (unclear) financially for her to be there, but I think the foundation is a lot more solid because they are preparing now, and teaching and giving them skills and they can go to college. And even when I was going to high school, the kids that went to Catholic school they did exceptionally well and they were prepared, whereas, in a public school they did not push me to do better or to meet higher expectations. So when I got to middle school, I struggled and I had to take the basics rather than taking honors math because I didn't have the foundation and the fundamentals to do the type of work that they did. They are prepared.

3) *When there's an organization out there to help your child, you don't shut your mouth. You keep asking until something gets done.*

The scholars and parents in the focus groups displayed aspects of all three hardiness components, but each component emerged in a different manner. *Challenge* appeared to be a concept that was encouraged within the family system and one that the children internalized and saw as an aspect of their personhood that distinguished them from their peers. *Commitment* was enhanced by the pledge and the scholars' decision to take the pledge seriously. It may be that the pledge and the Scholar program in general fit best for children and families who come to the program prepared for the challenge—and therefore are in a better position to make the commitment. The *control* component was not as clearly indicated in the data, but did come through in terms of scholars and parents advocating for the scholar's education-related needs.

Advice

The final section of this analysis lists the suggestions and comments made by Scholars and parents for improving the marketing, the delivery, and the administration of the Twenty-first Century Scholar program.

Some of the suggestions were made in response to a question about any disappointments the parents may have had with the program. Most of the disappointments involved there not being enough spaces on a bus for a trip, or receiving the information too late to arrange family plans so that parents and Scholars could attend an activity. While many parents had nothing negative to report, these were typical responses of those who had had a problem:

1) *We got a little card saying, OK, we're going to have this party for the parents, and so hurry up and call, and when we called, they said, "We are booked up." I kept calling to*

see if there was a chance to squeeze me in because I really wanted to go. I wanted there to be more spaces.

2) Our school counselors are little informed. They're not really informed. I'm like, I ask them about the next meeting... and she goes, "I have absolutely no clue." It's sad because they're not going to get the information themselves. I come in and say, "Here's scholarship stuff and papers," and getting people signed up myself, and they're not doing that. The Twenty-first Century Scholars are, but the schools need to be more informed.

3) I don't hear anything about it, and if I do it might come in too late or by the time, they're all booked up.

Parents also made these suggestions:

1) When [my child] got this piece of paper and it told all the classes and everything, and anybody would feel confused because it's so confusing. So, I think more parent help to make them feel, because when you're talking about higher education, it's been so many years since we had it, or we didn't have it at all, that it doesn't seem attainable for us, or useless for our children. You gotta make it real for the parents.

2) Recruit the parents' involvement just as much as you recruit the children. Perhaps make the parents go through a pledging ceremony as well as their children, stating their commitment.

3) You need to emphasize that once that window of opportunity is gone, if you don't register in the 7th or 8th grade, it's over.

4) In 4th and 5th grade, in the elementary, more parents are involved when their kids are younger and they come to the school meetings, and get someone from the Scholars

program to involve them there and explain it to them, because the middle school and high school years go by fast. Make them aware.

5 Even if it could be once a month where these kids get together, brainstorm, talk about school, what are you having problems with? Something to just keep them in touch, in academics and in this social setting.

6) I wouldn't mind if there was a little financial obligation to it. Where they could do more things. I know this is free, and how wonderful is that! But to put in finances so that they would have the opportunity to be together and do more positive things and have that continued input.

7) Have a monthly mandatory meeting. Just to make them show the commitment, because in the summer time it's easy to be committed. What else have you got to do?

8) What if they implement a plan where there was a Scholar that would be coordinating Scholars at that school, and they would talk to their peers about the program. You could probably have one in middle school and one in high school, the way they could get involved. They'd rather hear it from their peers than an adult.

9) Maybe give like a heads up. I know, a lot of times if there's something going on with [another program] they send it through the mail or ask you for your email address.

Students had other suggestions about how to get the word out to students about the program.

1) Some kids say, "I'm not going to do Twenty-first Century Scholars because it is boring," and I'm like, "No, we do this and that." So I think that those of us in the Scholars program should get others to join.

- 2) *I think that they can train us as leaders and have us go and talk to our friends and others in school, like the “No Child Left behind Act.”*
- 3) *I think we should do more signing up into the 9th grade, where some of the kids that are in the program can tell others about it.*
- 4) *My mom said I should wait until I’m a freshman to start the program, that it would mean more to me.*
- 5) *I think they should start in the summer between 5th and 6th, so they got more time to think about colleges.*
- 6) *I think just how it is presented – not just like here is something else that you can do, instead of this will help you be whatever you want to be; you could be a veterinarian, and this is your ticket, this is the bridge, this is one way you can get there.*
- 7) *I think they need to emphasize that this is your ticket to get into college. If they explained it like that, I think a lot more kids would join.*
- 8) *I think if you can get a list of kids who qualify and call them up and ask them if they are aware of this scholarship.*
- 9) *Have spaghetti dinners and stuff where they present at school, and things like that.*

Conclusions and Recommendations

By and large, the data report that the Twenty-first Century Scholars program is extremely beneficial to both Scholars and parents/guardians alike. That shared, there are several recommendations that come out of this analysis that should be considered as the Twenty-first Century Scholars program is reviewed and enhanced. The recommendations below are arranged in the same order as the three broad categories of responses received from the focus group participants.

Relationships

- Hold meetings with parents from the start. We recommend that parents should first hear about the Scholars program while their children are still in elementary school. Provide information to students as is currently done, but work to build the relationships with parents from early in students' academic careers.
- Allocate more resources (funding, and through that, staffing) to the Sites for relationship-building activities.
- Realize that *time* is the key. Funds are required, but are not sufficient. Time spent with Scholars, their families, and on worthwhile activities provide the foundation for success.
- Develop mentoring programs for the most at-risk pre-college Scholars.

Making the unknown known

- Expand the college visits and informational seminars. The number of these held is beneficial, but expanding the offerings, the institutions visited, and the breadth of topics offered during seminars can only serve to aid Scholars and their parents better in the long run.
- Utilize older Scholars to speak for the program to younger Scholars. Further, involve these Scholars, and college-aged Scholars as mentors within the program.
- Use technology to give virtual tours and to speak with college Scholars about their life at college. Since technology is often an access barrier, utilizing it early on and allowing Scholars to experience the technology may assist in both recruitment and affirmation of scholars.

Self Enhancement

- Understand and capitalize on the fact that from the parents' point of view, this is a collaborative program. Generally, the parents we spoke with want to be involved and see their involvement as key to their students' success. This sentiment needs to be impressed upon parents and guardians of all scholars in an effort to get this population to college.
- Provide additional support and parenting activities for parents that are geographically accessible to those who have not been close enough to sites to participate. Too often the sites cover an area so large that it is difficult for families to travel to the support site for an event, even if the support site is in the center of the region. Involvement in the outlying areas of the regions can only serve to better inform Scholars and their parents, as well as improve the relationships between all parties.
- Intentionally develop and implement programs specifically targeted at enhancing the constructs of hardiness. Maddi (2005) points out that people with high degrees of hardiness "are likely to show directionality and progress in their own activities, turning stressful circumstances from potential disasters into opportunities for growth, development and success. They will be quite able to shoulder the danger involved in taking unavoidable risks on the path to reaching their goals" (p. 318). By assisting Scholars and their parents in the enhancement of personal hardiness, we will ensure that students will learn to self-advocate and persevere in times of challenge, will use the skills taught to them in the pre-college Scholars program to overcome obstacles and, hopefully, eventually graduate from college.

In addition, we recommend that the Twenty-first Century Scholar program study, in more depth, the issue of those Scholars who are not ready for a traditional 4-year college experience,

but might be more suited to another type of higher education experience. It falls in some ways under the category of *relationships* because we believe it will take more time to get to know students to be able to make better matches for their education goals. Making these matches and tailoring to the needs of individual students speaks to the metaphor of triage: diagnosing students' needs more specifically and providing treatment, with the treatment being pre-college experiences that target each student's needs.

The voices and perspectives included in this analysis suggest future direction and considerations for the pre-college outreach and support provided to Twenty-first Century Scholars and their families. Collected through and derived from rigorous qualitative research, these voices have yielded suggestions that must be considered and, in many cases heeded. In addition to giving agency to the more than two hundred participants in this study, acting on the recommendations found in this document would also have a positive impact on the lives of tens of thousands of students and families who take part in the Scholars program each year. Ultimately, these changes would positively affect the quality of life in the state and nation of which these students and families are a part – thus allowing the Twenty-first Century Scholars program to surpass the mission envisioned for it by its early creators.

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Appendix A

Protocol for Online Twenty-first Century Scholar Site Coordinators

Protocol for the Online Survey of Twenty-first Century Scholar Site Coordinators

Thank you for taking a few minutes to answer these questions about your Twenty-first Century Scholar Support Site! Your responses are very important because you are the expert on your site's services, successes, and challenges. You may answer in as much detail as you choose. The information will be blended so that individual sites will not be identified.

1. What services, if any, does your site provide that target the early financial aid awareness of the Scholars?
2. What services, if any, does your site provide that target Scholars' access to rigorous coursework?
3. What services, if any, does your site provide that target increasing the number of Scholars who take the SAT or the ACT?
4. What services, if any, does your site provide that target improving the Scholars' knowledge of the college selection and admission process?
5. What services, if any, does your site provide that target getting the Scholars' parents involved?
6. What other services does your site provide that have not been mentioned in the previous five questions?
7. What services do you believe are most connected to the Scholars staying in the program?
8. What are the three services most frequently used by the Scholars at your site?
9. What are the three services most frequently used by the Scholars' parents at your site?
10. Which services at your site do you believe are the most effective in fostering access to higher education for your Scholars?
11. What services at your site do you believe are most effective in fostering success (e.g., higher grades, retention, graduation) in higher education for your Scholars?
12. How have funding cut-backs affected the services at your site?
13. Where do you think Scholars are getting support outside of the Twenty-first Century Scholars program?
14. What do you believe are the reasons why some Scholars drop out of the program?
15. What do you wish Scholars would understand about the Twenty-first Century Scholars program?
16. What do you wish parents would understand about the Twenty-first Century Scholars Program?
17. Who else needs to have a better understanding about the Twenty-first Century Scholars program?
18. If unlimited funds were available, what services would you like to offer to the Scholars?
19. What do you believe your suggestions would provide to the Scholars that you currently do not provide?
20. What else would you like to say about the services your site provides to the Scholars?

Appendix B

Protocol for Focus Groups with Twenty-first Century Scholars

Protocol for Focus Groups with Twenty-first Century Scholars

I. Opening Questions about the program:

1. What made you decide to join the TfCS program?
2. What did you think it would do for you?
3. Tell me about some ways it has helped you.
4. Tell me about some ways it has disappointed you.
5. What do your parents think of the TfCS program?

II. Questions about activities and participation:

6. Tell me about the activities you have taken part in.
7. How has (that activity) helped you?
8. What are some of the activities you know about, but have not taken part in? Why not?
9. Have your parents taken part in any of the TfCS activities? Which ones?
10. What have they said about the activities?

III. Questions about plans for the future:

11. What do you plan to do after high school?
12. What would you like to do when you are an adult (what kind of work)?
13. What are you doing now to make those plans come true?

IV. Questions about high school (for those in high school)

14. What math classes have you taken in high school? Did you want to take math classes that was harder than these? Why or why not?
15. Do you think that you have been able to get into your Core 40 courses pretty easily? Why or why not?

V. Questions about college:

16. Where have you gotten information about college?
17. How do you feel about going to college?
18. What do you think will be hard about college?
19. What worries you most about going to college?
20. Who can you talk to now to find out what college will be like?

VI. Questions about being a TfCScholar:

21. Why are you still a TfC scholar?
22. Is it hard to meet the TfCS requirements? Which ones? Why do you think it is hard?
23. Do you know someone who dropped out? Why do you think he/she dropped out?
24. What are the best three things the TfCS program has done for you?

VII. Closing question:

25. What would you suggest we do to make the TfCS program better for you?
26. What else would you like to say about the program?

Appendix C

Protocol for Focus Groups with Parents/Guardians of Twenty-first Century Scholars

Protocol for Focus Groups with Parents/Guardians of Twenty-first Century Scholars

- I. Opening Questions
 1. Why do you think your child decided to join the TCS program?
 2. What did you think it would do for your child?
 3. Tell me about some ways you believe it has helped your child.
 4. Tell me about some ways it has helped you.
 5. Tell me about some ways it has disappointed you.
 6. What does your child say about the TCS program?
- II. Activity Questions:
 7. Tell me about the activities you have taken part in.
 8. How has (that activity) helped you?
 9. What are some of the activities you know about, but have not taken part in? Why not?
 10. Which activities has your child taken part in? What did she/he say about the activity?
- III. High School/Core 40 Questions
 11. Did you think your child had adequate access to Core 40 classes and higher level math courses at his/her high school? Why or why not?
- IV. After High School Questions:
 12. What do you think your child plans to do after high school?
 13. What is your child doing now to make those plans come true?
- V. College Questions:
 14. How do you feel about your child going to college?
 15. What do you think will be hard about college for your child?
 16. What worries you most about your child going to college?
 17. Who can you talk to now to find out what college will be like?
 18. Where have you gotten information about college?
- VI. Persistence Questions:
 19. Why do you think your child is still a TC scholar?
 20. What are the challenges in meeting the TCS requirements?
 21. Do you know someone who dropped out of the program? Why do you think he/she dropped out?
- VII. Final Questions:
 22. What are the three best things about the TCS program?
 23. What would you suggest we do to make the TCS program better?