



Educational Roundtables: Nov. 10th, 2010

Summary Whitepapers

Note: There were three roundtables held on Nov. 10th, 2010 at Southern Vermont College, led by Greg Darnieder, Senior Advisor to US Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan.

Roundtable One was attended by high school guidance counselors and organizations advising students interested in college. Roundtable Two was attended by schools and organizations providing programming to foster college progression. Roundtable Three was attended by college personnel with programs addressing vulnerable student success.

For each roundtable, a summary whitepaper has been prepared. Each whitepaper reflects the issues/problems/challenges first and then some suggested solutions/ approaches/remedies. Attendees at the roundtables appear as an appendix to whitepapers.



ROUNDTABLE ONE: Challenges of High School Guidance Counselors

The Key Identified Problems

- Counselors have many job responsibilities, in addition to college guidance counseling. This multi-tasking takes time away from student/family advising;
- Increased use of high schools as the location to address non-academic issues students confront (including family issues, personal issues);
- The level of vulnerable student need is high, and these students face a set of complex family and psycho-social issues (which accounts, in part, for why Thanksgiving holiday in the first year of college is so difficult for students when they return home);
- Vulnerable students with academic potential avoid higher level courses because they sense that they “do not fit in”;
- Parental lack of involvement and discomfort with colleges and college finances, including a fear of the cost of higher education (i.e. those of participate in programs offered can be those least in need of the content offered);
- Lack of advocacy skills among lower income students and their families, particularly as relates to college admissions process and financial aid options/opportunities; and
- Excessive paperwork and complexity of information across the college access continuum, including the difficulty of FAFSA access and completion and locating and completing information for other grant opportunities.

The Key Identified Solutions

- More adult time with students (whether counselors, teachers, mentors);
- Improved understanding (plus eradication of misunderstandings) and increased use of “dual enrollment,” including transportation and scheduling improvements;
- Collegiate offering of summer bridge programming, geared to shore up academic weaknesses (particularly in mathematics) and develop collegiate navigational skills;
- Increased access to college campuses by vulnerable students and their families (i.e. maximize use of Open Houses and student and/or on campus programming), including fiscal support for transportation and oversight;
- Identify more family savings mechanisms (starting in kindergarten);

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- Simplify the college admissions and financial aid process, including through use of existing government databases;
- Consider improved treatment of older loans for students returning to college, otherwise return to college is or appears to be fiscally unfeasible; and
- Development of alternative financial aid models through the private sector that adapt the micro-lending approaches, designed to enable vulnerable students to pay for college and the accompanying costs (transportation, books, entertainment), including a recognition that some student dollars earned contribute to their family's financial capacity.



ROUNDTABLE TWO: High School Programs to Support College Progression

The Key Identified Problems

- Poverty, especially in rural areas, is a significant obstacle to aspiration;
- Lack of time and geography are impediments to making resources and programs available to all of our students, especially rural students;
- The curricular misalignment (from elementary school to middle school, from middle school to high school, and from high school to college) is an obstacle to achievement;
- The lack of high school foundational preparation prevents students from progressing in their educational journeys;
- A narrow perspective about the value of higher education is an obstacle to inspiring youth to aspire for more education;
- A lack of readiness for programs that are developmentally prepared is an obstacle to achievement; and
- There is a disconnect (a lack of accurate information about) between what is available to help students develop appropriate skills in high school as well as how to access those resources; and

The Key Identified Solutions

- Alignment of curriculums K-College (perhaps have academies in K-12 to match divisions in college);
- Improve understanding and make readily available dual enrollment programs between secondary schools and higher education institutions;
- Disseminate timely, clear, accurate information about resources and programs;
- Offer monetary assistance so that all tenth graders may take the PSAT;
- Develop a longitudinal data system that identifies educational problems and that offers all the resources available to solve these problems;
- Develop a way to navigate the time and geography issues preventing students from accessing resources and entering educational programs; and
- Cultivate leadership to bring about all of the above.



ROUNDTABLE THREE: Colleges Programs to Support Student Success

The Key Identified Problems

- Retention of first-generation students in college is an obstacle to developing an educated workforce;
- Mathematics and writing skills are inadequate for many vulnerable students, keeping them from entering collegiate programs that are better paying and more rewarding;
- There is a pedagogy of despair that pervades the classrooms for vulnerable students;
- There are precious few programs aimed specifically at retaining vulnerable students;
- The final year of high school is sometimes perceived as “a wasted year,” one that works against intellectual curiosity in college; and
- There is a lack of cultivation of creativity, risk-taking, and new learning initiatives.

The Key Identified Solutions

- More programs, like TRiO and AVID, need to be developed, which are aimed at vulnerable students;
- Develop bridge programs so that high school seniors can be preparing themselves for higher education while in their final year of high school;
- Develop a seamless curriculum, as in the CUNY system, K-College, especially high school to college;
- Have more timely, clear, accurate communication with parents and families about programs available for student success when they get to college;
- Foster one-on-one relationships with students by faculty and staff are critical for connecting a student to the institution;
- Opportunities for student engagement in the life of the campus additionally promotes student retention;
- Celebrate often faculty and student risk-taking, creativity, and novelty in teaching and learning; and
- Promote a pedagogy of trust and affection so that students will see learning as natural and logical and part of our country’s future design.