From Access to Opportunity

IMPROVING RETENTION IN LOW INCOME STUDENTS
Alana Wiens – FESP
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The challenge for low-income students

Graduation Rates by Family Income and Test Scores

From the Lumina Foundation
Approaches

- Individual
- Program
- College
Who are your students?

- Identify who your population is?
- Redefine the concept of the learner
  - Non-traditional to Traditional
- Removing the stigma
- Removing assumptions and biases
Holistic Advising
Advise, Educate, Advocate

- Advise
  - Treat every student as if they need guidance on navigating college
  - Content and direction, not length
  - Communication

- Advocate
  - Ask them what they need to succeed?
  - Role Play
  - Explore ways they can become involved on campus
Educate

- Identify campus supports before they need them
- Discuss Program expectations
  - Demystify!
- "Think for the student"
- Financial Aid
- Summarize and check in
Tap into both visible and invisible strengths

- Strengths Assessment
  Example
Identify Your Champions and Cheerleaders

- Informal vs Formal departmental relationships
Program
FESP

CARMEN MEDINA
Program – Building for Student Success

FESP – FAMILY ECONOMIC SECURITY PROGRAM
FESP Model

Retreats

Community Events

Coaches

Career

Academic

Financial

Life
FESP Success

- 50 students in first year
- Growing to 400 over 4 years
- 97% Student Success Rate in the first year
- Monthly Achievement & Financial Coach meetings
- Using proactive coaching model
- Flexibility

- Retreats for professional development & community building
- Personal connections
- Non-Judgemental/Blank face
- Navigation of HCC
- Financial Partnership with FCCF Fund for Women & Girls
Placed in the correct location/department in the College:

Report to someone who is flexible:

Supervisors who have the **Mission-Vision**
FESP – Family Economic Security Program

Student Success

Coaching
Build Relationships with others on Campus (Rice & Beans) — Team Work/Liaison/Referral Service - realizing their importance in your success

- I.T. /Computer Dept Staff/Maintenance
- Staff/Administration
- Security Dept./Faculty
- Be a Liaison – Teach Others - Refer others to other depts.
College

ALANA WIENS
Strategies for College Wide Change

Data
- Do you know your students?
- Do you know the scope of the achievement gap?
- Do you know students’ immediate need?
- Do you know key gateways to success?
Find Allies in Administration

- Administration
- Foundation
- Community
Scholarships/Grants

- How are you using scholarship money?
- Does the application process create barriers?
- Have you moved beyond traditional scholarships?
- Do you have emergency funding?
What does your college look like through their eyes?
Are there unseen barriers?
Are there unspoken assumptions?
Do your processes work for working students?
Does your jargon exclude 1st gen students?
Opt-Out vs. Opt-In

- Do students need to ask for services?
- Do your services carry a stigma?
- How do you move to an opt-in model?
Community Partnerships

- Bringing services on campus
- Benefit screening on campus
- Financial coaching on campus
- Which organizations would like to be on your campus?
- Can you co-apply for grants?
- Who do you already know?
Culture

- Remove isolation
- Normalize economic diversity
How is your campus doing??
Group Activity

- Find groups of 3-4 (preferably from your own campus)
- Look through the following questions from Lumina Foundation’s Beyond Financial Aid self-assessment
- Find the full document at www.luminafoundation.org/beyond-financial-aid
Self-Assessment

- My institution has identified the number of low-income students and knows their completion rate in relation to the total college population.
- My institution uses financial aid information to pre-screen for benefits (ex. SNAP)
- My institution tracks how many hours our low-income students are working while enrolled.
Providing Supports

- My institution provides assistance to connect students with public benefits.
- My institution provides or partners to provide low-cost or no-cost child care for low-income students.
- My institutions provides financial counseling/coaching services to students.
- My institution provides services at times that are accessible to working students.
Empowering students

- Students at my institution consider financial assistance to complete their education goals to be a normal and widespread benefit for all students.

- Students at my institution understand the full cost of attending the institution and the different ways to pay for it, including the differences between loans, grants, and scholarships.
My institution has a visual document to show students the steps needed to enter and navigate student services that is stripped of jargon and assumptions.

My institution provides information and education to faculty and student services staff to ensure that all campus stakeholders understand the circumstances and challenges faced by low-income students.
Strengthen Academic Progress

- My institution works with all incoming students to match their interests and skills to potential careers.
- My institution has an early alert system that allows faculty to communicate concerns in the first few weeks of each semester.
- My institution provides robust and targeted job search/placement services for students nearing the end of their program.
The Big Picture

In which areas does your institution need to improve?

Where are you succeeding (and how do you know)?

What are your take aways from this workshop?

Why is improving the educational experience and outcome of low-income students important to your institution?
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