

TEAM ON DEVELOPING EARLY OUTREACH
PROGRAMS
TO
STUDENTS IN AT-RISK SITUATIONS --
AND THEIR PARENTS --
TO GET READY FOR COLLEGE

RECOMMENDATIONS AND
IMPLEMENTATION

MARTHA T. NESBITT, CHAIR
JULY 12, 2007

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION ONE:

Each institution that does not already have one should establish a middle school council whose focus is reaching at-risk middle school students. This Council would include representatives from colleges or universities, middle schools, and community agencies, (e.g. Boys and Girls Clubs). The council would determine the most effective methods of reaching students and their parents

Issues That These Councils Should Address:

Mentor Programs:

- Interest in mentor programs if such are not currently in place; annual review of continuing assessment and changing needs for such programs if in place.
- Identification by partner middle school(s) of conditions for mentor programs (assumed continuity of participants for at least one year, longer if possible, with mentees; any needs for mentor background checks consistent with System requirements for individuals working in schools, program expectations for participants, (e.g. academic tutoring, non-curriculum interactions, and/or other academic support services). What, if any reporting requirements would be placed on mentors, and thus on USG institutions for specific interactions?
- Based on the identification of program conditions, the USG institutions would identify budget requirements for such programs to initiate and maintain tutoring activities.
- Each USG institutional program, together with partner schools, will develop an assessment strategy for mentor programs. Key indicators to review over time might include:
 - a. number of participants
 - b. academic record of participants, including attendance records and grades (aggregate data reporting might be sufficient);
 - c. specific interventions initiated by school or USG institution participants, and other measures to determine what, if any impact, mentoring will have on USG student academic performances;
 - d. comparative aggregate data between participants and non-participants based on possible measures as grades, retention, college going behaviors over time in systems with mentor programs.

Parental Involvement:

- Parental involvement is the most critical component of a successful middle school program. Parents are expected to support their middle school child and the school program. They should not be expected to teach their child. Too many times, they are put in this position when homework is assigned to the student cannot do independently. To support their child and the school program, they can
 - a. Encourage their child to be an active learner
 - b. Show interest in their child's learning
 - c. Support, expect and encourage their child to work to the best of his/her ability
 - d. Be an active parent in school activities and support school programs.
- Universities should offer expertise and resources in the development of effective parent programs in the middle schools. Any university involvement must be developed with the school principal, the middle school council and any already established parent group. Some university resources might be:
 - a. How to parent a middle school child
 - b. How to support your middle school child in doing homework
 - c. Planning for higher education and careers

Professional Development For Middle School Teachers:

- Professional development opportunities should be developed collaboratively among members of each Middle School Council. Additionally, a protocol should be developed to allow requests for professional development activities not included in the array to be provided.
- Several axioms must be followed in the development of the array and procedures for selection of additional professional development activities:
 - a. Care must be taken to ensure that the practices developed have sound empirical support; that is, the practices offered must be evidence based.
 - b. Professional development offerings must be sustained; evidence is clear that "one-shot" in-service activities results in few positive outcomes.

The Task Force will make available the report of current middle school activities to all institutions. This report can provide ideas as well as contacts as institutions seek more effective means to reach at-risk students in our middle school.

Institutional accountability should become embedded in the annual Presidential Evaluations.

Implementation FY 08 Funding Sources: Grants, new funding either through reallocation or private sources.

RECOMMENDATION TWO:

FY08 To promote awareness of college accessibility, all institutions should include an open house for middle school students and their parents at least annually.

Funding Sources: Redirected funding.

RECOMMENDATION THREE:

FY08 The System Office should take the lead in providing a common bi-lingual poster to be distributed by the institutions to the middle schools in their area. The USG Foundation would identify a corporate sponsor for this campaign. This awareness campaign should include coordination among various state agencies to avoid unnecessary duplication and even confusion.

Funding Sources: Corporate or System Foundation funding.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR:

FY09 The University System makes a commitment to long-term funding to assure continuing programming. (A recurring theme among the middle school responses was the frustration of programs that come and go). The University System should allocate a minimum of \$1,000,000 annually to provide up to 50% match for institutions doing in-depth intervention programs (with a cap of \$50,000). Institutions would have to apply and include accountability measures. A committee would be named to develop guidelines for funding and accountability.

Funding Sources: New money. The match from institutions would come from the private sector.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Task Force recognizes the essential element of accountability and would require each program implemented to include an assessment of effectiveness.

We recommend that each institution begin implementing these actions in the 2007-08 academic year. For some, this will be more of a planning year to assure funding and well-thought-out activities in conjunction with their Middle School Councils. For others, it will be a year to continue and expand activities already in place. This planning year will also provide the University System to include sustained funding to implement the important task of reaching at-risk middle school students.

Institutional accountability should become embedded in the annual Presidential Evaluations.

The Task Force will make available the report of current middle school activities to all institutions. This report can provide ideas as well as contacts as institutions seek more effective means to reach at-risk students in our middle school.