

Dates of Activity: October 2008 – December 2008
Seed Grant: Developing a College Going Culture in the San Joaquin Valley
Grantee Organization: Central Valley Higher Education Consortium
California State University, Fresno
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Project Summary:

Central Valley Higher Education Consortium (CVHEC) will report on the progress in meeting each objective listed in the Scope of Work approved by the California Business, Transportation and Housing Agency and the California State University, Fresno Foundation as stated in the contract.

CVHEC 2009 Q6 Benchmarks

- Initiative discussions with interested partners
- Ongoing operation of The College Place: A Community-Based College Access Center
- Outcomes: 375 new outreach contacts; 244 Center contacts

Our assessment of whether the funded work is on track to meet expected outcomes:

CVHEC has made progress in each of the benchmarks previously described.

Description of 2009 Q6 Activity

Benchmark 1: Initiate Discussions with Interested Partners

CVHEC staff remained in contact with the satellite centers in the following locations and provided an in-service on The College Place:

Coalinga Library	Merced Library	Springville Public Library
Huron Library	Modesto Library	Tulare Public Library
Madera Ranchos Library	Porterville Public Library	
Mendota Library	Reedley Library	

Benchmark 2: Ongoing Operation of Center

The College Place hours of operation are Monday through Thursday 2:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Our services:

1. Intake/interview
2. Needs assessment (clients interest, e.g., certificate program, AA degree, BA/BS degree, clients' potential for college success)
3. Aptitude and interest inventories
4. Review of student education plan. A computerized tracking procedure that tracks all A-G college prep courses, high school exit exam, and course grades. This helps the coaches determine exactly where they currently are and how best to proceed.
5. Researching colleges and universities online
6. Financial aid assistance
7. Career planning: ACT PLAN or STRONG Assessment
8. Setting up appointments with admission directors and/or referral to college open house and outreach events

Technology is used in a variety of ways

- College and career Web sites
- Interactive Web sites, such as Mymajors.com
- Setting vocational training and higher education goals as well as:
 - Exploring interests
 - Creating a college-going plan
 - Degree/major exploration
 - Scholarship exploration
 - Reviewing housing options
 - Locating the Guide to Central Valley Colleges and Universities
 - Financing a college education

At The College Place, CVHEC uses a coaching model/philosophy endorsed by the Harvard School of Business to produce "behavioral change and growth in the clients." "We believe that coaching leads to behavioral change," Harvard Business, Online, December 2004.

We have engaged in the following activities this quarter:

- College Career Fair
- Outreach to local high schools and presentations
- Gained referrals from the workforce connection program
- Sent out a newsletter promoting The College Place to local youth community centers

Benchmark 3: Center Contacts

Methods

375 contacts were made in person; using www.MySpace.com/thecollegeplace; e-mentoring contacts.

244 in-person contacts were made via appointments; walk-in intake forms from all of The College Place respondents were entered into an Access database and later analyzed using SPSS analytical software. Graphs were generated using Microsoft Excel. This report includes findings for select variables of interest.

Demographic data

A number of people visit The College Place (TCP) activities and events and can include current students, advisors, parents, interested family members, or people that have been out of school for some time but are presently considering going back to college. The mean age for TCP respondents was 23.9 years, with the youngest being 12 years old and the oldest 88. Preliminary analysis shows that 58.6% of students participating in the program are female and 41.4% male.

Minority students comprise an overwhelming majority of this sample (80.3%). Half of the 233 respondents chose Hispanic/Latino (54.1%) as their ethnic background, followed by African American (17.2%), White/Caucasian (15.9%), Asian (8.6%), mixed race (2.6%), and a couple of Native American and Indian students. Of the 175 TCP respondents who documented their primary language at home, 85.7% speak English as their primary language, with 6.7% of those speaking English as primary and either Hmong, American Sign Language, Navajo or Spanish as a secondary language. Less than 10% speak Spanish as their primary language. A smaller portion of people receiving TCP services speak Southeast Asian languages (Hmong, Laotian).

Place of birth and Residence

Place of birth data was available for 130 TCP respondents (Table 1). Of those, more than three-fourths were born in California. Of the 64.6% born in the Central Valley, 78.6% were born in Fresno. 16 percent of respondents indicated they were born out of state and 7.7% outside the U.S. in countries such as Mexico, Philippines, and Thailand.

Nearly all of the TCP participants for whom city of residence data were available reside in the Central Valley. More than 90% reside in Fresno and Clovis, cities closest to The College Place offices, while others live in surrounding communities such as Del Rey, Kerman, Madera, Orosi, Parlier, Pinedale, Riverdale, Sanger, Selma, and Tulare.

Education

Of the 175 TCP respondents who identified a previous school on the intake form, they attended schools all over the Central Valley from as far north as Merced to the south of Kerman, and as far south as San Diego. Data will be categorized into regions in future reports. Detailed educational level attained was documented for 138 of the respondents. Nearly 85% of the respondents were in high school at the time of intake. Of those, 60.9% were in the 11th and 12th grades. Less than 10% had achieved a high school diploma or its equivalent. A couple of the questions on the intake form assessed the parents' educational level; all of the TCP respondents answered them. 10.2% of respondents' mothers attended college, 7.4% of fathers.

Challenges/Feedback

In the beginning of implementation, CVHEC had to overcome the following challenges:

1. The lack **of follow-through by the family** is one of the most challenging issues we face. We need to encourage the parents to have their child select a college-going mindset and then take the necessary coursework to accomplish their goal. We attempt to do this in the very first contact; however, many of our families have no college-going experience and often view college as a luxury, rather than a necessity. A common mindset that we have to overcome is that college is not affordable. Parents tend to overestimate the cost of college tuition three times over. Therefore, we encourage coaches to be assertive about conducting follow-up with each individual visitor within two weeks of contact.

2. Overcoming territory issues within CVHEC institutions. We have had to work very hard to demonstrate that collaborating on The College Place will benefit all of our colleges and universities; but more importantly change the economic climate of our region. Inviting University of California and other CVHEC representatives to participate on the advisory committee has helped alleviate competition and provide a greater amount of in-kind support to The College Place. To further unite the colleges and universities in this effort, we have launched a view book: Guide to Valley Colleges and Universities. This project is endorsed by the CEOs of the colleges and universities and will be placed on www.collegenext.org, the CVHEC Web site as well as advertised through The College Place Web site.
3. Training interns. They are only employed for a semester at a time; they complete their training hours then move on. We hired a faculty member to supervise the interns. Dr. Albert Valencia spends 10-12 hours per week onsite with the interns. He has utilized counseling standards through the California State University, Fresno, practicum. Student interns are completing their training hours at The College Place and are all master's level students. As a result, our training component has been strengthened.
4. Maintaining relationships with Fresno Unified School District, the colleges, Workforce Connection, and community agencies. We have established an advisory board which meets quarterly. The board has expanded to include Natalie Culver-Dockins, Dean of Workforce at Fresno City College. This addition has helped to maintain relationships at the Manchester Educational Resource Center and Fresno City College staff.
5. Continued funding and support. The seed grant has ended. We have continued support from the City of Fresno through June. We are currently writing two education grants in an effort to maintain and expand our efforts. We have an interest in conducting outreach into high schools. We will need more funding to provide these types of services and to continue the stipends we are providing interns.

Other: Description of any new partners or funders that have joined your work

CVHEC has secured an additional \$50,000 from Walter S. Johnson Foundation

Planned Activities for next 3-6 months

1. Marketing. We are working with two local radio stations to air public service announcements (PSAs) to promote The College Place. They will begin airing the PSAs sometime in February 2009.
2. Completion of the Central Valley Higher Education Consortium Viewbook will be at The College Place and placed online at www.collegenext.org. It will display and promote all the colleges and universities in the Central Valley.
3. Completion of two grants: *Both grants will be to support The College Place.*
 - a. High School Equivalency Program Grant
 - b. Indian Education Center Grant
4. Keeping in touch with the satellite centers, ensuring they have the resources they need to promote higher education in the Central Valley.

A full report with diagrams will be placed online on the Higher Education and Workforce Development Web page on the Partnership's Web site.