

Coordinating the College Readiness Pipeline to Increase Access and Enrollment of Socio-Economically Challenged and Traditionally Under-Resourced Students at Rutgers University–New Brunswick

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Abstract:

Having a centralized funnel and clearly identifiable coordination among pre-college programs that are designed to feed qualified prospective students into our applicant pool for undergraduate admissions consideration at Rutgers University–New Brunswick can significantly improve outcomes. Currently, each pre-college program operates in a silo as its own separate entity that minimizes the overall impact on recruitment and outreach, limits the effectiveness of communications and marketing strategies directed at this targeted at-risk population, stifles the identification of this special population in the application review process, and consequentially reduces the likelihood to successfully yield this at-risk population for enrollment to ultimately matriculate at Rutgers through an access program like NJ Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) and/or Student Support Services. Pre-college programs like GEAR UP & College Bound, TRiO, Upward Bound, and Talent Search are governed by federal legislative guidelines, so statutory requirements and compliance must be maintained to engage with these programs. Cooperman Scholars and Price Family Fellows are governed by their foundation’s Board of Directors along with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Rutgers Future Scholars and Posse are cohort programs that have organizational alignment and delivery of services integrated within the internal Rutgers University structure.

Primary Stakeholders:

- Pre-College Programs, Participants, Parents, & Advocates
- Federal/State Government Agencies & Foundation Boards
- Division of Enrollment Management – Undergraduate Admissions & Financial Aid
- Office of VP for Undergraduate Education – EOF Program Offices
- Office of VP for University Academic Affairs – Educational Equity & Excellence Collaborative (E3C)
- Division of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement – Student Support Services
- University Enrollment Service (UES) & Office of Information Technology (OIT)

Key Steps/Activities:

Successful Coordination of College Readiness Pipeline will be evidenced when we:

- Form the Project Committee inviting members from designated Rutgers–New Brunswick departments/units as stakeholders for decision making on proposed project
- Determine the effectiveness of existing model designed to support college pipeline programs given our Rutgers structure & create/modify an implementation strategy
- Gauge interest and engagement from all key stakeholders for consensus to move forward with proposed project

Effectiveness Measures:

- Project Committee feedback surveys to assess level of buy-in and amount of engagement activity
- Database metrics to analyze number & percentage of college readiness pipeline program participants from prospective applicant to admission/enrollment at undergraduate schools within Rutgers–New Brunswick
- Track email open rates and website/webpage/social media clicks, comments, posts, and content shares to ascertain engagement in the electronic environment of all stakeholders and parties involved

Communication/Engagement:

Cooperation, collaboration, and coordination in tandem with time, talents, and treasury are essential components for a functional communications and engagement plan. As such we will:

- Schedule regular Project Committee meetings with a set agenda, record actions taken, and share minutes
- Articulate the need for human resource capital (staffing), financial resource capital (money), technological resource capital (websites/webpages/social media), etc. to establish viability of the project for forward movement

Proposed Timeline:

- Summer 2023 – Form Project Committee, Assess Needs
- Fall 2023/Spring 2024 – Research existing pipeline structure and analyze survey feedback data
- Summer 2024 - Develop/Upgrade a centralized website/online presence and communications stream
- Fall 2024 Design and Implement Project Strategic Plan

Current Status/Future Directions:

This proposed project is in the pre-approval state. Currently, there is no particular line item nor University budgeted funds that I am aware of to support a Rutgers-New Brunswick staff position that serves in unified capacity for **“Coordinating the College Readiness Pipeline to Increase Access and Enrollment of Socio-Economically Challenged and Traditionally Under-Resourced Students at Rutgers University – New Brunswick.”** We envision that by forming the Project Committee, efforts will be made, ideas will be vetted, recommendations will be explored, and opportunities will be presented to possibly bring this project to fruition if it serves the greater good and is in the best interest of all key stakeholders.