

**STATE OF ILLINOIS  
ILLINOIS BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVE PRACTICES**

**Supplement to the June 2006  
Report to the Governor and General Assembly  
on Underrepresented Groups in Illinois Higher Education**

**June 2006**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Chicago State University</b>	
Psychology Program Intensive Advising Project .....	1
<b>Eastern Illinois University</b>	
Recruitment and Retention .....	3
<b>Governors State University</b>	
Title V Cooperative Grant .....	4
<b>Illinois State University</b>	
Office of Disability Concerns.....	5
<b>Northeastern Illinois University</b>	
McNair Scholars Program.....	7
<b>Northern Illinois University</b>	
College of Engineering and Engineering Technology .....	10
<b>Southern Illinois University Carbondale</b>	
Task Force on the Retention of African American Males .....	11
<b>Southern Illinois University Edwardsville</b>	
Minority Faculty Recruitment and Retention .....	13
<b>University of Illinois at Chicago</b>	
Working Group on Underrepresented Students & Summer Bridge Working Group .....	15
<b>University of Illinois at Springfield</b>	
College Summit .....	17
<b>University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign</b>	
Community-Based Learning Initiative .....	19
<b>Western Illinois University</b>	
The First Year Experience .....	21

## INTRODUCTION

As part of the reporting requirements for the annual *Report to the Governor and General Assembly on Underrepresented Groups in Illinois Higher Education*, public universities are required to identify and describe institutional effective practices that best demonstrate how the institution is addressing the current year's focus topic. Since this year's report focused on the achievement of students from underrepresented groups, this document contains descriptions of programs and initiatives identified by the Illinois public universities as being effective in providing academic support to students from underrepresented groups.

## CHICAGO STATE UNIVERSITY

### Psychology Program Intensive Advising Project

CSU serves a high proportion of students who experience one or more of the risk factors associated with stopping out or dropping out of college. Because careful planning also helps students to attain a degree in a timely manner, the FY2005 state budget allocation included a grant for Chicago State University to fund a pilot program to improve retention and graduation rates. In FY2005, these funds were used to redesign the advising process in the psychology program, a program with a large number of majors.

#### *Goals:*

- Reduce the number of advising errors leading to delayed graduation;
- Decrease the time to graduation for students enrolled in the Psychology Program;
- Increase students' familiarity with and ability to use campus resources, including technological resources such as web-based registration;
- Continually audit psychology majors' academic records and monitor progress toward degree completion; and
- Ensure that all students receive and understand all information concerning degree requirements to assist them in taking responsibility for timely degree completion.

#### *Strategies:*

A centralized advising center was established in the Psychology department with personnel to assist students with the clerical and technological aspects of registration; Faculty advisors met with students to discuss academic progress and program requirements.

- Audit, advise and register sophomores (approximately 90 students with 40 – 60 credit hours to complete);
- Instruct sophomores on use of campus technology such as Blackboard, email, and web registration;
- Provide information about Psychology careers and courses related to career aspirations;
- Identify and contact any sophomores who did not come for advising appointments;

#### *Results:*

As a result of intensive advising in the Department of Psychology, the number of seniors who were able to graduate grew from 45 students to 60. In short, 15 students were identified as being at risk for not completing graduation requirements; due to the proactive advising process that identifies students at risk of not graduating early and provides interventions to ensure that all requirements are completed before the deadline for applying for graduation, these students were able to graduate on time. In addition, ninety sophomores received degree audits during spring 2005. Based on their audits, these students were advised, registered, and instructed on campus technology such as

Blackboard, email, web registration, and web navigation. Each student was counseled on career opportunities and advised about which courses lead to specific career goals. These students will be tracked through their degree completion in order to determine areas needing strengthening in advising and retention. An indicator of the success of the advising model developed by the psychology department is that three additional academic departments have decided to adopt the model for their own programs, thus, fulfilling one purpose of the project, to systemically improve the advising process at Chicago State University. In addition, cost savings were realized by certain clerical advising tasks to non-faculty personnel while reserving department faculty advisors for academic and career advising and mentoring.

Concerns were identified surrounding the accuracy of audit reports, which have been addressed. Further, a new handout has been developed to assist students through all the steps leading to graduation. All students in the Psychology are given this handout by the advisor who converses with students to ensure that they understand all published material concerning program and graduation requirements.

*Institution-wide Impact:*

The systematic improvements made to advising in the Psychology Department have been widely disseminated campus-wide. The Psychology Department advising model has demonstrated that intensive, centralized advising increases students ability to successfully navigate the university system. Further, three additional departments will adopt the advising model in the hopes that their retention and graduation rates will improve at the same rate as those of the Psychology Department. This project has helped foster campus-wide awareness of the empirically substantiated notion that advising plays an important role in the retention of students and supported recent campus reports indicating a strong link between retention and the quality of advising.

## **EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**

### **Recruitment and Retention**

Eastern is examining which strategies are most effective in recruiting and retaining both students and faculty. With the appointment of a new director of admissions in 2004, new approaches for recruiting minority students were begun. That office is experimenting with better mining of potential student prospect data and with more face-to-face connections with minority high school students. By AY06-07, Eastern will be better able to assess which specific activities positively affected the application and matriculation rates of minority students.

Retention of minority students at Eastern has been among the highest among state campuses. The Gateway, Peer Helper and other support services are effective. In addition, Eastern's federally funded TRIO program has continued to be funded in a time of diminishing federal dollars for such initiatives. The tragic loss of most longitudinal data regarding minority programs which was destroyed in the Blair Hall fire coincided with steps undertaken by the recently appointed director of minority affairs to consider how Eastern may best serve students who are members of minority groups, and also all students who may be academically at risk.

Similarly, Eastern has been quite successful in recruiting and retaining members of minority groups in the professoriate. The campus utilizes many of the sources and best practices used by many effective campuses. Departments and decision makers are assessed for their specific efforts to aggressively recruit potential candidates.

Eastern continues to believe that it's most effective method of recruiting members of minority groups within both the student body as well as within the faculty is face-to-face networking.

# **GOVERNORS STATE UNIVERSITY**

## **Title V – Cooperative Grant**

### **Collaboration to Improve Hispanic Student Persistence to Degrees**

Morton College and Governors State University are collaborating on a Title V (Strengthening Hispanic Serving Institutions) Project which will take place over five years. The purpose of the Project is to provide services, support, and resources to help ensure Hispanic students' persistence to degrees. The Morton College Project staff will work with students to ensure their academic readiness and skills development for transfer to a four-year institution to complete their four-year degree programs. The activities will include a summer bridge program offered before students' entry into the College. This program will introduce students to the rigors, expectations, and experiences of college courses. The goal is to help students prepare for the required placement tests in Math and English to ensure that they meet the level established for entry into college-level math and English courses. Students will develop social skills by working together in teams to complete tasks and assignments. Students will also participate in leadership development activities such as a ropes course and will have opportunities to become technologically knowledgeable.

Governors State University will provide resources and activities to help Hispanic students transition effectively into upper level classes. Part of the research used to inform the Project demonstrated that one reason Hispanic students do not complete their degree programs is a lack of career exploration and guidance. To minimize the number of Hispanic students who enter GSU as undeclared students, the staff of the GSU Career Services Office will guide Project participants through career exploration activities to help students focus their studies. Peer mentors and advisors will help guide students through their upper level courses, internships, clinicals, and fieldwork. The GSU Project Activity Director will monitor and track the progress of the Hispanic students to help ensure they make satisfactory progress towards graduation.

The Project activities at both Morton College and Governors State University include faculty development activities to increase cultural awareness; review and revise curriculum to include more cultural consciousness and responsiveness in courses; and help make the campus a more welcoming and supportive environment for Hispanic students. Student support activities (tutoring; academic skills development and strengthening; and advising) will be accessible and welcoming to the Project participants. The students at Governors State University will have access to the Project computer lab and transition center to take part in group study, counseling and advising activities. The Project Activity Directors at both institutions will meet frequently to coordinate activities, plan programs, and share strategies. Each institution has an advisory committee to oversee and monitor the implementation of the Project. The two advisory committees meet monthly, alternating the campuses for each meeting.

## ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

### Office of Disability Concerns

Established in 1977, Disability Concerns is the designated office on campus to provide accommodation services to students, faculty, staff, and guests with disabilities. It is the administration's responsibility to provide overall supervision, executive management, fiscal responsibility, campus leadership and technical assistance to ensure that all accommodation services are reasonable and in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and §504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

The administration is responsible for the development of the Department's Vision, Mission and Strategic Plan and the implementation of the strategies, policies, and the supporting operations to achieve the goals of those plans. Guidance from the administration consistently focuses on Disability Concerns being a contributing member of the University community in meeting the goals of *Educating Illinois: An Action Plan for Distinctiveness and Excellence at Illinois State University*.

Daily operations are guided by specific tenets established by federal disability laws and the interpretations of the court cases and U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights ruling regarding reasonable accommodation and disability discrimination. As a member of the International Association of Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD), Disability Concerns adheres to three major sets of guidelines established for postsecondary disability service providers by this organization: the ethical guidelines, the guidelines for confidentiality, and the guidelines specific to the review and acceptance of disability documentation as support for providing accommodation services for a disability.

Disability Concerns, as a member of the University community and the provider of accommodations for both students and employees, also operates under any guidelines established and adhered to by the University. Such guidelines would include those established by the Illinois Board of Higher Education, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Illinois State University Student Code of Conduct, and state and federal regulations for the establishment of employment terms and conditions for all employees.

Disability Concerns has office policies and procedures that have been established for the daily internal operations and the procedures for providing accommodations to persons with disabilities. The organizational chart establishing the division of labor is based upon areas of expertise needed when determining appropriate accommodations, so as to ensure that the accommodations provided are based upon the impact of the disability and determined by a case-by-case basis. This organizational method as provides a means of creating an understanding with the students and employees that they have been assigned to a professional with expertise in the area of disability specific their needs.

In the Office of Disability Concerns, two Coordinators are responsible for evaluating documentation, determining eligibility and establishing appropriate accommodations for students. One Coordinator is responsible for overseeing the processes of fulfilling the

determined accommodations for eligible students. A fourth Coordinator is responsible for overseeing that all text conversion requests are fulfilled. The Director, in addition to the duties of directing the office, is responsible for evaluating documentation, determining eligibility, and fulfilling appropriate accommodations for all levels of University employees.

While each staff member is responsible for specific areas of disability service, each member of the staff has been cross-trained to accept additional responsibility in all areas of operation if necessary.

In order to utilize each staff member's expertise in evaluating documentation and determining an individual's eligibility for services, a once a week Documentation Review Committee has been created. This Committee is comprised of the Director, the Coordinator for Psychological, Visual, Physical and Medical/Health Disability Services, the Coordinator of Learning Disabilities, Attention Deficit Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury Services, and the Coordinator for the Text Conversion Lab.

In FY05, the Office of Disability Concerns provided accommodation services to 388 undergraduate students and 22 graduate students. Of this total, 140 students received accommodation services due to their learning disability (137 undergraduate, 3 graduate), 56 received accommodations for ADHD (54 undergraduate, 2 graduate), 48 were provided accommodations for their psychological disability (45 undergraduate, 3 graduate), 47 received accommodation services for mobility impairments (41 undergraduate, 6 graduate), 20 students were provided accommodations for being blind or low vision (19 undergraduate, 1 graduate), 25 were provided accommodations for deafness or hard of hearing (23 undergraduate, 2 graduate) and 74 were provided accommodation services for systemic/chronic health disabilities (69 undergraduate, 5 graduate).

# **NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**

## **McNair Scholars Program**

### **PURPOSE**

First generation low-income and students from underrepresented groups constitute a large percentage of students entering postsecondary education each year. Though many demonstrate strong potential; unique academic, family, and financial challenges negatively affect the academic achievements and persistence of these students. The Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Program is funded by the United States Department of Education to support national efforts to reduce the obstacles first generation low-income and students from underrepresented groups face in their pursuit of postsecondary degrees. Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) was awarded a McNair grant in August of 2003.

The NEIU McNair Scholars program targets low-income first generation undergraduate students and students from groups underrepresented in graduate education. Participants will be NEIU students who have, at the minimum, completed their sophomore year with a GPA of 3.0 or better. The diverse student population at NEIU includes a significant number of first generation low-income and underrepresented students, whose family, cultural and financial backgrounds make their postsecondary experience especially difficult. These students, also the target population for the proposed McNair Scholars program at NEIU, have been proven by both national research and institutional data to face more challenges than the average student in obtaining baccalaureate and post-baccalaureate degrees.

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. Establish and maintain cohorts of first generation low-income and underrepresented students for academic support services;
2. Conduct on-going assessment of academic progress of McNair Scholars;
3. Through directed study and support services, retain and graduate McNair Scholars, and prepare these students for doctoral study at a rate higher than that of non-participants
4. Increase the level of awareness among the McNair Scholars' family members about graduate opportunities and the benefits of graduate study;
5. Increase the level of computer literacy of all McNair Scholars in preparation for doctoral study;
6. Each McNair Scholars will complete a research project and 90 percent will present a paper or poster at a symposium and/or a professional meeting under the guidance of a faculty mentor.
7. 100 percent of senior McNair Scholars will apply to at least two doctoral programs;
8. 75 percent of McNair Scholars who complete the program will enroll in a graduate or doctoral program with appropriate financial assistance within two years of completing their baccalaureate degree.

### **IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

Implementation of the NEIU McNair Scholars Program began November 1, 2003. The first two cohorts (12 seniors and 12 juniors) were identified by mid-February 2004.

## **STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION**

Faculty mentors play a vital role in preparing McNair Scholars for graduate study and academic careers. Recruitment of faculty for McNair participation is achieved through information meetings, McNair staff presentations at departmental meetings, e-mailings and campus mailings of program information. Mentors new to the program are provided detailed information regarding program objectives and associated Mentor responsibilities. NEIU is fortunate to have several minority faculty and the McNair Program has benefited from their support; (30.5%) of NEIU Faculty Mentors to date are minority faculty.

Scholars are recruited for program participation through faculty members as well as direct mailings twice each academic year to all eligible students. Applicants are screened and the twelve students most likely to pursue doctoral education are selected into a cohort. Once selected, McNair scholars are given every opportunity to succeed. Various workshops are organized to benefit them. Critical thinking, library research, GRE preparation, presentation skills, and learning styles are just a few of the workshops organized for the scholars. In addition to guidance from a Faculty Mentor, NEIU Scholars are each assigned a Library Mentor for assistance with identifying and obtaining research materials. One-credit hour seminars are provided at no cost to the Scholars to guide them through the proposal writing process and to provide training to prepare them as teaching assistants. McNair staff guides each Scholar through the entire graduate program selection and application process and pursuit of all possible avenues for securing funding. This is done through workshops and a rigorous schedule of one-on-one meetings.

## **SUCCESS**

The program is meeting or exceeding all of the objectives listed above.

- The program objective to ensure that (75%) of the scholars enroll in graduate school within two years after completing the undergraduate degree has been accomplished in just the first year of the program's existence. Many of these Scholars have secured enrollment in academic institutions of national and international repute with full or partial scholarship, fellowship, or assistantship. Here are some of the schools where graduated NEIU McNair Scholars are pursuing advanced degrees:
  - ◇ The Massachusetts Institute of Technology,
  - ◇ The University of Chicago
  - ◇ The University of Wisconsin Madison

- ◇ Northwestern University
- ◇ Loyola University Chicago

- The objective to retain and graduate Scholars, and prepare them for doctoral study, at a rate higher than that of non-participants (>16.8% of NEIU cohort graduated within 6 years) has been met. Twenty Scholars have graduated of whom 9 (45%) graduated within 6 years.
- (100%) of Scholars (24 of 24) who conducted a research project have presented at a research conference, exceeding the goal of (80%).
- To date, 48 Scholars have been recruited, meeting the objective to recruit 12 Scholars each year.

## **NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**

### **The College of Engineering and Engineering Technology**

The College of Engineering and Engineering Technology (CEET) is committed to enhancing the level of academic achievement for minorities, women, and individuals with disabilities. Several initiatives were continued, while others were initiated during the year 2004-2005. Listed below are programs, initiatives, and activities regarded as effective practices:

- In the past the college had adopted one hundred high schools, providing them with information about engineering, technology, success strategies, college tours, advising, scholarship opportunities and other pertinent information. This year the college adopted 350 state high schools, providing faculty mentoring opportunities for students interested in engineering programs.
- The Department of Technology at CEET participated in the Math Science Partnership (MSP) Grant to promote learning in math and science through applied engineering.
- The college obtained a \$50,000 grant from Verizon Communications to work with high schools in Elgin, Aurora, DeKalb and Sycamore to increase students' awareness and motivation to pursue careers in engineering and technology.
- Under project REAL (\$5 million grant), the college hosted several minority teachers and students during the summer to practice engineering to appreciate the importance of math and science.
- The college is committed to complying with the federally mandated guidelines to accommodate all students with disabilities. Services, such as medical withdrawals and extended time for assignments, are confidentially provided to all students including underrepresented students. If necessary, the dean's office promptly ensures absolute compliance by departments and faculty.
- The ability of faculty to work closely with engineering students and to provide professional attention to their career and professional goals is unique to the college. The close interaction between faculty and students not only provides academic support to underrepresented students, but also helps their retention in their major programs. In addition, underrepresented students who feel inadequately tuned to handle the mathematically-rich content of engineering courses have the option to switch majors from engineering to engineering technology or industrial technology. For underrepresented and other students who find it difficult to handle foundation courses, this option is crucial for them to continue their academic career and graduate with a B.S. degree in technical area(s).

## **SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY CARBONDALE**

### **Task Force on the Retention of African American Males**

The issue of how to enhance persistence and achievement of African American male undergraduate students is among the biggest challenges confronting the higher education community. An analysis of education, social, and economic data indicates that Black males as a group generally are not achieving at the same level as other groups, including African American females. The data does not identify the reasons for the disparity but does suggest that traditional application strategies and initiatives are not adequately addressing the issue. The data suggests that a focused, proactive approach that involves successful Black males is needed.

In 2003, a group of African American faculty and staff members met to identify and examine issues related to being African American and male in America, particularly at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Following a series of meetings among themselves and with students, the group decided to establish the SIUC Task Force on the Retention of African American Males. Task force members stressed the development of both college and life skills. The following were considered to be major priorities.

- Helping African American male students become acclimated to Southern Illinois University Carbondale.
- Developing activities that sensitize institutional faculty, staff, and students to the issues that directly relate to the adjustment, persistence, and achievement of African American male students.
- Establishing activities that address the academic, social, and cultural needs of African American male students.
- Providing support services that will address the unique needs of African American male students.
- Encouraging African American male students to be responsible and independent.
- Strengthening the ability of African American male students to support the African American community.
- Strengthening African American male students' academic skills and abilities and helping them to better adjust to the demands of institutional life.

Faculty and staff members, in consultation with students, developed and implemented a series of town hall meetings and workshops. Initial meetings focused on needs, issues, and concerns expressed by the students.

Among the issues identified were the following:

1. Need to enhance relationships and understanding between Black students and faculty and staff.
2. Relationships between Black males.
3. The impact that Greek organizations have on Black male students.
4. Need for more positive Black role models.

5. Need to enhance Black male study skills, particularly time management, goal setting, and help-seeking skills.

In an effort to address these and other issues, a series of monthly roundtables was organized. Discussions were focused around the following topics:

1. Relationships among Greek organizations.
2. Events that include Black students and faculty and staff members.
3. Skill-building workshops that focused on academic survival and life skills.
4. Interaction between Black male and Black female students.

One of the most interesting and informative workshops dealt with the generation gap between students and faculty and staff. Issues such as dress, the role and value of education, expectations, and goals were examined. Students and staff who participated in the discussions considered them to be very successful, educational, informative, and beneficial.

The Black male workshops have continued during the past two years. Increasing the number of active participants is one of the major challenges confronting the group. In the past, the major participants were upper-level students. Future efforts will be directed toward attracting greater participation from freshmen and transfer students.

## **SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY EDWARDSVILLE**

### **Minority Faculty Recruitment and Retention**

#### SIUE Statement on Diversity

*All societies and peoples have contributed to the rich mix of contemporary humanity. In order to achieve domestic and international peace, social justice, and the development of full human potential, we must build on this diversity. SIUE nurtures an open, harmonious, and hospitable climate that facilitates learning and work. Each member of the University is responsible for contributing to such a campus environment.*

*SIUE is committed to education that explores the historic significance of diversity in order to understand the present and to better enable our community to engage the future. Integral to this commitment, SIUE strives for a student body and a workforce that manifests diversity.*

SIUE has a history of seeking to support and improve faculty diversity. In 2001, through the new accreditation process being implemented at the University, the Academic Quality Improvement Project (AQIP), the above statement on diversity was developed and approved. In fiscal year 1990 the faculty search process was refined, followed in fiscal year 1991 by the allocation of funds specifically designated for minority recruitment and retention. In fiscal year 1997 the position of assistant provost for cultural and social diversity was created. Each of these initiatives, which are described below, illustrates the importance SIUE places on faculty diversity.

In fiscal year 1990 the provost implemented procedures to monitor closely all faculty searches to identify, recruit, and interview and attract to SIUE increased numbers of minority faculty. Every advertisement for a faculty position is accompanied by a plan detailing the steps to be taken to identify and recruit minority candidates. When the search committee is ready to bring candidates to campus for interviews, the provost confers with the chair and the dean to review the pool of candidates for racial diversity. If the pool is not racially diverse, the search is aborted or extended unless the unit can demonstrate extraordinarily aggressive efforts to locate minority candidates. At the conclusion of the campus interviews, the provost again confers with the chair and the dean to decide if an offer should be extended. If a minority candidate is available, this meeting focuses on how to insure the candidate will accept the department's offer.

In fiscal year 1991 the then-president at SIUE announced the allocation of \$250,000 annually to enhance the recruitment and retention of minority faculty and students. The fund has since been increased to \$548,000. The Office of the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs was charged with developing strategies for using the funds for increasing the academic success of minority students and the representation of minority faculty. Departments that request funds for hiring minority faculty may use the fund for salaries for no more than three years for any position, after which the department must provide the salary money on its own.

In fiscal year 1997 implementation of the SIUE Diversity Plan led to the hiring of the assistant provost for cultural and social diversity, who has oversight responsibility for issues related to diversity. The assistant provost manages and distributes the Minority Recruitment and Retention Fund. Goals for the program include the following.

- Increase the employment of minorities at SIUE, focusing on African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Pacific Islander Americans, Native Americans, and women.
- Provide opportunities for administrators, faculty, and staff to become knowledgeable about programs that focus on recruitment of minorities and to supplement funds for attending programs, conferences, and institutes dealing with diversity, minority recruitment and retention, search committee structures, and recruitment policies and plans.
- Provide graduate assistants for faculty who develop special programs and activities for recruiting minority graduate students.
- Provide funds to "grow our own" minority faculty and staff by encouraging them to continue their education and return to SIUE for employment.
- Help retain minority faculty by assisting them with research grants, summer employment, educational leaves, and travel to conferences and institutes.

In the past five years, the Minority Recruitment and Retention Fund sponsored faculty and staff employees to attend over 100 events in 5 countries, 27 states, and 54 cities.

Data from the *Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Fact Book 2005 Edition*, produced by Institutional Research and Studies, is shown below. There has been an increase in Black faculty since 2002. As deans negotiate a contract with a minority candidate recommended by a search committee, the Minority Recruitment and Retention Fund provides additional resources to help guarantee employment.

	Black Non-Hispanic Faculty	Black Non-Hispanic All Employees
Fall 2000	47	416
Fall 2001	45	436
Fall 2002	44	412
Fall 2003	46	365
Fall 2004	47	378

In October 2001 SIUE received the 2001 Excellence Award for Best Practice in Minority Faculty Recruitment from the Illinois Committee on Black Concerns in Higher Education.

## UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO

### **Working Group on Underrepresented Students & Summer Bridge Working Group**

The effective practice described in this section is the effort of two groups, one organized by the Provost and the other organized by the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Affairs. This effort facilitates information sharing by all campus leaders with responsibilities for underrepresented groups. Though just begun, already it has created synergy among the campus leaders. Working together, they have begun implementation of new programs aimed at helping students from underrepresented groups transition successfully to college and increasing their retention and graduation rate.

*Goals:* Prepare students from underrepresented groups for college and thereby increase their retention and graduation rates.

*Date Implemented:* Starting from August 2004 and continuing.

*Programs:* The Provost's Working Group on Underrepresented Students and the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Affairs (APUA) Summer Bridge Working Group are working together on programs for students from underrepresented groups.

#### Provost' Working Group (PWG) on Underrepresented Students

The PWG was formed in August 2004. All directors of identified programs or departments that have a specific responsibility to support underrepresented students were invited to join the group. Most of these programs are independent programs such as LARES and AAAN and are not housed in an academic unit. Members of the PWG also include counselors and directors from the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Services. The Provost's charge to the group is to help underrepresented minority students transition to UIC and to improve their retention and graduation rates.

#### VPUA Summer Bridge Working Group

Based on the data collected since December 2004 on the existing summer bridge programs, the VPUA Summer Bridge Working Group was formed in Fall 2005. Directors of the existing summer bridge programs and members of the PWG were invited to join the group. The VPUS's charge for the group includes sharing information on the operation of the existing summer bridge programs and implementation of additional summer pre-math and per-composition workshops for new freshmen in summer 2006.

#### *Progress/Evidence of Success:*

##### Provost' Working Group (PWG) on Underrepresented Students

Since August 2004, the PWG has been meeting on a monthly basis. In addition, they are working in six subgroups defining mission and goals for the group, identifying the characteristics of the UIC's underrepresented minority students, mapping campus and community partners, analyzing the strength and weakness of our existing programs and studying best practices. In September 2005, the Group produced its first annual report with goals and recommended 29 action items. The report was presented to the Provost in October 2005. Since then, the Provost and the group have begun implementing action items and defining programs recommended by the group for implementation. The new programs include a student convocation, a yearlong first-year program, cultural

competency/awareness activities, and an early warning program. The PWG will continue to meet and address issues related to recruitment, preparedness, retention, and graduation of underrepresented groups. The resulting new programs are expected to enhance the effort to get students ready to start their career at UIC and hence improve their retention and graduation.

#### VPUA Summer Bridge Working Group

Since the Fall of 2005, the Summer Bridge Working Group has shared information about the audience, duration, academic courses, and enrollment of the existing bridge programs. Additional data will be gathered with respect to the performance of students after their participation in these programs. This information would help these existing programs better serve their students. Also, in order to ensure that all entering students who need preparatory academic coursework in Math and English have access to an appropriate and consistent curriculum, starting in the summer of 2006, the Math and English departments, with funding and coordination from the Office of the Vice Provost of Undergraduate Affairs, will provide Math and English composition workshops. These workshops will be made available to students in the various summer bridge programs and to other eligible students who previously were not invited to participate in the preparatory summer workshops. The pre-college math workshop is a five-week accelerated pre-college math program (MATH 075). It was piloted for 50 students with considerable success last summer. The placements results for these 50 students upon the completion of the workshop exceeded by over 50% the success rate of students taking the previously offered pre-math course. In the summer of 2006, ten sections of MATH 075 will be offered. In addition, another accelerated pre-college math program (MATH 095) will be developed and, tentatively, six sections will be offered. Together, these two pre-college math programs are expected to accommodate 240 students in the summer of 2006. The pre-freshmen composition workshop is also a five-week program. It has been offered to students in previous summers with spaces available to about 90 students. Past participants of this workshop have a higher first and second year retention rate compared to their peer group who did not participate in this workshop. Preliminary study shows that the students who participated in this pre-college composition workshop have a first and second year retention rate 11-14% higher than their peer group who did not participate in this program. Sixteen (16) sections of a pre-freshmen composition workshop will be offered in summer of 2006, expected to accommodate 240 students. Scheduling for the Math and English Composition workshops will permit students to take both subjects, if appropriate. Although the students will not earn academic credit for these workshops, they will be able to place into a higher-level course in the Fall if they successfully complete the workshops. It is anticipated that the increased availability of preparatory academic coursework will have a measurable impact on the students' time-to-graduation, retention, and graduation.

## UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT SPRINGFIELD

### College Summit

**Date Implemented:** During Academic Year 2004-2005, the University of Illinois at Springfield entered into a partnership with College Summit as a means to increase recruitment of students from underrepresented groups.

**Goal or Purpose:** Through this partnership with College Summit, UIS will help support activities that will encourage students from low-income families to enroll and complete a college degree.

**Program Description:** College Summit is a national nonprofit organization whose mission “is to increase the college enrollment rate of low-income students by ensuring that every student who can make it *in* college makes it *to* college and by putting college access ‘know-how’ and support within the reach of every student”.

College Summit pursues its mission through partnerships with high schools and colleges and universities. In Academic Year 2004-2005, College Summit partnered with 15 high schools nationwide, including several large districts within a reasonable distance from the University of Illinois at Springfield – the Chicago Public School District, the Chicago Archdiocese, and the St. Louis Public School District. The College Summit has 30 college partners, including six private colleges or universities in Illinois. The University of Illinois at Springfield is the first four-year public university in Illinois to partner with College Summit.

One of the major events that College Summit sponsors is a series of workshops that are held throughout the nation. The workshop is an intensive, four-day event that brings together students, counselors, schools, colleges, and community partners. During the workshop, high school students are trained to serve as peer leaders, high school teachers are trained in college application management, and colleges are given the opportunity to host the workshop to introduce students to their campus and get access to a group of talented students. The student peer leaders are trained on how to submit applications for themselves and how to work with other interested students throughout the application process.

During Summer 2005, UIS hosted a four-day residential College Summit workshop in which 30 soon-to-be high school seniors completed the college application process, learned more about financial assistance options available for them, enhanced their skills at navigating the higher education system, and experienced life on a college campus. UIS plans to sponsor a second College Summit next summer and is working with the College Summit staff to encourage more students from downstate Illinois to attend.

**Evidence of Success:** The record shows that College Summit produces results. Of the close to 5,000 student Peer Leaders that College Summit has worked with, 79% have enrolled in college, compared to 46% for all low-income high school graduates. College Summit students stay in college at a rate of 80%, a rate well above the national average

for *all* students. College counselors in each partner high school report an increase in the number of college applications filed.

It is too early to identify the results of UIS' partnership with College Summit; however, at a minimum it has provided the opportunity for 30 low-income students to see the campus and learn more about the college application and financial aid process. The Office of Enrollment Management will track the enrollment patterns of these students who may choose to attend UIS.

## UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

### Community-Based Learning Initiative

**Goal:** To advance student knowledge through illustration of community relevance of scholarship and cultivate a commitment to lifelong civic engagement.

**Progress/Description:** As a component of Partnership Illinois, a Community-Based Learning Initiative was launched in 2004 to promote collaborations between academic courses offered at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and agencies, organizations, governments, schools and community entities that work to address critical societal issues. Through Community-Based Learning projects, students enroll in a wide range of academic programs and gain the opportunity to learn firsthand about the societal challenges that face America's communities. The Community-Based Learning Initiative provides resources for faculty to redesign existing academic courses or create new offerings to infuse a community component within the course, connecting traditional academic content to societal concerns that are intimately tied to the scholarship of the discipline.

A request for community-based learning proposals was issued to the campus in Spring 2004. Approximately 25 proposals were submitted from a wide range of disciplines. Each of these proposals outlined an approach for infusing a community-based learning component within an existing or new undergraduate course. Proposals specified community collaborators, as well as plans for sustaining the community-based learning module after the initial course offering. Approximately 12 proposals were selected for funding through a committee review process, based on evaluation of (a) quality, (b) likelihood for success and sustainability, and (c) clear evidence of commitment from a community partner. Funding up to \$15,000 was provided to each selected project to enable initial development and delivery efforts.

Courses which incorporated a community-based learning component were offered in a wide range of units around campus in 2004-2005 (e.g., a psychology course that connected with local juvenile justice system, a Spanish course that enhanced students' Spanish skills through interactions with local Latina/o community, an urban planning course that engaged students in a local community design project, etc.). Many faculty and students are attracted to the concept of using current scholarship in ways that will benefit local communities and their inhabitants and provide a life changing experience for the students who participate.

In 2005-2006, the Community-Based Learning Initiative will be integrated as one component of the Provost's Initiative on Teaching Advancement (PITA), a program that offers grants for instructional enhancements. Through initial success and present integration within the well-established PITA grant mechanism, the Community-Based Learning Initiative has achieved sustainability on the University of Illinois campus, and thus, affords interested faculty a lasting mechanism for infusing community-based learning experiences within academic courses in any unit on campus. The projects supported in 2004-2005 received highly positive student and faculty evaluations.

**Challenge Areas/Development/Strategy:** Many of these efforts have been integrated within the ongoing course offerings of the academic unit; a few other courses requested and received a second year of resources to support additional development and promote the ability to sustain the course offering with the academic unit. Some projects are seeking resources to expand and sustain efforts from external sources (e.g., NSF funding).

## **WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**

### **The First Year Experience**

After a year of pilot testing, Western Illinois University launched a comprehensive First Year Experience (FYE) program for all incoming new freshmen (students matriculating with 15 or fewer hours of college credit) in fall 2005. Several components of the program should lead to greater interaction among diverse groups of students and should provide college success strategies for students from underrepresented groups, as well as all other students. The program consists of two components.

First, all freshmen enroll in two FYE courses during their first year at the University (one during each of their first two semesters). These courses are primarily general education courses (with the addition of a few introduction-to-major type courses) that count for three hours of college credit toward graduation requirements. Enrollments for FYE sections are limited to approximately 20 students, and classes are taught by outstanding faculty at the University. The smaller class size is expected to create an opportunity for students to form close relationships among one another and with a faculty member. It is hoped that students will draw on these relationships should they encounter issues or problems in their educational career.

All FYE courses require that students attend at least three cocurricular activities outside of regular class meetings. Cocurricular activities are related to class content and serve as a basis for class discussions, assignments, etc. Attendance at cocurricular activities will further strengthen relationships among students and faculty and will reinforce that learning occurs both inside and outside the classroom setting.

FYE classes include the services of peer mentors. Peer mentors are upper level students who are familiar with the FYE class content and who are outstanding examples of successful Western Illinois University students. They provide an additional focus for first year students' development. Peer mentors are also able to model successful acclimation to and achievement of the college experience. Peer mentors for 2005-2006 include a number of members of underrepresented groups, who also provide role models for freshmen.

Second, all freshmen are required to live in freshmen-only residence halls which provide freshmen with additional opportunities for the development of close relationships with their peers. The FYE residence hall staff members receive training in transition-to-college issues and are directed to work with students, both in groups and as individuals, to provide needed support. FYE residence halls offer FYE seminars on a weekly basis. Topics include study skills, time management, understanding/celebrating diversity, and other information which should help ensure student success at the University.

While in the first year of operation, it is too early to evaluate the FYE program or assess student-learning outcomes. However, Western Illinois University does believe that the program will contribute to student academic success and increased freshmen retention rates. Current University practices coupled with the new practices of the FYE meet all 12

of the “best practices in student retention at small colleges and universities” identified by the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education.

1. Intentional academic planning: Through intrusive advising, freshman orientation courses and academic reviews for students in trouble, institutions make sure that students pursue a well structured academic program. *Intrusive academic advisement is required of all specially admitted students and the small class sizes of the FYE program help students identify institutional academic resources.*
2. Small classes: Most classes, even those for freshmen, are small, giving students opportunities for recognition and class discussion. *FYE class enrollments are limited to sections of 20.*
3. Special programs: Many students, especially those at academic risk, participate in programs that provide advising/academic support and give them a greater sense of belonging on campus. *This is the basic premise of Western Illinois University’s special admission programs.*
4. A dedicated faculty: Most faculty members teach full-time and are easily accessible to students. Full-time tenure/tenure-track faculty teach FYE courses. *Over 94 percent of the instructional staff years (Fiscal Year 2004) are allocated to the function of instruction. The remaining six percent are allocated to research and service.*
5. Educational innovation: These institutions have courses to ease freshman entrance and help students adjust to college life and offer a wealth of academic support through tutoring, group study, supplemental instruction, and mastery classes. *These academic and cocurricular components are part of the FYE.*
6. Developmental education: Although formal developmental offerings are fading, they were active at most of these institutions at the time they were selected. *Western Illinois University does developmental courses where earned credit hours are not applied to degree requirements.*
7. Geographic isolation: Most of the institutions are in rural areas or small cities, making campus life and work on campus the center of the students’ lives. *The city of Macomb’s population is 20,000 and is the largest in a 70-mile radius.*
8. Residential life: Half the institutions require freshmen to live on campus. *Western Illinois University requires students to live in the residence halls during their first two years of attendance. The University also has the highest percentage of students (over 50%) living on-campus.*
9. Shared values: At many of the colleges, students share rural and small-town backgrounds, some share a religious orientation, and in some schools the faculty reflect similar backgrounds. *Higher Values in Higher Education is a values-based strategic plan endorsed and implemented by all members of the campus community.*
10. Modest selectivity: Institutions do not intentionally attract students from low-income families but they do seek students likely to graduate, setting modest but important admissions requirements — at least a C average in high school and

decent SAT/ACT scores. *Western Illinois University's admissions standards are moderately selective.*

11. Financial aid for high achievers: The institutions use state and institutional merit-based aid to attract high-performing students. *More than 70 percent of Western Illinois University students receive merit and/or need-based financial aid from private, federal, state, and/or University sources.*
12. Retention policy: The colleges are explicitly concerned with retention and graduation rates, and several have set ambitious goals well beyond current performance. *Western Illinois University-Macomb has set retention and graduation rate goals (from 78 to 84 percent and from 54 to 65 percent, respectively) that will place us at the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile for all U.S. News and World Report Tier 1 Midwestern comprehensive universities.*