

UIF Assessment
Partnership for a Seamless Education
Final Report
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Submitted to: President Richard McCormick and Provost Lee Huntsman

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Introduction

The Partnership for a Seamless Education seeks to further the University's avowed aim of creating a seamless web between the K-12 system and the University of Washington. The program created an opportunity for student-initiated or class-initiated programs to get University of Washington students out into the Washington State community with a special emphasis on underserved and multiracial communities. The program sought to achieve multiple goals. First, it aimed to contribute to a stronger graduation and retention rate of underserved and minority populations in the state of Washington by fostering education and connections with the University at early ages for K-12 students. Second, it sought to increase the leadership and multicultural competency of University of Washington students who participated in this program. Third, it sought to create a stronger pipeline that enabled underserved students to attend the University of Washington. These goals would help actualize the University's commitment to a strong and diverse student population.

The committee took testimony from a wide variety of administrators, teachers and students who participated in the program (see appendix). By our reckoning, it has served approximately 64 to 70 University of Washington students over a three-year period. The committee was extremely impressed by the large number of individual testimonials about the impact of the program on students who participated in it. Three struck us as worth highlighting. A former ESL student working with a faculty mentor and the Office of Minority Affairs created a program to identify and bring to the University of Washington high school ESL students. The student realized how difficult it is to be struggling as an immigrant with a second language and how often the University feels out of reach. The program served 45 students over the first two years and involved 10 University of Washington students in its organization and design. In the second program two single mothers attending University of Washington realized how marginalized single mothers in high school are and how often such mothers are written off. With the support of the Office of Minority Affairs these students worked two years to connect with single mothers in high schools to let them know about the resources available at University. The University students passed on the message that as high school mothers they can succeed and make a life at the University. Finally, a young sociology and statistics major worked very closely with the Office of Minority Affairs and Rainier High School to set up two separate programs. One was a summer program that helped underprepared eighth graders prepare for high school, and the second provides math tutoring for over 60 at-risk students. These

cases exemplified the incredible level of initiative, leadership and commitment manifested by the students in the program as well as the energy and time spent by dedicated teachers.

Evaluation

The committee evaluated the program within the limited time available. We describe the strengths and weaknesses of the program below.

Strengths

1. The program has clearly impacted the moral imagination and leadership skills of the University of Washington students who participated in it. While no baseline data exists, the consistency of journals and testimony as well as teacher feedback strongly supports this conclusion. This program elicits and develops heroes and is carried out by the heroic endeavors of students.
2. The emphasis upon student initiated proposals lead the program in promising non-traditional areas such as focusing upon ESL students, young mothers, working with a football team, and basic mathematics skills.
3. Some anecdotal evidence suggests that the students in the Rainier and Franklin tutoring programs increased grade performance, but we do not know about retention or college attendance.
4. Despite severe funding constraints, the performance of Associate Vice President Bill Baker provided exceptional student support and enabled many of the more innovative projects. Similarly, the linkages with the Carlson Center enabled some courses to have stronger service learning components.
5. The attempt to expand University outreach in the Yakima valley and create contact with University students in rural areas makes sense and complements existing initiatives.
6. The relatively few faculty who participated in the program demonstrated commitment and went far beyond the call of duty to make it work.

Weaknesses

1. The basic structure of the program builds upon student-initiated programs or class initiated service learning and this lead to a disparate range of program initiatives with little programmatic cohesion or consistency. We are unable to determine the program's strategic design and the ways in which it coordinated with other University of Washington initiatives.
2. While we have some sense of the impact on UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON students, we have not been able to determine the short or long term impact on students served. The initial program specified clear targets and extensive evaluation. None of the targets has been met, and very little evaluation has been done. The project developers believe that serious initial cuts in funding were the major reason that the evaluation aspect of the project is weak. It is not clear,

however, how the program contributed to increasing the pool of students who have the knowledge and skills to attend the University of Washington.

3. The very strength of the program that generates new student ideas and programs leads to strong concerns about the sustainability of the programs started by students. When the students who initiated the programs graduate or move on, we could identify no means to sustain the programs. We don't know whether each year brings a new group of ideas or sustains the good ideas from past years.
4. The student initiatives also lead to an impulse of movement that has no strong coherence across the different programs. They exist fortuitously tied to student interest without internal coherence or long-term University or partner commitment. They may overlap with or complement existing outreach programs like the tutor program or Gear Up but this is not built into the design of the program.
5. The program has little monitoring or oversight of the work of students. We grew concerned about the level of involvement that some students manifest with students that could cause problems for both the UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON students and the students with whom they interact. There is little mentoring of students to keep perspective and develop professional distance as they work with students.
6. There is little faculty involvement given the level of time needed for the distance components. While the Carlson Center has developed strong protocols for service programs, we see little sustained coherence or commitment across the faculty participation in this program. More importantly there are few incentives to draw faculty into the program or sustain them once they enter it.
7. The sustainability of the programs is also undermined by the potential lack of continuity without strong and trusting partners. We are not sure that there are any strong institutional partnerships that will endure past the first impulse of activity.

Recommendations

We believe that the program has serious weaknesses and recommend that it not be continued in its present configuration.

We believe that certain aspects of the program are extremely important and deserve implementation in different programmatic settings, perhaps restructured within the Office of Minority Affairs.

We believe that the program's emphasis focusing upon extending outreach to underrepresented settings is vital. Connecting University of Washington students to these underrepresented communities is a valuable and powerful tool for encouraging K-12 students to stay in school and aspire to college. We also believe that having students from similar backgrounds doing these interventions gives greater power to these programs.

If we implement these interventions, they should be consistent and provide continuity and depth. They should build upon institutional partnerships with schools with whom we can build trusting and lasting relationships. Right now the program does not do

this. What we do should be powerful and sustained with long term presence in the schools.

We believe that the University should develop a way to take advantage of the student initiative in developing programs that the Seamless project revealed. The University and Office of Minority Affairs should create a program that supplements the existing tutoring and outreach initiatives that encourages students to develop their own programs in a way demonstrated by the Seamless project. But these initiatives should be done within existing outreach partnerships.

The University should provide funds to support student initiated programs, but the Office of Minority Affairs should also provide guidance and mentoring for the University of Washington students in their teaching and outreach efforts. Right now the students who create these amazing initiatives are very much on their own doing great things, but we want to ensure they have the mentoring to gain perspective and support as they participate in these activities.

The Office of Minority Affairs should develop criteria for evaluating the student initiatives and decide which ones to support after student leave while continuing to encourage new initiative. We also urge the Office of Minority Affairs to think of partnerships and handing off programs; for instance the high school football program could grow into a sponsorship program by the Athletic Department. We should also explore ways in which the College of Education could support these tutorial projects.

Finally, the committee believes that the Carlson Center should expand service learning classes to the eastern side of the state. The Carlson Center provides an existing and funded venue to encourage interactions with University students in the rural areas of the state.

While we recommend that the project as presently constituted be ended, we want to emphasize that the program generated great student creativity and new and interesting ideas. We also want to emphasize that the University and the Office of Minority Affairs should institutionalize the innovative aspects of the program in ways that provide more institutional continuity and sustainability.