

DE-CAN
(Delaware College Access Network)
Meeting Notes for March 28, 2008

Welcome/Highlights from February Meeting

Dr. Joseph Pika, Chair of DE-CAN, welcomed the subcommittee members to the meeting. The meeting was held in the Cabinet Room of the Townsend Building in Dover, DE.

The highlights of the February 29th meeting were reviewed. No changes were made. Dr. Pika reminded the group that it's task for the series of winter/spring meetings is developing a plan of action and called attention to the three areas of focus that were suggested by Paul Herdman at the previous meeting: 1) Access 2) Alignment and Rigor, and 3) Actionable Networks. These three areas were used to guide the discussion that ensued.

College Access Efforts in Selected States

Dr. Judi Coffield presented a document (see attached) that compares the college access work that is occurring in selected states. The chart compares the efforts of Kentucky, Georgia, California and Indiana. The comparison is based upon purpose, target audience, membership, strategy, goals, and services/activities of college access efforts. The overall sense of the group was that these efforts are focused on communication and outreach efforts designed for two purposes: 1) to inform and 2) to change beliefs/attitudes, especially among underrepresented groups, regarding college going.

Barriers to College Access and efforts in Delaware

Dr. Coffield shared a second document (see attached) which utilizes college access barriers as defined in the American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF) Issue Brief: *Postsecondary Access and Success- The Barriers to Postsecondary Access*. She conducted a gap analysis of the work being done across Delaware by various entities relative to each of the specific barriers. It became clear that through this lens, the area of **Alignment and Rigor** (see item 2 in the focus areas proposed by Mr. Herdman) is being well addressed. It is clear that many of these efforts have been launched recently and have not yet produced clear results, but considerable effort is already being focused on that area.

Ms. Shannon Griffin suggested that DE-CAN continue to monitor the effectiveness of these efforts. Secretary Woodruff explained that the monitoring responsibility falls within the Department of Education. The department's revised monitoring system includes a service/support component. The system utilizes a "balanced scorecard" methodology and common measures across the state. This process also allows for the inclusion of specific district measures. She agreed that DE-CAN should be kept informed of the progress monitoring. Dr. Audrey Noble noted the strength of Delaware's data system and the tremendous amount of work being done

around data collection and analysis. She specifically mentioned the work of the Data Subcommittee of the P-20 Council, the Achievement Gap Action Group and the Correlates of Achievement work sponsored by the State Board of Education.

Discussion continued on **Access**, and the group concluded that while it is being addressed from multiple fronts, there is no single, consistent message. Mr. John Carwell (Rodel) expressed concern about the multiple meanings of “college readiness.” He also reminded the group of points that were made in the initial discussions with the Lumina Foundation: that college access should include a component of financial literacy preparedness, the issue should be approached from the students’ point of view and that there needs to be alignment between K-12 and higher education. Dr. Pika reminded everyone that the K-12/higher education alignment issue was started when the state’s three public institutions had endorsed “the commitment to Delawareans” (high standards for high school graduates that would ensure their admission to post-secondary programs), but high institutional turnover and leadership changes in higher ed institutions had delayed progress beyond UD. This effort may need to be revisited through the Council of Presidents. A meeting of the HEI’s provosts will be scheduled to follow the May meeting of the P-20 Council.

Secretary Woodruff echoed that student perspectives must be prominent. In fact, DOE held several student forums across the state to listen to students’ voices on the high school experience and in designing the “Yes You Can” program. A DVD summarized the findings from the Delaware High School Student Forums. Copies of the DVD can be made available to those who are interested. A great deal of market research was conducted by Janet Hughes and Associates through the NGA Honor State Grant for the communication campaign. These included focus groups conducted with students, parents, higher education, and business partners. The result was the creation of the Reaching Higher for Student Success Campaign, the Yes You Can posters and website and the MySpace Page. These were all market-tested with students to ensure that they would be appealing and send the appropriate message. Thus, a student perspective has been well-represented, but, as Audrey Noble noted, DE-CAN efforts will be strengthened by continuing to provide student input as refinements are made in the various campaigns.

The group returned to the issue of defining college readiness. Most agreed that Delaware’s working goal has been “student success,” not just college readiness. This includes opportunities for students to enter trade schools or move directly into the work force. “College readiness,” the charge of DE-CAN, addresses one subset of our high school students that we believe should be expanded and diversified. The committee agreed with the position taken by other task forces that regardless of the student’s path, the same level of academic rigor at the high school level is necessary for future success. Having a separate definition for college readiness sends the message that the two are not the same and reinforces a “tracking” mentality. One suggestion raised in the group was to conduct a survey of successful college students on what high school factors they believe were important to their success in college.

Financial Subcommittee Report

The financial subcommittee report was presented by Ms. Maureen Laffey (DHEC) and Ms. Christine Lodge (AES). Several publications were distributed:

Financial Aid for DE Residents pamphlet; Junior/Senior College Checklists; 2008-09 Delaware Guide to Student Aid (AES); and the Fall 2007 Delaware Scholarship Compendium. Also shared was a new website published by the US Dept of Ed called FAFSA4caster. This website can provide an early estimate of eligibility for federal aid so that parents can learn about the potential for financing a college education even when their children are quite young. DHEC and AES focus their efforts on high school juniors and seniors. They conduct the annual College Goal Sunday (one in each county) in February at the DTCC campuses (Owens, Terry and Stanton). The focus of this program is help with completing the FAFSA. In addition, eight financial aid nights are held per year. This targets mostly high school juniors and their parents, although some seniors do attend. The DHEC and AES representatives acknowledged that there are barriers in reaching targeted populations (e.g.: Hispanic). DHEC and AES are not currently working through high school guidance counselors. Dr. Pika suggested that one vehicle for this would be to join UD admissions meetings that currently host both high school and middle school guidance counselors.

The group then discussed ways to overcome the barriers of reaching target populations, a strategy that focuses on the communication campaign and the “messengers.” The group felt that there needs to be a common message that utilizes community members as “soldiers in the army.” The communication campaign must incorporate a grass-roots effort with two purposes: to inform potential students and their families, and to change resistant attitudes/beliefs. Some cultures have differing views of college going, of securing loans, etc. These cultural differences must be identified, understood and addressed by members inside the community. Based upon today’s conversation, there are several networks that we would want to create. This would reinforce Mr. Herdman’s recommendation that DE-CAN’s third focus be on **Actionable Networks**.

AES has financial literacy materials and training that can be provided to counselors. YouCanDealWithIt.com is an AES website that addresses financial counseling. This brought up the issue of the debt burden that Delaware students are facing upon graduation. The issue of debt burden was also defined as a barrier in the AYPF Issue Brief discussed earlier. For the school year 06-07, Delaware residents on average have an annual federal loan debt of \$4,800. This amount does not include private loans. Overall, however, it is important that DE-CAN push for developing a source of data that will help the state clearly address its citizens’ financial challenges in seeking higher education.

Meeting highlights were shared from the subcommittee’s March 27th meeting. The highlights call to attention several questions that need to be answered. Ms. Laffey will work on finding the answers to the questions for the April DECAN meeting.

Based on this conversation, Dr. Jennifer Bausmith (REL) shared the following framework that might guide DE-CAN’s efforts:

- 1) Define the skills and knowledge students need to be successful after high school
 - a. Academic- middle school & high school (Pull from work already completed by DEDOE to increase the rigor of the curriculum; graduation requirements; alignment with post-secondary; math, language arts, literacy, science, etc. Be as specific as possible);

- b. Financial—financial literacy in general (e.g., credit cards); financing college; financial impacts of NOT going to college; others?
 - c. Social—define post-secondary readiness (study skills, peer pressures, time management?)
 - d. Other? Ask students who were at risk for not being successful in college but who persisted and were successful (Audrey Noble)
- 2) Outline the programs that are in place in Delaware that support students in acquiring these specific skills and knowledge (Much of this has already been started)
- 3) Identify priority areas of need. Who needs targeted help academically, financially, socially? REL Mid-Atlantic's data compilation, to be presented at DE-CAN's next meeting, will start to frame some of this. Examines trends in achievement, trends in demographic changes, trends in post secondary access etc in Delaware by student subgroups.
- 4) Develop communication channels. For each priority group, determine an effective means of communicating with those students, families, school staff, IHEs, etc. Who will be the messenger? How will the message be spread? What will the message be? Keep It Simple. Develop Networks—e.g., Rodel's programs, schools, IHEs, community organizations (Boys and Girls Club, 4-H) etc.
- 5) Develop Measurable Goals (and baseline measures now)—examples
- a. Increase number of students in on- and off-campus pre-collegiate programs (by how much over what time period.)
 - b. Increase number of students attending 2 and 4 year DE colleges.
 - c. Increase number of students taking AP/dual enrollment courses
 - d. Increase number of students taking specific rigorous courses
 - e. Increase number of student using Student Success plan
 - f. Increase graduation rate (reduce dropout rates)
 - g. Increase other support program participation (see Barriers to College Access table)
 - h. Others....
- 6) Develop timelines
- 7) Identify Staff to run/oversee program
- 8) Identify components that need funding
- a. Staff
 - b. Administration
 - c. Data analysis
 - d. Communication (electronic, website maintenance, paper, meetings, trainings)
 - e. Other?

It was stated that we need buy-in from the higher ed institutions, district superintendents, and other K-12 organizations who have not been at the table. There were representatives from only two of Delaware's higher education institutions represented at today's meeting.

Dr. Terry Whitaker stated that with all the information we received just today, one could imagine parents and students being on information overload. There is so much information out there, but how do we ensure that it makes it to the target audience and that it is used? His message was to keep it simple. Find a way of condensing the important pieces into user friendly formats. Ms. Lodge suggested the creation of an “Information Plan” that would identify what would be done when. E.G: don’t overwhelm 8th graders with FAFSA, but provide 8th and 9th grade students with a broad overview. We need to map out a plan through the grades that becomes more detailed as needed. The 529 College Savings Plans were mentioned by Secretary Woodruff as another example. When children are born in Delaware, information on the 529 Delaware College Investment Plans is provided in a packet to new parents at the hospital. This information is also sent out to childcare centers across the state. Thus, some major efforts already exist and can now be expanded or retooled.

Dr. Jennifer Bausmith, from the Mid-Atlantic Regional Education Lab, has proposed to compile Delaware specific data from multiple sources for the DE-CAN Committee. She will provide the committee with that report in April.

Secretary Woodruff and Dr. Pika will work on improving meeting attendance. The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Additional Resources-

- SREB Report: *Lost in Transition: Building a Better Path from School to College and Careers* (see attached PDF)
- Inside Higher Ed: *Closing the College Achievement Gap*
<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2007/10/31/system>
- Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education: *Knocking at the College Door* www.wiche.edu/policy/Knocking

Meeting Schedule-

The DE-CAN Subcommittee will meet as follows:

Friday, April 25	9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Cabinet Room Townsend Building
Friday, May 30	9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Cabinet Room Townsend Building