

UC Office of the President

UCOP Previously Published Works

Title

Preparing for College: Nine Elements of Effective Outreach (review)

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4kt2f8hq>

Journal

The Journal of Higher Education, 77(3)

Author

Hossler, Don

Publication Date

2006-05-01

Peer reviewed

Preparing for College: Nine Elements of Effective Outreach (review)

Preparing for college: Nine elements of effective outreach by W. G. Tierney, Z. B. Corwin, & J. E. Colyar (eds.). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005.

By Don Hossler

From: The Journal of Higher Education

Volume 77, Number 3, May/June 2006

pp. 553-557 | 10.1353/jhe.2006.0021

In the last decade, there has been a dramatic expansion of non-school-based programs to provide information, support, and encouragement for low-income and first-generation youth to pursue postsecondary education. Indeed, the evolution of a myriad of local and regional postsecondary educational encouragement programs has rapidly become part of a national organization—the Pathways to College Network. The Pathways to College Network is becoming the national association for the professional development and affiliation needs of individuals working in these diverse programs. I begin this review of *Preparing for College: Nine Elements of Effective Outreach*, edited by Tierney, Corwin, and Colyar by focusing on the Pathways to College Network because the rapid growth of this organization helps both to define the primary audience for this book and to provide a unifying structure for postsecondary encouragement programs that have a diverse array of purposes, organizational structures, and funding sources. The Pathways to College Network (<http://www.pathwaystocollege.net/>) is a national alliance of organizations committed to using research-based knowledge to improve postsecondary education access and success for the nation's many underserved students, including underrepresented minorities, low-income students, those who are the first in their families to go to college, and students with disabilities.

The programs that comprise what might well be called the Pathways movement range from programs that are being funded by the federal Gear Up legislation to local groups funded by community foundations that have come together to provide guidance and assistance for low-income and first-generation students who are at risk of not continuing their formal education after high school. They also include programs such as "I Have a Dream" that focus both on college information and upon the provision of direct financial assistance for college costs as well as university-based programs that provide information and academic support for participating students. Some programs are well funded while others are bootstrapped efforts that rely heavily on the good will of volunteers.

Although these efforts have grown rapidly and garnered a great deal of attention, to date there has been a dearth of solid and comprehensive integrative reviews of relevant literature that provides insights and guidance for establishing effective college outreach and preparation programs as well as for scholars studying early outreach programs. Until now, one of my concerns for Pathwaysefforts has been the dearth of solid practical research. Tierney, Corwin, and Colyar's new edited book from SUNY Press, however, provides an excellent set of chapters that address most of the key elements of Pathways to College programs. This volume covers most of the major topics that the organizers of effective postsecondary encouragement programs should consider as they develop a comprehensive set of support services for low-income and first-generation students. The authors do an effective job of synthesizing relevant literature and providing practical suggestions regarding the implications of the research for providing support for students and their families

Most Pathways programs have been established to provide early outreach efforts for low-income, rural white students and urban students of color in order to give them a better chance of attending 2- or 4-year postsecondary educational institutions after high school graduation. These programs provide one or more of the following elements: guidance and counseling about colleges; information about financial aid; strategies for gaining admission; peer groups for individuals to support and encourage one another; information and support for parents so that they can be better sources of encouragement for their children; tutoring and academic support; mentoring; encouraging students to take a rigorous high school curriculum; and, in some cases, direct access to scholarships for students who matriculate (Pathways, 2004; Tierney and Hagedorn, n.d.). One of the strengths of this book is that it helps practitioners determine how to spend their most precious resources, time and money, as they work to support students. Tierney and his colleagues provide clear insights into the areas that are proven to have direct positive impact on students who participate in encouragement programs and those support efforts for which there is little empirical support of their impact or the effects are modest and indirect. The only areas not addressed are those on the impact of tutoring and academic support programs and the impact of early information and early commitments of financial assistance upon postsecondary attendance.

This edited volume is organized into two parts, a total of nine chapters. The first five chapters are organized around the theme of social support networks, and the second section discusses elements of effective programs. The first five chapters include an interesting chapter that reviews evidence of the effects of including sensitivity to students' cultural backgrounds on the success of post-secondary encouragement efforts. Remaining chapters also consider the roles of families, the impact of peer groups, college counseling, and mentoring programs within early outreach efforts. The reviews of research on these topics are especially strong. Some important themes emerge from these chapters.