The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2013
First-Generation Students
http://www.act.org/newsroom/data/2013/states/pdf/FirstGeneration.pdf

November 4, 2013

ACT’s mission—helping people achieve education and workplace success—inspires us to partner with organizations like the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) that share a devotion to helping individuals meet their full potential. Research and the experiences of school and college educators demonstrate that first-generation college students face the same kinds of barriers to become ready for college and to navigate the complex college-going process as their classmates do.

However, unlike their peers, first-generation students face these barriers without the aid of acquired familiarity with that process. For these students, the playing field isn’t level.

The obvious question, then, is how do we level it? We at ACT know that we have some, but not all, of the answers. We are therefore grateful to collaborate with COE in its work of serving the educational needs of first-generation college students, in part, through joint research studies such as this one.

What we have learned together through this study is important for a greater understanding of first-generation students. Yes, many such students face multiple challenges to their academic success. And, yes, many are not as academically ready for college as they need to be. However, our joint report offers genuine optimism, too. Nearly 94% of ACT-tested first-generation students aspired to earn some form of postsecondary degree. Two out of three took ACT’s recommended core curriculum, which includes four years of English and three years each of math, science, and social studies. And 60% of 8th and 10th graders were on target to be academically prepared for college-level courses in at least one subject. As we learn more about not only the challenges faced by first-generation students but also their capabilities, we develop a better understanding of how best to assist such students to succeed in school and the workplace, including through college access programs such as TRIO and GEAR UP.

This report is but the first step in the partnership between ACT and COE. I’d like to thank COE and TRIO professionals everywhere for their lasting commitment and daily efforts to help students. It is because of such work that we at ACT are not merely excited but hopeful for our future together.

Jon Erickson
President, Education and Career Solutions, ACT

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This report on first-generation students http://www.act.org/newsroom/data/2013/states/pdf/FirstGeneration.pdf is significant because it acknowledges the necessity of developing policies to promote college readiness with the needs of this population in mind. Not surprisingly, first-generation students lag behind their peers in meeting college readiness benchmarks in core subject areas.

The lack of families’ college background makes it all the more vital that schools with large percentages of first-generation students integrate supportive services into the required curriculum to create a college-going culture. Also, they must implement these services and strategies on a school-wide basis to ensure that all students are embarked on a path to college.

Further, we recommend that schools partner with local colleges to offer dual enrollment in areas of greater propensity and interest for first-generation students. Dual-enrollment programs capitalize on students’ strengths and demonstrate to them that they are capable of doing college-level work.

The findings of this joint ACT/COE report underscore the importance of greater support for college access programs like TRIO and GEAR UP. For decades, these programs have provided academic tutoring, mentoring, counseling, and other supportive services to low-income and first-generation students to make the dream of college a reality. Recent federal initiatives have emphasized early childhood education; the nation must capitalize on that investment by continuing to support these students once they enter elementary and secondary school.

Maureen Hoyler—President, Council for Opportunity in Education


By Beckie Supiano; Published November 4, 2013

About a quarter of high-school graduates who took the ACT in 2013 met all four of its college readiness benchmarks, in English, reading, mathematics, and science. But students whose parents did not go to college fared quite a bit worse: Only 9 percent of them met all four benchmarks. That finding comes from a report, “The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2013: First-Generation Students,” released on Monday by ACT and the Council for Opportunity in Education, a nonprofit group focused on access to college.

While the report highlights the disparities in students’ college readiness based on their parents’ education level, it did identify a few bright spots. Almost 94 percent of students who took the ACT and whose parents did not attend college hoped to earn a postsecondary degree, it found. And two-thirds of those students took the core courses ACT recommends.
Sharadee Allred has transferred over from the Davis Campus to join the Student Support Services (SSS) team. She has brought valuable experience and a hard-working attitude to the table, which is already proving beneficial for the program. The move was also highly beneficial to her family, as her husband has been working in Student Affairs at WSU for many years now.

One of SSS’s biggest pushes of the fall semester was to convert many of their paper processes into electronic processes. The objective was to simplify clerical tasks and to reduce the thickness of paper files by compiling that information onto spreadsheets that could be stored both in hard copy and in electronic form with greater ease. This effort was highly successful, and has saved both work time and physical storage space.

SSS has also recently been privileged to see some of the fruits of their hard work from the last school year in the finalization of the Annual Performance Report. The Weber State SSS program met all of its goals for the year, earning 100% of the prior experience points that could be awarded. Meanwhile, they are using insights gained from the recent ASPIRE Conference in Colorado to make program improvements so that SSS can continue to make progress in its goal to help its students toward graduation through the advising, tutoring, and financial services it offers.

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College TRIO Students Speak Proudly about Being First Generation in “I'm First” Storytelling Project

First Lady Michelle Obama has launched a new effort to encourage more disadvantaged students to go to college. Mrs. Obama herself was a first-generation college graduate. About a third of college students today are the first in their families to pursue higher education, but those students are much less likely to graduate than students with college-educated parents. A new campaign aims to change that by tapping into the power of YouTube.

In a series of homemade videos, first-generation college students and graduates offer encouragement, empathy and sometimes stern advice. Like from Daniel Lugo, a first-generation graduate and now dean of admission at Franklin & Marshall College.

“Trust me,” he says to the camera, framed diplomas on the wall behind him. “Life can be a lot harder if you choose not to be first.”

This is the “I'm First” storytelling project, from the nonprofit Center for Student Opportunity. It was inspired by the “It Gets Better” project for gay and lesbian teens facing bullying, says executive director Matt Rubinoff.

“These students may be in households and in schools and in communities where there aren’t many college-educated role models or influences,” Rubinoff says. “At the end of the day, students are responding most to those who they can personally relate to.”

I'm First launched last month. It’s got a few dozen videos so far, including one from Education Secretary Arne Duncan. He wasn’t first, but wants others to be.

Rodney Savannah is a junior at the University of Southern California. In his video, he talks about growing up with a single mom in a low-income neighborhood in Los Angeles.

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TALENT SEARCH

A BUSY TIME FOR TALENT SEARCH

TRiO Talent Search held their annual "College Retreat" (previously known as Senior Retreat) on November 9. Juniors and Seniors were treated to a day at Weber State University to learn about: Developing Career/Professionalism (presentation conducted by Shari Leder in Career Services who did a fabulous job!), Admissions Information, How to Write for Scholarships, College Financial Literacy/FAFSA, and an Amazing Race where students learned about services that are on campus (and how other campuses provide same/similar services). Students were provided with a full lunch, as well as transportation for any students who needed it. The TRiO Talent Search team did a great job in registering the students, and provided lots of information to prepare students to make the transition to college.

The TRiO Talent Search Advisors also assisted the Ogden School District (at Ogden High School and Ben Lomond High School) with their "College Application Week" held November 11-15. The TRiO Talent Search Director in partnership with the Ogden City Gear Up Liaison provided training to the high schools about pitfalls first generation, low income youth face when going through the admissions process.

We are also hard at work implementing the following initiatives as outlined in our grant: 1) Rigor—We are working closely with the students to educate them on the benefits of taking rigor coursework with all the grades we serve (8-12). We work with students one on one with personal schedules, implement workshops, and conduct general public relations within the school to ensure “Rigor” is being promoted for all students. 2) Financial Literacy—We conduct workshops throughout the year (small and large) to ensure we get effective information out to our students about what can be a daunting subject for first generation, low income students. We emphasize FAFSA completion, educate on what FAFSA provides, loan information that is based on frugality (but sometimes a necessity), financial aid definitions, and assist students and parents one on one with the application process.

The Director would like to extend her appreciation to the hard working staff at the TRiO Talent Search Program: Jill Schneck, who does a fabulous job with recruiting our 8th graders and providing junior high workshops and trips, Alejandro Valquinto and Marisol Velasco, who have shown amazing initiative with learning the ropes as new Advisors, Nick Berg who has helped us at Ben Lomond and with our IT needs, and Shaquille Heath, the person who helps keep the data organized and up to date.
UPWARD BOUND

UPWARD BOUND STUDENTS ARE ACTIVE PEOPLE

On Tuesday, November 26 and Wednesday, November 27, Upward Bound students worked with Project Success in Weber State’s kitchens to prepare a meal for the area’s low-income and homeless populations. On Thanksgiving Day, Upward Bound students volunteered at the Summit Hotel serving dinner and assisting with set up and clean up.

Throughout the month of November, Upward Bound students worked to create crafts which were sold at the Festival of Trees. Upward Bound visited Festival of Trees on Saturday, December 7 where each student and staff member purchased at least one item in support of Primary Children’s Medical Center.

Upward Bound student leaders organized donation drives during the months of November and December to benefit the youth involved with Juvenile Justice Services. Upward Bound students filled a total of 75 stockings with many donations left over.

In addition to their participation in community service, Upward Bound students have attended several activities over the past few months. The sophomore and freshmen classes visited WSU’s campus to hear Irving Roth, a Holocaust survivor, speak about his experiences in Auschwitz and his life after WWII. The junior class attended Science Day at the University of Utah. The senior class visited campus with their parents as part of Upward Bound’s “Financial Aid Night,” where families learned about the FAFSA. Several students attended a performance by the Utah Symphony of Vivaldi’s Four Seasons. All students had the opportunity to attend a Utah Jazz game.

“Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever.”
— Mahatma Gandhi

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”
— Nelson Mandela

“The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be kindled.”
— Plutarch
I am happy to announce that Daniel Kiser is now the Math Basic Skills Instructor in Veterans Upward Bound. Daniel began work October 14, 2013.

Daniel holds a Baccalaureate degree in Math Education from BYU and intends to pursue his Master's Degree at Weber State University while working at VUB.

Daniel was employed at Salt Lake Community College for approximately the past two years and worked as the VUB math tutor in that area as well. Before that time Daniel taught half a year in a junior high school.

Daniel and his wife, Amber, just became new home owners in the Salt Lake City area and they share their living accommodations with their pooch named Darwin.

When asked about hobbies, Daniel said he liked to play video games but does not have much time to do so any more.

The fall semester saw a renewed interest in VUB computers. PCs are popular and our laptop lending program is doing a healthy business as well. Participants come to Annex 12 to use computers and study as well as receive instruction, tutoring and other help.
NEA Today: Clearing the Path to Academic Success for Minority Students
By Edward Graham; Published November 7, 2013

With many suburban neighborhoods divided into racial clusters, white students from white neighborhoods are attending almost all-white schools, while African-American or Latino students attend minority-majority schools. These schools usually have fewer resources available because the families within the district come from lower tax brackets. So-called “reforms” meant to raise the quality of teaching often have the reverse effect of driving good teachers out of the schools where they’re most needed.

“Locked in the doubly segregated or triply segregated schools, which are segregated by poverty and race and sometimes language, are kids who have virtually no chance of being ready for college,” explains Gary Orfield, co-director of the Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles at UCLA. “And we accept that segregation and do nothing about it. We think that we can make everything equal just by putting pressure on those schools where all those kids with problems are concentrated, and where we have all the newest teachers with the least experience. That’s not sensible.”

Orfield made these comments at a panel discussion that was one of the highlights of the NEA Foundation’s recent two-day convening of union-district leadership teams to discuss new and innovative reform measures. The panel conversation focused on issues of race and equity in public education and was moderated by Michael Lomax, president and CEO of the United Negro College Fund. In addition to Orfield, the panel also featured Gloria Ladson-Billings, professor of urban education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Early on in the discussion, Michael Lomax cited Frederick Douglas’ famous words, “Education is the pathway to freedom,” to highlight the transformative role a good education has on lifting all students up to a better life. But the conversation soon focused on the many roadblocks facing minority students—post-secondary readiness, resegregation of public schools, and the harmful effects of misguided reform measures.

And because most jobs place a premium on post-secondary degrees, Orfield said that the traditional notion of PreK-12 schooling needs to be expanded to include Pre-K-16, as a way of ensuring that all children have a chance of attaining middle class status. Higher education opportunities tend, however, to skew away from African-American and Latino students, and the rising costs are a major deterrent.

“You can’t be in the middle class unless you have a post-secondary education now,” Orfield said. “We’re creating a lot of barriers to college—namely financial barriers, we’re not keeping our aid programs high enough to make up for those barriers, and we’re having more and more selective admissions. We’ve got a lot of problems.”

For many minority students who attend post-secondary schooling, the opportunity to attend top tier universities is often elusive. Gloria Ladson-Billings cited a recent study by Georgetown University to illustrate the growing racial disparity in post-secondary education. The study, “Separate & Unequal,” found that “82 percent of new white enrollments have gone to the 468 most selective colleges, while 72 percent of new Hispanic enrollment and 68 percent of new African-American enrollment have gone to the two-year and four-year open-access schools.”

“The 468 top-tier universities in the country are largely white and Asian,” Ladson-Billings said. “The 3,250 two-year, four-year lower tier schools are black and Latino. They are overcrowded, they are under-resourced, you’re less likely to graduate from one of these,” (continued on next page)
and you’re more likely to have to work while you’re doing it. So, the system is unequal all the way through.”

The panelists pointed out that many students pursuing an advanced degree at lower-tier universities will have less life and career aspirations than their white and Asian counterparts—and those are the ones who can even afford to further their education.

The experts agreed that drill and kill testing, rising post-secondary costs, misguided reforms, and a rollback of policies supporting integration are all playing a large role in limiting the opportunities for many Latino and African-American students. So what are some of the potential remedies?

Ladson-Billings cited the successful incorporation of magnet schools into many at-risk communities around the country as an example of how meaningful solutions can extend beyond reforms centered on tests and evaluations.

“Magnet schools draw students from all over to attend,” she said. “These are schools that set kids on the road to high-quality post-secondary models. We need to expand on these.”

With 70% of African-American students who are eligible for Advanced Placement based on their PSAT scores never taking an AP course because they have no access to these opportunities, Ladson-Billings said it’s clear that high-minority schools need to focus on these kinds of classes to give students the academic enrichment they need to succeed in top colleges.

And while she and the other panelists agreed that there was no silver bullet for creating inclusive school environments, working towards creating districts and schools that value diversity, academic enrichment, and teacher retention—all with an eye on post-secondary opportunities for students—can go a long way in providing the stability and equity that school’s need.

“How do we create the sort of stability that all families are looking for, not just white families?” Ladson-Billings said. “All families are looking for schools where teachers stay, where the administration is stable, and where they can be fairly assured their children are getting a high quality education experience.”

“Being able to hear first-hand from other college students would have helped out a lot, because my mom wasn’t able to give me any actual advice,” he said in an interview. “Just, you know, ‘good luck, and make us proud.’”

The I’m First website also lists more than 150 member colleges with services and support for first-generations students, like peer mentoring and summer bridge programs that help students adjust to college life.

When those students get to college they can feel isolated, says Maggie Cahalan, director of the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education.

“And now somebody is standing up and saying, ‘Well this is something to be proud of, not something to be hidden or that has a stigma to it,’” she says.

http://www.coenet.us/coe_prod_imis/COE/Newsroom/In_the_News/COE/NAV_Newsroom/News_Articles/2013/Select/College_TRIO_Students_Speak_Proudly_about_Being_First_Generation.aspx