

POLICY AREA FOUR: Illinois will increase the number and diversity of citizens completing training and education programs.

College Quest

What issue or need is addressed by the effective practice?

To assist promising, capable, and diverse rising high school juniors and seniors, particularly those from the Chicago and Belleville area public schools, in learning about the college search process so that they strengthen their chances of college admission and increase the range of college choices available to them.

Description of the effective practice.

In Summer 2004, the Illinois Wesleyan admissions office formalized a relationship with the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) for the purpose of assisting capable CPS students in searching and applying to colleges that best suit their personal and professional goals. The resulting summer program, called College Quest, was offered for the third time in June 2006. Potential participants complete a formal application, including several questions and an essay, that are similar to what they will encounter on their college applications. College Quest applications are reviewed by the IWU Admissions staff, and successful applicants spend four days and three nights on the IWU campus. IWU pays all programming, meal, housing, and transportation costs. While on campus, students attend seminars entitled Find the Right College Fit, Understanding the Financial Aid Process, Diversity, What Colleges Are Looking For in the Application, Writing a College Application Essay, What College is Really Like (Student Panel), and Faculty Expectations in the College Classroom. In addition to the formal program, attendees have opportunities to interact with faculty, college students, admissions counselors on an individual basis and in small groups. It is important to stress here that the program is geared to college admissions in general and not to IWU specifically. Thus, it illustrates IWU's commitment to public service, and, in particular, service to the State of Illinois.

How does this practice achieve sustainability?

College Quest has become an established item in the IWU operating budget, and a core group of experienced admissions counselors, faculty, and administrators organize the program each year. The IWU administrator who was involved in the initial agreement with the CPS is now Dean of Enrollment Management and strongly supportive of continuing and increasing the size of the program over the indefinite future. There will always be potential new college applicants with a need to learn about the application process, so a steady stream of applicants seems guaranteed as well.

What are the measurable outcomes?

In Summer 2004, 18 students attended College Quest, and by Summer 2006, the number had grown to 35. Thus far, of the 79 participants, 71 have been from the CPS, and 4 attendees have

been from Illinois outside the CPS. (The remaining 4 completers are from outside Illinois; they learned of the program from high school guidance counselors who had been on the Illinois Wesleyan campus.) The ethnic/cultural diversity of participants is also measurable and consistent with the Illinois Commitment's goals: of the 79 participants thus far, 39 have been African-American, 17 have been White (Non-Hispanic), 14 have been Latino, and 9 have been Asian-American. Four participants from the 2004 and 2005 programs have elected to attend Illinois Wesleyan, and many others have enrolled at other Illinois colleges.