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Helping Diminish the College Knowledge and Access Divide: Development of a College Outreach Camp to Serve Community Needs

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Abstract

This descriptive case study examined the development of a college outreach summer camp at a university in Texas. The camp aims to diminish the college knowledge and access divide that exists between first generation college-going, lower-income, and underrepresented students and their counterparts in the region in which the university is located. Drawing on one year of survey data, interviews with program personnel, program documents, and newspaper articles about the camp, this study highlights some of the camp's early successes, as well as growing pains of starting such an effort to serve community needs.

Programs that aim to increase college knowledge and readiness, as well as enrollment and completion among underrepresented groups of students abound across the country (Swail & Perna, 2002). These programs are known as pre-college outreach, "early intervention, early outreach, or college access" programs (Loza, 2003, p. 44). They "provide a safety net for thousands of [K–12] students who do not get the level of support—academic and social—within their current educational environment to become college ready" (Swail & Perna, 2002, p. 16). Despite their shared focus, these programs vary greatly based on funding, students served, duration and frequency, and types of academic and/or social activities provided (Loza, 2003; Swail & Perna, 2002). Some programs also emerge more organically from purposeful and collaborative school, community, and university partnerships (Burbank & Hunter, 2008).

Among the most widely known college outreach programs in the nation are federally funded TRIO programs like Upward Bound, GEAR Up (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness through Undergraduate preparation), and other non-federally funded programs such as AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) and the Puente Project (Swail & Perna, 2002). While such programs are nationally recognized, outcome data to support their effectiveness is sparse (Swail & Perna, 2002; Tierney, 2002). Yet less is known for thousands of other pre-college outreach programs across the country (Swail, Quinn, Landis, & Fung, 2012). This descriptive case study (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2013) examined one program: a college access summer (CAS) camp at a university in

Texas that emerged organically from community partnerships and collaborations to serve the college access and readiness needs of the university's surrounding community, known here as Central City.

Context of the Study

The CAS camp is one of several initiatives carried out by a P-16 Center for Education that was officially formed in 2010 at a university in Texas. Developing the center was a priority for the university's president who appointed a presidential fellow, a tenured faculty member in the College of Education, to lead this charge. The formation of the center and the CAS camp were spurred after leaders from the university, the city of Central City, and the Central City school district engaged in purposeful conversations on ways to address college access and readiness issues among Central City youth. In particular, stakeholders recognized the need to increase awareness and knowledge of viable postsecondary options for Central City youth given the low college-going rates in the area.

The university itself is a comprehensive, doctoral granting institution serving approximately 36,000 students. It recently gained the status of a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) when it reached the milestone of enrolling at least 25 per cent Hispanics in its undergraduate student population (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Aside from the center's establishment, the university has a history of serving and working with Central City and the surrounding region. The university's office of community relations in particular was established "to connect university

resources with community needs and serve as a liaison among the university's constituents in the region." Other student organizations, academic and student affairs departments, and individual faculty members also engage in pre-college outreach programming with Central City youth in varying capacities. However, the CAS camp is one of the first pre-college outreach programs specifically established through the center as a direct result of the collaboration between the university and community stakeholders.

Only one public school district serves Central City with six elementary schools, two middle schools, one traditional comprehensive high school and one alternative high school. Central City has a population of about 50,000, with 53.7% of residents identifying as White, 37.8% Latino, 5.5% Black, 0.9% Native American, and 1.6% Asian (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). The majority of residents have at least a high school diploma (89.3%), but only 31.3% have a bachelor's degree or higher form of education. These statistics likely reflect the historic struggle that the district has faced in adequately preparing students for postsecondary education. As a result, the district has gained somewhat of a negative reputation among new residents with school-aged children. New faculty for instance, are often discouraged from enrolling their children in public schools in Central City (Central City school district administrator, personal communication, September 19, 2012). Data from the traditional high school conveys some of the district's challenges, particularly in relation to high school completion, advanced course enrollment, and college ready graduate rates.

As of the 2013–2014 school year, the high school was comprised of approximately 2,073 students of which 5.1% were African American, 69.3% Hispanic, 23.4% White, 1.0% Asian, 0.9% were of two or more races, and 0.2% were American Indian (Texas Education Agency, 2014). School data (Texas Education Agency, 2012, 2013, 2014) indicates the high school's four-year graduation completion rate has increased over the years (from 79.4% in 2011 to 83% in 2013), but remains below the state average (88% in 2013). More concerning discrepancies can be seen among graduates based on racial and ethnic background, particularly between Hispanic students and their White peers (Table 1).

A similar gap is evident when it comes to advanced placement (AP) or dual enrollment course completion (Table 2). About twice as

Table 1. Four-year Graduation Rates for Central City High School from 2010–2013

	African American	Hispanic	White	Asian
Class of 2011	82.6	76.3	87.4	100
Class of 2012	84.6	80.4	94.3	83.3
Class of 2013	90.5	79.6	92.0	*

Table 2. Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment Completion Rates for Central City High School

	African American	Hispanic	White	Asian
2010-11	15.6%	19.6%	34.8%	37.0%
2011-12	17.0%	16.9%	36.6%	33.3%
2012-13	24.8%	23.0%	36.2%	35.3%

Table 3. College Ready Graduates in English/Language Arts and Mathematics

	African American	Hispanic	White	Asian
Class of 2011	50%	31%	53%	60%
Class of 2012	26%	39%	70%	60%
Class of 2013	29%	38%	62%	*

many White and Asian students completed AP or dual enrollment courses compared to African American and Hispanic students over the last three years, with the exception of 2012–13 when the gap decreased to a greater degree.

Although the percentage of Central City High School graduates deemed college ready in English/Language Arts and mathematics generally needs to increase, it is students of color that once again have the greatest gains to make to be on par with their White and Asian peers. In addition, the college-going rates for all students in the district have remained well below the national average. Overall, the college-going rates in the district from 2008-2011 have ranged from 36% to 43% (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, n.d.) (Table 3).

These statistics substantiate the concern for Central City's youth among city officials and district and university leaders. The CAS camp is one attempt to address some of these challenges by promoting college readiness and access among Central City youth, particularly for those from historically underrepresented backgrounds in higher education. This includes students of color and first generation college students. This descriptive case study (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2013) attempts to document the camp's development and uncover insights that can help the CAS camp, as well as other similar programs, learn from the growing pains it has faced in trying to meet the community's needs for additional college knowledge and awareness among its youth.

The Nature of College Outreach Programs

As previously noted, there is a dearth of

research on the many college outreach programs that exist nationwide. However, in 1999–2000 a National Survey of Outreach Programs was created and disseminated by the College Board, in association with The Education Resources Institute (TERI) and the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) in an effort to gauge the number and types of programs in existence. The survey yielded information from 1,110 programs, and a series of focus groups with program administrators followed the survey. Swail and Perna (2002) examined this data and summarized the common attributes of existing programs. They found that about 50% of programs received federal funds and were housed and provided their services on a college campus. A majority (67%) provided services year round, 18% during the academic year, and only 15% were offered in the summer. Programs also varied in capacity and duration, with some lasting days and others years. Programs tended to focus on generally promoting college, awareness, and exposure, while fewer promoted rigorous course taking or focused on a particular academic area. Most programs also provided cultural activities or activities that developed students' social and leadership skills, as well as the opportunity to develop academic skills related to critical thinking, studying, reading and writing, and mathematics and science instruction. A majority of programs (75%) also utilized workshops or classroom instruction and some form of role modeling, tutoring, and mentoring. Almost all programs (94%) utilized program evaluations, but as Tierney (2002) notes, such evaluations tend to be weak as most individuals running these programs have little expertise and limited resources to conduct their own data collection and analysis (Swail & Perna, 2002).

Many programs also attempted to involve parents, with about 69% offering a parental component. Many universities recognize that the inclusion of families is critical in these programs, particularly for students who come from families where they are the first to attend college or who have families with limited knowledge of how to access a higher education. Albeit, involving parents and families in such programs can be a challenge because of issues related to "cost, family privacy, logistical concerns or even negotiating difficult pre-existing contacts between universities and urban K–12 communities" (Smith, 2012, p. 21).

Swail, et al. (2012) were able to conduct a follow-up to the study conducted in 2000 to assess changes in the landscape of college outreach programs nationwide. Fewer surveys were completed in the follow-up (374), with a majority completed by programs in California (10%), Texas (7%), and New York (6%). It was found that almost half of all programs still received some federal funding. However, program services were not overwhelmingly delivered on college campuses. While postsecondary institutions primarily sponsored 50% of programs, program services were equally offered on university campuses (39%) and at K-12 schools (39%). The primary goals, services, and instruction provided by programs also had not changed. The focus of most programs (93%) was still on increasing college attendance among participants, followed by increasing college awareness (92%) and college exposure (91%).

At least half of all programs also focused on improving students' study, critical thinking, and test-taking skills through math, science, reading, and writing instruction, academic enrichment and college preparatory courses, as well as grade and attendance monitoring. A majority of programs (87%) included college awareness activities and specifically helped students develop social skills and provided career counseling information and academic advising. The percentage of programs that had a parental component was still about the same (67%) when compared to 2000, as was the manner in which services were provided (85% through workshops). When and how long programs operated still varied, but a majority of programs (70%) were year round and provided services after school (71%). However, more than half of programs surveyed (61%) required students to apply for admission to a college and 46% required a contract with a parent. Only 28% of programs were open enrollment. Almost all of the programs (93%) surveyed also required some pre-service training for staff. Therefore, this compilation of characteristics of pre-college outreach programs was considered when examining the development and characteristics of the CAS camp.

Methods and Research Questions

A descriptive case study design (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2013) was used for this analysis given the purpose of the study and the research questions posed. The intent of a descriptive case study is to describe a contemporary, real-life phenomenon, intervention, or case within the context in which it occurs (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2013). This type of inquiry is optimal when attempting to answer

"how" and "why" questions to understand the case. Case study design also draws on detailed data collected through various means and from multiple sources, so that evidence is triangulated as a means of contributing to the study's validity (Yin, 2013).

In this study, the unit of analysis was the development of the CAS camp, and the research questions included: 1. How was the CAS camp developed to meet the specific needs of the community it serves? 2. How has the CAS camp been successful, in terms of positive impact and usefulness, from the perspective of its developers and students? 3. How can the CAS camp be improved given challenges it has faced and lessons learned? Given the limitations associated with a case study approach, we did not attempt to identify any causal relationships in this case or seek to provide any statistical generalizations (Yin, 2013). Instead, we focused on lessons learned in the development of the CAS camp to inform future camp programming as well as future scholarship and practitioners seeking to understand the intricacies of developing similar outreach programs based on community needs.

Data Sources and Analysis

Data for the case study was drawn from multiple sources including: 1) one audio-recorded and transcribed group interview with the center director and the CAS camp coordinator, 2) a follow-up written interview questionnaire with the coordinator, 3) informal conversations with the director and the coordinator, 4) one year's worth of program evaluation survey data collected for the CAS camp in 2012, 5) curricular and CAS camp related documents, and 6) university press releases and Central City news articles.

In the spring of 2013 the director and the coordinator were interviewed and asked the following questions: how and when the CAS camp first got started, how many students and staff were involved in the first and subsequent camps, how the first camp was designed and what curriculum was developed, what was learned from the first camp, what challenges were faced, how the camp changed or improved from year to year, and how beneficial they perceived the camp to be for student participants and for the Central City community. The coordinator also completed a written interview questionnaire as follow-up for additional clarity.

The program evaluation survey data examined consisted of two measures: 1) daily evaluations completed by students for each session attended, and 2) a pre- and post-camp questionnaire. The coordinator, in collaboration with camp staff, developed these evaluation measures. The daily evaluations assessed the usefulness of specific activities and presentations to help guide camp staff with future program planning. The same evaluation form was used to assess each event and consisted of 12 Likert scale statements where students chose among the following responses: no way, probably not, not sure, probably, definitely. Questions included statements such as: the information covered was helpful, the presenters were knowledgeable, this event was too short, and I would recommend this event to a friend. Three open-ended, short response questions were also included but this data was not accessible for this case study.

The CAS camp did not disseminate both a pre- and post- program evaluation survey to student participants prior to 2012. The pre- and post-survey, which consisted of identical statements, was the camp's first attempt to gauge students' general knowledge of college related information before and after attending the camp. The survey included 32 Likert scale statements where students could choose among the following responses: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree. Some of the statements on the survey included: I am informed about registering for the ACT/SAT, I know what my major will be in college, I know how to apply for a college scholarship, I know the purpose of FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid), and I know how to explore college housing options. Among the rising juniors that participated in the 2012 camp, 11 completed the pre-survey and 13 completed the post-survey, although a total of 14 students enrolled in the junior camp. Among the 17 enrolled rising seniors for the 2012 camp, 17 completed the pre-survey and 10 completed the post-survey. The difference in the number of completed surveys reflects student absences and new student enrollment after the first day.

The development of the CAS camp was gauged after examining all curricular documents and articles, the survey responses, and the interview transcript and follow-up interview questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were derived to provide summary findings from the surveys.

Findings

Development and Evolution of the CAS Camp

As previously noted, the CAS camp was one of the first programs initiated by the center. The center director explained that as a presidential fellow at the university from 2007–2008 she was asked by the university president to develop a P-16 Council in Central City, as one did not exist. The director indicated, "The president's interest in this was based on the push from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board that wanted each university in the state to identify someone to work on the state's 'Closing the Gaps' initiative." In 2000 the state of Texas developed a statewide higher education initiative called *Closing the Gaps by 2015: The Texas Higher Education Plan* to address four areas in higher education: participation, success, excellence, and research (*Closing the Gaps*, 2000). The initiative outlines five-year targets for each area and provides strategies to reach these goals in the state.

Given this charge, the Director leveraged her new role to convene community stakeholders in Central City to develop the P–16 council. She explained how her title as Presidential Fellow and her relation with the university's president provided her clout in this process, which lent to her ability to bring together prominent community members. What resulted was the development of a steering committee that subsequently held community-based dialogues to garner political and grass-roots support and input on a strategic plan to improve education for community residents from pre-school through college. The plan focused on three priorities related to: 1) early childhood and kindergarten readiness, 2) college access and workforce development, and 3) community engagement. Therefore, according to the Director the CAS camp developed "very quickly" out of a need to promptly respond to the community-based conversations about how to increase the college-going culture in the community and specifically increase college-going rates among economically disadvantaged students in Central City.

The director described how they first embarked on delivering the camp "without having very little pre-planning in terms of the specific goals and objectives and any type of strategic planning prior to its implementation" or without fully established evaluation procedures for its programming. Because the CAS camp initially had no allotted budget, programming was initiated with monies from the operational funds for the center. Since then, the center has remained limited in financial resources and is primarily funded through external grants. Therefore, the primary focus of the camp staff in its first two years of existence was on its organization and delivery.

The center is also limited in terms of human resources, which impacts the design and implementation of the camp. The center staff includes the Director, who is also a faculty member, an administrative assistant, and two grant coordinators, one of which is also the CAS camp coordinator. The center also employs part-time students from the university who serve as mentors and help coordinate, lead, and provide instruction for the camp. Mentors are employed in part through grant funding. The first cohort of mentors that assisted with the camp also helped develop the camp curriculum along with the coordinator and director. The curriculum was derived from specific college-ready related goals the staff developed for the camp participants.

The mentors are key assets to the center as many come from diverse and low-income backgrounds like many of the students who attend the camp, and many mentors are from the Central City community as well. Hiring college student mentors from diverse and low-income backgrounds was purposeful, and based on the implicit assumption that the mentors themselves would be motivating to the high school students. Additionally, since research suggests that a factor in the lower college enrollment of students of color is the lack of interactions with college students and campuses (Bergerson & Petersen, 2009), the opportunity to form relationships with the mentors is a unique experience for many camp participants. The college students also benefit from their roles as mentors in a number of ways. Employing low-income students, many of which are from the Central City community, provides them with income, work experience, a social safety net, and an opportunity to contribute to the well-being of students from similar backgrounds. The bidirectional nature of the relationship between mentors and student participants provides both parties with positive social experiences in a higher education setting, emotional support, enhanced perceptions of identity, increased self-worth and competence as learners, and encourages the importance of continued education (Bergerson & Petersen, 2009).

The first camp began in the summer of 2010, serving rising 9th–12th graders in the surround-

ing community. To attend, students completed an application that consisted of basic contact and demographic questions, as well as a document listing the camp's rules and expectations, which parents and students were asked to sign. Several other permission forms are included in the application related to travel, medical treatment, and a media release. According to the director, recruiting for the first camp through the district initially posed some challenges, and required that the center staff build trust and rapport with school counselors. "They saw us as a competitor initially, as opposed to an asset or collaborator," intimated the Director. Moreover, the school personnel were used to focusing their college outreach efforts on the top 10-25% of students at the high school, which was contrary to what the CAS camp aimed to do. Nevertheless, fliers were distributed at the high school, posted in the public library, and sent to community organizations to market the camp. The camp was also advertised in the Central City newspaper. The forms of marketing remain the same even today.

Each camp session has a capacity for about 20 to 40 students, although enrollment does not always reach capacity. Funding also impacts the capacity from year to year. The camp takes place on the university campus, but is not residential and instead is offered between the hours of 8 am to 5 pm. The district provided bus transportation for camp participants for the first two years, but ceased due to budget limitations. Students must now provide their own transportation to attend. The director and coordinator realize the increased benefits of a residential camp, but the center's limited budget inhibits use of this design. The director and coordinator also recognize that the non-residential nature of the camp likely keeps some students without transportation from attending and limits the degree to which the camp can involve parents during camp hours, as most parents are working during the day.

Nonetheless, the center designed and implemented five camps in 2010: 4 one-week long camps for 9th-11th graders, and one camp serving 12th graders lasting for two weeks. Based on student enrollment and general observations of and feedback from students and staff, subsequent camps were limited to juniors and seniors. In 2011, the camp was redesigned to serve 11th and 12th graders during separate one-week sessions. However, in 2012 and 2013 the center reverted to a two-week camp for seniors and maintained a one-week camp for juniors.

Measuring "Success"

The curriculum for both the junior and senior camps covers similar content as other college outreach programs. Programming focuses on improving students' college awareness and readiness (e.g., knowledge of college entrance exams, admissions, financial aid, taking advanced courses, time management, and note taking), leadership skills, and provides students with opportunities to apply these skills, such as working on their resumes and college essays. This information is provided through workshop style sessions and interactive activities provided by the camp mentors as well as invited speakers, including the university's Financial Aid Office and Division of Food and Housing. While students tour the university and engage in activities on campus, students also visit an additional four-year university in the region during the camp.

Daily evaluation results. The daily evaluations from the 2012 camps revealed pertinent information that helped guide the coordinator and mentors for future camps. The juniors completed evaluation forms for the following types of sessions: being money savvy, time management, services provided by various university centers (writing, career services, health center), writing a college essay, signing up and preparing for the ACT/SAT, a college student panel, a professional development session, and the college tour of another four-year university. The seniors completed evaluation forms for all of these same events, plus presentations related to: college admissions, AP/dual credit courses, completing the state's application for college admissions, financial aid, and a community service project. All participants were also asked to indicate how helpful the mentors were during sessions.

Among the sessions provided to both juniors and seniors, there were two where at least 75% or more of all students indicated they "definitely" learned a lot and "definitely" found the information provided in the session helpful. These two sessions included the college student panel and the university writing center session where students were provided assistance with writing a college essay. There were also three sessions where at least 50% of both juniors and seniors "definitely" learned a lot and "definitely" found the information provided useful. These sessions included the money savvy presentation, the workshop on time management, and the college tour of another four-year university.

Conversely, there were four sessions where an overwhelming majority of juniors (83% or more) indicated they either "definitely" learned a lot or found the information in the session helpful, while only about 50% or fewer seniors found these same sessions to be equally beneficial. Three of the sessions included the university career services and university health center presentations, as well as the professional development workshop where students worked on their resumes. The fourth session was the ACT/SAT presentation, although it is important to note that this topic was covered in only one session for the juniors while the seniors received this information in two KAPLAN-led presentations. It is unclear why the seniors did not find these sessions as beneficial as the juniors. Perhaps seniors were already familiar with the information provided in these sessions or it had more to do with the presenter and their delivery.

There were also some sessions that were solely offered to seniors that were considered very useful by at least 73% of students. These sessions included the financial aid presentation and the workshop on the state's common application for college admissions. Only about 50% of seniors "definitely" found the sessions on college admissions, AP/dual credit courses, and the community service project useful.

Finally, one of the last questions on the daily evaluation form asked student participants to consider whether the mentors were helpful in each session. Overwhelmingly, juniors (80%-100%) and seniors (73%-100%) agreed that the mentors at each event were "definitely" helpful. This positive feedback reiterates the key role that the mentors play in the CAS camp.

Pre- and post-survey results. According to the results from the pre-surveys for the CAS camps of 2012, juniors and seniors often began the camp lacking the same type of college knowledge related to completing a college application, completing the FAFSA, completing a college housing application, and seeking fee waivers for college applications. Fortunately, the post-survey results indicated that students became more knowledgeable in these areas after the camp. Table 4 lists the pre- and post-survey averages for questions on which both juniors and seniors made the most gains accompanied by the difference between these pre- and post-survey averages.

Perspectives of camp staff and student participants. The director and coordinator do believe the camp has been beneficial to student participants. The coordinator stressed how there always seemed to be a strong sense of community and shared experience that developed over the course of the camps: "[the students] enjoyed being on a college campus and feeling a part of something much greater—it gave them a sense of belonging and a feeling of 'I can do this.'" In a news release published on the university's website to advertise the 2013 camp, the perspectives of mentors and camp alumni were captured and indicated the camp's value (Blaschke, 2013). For instance, one of the mentors who had worked for the center several years prior and was key in helping coordinate the camp shared how the intent of the camp was "to build motivation in the students so they can develop a plan for their post-secondary education" and "to show them [student participants] that the college-going process can be done in clear, specific steps, and that anybody can go to college." A female student participant who had attended the 2012 camp and was a high school student in Central City said, "I really enjoyed it. It opened by eyes about college life...and about the opportunities I have with FAFSA." Another male student participant who attended a charter school in the community explained how he had already attended the 2012 camp but intended to participate again in 2013. "I love it. There are too many words to describe it... Everyone is from different backgrounds, but here to learn the same stuff."

Another indication of the general success of the camp has been the reception by families in the community. The coordinator mentioned how the enthusiasm of the early camp participants was shared with other students and their families. As a result, parents are regularly requesting information about the camp before the calendar information for the next camp is even available. This suggests an increase in community knowledge regarding the CAS camp and an increase in discussions regarding college options and resources among families in the community.

Challenges and Areas for Improvement

While the survey data from 2012 indicates that the CAS camp is helping increase students' college knowledge and readiness, the camp stands to improve in a number of ways. For example, indicators of programmatic success and organizational effectiveness for the camp have not been fully determined. It was not until 2012 that the pre- and post-survey to measure the effectiveness of the camp in general was created

Table 4. Pre- and Post-Survey Averages for Questions in Which Students Made the Most Gains

Survey Question	Juniors Pre-	Juniors Post-	Difference	Seniors Pre-	Seniors Post-	Difference
I know about college application fees	2.88	4.80	1.93	2.90	4.80	1.90
I know how to apply for a college scholarship	2.88	4.80	1.93	2.90	4.80	1.90
I know the purpose of FAFSA	2.13	5.00	2.88	2.60	4.70	2.10
I know how to complete a FAFSA	1.63	4.70	3.08	1.90	4.40	2.50
I know what job an advisor has on a college campus	1.63	4.70	3.08	1.90	4.40	2.50
I know how to complete a college housing application	1.63	4.70	3.08	1.90	4.40	2.50
I know how to get a college application fee eliminated	1.63	4.70	3.08	1.90	4.40	2.50
I know about college housing deadlines	1.63	4.70	3.08	1.90	4.40	2.50

and disseminated, in part because the staff for the camp lacked experience and knowledge creating and utilizing such a measure. The staff is eager to establish indicators for programmatic success and organizational effectiveness in order to improve the camp. The coordinator noted, "students learn about college entrance exams, the college application process, and college life, and the camps demystify the process for them. We take their comments every year and try to give them an experience they will come back to if given the chance."

Another important limitation is that tracking of students attending the camp has been non-existent. The director and coordinator acknowledge that although most of the students attending the camp are juniors and seniors, there has not been any effort to follow students through the educational system. For instance, campers are not tracked on application or financial aid status following the camp period. The director and coordinator admit it would be beneficial to identify the information that was most helpful for campers in the long-run, but currently there is no system in place that actually tracks the application process of the students attending the camp. Plus, tracking camp alumni would result in an increased workload for the center's limited staff. Somewhat related to this is the camp's inability to communicate with alumni for the purpose of providing continued support to students. Although the camp staff intend to add a social media component to the program to afford camp participants the opportunity to maintain their relationships with each other and the camp staff even after their camp session ends.

Staff also highlighted the need for additional resources from the university in order to create a fully established CAS camp that can perhaps become residential in nature, or at least provide students with needed transportation to the camp. Making the camp residential would particularly allow more students with limited transportation to attend. With secured financial resources, the schedule for the camp could also be set well in advance. This would eliminate some of the difficulties associated with securing space at the university while competing with other camps and events that take place on the campus during the summer. The enter has had to deal with such challenges for the last three years because funding for the camp is often not secured until the spring or even early summer. Despite this need, the coordinator noted that the current support from the university administration has been remarkable. Her belief is that there would be no program if not for current levels of assistance.

Lessons Learned: Discussion and Implications

Findings from this study have several implications for research and practice. For instance, while similar college outreach programs may also develop quickly, and/or out of community response, it is essential that those involved at the onset take the time to consider underlying assumptions and goals for the program. Ideally, identifying these assumptions and goals should happen prior to the implementation of the program. However, this is not always feasible as was the case with the CAS camp. This initially caused tension for camp staff, as they were simultaneously planning and implementing the first camp. Moreover, if limited by funds and staff, like the CAS camp, seeking additional partnerships with other university faculty and/or staff can be useful in order to increase the human resources needed to carry out

and evaluate such programming. Strategic use of faculty is critical to the long-term survival and success of outreach programs (Laninga, Austin, & McClure, 2011).

Allowing students to play a central role in community-university partnerships contributes to the longevity of the programs (Laninga, Austin, & McClure, 2011). The CAS camp drew upon the assets of current college students from low-income backgrounds at the university by employing them as mentors that could assist with the camp. This staffing choice was based on the assumption that the college students could serve as role models and more easily connect to the high school students at the camp who come from similar backgrounds. Additionally, the use of work-study student staffers allowed the camp to be offered at no cost to the community. This model appears to have proven useful thus far, but stands to be examined further in future research to evaluate the implications of the bi-directional relationships that are formed between mentors and student participants. College outreach programs might consider employing or recruiting current college students to volunteer their time in these efforts. Partnering with student groups such as fraternities or sororities could be ideal, as many require community service hours.

The logistical planning for such programming is always important to consider as well. While held on the university campus, due to limited funds, the CAS camp is not residential in nature. This impacts the number and types of students that are able to attend. It is likely that transportation is a barrier for some economically disadvantaged students that the camp intends to serve. These types of logistical issues must be considered when a college outreach program is organizing their available resources and developing their goals.

As a "key to the development of inclusive outreach practice is considering parental or even family involvement as a fundamental and common practice" (Smith, 2012, p. 21), the CAS camp coordinator and director expressed regret that they did not prioritize parental involvement during the creation of the camp. Not only would the increased involvement of parents and family help incorporate the cultural strengths and experiences of students but could also prepare parents as community advocates (Burbank & Hunter, 2008). This would enhance the community benefit of the CAS camp as parents could "share the information with other parents, neighbors, family members, and friends—[creating] a knowledge ripple effect within the

community" (Burbank & Hunter, 2008, p. 50). Examining ways to involve parents and families in the CAS camp is a necessary step to further develop the camp to serve community needs.

One of the biggest ways in which the CAS camp stands to improve is in its evaluation measures and in the clarification of specific outcomes for the camp. Both the director and the coordinator are aware of this. They have contributed to this case study, and are working towards addressing this need. Thus, the CAS camp staff could stand to benefit from adopting a number of the steps that Tierney (2002) suggests for reflective evaluation of outreach programs such as using "multiple measures of effectiveness" (p. 226), conducting "one discrete evaluation project per year" (p. 227), and creating "an ongoing schema for evaluating cost and communicating effectiveness" (p. 228).

Overall, this case study contributes to the literature base surrounding the development and effectiveness of college access programs that arise based on community needs. As outreach programs like this one emerge across the country, they must consider how their practice can inform research. There is a great deal of planning, organizing, and informal evaluation that often takes place with similar programs yet all of these efforts are not always documented or considered as data for research. In this way, this study, while limited in scope and data, is informing the continued development of the CAS camp itself. Future studies that compare different types of university-based college access programs that are similarly limited in financial and human resources but vary in longevity and design would be useful to help further understand the complexities in developing and implementing such initiatives. Additional investigations should also focus on evaluating the bi-directional benefits and costs of college access programs to participants, mentors, faculty, and staff working in such programs, as well as the community.

Conclusion

Universities "not only create and transmit knowledge, they are also economic engines, applied technology centers, major employers, investors [and] real estate developers" (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, n.d.). In this sense, they are in a unique position to improve their surrounding communities through purposeful collaborations. College outreach activities like the CAS camp that emerge out of community and university partnerships are therefore vital as they

not only serve the institution's own recruitment and diversity agendas, but also "embrace the goal of greater civic engagement" and "create a more equitable and just society in the institution's 'own backyard'" (Smith, 2012, p. 22). As a university-based college access program, the CAS camp provides a type of political and social capital in Central City. Despite its shortcomings and continued challenges, it strives to be more than a "feel-good" program and instead meet the urgent college access and readiness needs of historically underrepresented students in the community. This case study helps substantiate its efforts.

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