

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 395 904

SP 036 703

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 TITLE Disadvantaged Rural Students: Five Models of School-University Collaboration.
 PUB DATE Feb 96
 NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Teacher Educators (76th, St. Louis, MO, February 24-28, 1996).
 PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS American Indian Education; American Indians; Colleges; *College School Cooperation; *Disadvantaged Youth; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Mathematics Teachers; Minority Group Children; Models; *Nontraditional Students; *Partnerships in Education; *Rural Schools; Science Teachers; Teacher Education Programs

IDENTIFIERS *Academic Support Services; Central Washington University; Diversity (Student); Heritage College WA; Jacksonville State University AL; Native Americans; Saginaw Valley State University MI; State University of New York Coll at Plattsburgh; Yakima Valley Community College WA

ABSTRACT

This paper describes five models of school-university collaboration designed to maximize academic achievement opportunities for disadvantaged rural students. Project SHAPE (School and Homes As Partners in Education) at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Plattsburgh is an extended school day program established in partnership with Plattsburgh public schools, parents, community, and university. The Yakima Valley Collaborative Program involves three institutions: Yakima Valley Community College, Heritage College, and Central Washington University. It is designed to meet the needs of older or minority students unable to leave jobs, families, and other responsibilities to travel to the college campus. The Center for Individualized Instruction (CII) at Jacksonville State University (Alabama) is a multi-disciplinary academic support center serving both undergraduate and graduate students. The CII provides computer based instruction, special classes in basic skills, and peer tutoring in core curriculum subjects. The Systemic Teacher Excellence Preparation Project (STEP) at Montana State University is a 5-year project funded by the National Science Foundation to improve the training of K-12 mathematics and science teachers in Montana, in particular Native American teachers. At Saginaw Valley State University (Michigan), applicants from diverse economic, racial, and cultural backgrounds are recruited through a variety of strategies. Initiatives implemented by the College of Education to attract minority candidates include: the Bilingual Education Program; math/science scholarships funded by a grant from the Kellogg Foundation; a cooperative program with Delta College for minority students; and the Young Educators Society for minority middle school students. (Contains 16 reference.) (ND)

DISADVANTAGED RURAL STUDENTS: FIVE MODELS OF SCHOOL-UNIVERSITY COLLABORATION

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Paper presented at the Association of Teacher Educators' 76th Annual Meeting, St. Louis, Missouri, February 24-28, 1996.

Introduction

The problem of maximizing academic achievement opportunities for disadvantaged rural students in the USA continues to be a major concern for many state education departments. (Helge, 1989; Reddick & Peach, 1990; Cuomo, 1991; Dorrell, 1991; DeYoung & Lawrence, 1995). In addition, the college participation rate for disadvantaged students who reside in rural or rural influenced counties tends to represent the lowest levels of enrollment (Herzog & Pittman, 1995). However, in cases where local schools have engaged in various academic partnerships with neighboring universities and colleges, there has been a marked improvement in the post-secondary participation of the students. (See the five models discussed in this paper.)

A number of factors influence a student's desire to attend a college or university. A study by the Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Universities in 1984 found that the most important factors related to a student's economic situation, courses that the student had enrolled in while attending high school, and parental attitudes and preferences toward higher education.

Five models of school-university collaboration that address these and other issues are presented in this paper: the proposed Schools and Homes As Partners in Education (SHAPE) program at SUNY Plattsburgh; the Yakima Valley Collaborative Program at Central Washington University; the Center for Individualized Instruction at Jacksonville State University; the Systemic Teacher Excellence Preparation Project (STEP) at Montana State University; and the Young Educators Society (YES) at Saginaw Valley State

University. The models illustrate various approaches that have been used to provide increased scholastic opportunities through skill development programs, parental participation, and conflict resolution counseling for disadvantaged rural students.

Project SHAPE (Schools and Homes As Partners in
Education) SUNY at Plattsburgh

The purpose of Project SHAPE is to address more fully the academic, social, and emotional needs of "children of promise" through collaboration and partnership of public schools, parents, community, and university in the establishment of an extended school day program. The main focus of the extended day program is the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual growth and well-being of children K-8. The program offers a wide range of activities capitalizing on the interests and learning strengths of individual children; it aims to nurture each child's individuality and provide the warmth and attention children need to mature both academically and non-academically.

Students who are two or more years behind their peers in reading and who participate in free or reduced lunches will be targeted specifically. One hundred children K-8 from six schools in the Plattsburgh City School District will be selected to participate during the course of the year. Each participant will spend two afternoons a week in a seven-week program of academics, recreation, counseling, and community field trips facilitated by graduate students, college staff, and supervised and designed by

university consultants in conjunction with the expertise and advice of parents and caregivers. Three workshops for parents will be offered during each program cycle.

Collaboration. The proposed program will provide coordinated services from the Plattsburgh City School District, SUNY Plattsburgh, members of the parent community and community-at-large, and Champlain Valley Family Services. Since collaboration is a key element in the success of the program, the project was designed with suggestions from the Plattsburgh City School District superintendent, college faculty and administrators, the high school resource room teacher, personnel from the Champlain Valley Family Services, and the Chapter I Parent Council in the Plattsburgh City School District. Graduate students within the reading program, many of who are currently teaching in local schools, also contributed ideas. In addition, six reading teachers from the school district will be provided release time one time per seven-week cycle for the purpose of collaborating with college faculty and graduate assistants. These individuals will also be contributing to the implementation, monitoring, and assessment of the project. The community of Plattsburgh will serve as a resource through the active involvement of parents, guest speakers, a health care specialist, and consultants as well as providing numerous opportunities for field trips.

The Program. The program offers an extended day program from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. for grades K-8, Mondays through Thursdays, in the Center for Educational Studies and Services, Sibley Hall. (During the summer four-week session, the program will be offered from

9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., Monday-Thursday.) Each level (K-8) will be supervised by a reading faculty member who will coordinate academic content, procedures and program assessment. The K-8 program will focus on the following key areas:

1. Reading diagnosis and academic tutoring in reading by three graduate students (who are working on reading specialist credentials) and three reading assistants (certified in reading) under the direct supervision of college reading faculty.

2. Strengthening academic and study skills in other subject areas as needed.

3. Oral and silent reading.

4. Storytelling, working with computers, arts and crafts, recreation, and special activities within the community offered by consultants working with the project.

The SHAPE project promises to be the forerunner of future educational initiatives at SUNY Plattsburgh designed to assist disadvantaged students through school-university collaboration.

The Yakima Valley Collaborative Program Central Washington University

Eight years ago, three colleges in the central portion of Washington state began discussions that resulted in a four year teacher degree program for place bound students. The three institutions involved in this collaborative program are Yakima Valley Community College (YVCC), a two year state institution located in Yakima, Washington; Heritage College, a four year private

institution located on the edge of the Yakima Indian Reservation south of Yakima; and Central Washington University (CWU). All three of the colleges are involved in the course work that results in the BA degree.

This program grew out of the demand to meet the needs of older or minority students who were not able to leave jobs, families, or other responsibilities to travel to the college campus. Local legislators and the Higher Education coordinating board were interested in meeting the needs of this under-served population. Students had been attending YVCC to obtain certification for day care and preschool licenses, but because of family, financial, or distance reasons, they were not able to continue their education at a four year institution to obtain a B^A and teaching certification. Because the classes are held in the late afternoon and early evening and are in one location, most students are able to maintain much needed jobs or attend to family needs. The average age of the student population is 36 years and a very high percentage is single mothers.

The program negotiated among the three colleges divided the responsibilities for course work so that each college carries a portion on a rotating basis. Students do their first two years of course work at YVCC. They graduate with an AA Degree with a strong background in early childhood education. The next two years are shared between CWU and Heritage. The courses are taught in the evening on YVCC's campus. CWU teaches juniors one quarter while Heritage teaches seniors and then the colleges switch.

Because the classes are held in Yakima, the surrounding school districts have also been helpful in providing classrooms for observations, practica, and student teaching. These districts are also very eager to hire the graduates of this collaborative program. The districts have been involved and have seen the amount of field-based experience and types of course work these students receive.

The students enter the second two years as a cohort group. This provides them with a strong support system on which they learn to rely. It also gives the instructors a wonderful opportunity to engage in cooperative learning. Because the course sequence has been worked out and is set for the junior and senior years, instructors find that there is less going back and repeating or reteaching of material. The work builds on previous work and allows for much more material to be covered in classes. The partnerships being built with the teachers in the field has also helped to bring new methods and techniques into existing classrooms.

Each quarter, the three colleges meet to discuss scheduling, fees, course work, and any other problems that may have arisen. By collaboratively working together, all major problems have thus far been worked out. The program does not duplicate existing programs at the private college and allows students to further their early childhood course work and receive endorsements in early childhood education and elementary education. Special Education is being added due to the need for people endorsed in the area.

This collaborative program is a partnership between colleges, school districts, practicing teachers, instructors, and students. It has been a winning experience for everyone involved.

Center for Individualized Instruction (CII)
Jacksonville State University

Jacksonville State University (JSU) is a state-supported, regional, coeducational university serving northeast Alabama and northwest Georgia. This is a predominantly rural area. Atlanta and Birmingham are the only two metropolitan areas from which the university draws many students. First-generation college students comprise nearly one-half of the freshman class each year.

JSU offers a variety of developmental education services to assist students in developing academic skills, mastering the core curriculum, passing an English competency examination, and pursuing subject matter specific to their areas of interest. These developmental education services include the Center for Individualized Instruction (CII), a summer program called "Experiencing Student Success in Education and Life" (ExSel), and developmental courses in the academic departments.

The Center for Individualized Instruction provides the majority of the developmental education services available at Jacksonville State. Originally, in 1976, it was funded under Title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965. Since 1988 the university has supported it entirely. The CII is a multipurpose, multidisciplinary academic support center serving both undergraduate and graduate students. It provides computer-based instruction, special classes in basic skills, and peer tutoring in core curriculum subjects. In addition, the center offers specialized services for selected groups

of students, including the learning disabled and student athletes. The CII employs instructional strategies such as precision teaching, cooperative learning, computer-assisted instruction, peer tutoring, and a personalized system of instruction. The staff engages student clients in intensive interpersonal interaction. All skills' classes offered by the center are in competency-based mastery learning formats.

Over 23,000 students have passed through the CII since 1980. The center's director estimates that three-fourths of those students have come from rural homes. The CII carefully monitors the progress of each student and evaluates the effectiveness of the program through the collection of learning outcome data. The center is available to all JSU students, and faculty is encouraged to refer students for assistance.

The Experiencing Student Success in Education and Life (ExSEL) program began in the summer of 1993. Currently, it is a six-week residential summer program of developmental education for high-risk students conducted by the staff of the Center of Individualized Instruction. It consists of 12 semester hours of courses emphasizing study skills, basic skills, reasoning skills, and skills for adjustment to college. Successful completion of the competency-based program enables students to enroll at JSU in the following fall semester as conditionally-admitted students. Conditionally-admitted students must include a freshman orientation class and an academic survival skills class in their schedules.

Academic departments at JSU offer courses for disadvantaged, underprepared undergraduate students. Their offerings include basic English skills, writing skills, intermediate algebra, and developmental courses in chemistry and physics.

Jacksonville State University recruits students from northeast Alabama and northwest Georgia which are essentially rural areas. University recruiters make regular visits to rural high schools and to the junior colleges which also serve the region. These recruiters are aware of the developmental education services provided by the university and provide prospective students with brochures describing them. The university's reputation for serving first-generation college students from rural Alabama and Georgia is well-known in the region, especially by high school counselors. Now, according to the director of the Center for Individualized Instruction, JSU has begun to enroll the children of students who used the university's developmental education services a generation ago.

Systemic Teacher Excellence Preparation Project (STEP) Montana State University

The definition of under-served population in Montana is definitely Native American. The Systemic Teacher Excellence Preparation Project (STEP) is designed to help Native Americans and all mathematics and science teachers in the state of Montana.

STEP is a five-year NSF funded project for the improvement of the training of K-12 mathematics and science teachers in Montana.

Funding for this project began in June 1993. During the first six months of the project, the following activities involving tribal colleges and nearby K-12 schools took place:

July 1993 - Representatives from the five tribal colleges to originally join STEP met in Great Falls with the project co-directors. Preliminary discussions took place regarding the establishment of model mathematics/science teaching labs at the tribal colleges, the recruitment and preparation of future mathematics and science teachers, and the development and delivery of courses by teams of tribal college and university system faculty.

September 1993 - Tribal college and university faculty met for two days in Polson, MT and at Salish Kootenai College to create guidelines for the STEP evaluation and to begin planning joint teacher preparation activities. STEP staff visited the Little Big Horn College to discuss the coordination of STEP with LBHC's FINEST grant.

October 1993 - The five tribal colleges originally participating in STEP (Blackfeet, Fort Belknap, Fort Peck, Little Big Horn and Salish Kootenai) were joined by Stone Child College. STEP staff visited Fort Peck College and nearby K-12 schools to discuss coursework and careers in mathematics and science teaching. NSF Division of Undergraduate Education Director Robert Watson (whose division oversees STEP), visited U of M and Salish Kootenai College.

November 1993 - Representatives from four tribal colleges attended a meeting in Bozeman with the project co-directors and STEP's NSF program officer Terry Woodin. The STEP co-directors visited four tribal colleges to discuss each site's plans for a model

math/science teaching lab, to learn about teacher training programs started at some sites, and to gather recommendations for the team-designed distance learning courses to be developed through STEP. Campuses visited included SKC, FBC, SCC and BCC. It was agreed that three distance learning courses would be planned during spring 1994 and offered next year for tribal college credit. The three courses are: Mathematics for Elementary Teachers, Introductory Chemistry and Environmental Science. Course planning teams consisting of 3-4 tribal college and university faculty have been formed, but additional team members are welcome.

December 1993 - Planning teams for the three "first round" distance delivery courses met in Bozeman to participate in a day-long meeting on telecommunications. Activities included AIRONET training, a demonstration of data and imagery available through INTERNET, and a demonstration of how the SHARE VISION system can be used to allow users at two sites (in this case SKC and MSU), to hold an "on camera" discussion or work together on the same computer program. Preliminary screening for STEP's model K-12 schools program took place on December 9. At least four of the eight sites selected will have significant Native American populations, and several of these will be located on or near a reservation. It is expected that negotiations with finalists will be wrapped up by early January, and that awardees will be announced later that month. STEP will work with these sites to develop exemplary programs in mathematics and science teaching, and in student teacher supervision. The sites will host student teachers from all the STEP campuses.

Winter/Spring 1994 - A preliminary planning meeting for representatives from the K-12 model sites will be held in Helena in early February. The three course planning teams will pilot segments of the courses to be offered next year. MSU academic advisor Nancy Evans will visit all interested tribal colleges to advise students planning to enter teacher training programs at any of the Montana University System campuses (U of M, MSU, Eastern, Western or Northern). She will meet with students in groups and also set up individual advising appointments.

Summer 1994 - Mathematics and science faculty at STEP tribal college campuses are invited to participate in a funded month-long workshop to be held at MSU from June 13 - July 8. Participants will study advanced mathematics and science topics for graduate credit and will continue to work with university faculty on the planning and delivery of courses needed by future K-12 mathematics and science teachers. Science and mathematics teaching students from Blackfeet College will attend an intensive 6-8 week pre-calculus and physics workshop at MSU. It is expected that limited space will be available for interested undergraduates from other tribal colleges.

Saginaw Valley State University

At Saginaw Valley State University, applicants from diverse economic, racial and cultural backgrounds are recruited through a wide variety of recruitment strategies. At the basic level, these strategies are undertaken by the Office of Admissions through a

variety of initiatives, projects and efforts. At the advanced level, these strategies are carried out by the Office of the Dean of the College of Education. Strategies for seeking applicants from diverse economic, racial and cultural backgrounds include 1) special programs, 2) local and regional advertising, 3) scholarships and financial aid and 4) target recruitment. Recruitment is promoted through a variety of strategies and services by various offices. This promotion includes mail recruitment campaigns, high school visits, and open houses throughout the State of Michigan and target areas outside of Michigan, financial aid information sessions in high schools, and college nights throughout Michigan. In order to communicate with prospective students in mid-Michigan, members of the Office of Admissions are physically located in identified centers.

Efforts are also made to identify and attract students from diverse economic, racial and cultural backgrounds by the staff of the Minority Student Service Office. Counselors in this office visit high schools, community colleges, churches, Indian Reservations and other locations to recruit minority students to SVSU and to Teacher Education programs. They also assist these students with financial aid, admission, housing, and selection of courses, and help them in their adjustment to college life.

Brochures, handbooks, newsletters and other printed material are designed and updated regularly to show that SVSU has a culturally diverse student population, and that we are interested in attracting and serving international students and minority students.

Pictures of minority students are included in such printed material as shown in the 1992-94 SVSU Catalog.

The nature and geographic distribution of the student population enhance cultural diversity. For example, in Saginaw, a primary site for the delivery of unit programs, students from a variety of cultural, economic and geographical backgrounds are enrolled in basic and advanced programs. This diversity of students is encouraged at the Saginaw and Macomb service sites.

The College of Education implemented several initiatives to attract minority candidates to its basic and advanced programs. Some initiatives are specific to the unit; some initiatives have been developed in consort with the University or with other institutions. Each initiative is discussed below for either the basic or advanced programs.

Bilingual Education Program. The Bilingual/Bicultural Education Program provides reimbursement funds for tuition and books to all undergraduate (basic) students seeking bilingual education endorsement and who qualify for the program. There are approximately 55 students in the program, and there are 60 spaces available. Applicants are recruited to the program by presentations to students in local and regional high schools through informational brochures and other literature, and through on-campus programs and activities which explain the program.

Kellogg Math/Science Grant. Scholarship funds are available through a grant from the Kellogg Foundation to minority students interested in teaching mathematics or science.

Delta College Programs. A program has been developed in consort with Delta College, a two-year community college located in close proximity to SVSU, whereby minority students interested in teacher education can complete the first 62 credits of their program at Delta College and the remainder at SVSU. The program includes special counseling from an SVSU staff member and assistance from Delta College.

Young Educators Society (YES). The Young Educators Society (YES) is a statewide program focused at minority young people beginning in junior high/middle school and working with them through the high school years to attract them to teacher education. The unit has given ongoing support to the involvement with YES each semester by hosting the local chapter with a workshop, presentations or other appropriate activities. Also, the unit hosted the annual statewide YES Executive Board Meeting on campus in April, 1991.

Wade-McCree Scholarship/Incentive Program. The Wade-McCree Scholarship/Incentive Program is a State of Michigan scholarship program which provides funds to minority candidates during their first four years of undergraduate study. Appropriate candidates are recruited by public school personnel and paired with a university faculty mentor who works with the student throughout the junior high school and/or high school years. At SVSU, the candidates are paired primarily with faculty in the unit to not only influence them to attend SVSU, but to attract them into pursuing teaching as a career choice.

Admissions Counselor. The University has hired an admissions counselor whose major responsibility is to recruit minority

students to the undergraduate program. The unit has encouraged the counselor to focus on minority candidates who display an interest in teaching.

Field-based Experiences. The Department of Teacher Education, as described previously, has extensive field-based experiences. When students from the teacher education programs are placed in culturally diverse schools, they prove to be excellent ambassadors for the programs and serve as a mechanism for attracting qualified applicants.

Conclusion

The composition of the student body represented in the five programs discussed in this paper is largely rural, and ranges in age from kindergarten through high school to adult, with a good proportion of minority students including Native American, African American, Hispanic and Appalachian white.

The students are usually in one of the programs because they qualify as disadvantaged or are unable to commute to a college campus to participate in college bound programs. Many are also underachieving and lack motivation or need assistance with basic literacy and study skills.

The programs cover a wide range of offerings both for credit and non-credit at the undergraduate and graduate levels, including academic subjects, recreational activities, counseling, literacy development, basic learning skills, core curriculum subjects, self-esteem and telecommunications. Financial aid and advice are also an important aspect of most programs.

All of the programs arose out of the perceived educational needs of rural students by educators and caregivers who were aware of the difficulties often posed by time and distance to an earnest desire by students to improve their education. The programs attempted to create equal opportunities for the students to achieve to their fullest potential.

It is hoped that as further improvements in telecommunication and education delivery systems occur, more initiatives and programs for rural students will be developed that allow them the opportunity to both enjoy a high quality of life in an environment of their choice and also improve their access to the full educational offerings provided by a global network of information and services.

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