

Strategic Plan – Initiative Work Plan FY2015

Initiative Name Pre-College Date 5.14.2014

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Thesis Statement: In order to positively impact retention and 4 year graduation rates, we must begin working with students as early as middle school to adequately prepare them academically, financially, and socially for college.

1. Introduction/Background – What?

In fall 2007, 72.09% of the students who enrolled as freshmen at Indiana State University were between the ages of 17 and 19. It is safe to assume that a majority of these students enrolled at ISU almost immediately after completing their high school education and that many of them, especially those who are the first in their family to attend college, relied on school resources – special programs, teachers, counselors, administrators, etc. – for information about college. Influencing students early and often in their educational experiences would help to spark their interest in ISU as their college of choice.

This initiative has been focused on building on the extensive array of marketing and communication plans already in place for high school juniors and seniors, to include support and communication for students as early as 8th grade. Starting a relationship with students in middle school will strengthen our ties to these students and their families and encourage them to consider ISU as a strong choice in their college planning.

In particular, high need families require a heightened level of support and assistance to see a future that includes a college education. From a financial aid perspective, high-need students are defined as students with limited access to funding sources, or a low Expected Family Contribution as indicated on the FAFSA. Such students make up 52% of the ISU undergraduate population and are the students most at risk of stop out or withdrawal before achieving the goal of a college degree. Additional supports are needed to help these students prepare BEFORE they arrive on campus in August. An earlier start in providing the information and guidance these families need, coupled with a progressive, coaching approach to information sharing, will increase their knowledge, comfort, and overall preparedness for college.

2. Proposal/Purpose/Justification – Why?

The goal of the Pre-College initiative is twofold:

- to connect early with students and their parents, to develop a college-going culture, particularly for students who might not otherwise see college as an option (first generation and/or low income students/families)

- to increase the rate of students in the region who matriculate to ISU and graduate in 4 years

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Students (and their parents) need to begin considering college as a possibility well before they reach the junior or senior year. The greatest obstacles are typically a belief that they cannot afford college and/or basic lack of information and exposure to college in general. By building on current pre-college efforts we are creating a targeted plan to address financial literacy and basic understanding of higher education opportunities, ISU will:

1. connect early and often with students and parents
2. prepare students for a future that includes a college education
3. develop a relationship with students and families such that Indiana State is at the top of the list as they near graduation and consider college options

Working with families that have little to no college experience often requires a concerted effort to remove any stigmas or perceived barriers before the student reaches high school, thus eliminating the intimidation factor that many associate with higher education. Pre-college efforts will bring down these barriers, creating a culture of support and a wealth of resources and information allowing student and parents to approach college enrollment prepared and confident. We have developed a plan that includes audience-specific informational materials, both print and online, that span through middle school and the early high school years (freshman and sophomore years). As the needs of students and parents change over time, so do the methods and content of the pre-college initiative components.

This work plan includes components that focus on middle school (grades 7-8) and early high school (grades 9-10). Basic elements of the plan are classified as follows:

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

Goal: Get middle school students excited about college! Strengthen the connection with students and begin to expose them to college academics and campus life. Also, continue to the feed information and planning material to parents to build a relationship of support and encouragement that will help them help their children as they approach high school.

Complete phase II of the new, pre-college website: COLLEGE+YOU, which was developed using strategic plan funds obtained last year. The site targets middle school students in a unique way, involving a great deal of information and advice that come directly from current ISU students, making it relatable and less intimidating for the target audience. Phase I of the website uses predominantly text and some photos to convey information. Phase II will incorporate video production and photo shoots for additional visuals and interaction that speak to the audience, as well as contracted professional editing.

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EARLY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Goal: Get high school freshmen, sophomores, and juniors to begin planning for college and strengthen their connection with ISU before the flood of college marketing materials begin to hit their mailbox in the junior year. Also, continue to feed information and planning material to parents such that they see ISU as not only a valuable resource, but a partner. Promote college-going activities, such as enrollment in College Challenge dual credit courses. Increase opportunities for students to earn college credit in high school by partnering with new schools and adding new CC teachers.

Re-print the postcard developed last year to be mailed to the prospect database (currently 43,103 for 201605 and 3,684 for 201705) offering a free ISU t-shirt for responding online. The online form will gather student contact information and move them through the admissions funnel from prospect to inquiry, triggering an e-mail communication plan. An ISU t-shirt will be mailed to each student who responds to the postcard mailing by completing the online form. The purpose behind the mailing and t-shirt give-away is to get students to interact with us earlier, moving through the admission funnel from prospect (a purchased name from College Board or another provider) to inquiry (a student who has interacted/contacted ISU). Students who remain in the prospect pool do not apply, so it is important to get them to take that first step by interacting with ISU. ****NOTE: We recommend that this piece of the Initiative 12A work be mainstreamed to the Office of Admissions with a budget allotment to cover the cost. If it is not mainstreamed to Admission for 2014-15, then we would like to request the funding as part of this budget request.**

Increase the number of partner high schools and teachers offering College Challenge courses, by providing tuition assistance for high school teachers to meet ISU credential requirements. Typically, one must have a master's in discipline in order to teach for the University. High school teachers do not generally have a master's degree, as it is not an IDOE requirement, nor is there a pay incentive for them to pursue graduate coursework. The lack of incentive makes it difficult for teachers to justify the time and expense of pursuing the degree. With tuition assistance, many high school teachers would be willing to take on the work to complete a master's in order to teach College Challenge courses, thereby expanding dual credit opportunities for Indiana high school students.

3. Discussion of Past Years Results – Benchmark Successes?

The Benchmark data indicates that Initiative 12A efforts this past year have been extremely successful:

- College Challenge total course enrollment for 2013-14 was 1812, which is 63% above the year-end goal of 1110, and reflects an increase of 38% over last year.
- College Challenge students earned 4971 credit hours; 27% over the year-end goal of 3900 credits, and an increase of 35% over last year.
- Rate of College Challenge student who matriculate- while we've seen tremendous growth in College Challenge enrollment, we will continue to work on matriculating College Challenge course completers. We fell short of the goal this year by 1%. We added monthly on-campus events for College Challenge students this year to help convert CC students to matriculates.

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We will begin to see in the fall how these campus visits impact recruitment of College Challenge students. In Fall 2013, 24% of students who completed a College Challenge course last year enrolled as members of our freshman class.

- Increase freshman new student enrollment- The impact of the 12A Pre-College Initiative on freshman enrollment will not be measurable until current 8th to 10th graders graduate from high school; at least 201605. However, we will continue to track overall progress on freshman enrollment.
- Early Outreach Events- Ten early outreach events have been completed this year, to date. These events included five curriculum/advising events for 8th graders preparing for high school (hundreds of 8th graders attended these events in Vigo, Clay and Vermillion counties), and 7 group on-campus visits for current College Challenge classes (171 students participated in these CC group visits).

Details regarding the specific objectives/actions for the last year follow:

1. **DEVELOPMENT OF A PRE-COLLEGE MICROSITE:** The 12A team contracted with MarketAbility (Jen Perry and Deb Keay) to develop content for an interactive website designed to target students in 8th to 10th grade to provide them with information that their specific demographic will find valuable and engaging. The COLLEGE+YOU website has been developed and is in final editing this week. Content development began in the fall with surveys and interviews of current students to gather direct quote content which speaks to potential future student from the perspective of current college students. The site incorporates pictures as well as interactive components where 8th to 10th graders can connect and communicate back with us to bring the content to life. *Marketability* began this project with focus groups of 8th to 10th graders. They got feedback from the students on our existing website and forms of communication, and extensive feedback on what they like and dislike about the manners in which colleges communicate to students. The overall theme of the responses was that they hate being “marketed” to, and it shuts them down immediately- they are very skeptical about what is presented to them in most publications, and they have a very skewed image of what college is really like, based on what they see in the media today. The goal of the website is to clear up the misconceptions and biases, and speak to these students in an honest and straight-forward manner about the realities of college and how to prepare for their future. Our approach with the website is to follow the examples of the types of social media these students use daily. Information they can quickly skim and still get valuable content; check lists, reminders, visuals, questions they can respond to, etc. All of which have been written in a tone that will connect with them on a personal level. We love the content, tone, and design and plan to go live by June 1st after a few minor edits are completed.
2. **DEVELOPMENT OF NEW STUDENT COMMUNICATIONS AND PRINT MATERIALS:** a new postcard mailer was created and sent out to 46,183 prospects for 201605 and 2017 05. The postcard invited the students to visit a specific webpage to provide additional information about them and to receive a free ISU t-shirt. As of May 23rd, Admissions has mailed out 2,000 t-shirts, and anticipates that another 600-700 will be mailed out over the summer. These

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2,000 students have now moved up the admissions funnel from Prospects to Inquiries, and are now in the regular communication flow from the Admissions Office. The 46,183 names were purchased lists of students who have completed PSAT and/or ACT. Also, a print publication, “Explore ISU: Flight A Magazine for Future Sycamores” has been created in partnership with the Office of Communications and Marketing. The piece targets students in 8th grade and will be used in the Fall 2014.

3. ENHANCED OUTREACH EFFORTS IN GARY AND INDIANAPOLIS: The Office of Admission has continued to provide a visible presence in these key recruitment areas. Each of these communities has been assigned veteran admission personnel. In the case of Lake County, ISU supports a regional representative who lives in the county and is a regular presence at target schools and communities. In the Indianapolis area, an Admissions Coordinator makes strategic visits and follow ups to schools, community agencies and groups. These staff members have coordinated several bus trips for large groups of students to visit our campus and meet with key faculty and staff. In addition, in collaboration with the Alumni Association, the Office of Admission has coordinated regional events in these areas, and several others, to further establish a personal connection with students at different points of the college process. These connects have proven to better advise and direct students through both the college search and admissions funnel.
4. INCREASED PROMOTION OF COLLEGE CHALLENGE DUAL CREDIT PROGRAMMING: Promotion for, and awareness of, the College Challenge program has increased considerably over the last year. Staff attend many high school and middle school events, curriculum fairs, and programs to present to groups and connect with families one-on-one. In Vigo County, ISU partnered with the school corporation in securing \$360,000 in Innovation Grant funding to better prepare high school students for college. A significant portion of these funds were used to grow the array of College Challenge courses available to Vigo County students, and thus the number of students receiving dual credit in high school. As a result of the various promotional efforts, the College Challenge enrollment continues to increase, along with SCH. Increased program promotion has contributed to growth in terms of:
 - a. Partner high schools (up 70% in 2 years)
 - b. Approved College Challenge teachers (added 33 new teachers)
 - c. Courses available for partnership (added 17 new CC courses)
 - d. Participating academic units (brought 8 new disciplines on board for CC course offerings)

4. Work Plan, Next Fiscal Year – Action Steps – Process – How?

Summer 2014

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- A. Contract with MarketAbility to provide photo, video and editing services for phase II of website. Begin video and photo collection.
- B. Develop communications to promote tuition assistance for high school teachers who require graduate coursework in order to teach College Challenge courses.
- C. Send out initial mailing to high school administrators to inform them of the tuition assistance opportunity.

Fall 2014

- A. Visit middle schools to meet with administrator, teachers, and students to promote the new COLLEGE+YOU website.
- B. Take advantage of the excitement around move-in day and the first week of the fall semesters with video and photo shoots. Complete video and photo collection by October 1 and begin selecting and editing footage and photos for website. Finalize editing and post videos and new photos to website by December 19th such that phase II is complete for student use when the return from holiday break.
- C. As teachers return to schools, begin promotional push for graduate course enrollment with tuition assistance. Visit high schools to meet with teachers and administrators to prepare teachers for graduate enrollment. Request all applications (and various supplemental materials) by October 31st for enrollment in Spring 2015 courses.
- D. Process enrollments and tuition assistance paperwork for teachers enrolling in Spring 2015 courses.

Spring 2015

- A. Purchase student contact info (from ACT and College Board) for Postcard/t-shirt mailing, print postcards, design and order t-shirt (complete by March 15th) Send out postcard mailing and follow t-shirt mailings, and initiate email communications to respondents.
- B. Additional promotion for teacher tuition assistance for summer course enrollment. Request all applications (and supplemental materials) to be submitted by March 31st.
- C. Process enrollments and tuition assistance paperwork for teachers enrolling in Summer 2015 courses (February-May).

5. Reporting and Deliverable Schedule – When?

Date	Action	Responsible Area
Summer 2014 (as soon as budget request is approved)	Sign contract with MarketAbility for Phase II of COLLEGE+YOU website	Communications & Marketing
Summer 2014 (as soon as budget request is approved)	Develop communication plan to notify high school teachers of tuition assistance available	Extended Learning

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Summer 2014 (as soon as budget request is approved)	Send high school administrator mailing re: tuition assistance for teachers	Extended Learning
August 2014	Begin promotional push to teachers for tuition assistance opportunity for spring/summer course enrollment	Extended Learning
Mid-August to October 2014	Video and Photo shoots during move-in day and early-fall term	MarketAbility
October-December 2014	Finalize editing and post new videos/photos to website	MarketAbility/Marketing and Communications
September-November 2014	Visit middle schools to promote use of COLLEGE+YOU website tool	Admissions/Extended Learning
September-November 2014	Process enrollments and tuition assistance paperwork for teachers enrolling in spring courses.	Extended Learning
January 2015	College Board/ACT name purchase for postcard mailing	Admissions
January- March 2015	Create and order postcards and t-shirts for mailing	Admissions
January- March 2015	Additional high school visits and promotion for teacher tuition assistance for summer course enrollment	Extended Learning
February- May 2015	Process enrollments and tuition assistance paperwork for teachers enrolling in summer courses.	Extended Learning
April 2015	Send postcard mailing, and follow-up t-shirt mailings to respondents	Admissions
Summer 2015	Begin email communication to postcard mailing respondents	Admissions

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6. Budget – How Much, a General Discussion of Funds Use?

A. Early Prospecting T-shirt Mailing:

201705 & 201805 prospects name purchase	48,000				
Postcard printing	48,000	@	0.0922	4,416	
Postcard postage	48,000	@	0.2	9,600	(USPS)
subtotal				14,016	
T-shirt printing	3,000	@	2.5	7,500	bid
T-shirt envelopes	3,000	@	0.25	750	Staples
T-shirt postage	3,000	@	2.85	8,550	USPS
subtotal				16,800	
TOTAL PROJECT COST				\$30,816	

B. COLEGE+YOU website, Phase II work:

Description: Photo and video captured and edited by MarketAbility.

Cost: \$5,000

C. Teacher Scholarships/Tuition Assistance:

Description: Based on the Innovation Grant experience, we have enrolled 13 teachers in 28 courses between spring and summer 2014 in Vigo County alone. Based on those numbers and accessibility of funds to schools beyond Vigo, we would like to obtain funding sufficient to assist 15 teachers at 6 graduate credits each, plus associated fees. *(Figure is based on a projected tuition rate of \$383 per credit hour plus \$100 in fees per student.)*

Cost: \$36,000

TOTAL BUDGET REQUEST= \$71,816

7. Stakeholders and Management Plan – Who?

The Early Outreach work plan elements will be carried out as a joint effort between Admissions, Extended Learning, and Marketing and Communications. See timeline table above under Reporting and Deliverables.

8. Outcome Assessment & Future Testing

Traffic on the COLLEGE+YOU website (down to individual page views) will be tracked to determine how effectively the site is capturing the interest of our target audience. We will also track teacher

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enrollment in graduate courses to work toward credential requirements for College Challenge. This will be monitored daily and can be reported on weekly/monthly/whatever the need may be for assessment purposes. It is likely, however, that most teachers who choose to take advantage of the tuition assistance will choose to do so in the summer, due to their teaching schedule. With the Innovation Grant, we saw 6 teachers enroll in 8 courses in the spring, while 10 teachers enrolled in 20 courses for summer.

While some aspects can be challenging to assess in the short term because they are specifically “early outreach”, the increased visibility and resulting ISU awareness and student preparation will positively impact our recruiting and retention efforts down the road. Using Talisma, Admissions will be able to track students from initial contact (whether it might be an online form submitted in response to the early high school postcard mailing or a connection made with a student on the COLLEGE+YOU website) through to application and registration. As students (or their parents) submit their contact information via the new website, and freshmen and sophomores complete the online form for a free ISU t-shirt, we will be able to compare the number of inquiries to previous years, and compare the conversion rate of prospects to inquiries. We intend to complete the early high school postcard mailing in April, and would have initial results on mailing response (in terms of the number of students who move through the Admissions funnel from prospect to inquiry) by June 1, 2015. Moving students through the funnel to inquiries is critical. If they don’t interact with ISU they will not apply to ISU; and the earlier the interaction, the more time they have to prepare for enrollment.

All students who interact with ISU, regardless of their grade level, will be tracked in Talisma. As these students reach what would typically be the first semester in college, Admissions will be able to track back to the initial contact in order to verify effectiveness of the plan elements and determine the impact of our early outreach. Further, utilizing student and parent surveys, we can compare the effectiveness of early outreach efforts and their impact on incoming freshmen.

9. Line Item Budget Discussion that tracks Budget Templates ...

(These sections also need to be as long as is necessary to articulate each of the budget line items.)

The Initiative 12a work budget request is divided between 3 budget line items:

- A. **Graduate Student Tuition: \$36,000-** these funds will be utilized to provide high school teachers with scholarships for graduate courses that they require in order to meet ISU credential standards so they can teach in the College Challenge Program. Assisting these teachers through scholarship will grow the College Challenge program in terms of participating high schools, participating teachers within current partner high schools, courses available for enrollment, student credit hours earned, and ultimately student success. Funds will cover tuition for up to 6 graduate credit hours plus fees for up to 15 teachers in the 2014-15 academic year.
- B. **Supplies/Expenses: \$35,816-** This amount will be split as follows:
 - I. \$5,000 for photo and video shoots and editing for phase II of the COLLEGE+YOU early outreach website. Phase I was completed in the current academic year, and we are

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now ready to add the video component, as well as high quality photos of young students, consistent with our target audience. The current cache of photos available does not include a very large selection of photos featuring young teens. In order to connect with middle schools students, the website must be reflective age appropriate pictures. *Marketability* has provided us with a quote of \$5,000 to gather the video and photos, and provide editing services.

- II. \$30,816 will be utilized to printing and postage to cover the early outreach mailing. If this portion of the initiative is to be mainstreamed into Admission for 2014-15, then this portion of this request will not be needed for the Initiative 12a work plan. The Admissions Office will need a budget increase to support the cost of the mailing, if it is mainstreamed.

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