

Project: Parent and Families Initiative

Start Date: 7/1/2012

Project Managers: Paula Meyer and Freda Luers

Introduction/Background – What?:

Parents, siblings and other family members serve as major stakeholders and sources of support for our students. The work group has targeted the strategies listed below as a way of increasing and centralizing the University's interaction with these stakeholders and makes, them true "parent partners" for the upcoming year.

More than 60% of our first year students are first generation college students. Parents of first generation students are in unfamiliar territory. They want to support their student, but they need additional support to learn the University system, its language and processes.

In fall 2010, 63.6% of undergraduate students at Indiana State University were 25 years old or younger. Students in this age group – the Millennial generation – often share close relationships with their parents, and those relationships continue when the students begin their college studies. Parents today are playing a much larger role in their students' lives than in the recent past. Veteran as well as first generation parents play an important role in keeping their student in school. It is our goal to get them engaged with Indiana State and give them the information they need to guide their student and feel like a member of the ISU Community.

Proposal/Purpose/Justification – Why?:

Our positive interactions through a variety of programs with parents and family members can prove to be an invaluable resource in helping to keep students in college.

This initiative relates most directly to:

- *Increase Enrollment and Student Success
- *Community Engagement

Work Plan – Action Steps – Process – How?:

- 1) Continue to develop a robust Parent and Families website and companion Facebook page: this give parents a variety of resources whenever they need it to answer their questions or help guide their student.
- 2) Our first two Parent Surveys provided very useful feedback and insight concerning parent expectations, needs and opinions. For this reason, we plan to conduct an annual parent survey.

- 3) In addition to interacting with Parents and Families during Orientation, we continue to work with First Year programs to provide resource materials for younger siblings/children that are attending New Student Orientation with their brother or sister/parent. These materials will include coloring pages, crayons, etc. We will continue to setup a tent during Move-In weekend to answer questions, give directions and help parents through a stressful time. We have traditionally set up shop at the Fountain. We notice last year our numbers declined and we attribute that to the Bookstore relocating so we are considering setting up a second location for 2012-13 Move In Weekend.
- 4) Family Day has grown to include academic units, student organizations and targeted programming for younger siblings and a community engagement activity for the whole family. The committee, made up of representatives from a cross-section of campus, is looking at ways to involve more units with activities for multiple generations.
- 5) Plan and pilot a First Generation Parent Focus Group to learn how we can better serve ISU's largest demographic. After watching the film "First Generation" we were inspired to do more for those families – but we really wanted to explore what they don't know and what they perceive as barriers to better communicate with them and, as an institution, better serve those families. Our initial group would be confined to the Wabash Valley (Vigo and surrounding counties). Representatives from select units across campus would be facilitators. The information gleaned from families could be used to help improve institutional processes and communication.
- 6) Continue to support the mailing of a letter from President Bradley to the families of the new first-time students. The letter invites them to be an active participant in their students' collegiate experience. As a resource for the parents, a magnet with contact information for the Parent Advisor, other campus resources and the parent website will be included with the letter.
- 7) Continue to partner with Communications and Marketing on ParentLink, which is distributed to the families of newly admitted students and families of undergraduate students below the age of 21 three times a year. We plan on conducting a readership survey for ParentLink in 2012-13 to hear what parents like about the newsletter and what new features they would like to see.
- 8) For 2012-13, we have teamed up with Turner Coaches to provide break transportation for Thanksgiving, Winter and Spring Break. We are starting with two routes - Northwest Indiana/Chicago and Indianapolis Airport/465 loop. Students and parents make reservations and pay directly to Turner. Our role is strictly to promote and publicize the service. At the conclusion of this initial contract, we will conduct a survey of students who used the service and use the feedback to renegotiate the contract with Turner.
- 9) We plan on hiring student assistants to help us with planning, marketing and assessment.

Reporting and Deliverable Schedule – When?:

Each action item will be reported on during our workgroup meetings. This information will be shared with our Initiative chairperson. Action item completion dates vary – some are ongoing – such as web

and Facebook development, while others link to a very specific date or time period (such as Family Day or Break Transportation).

Budget – How Much?:

* Student Assistant (15 hours a week) \$3,000

* Programming (Family Day activities, Sycamore Hoopla activities, contact cards/coloring books for New Student Orientation, information and tent supplies for Move-in, food, and print materials for First Generation Focus Groups - \$7,000

* Publicity to promote Family Day, Sycamore Hoopla, Break Transportation and annual Parent Survey - \$7,500

Stakeholders and Management Plan – Who?:

- 1) Parent and Families website and Facebook page: Paula Meyer and Freda Luers
- 2) Parent Survey (including printing for a postcard): Paula Meyer, Freda Luers and Marcee Everly
- 3) Orientation/Move-in: Paula Meyer, Freda Luers
- 4) Family Day/Sycamore Hoopla: Freda Luers and Paula Meyer and members of the planning team (John Sherman, Heather Miklozek, Stephanie Percy, Dara Middleton, Della Thacker, Laura Froelicher, Stephanie Jefferson, Abbe Hendrix, Regina Atkins, Tracy Machtan, Brenda Coldren, Jennifer Cook, Aimee Janssen Robinson)
- 5) First Generation Parent Focus Group: Paula Meyer and Freda Luers, together with representatives from other campus offices (Admissions, Financial Aid, Residential Life, and Student Ombudsperson)
- 6) Welcome letter from President Bradley: Paula Meyer
- 7) Parentlink: Tara Singer, Paula Meyer and Communications and Marketing staff
- 8) Break Transportation: Paula Meyer and Freda Luers

Outcome Assessment & Future Testing – How Well?:

We plan on collecting student 991 numbers when we can. Some of our activities, such as Family Day, break transportation and the parent surveys, lend themselves to that type of data collection. Other activities, such as ParentLink, web/Facebook, Orientation/Move-in and Welcome letter, are just numbers. However, we have been doing many of our activities since the Initiative was started so we are able to compare current numbers with those from the past and watch trends.