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ABSTRACT

The College and Careers Project sought to increase college attendance of at-risk students in the Philadelphia public high schools and to help students link their college and career planning. Over a three-year period, 48 students from 4 high schools participated. Students took part in college preparatory and career awareness activities throughout the year. Five-week summer internships involved group visits to college campuses, practical experiences in the work world, and exposure to career opportunities. Activities included college application and financial aid workshops; tutoring in science, math, and English; Scholastic Aptitude Test courses, and motivational sessions. Career-related activities included goal setting workshops and presentations by professionals in various fields. Special activities were conducted with students' parents to help them become stronger advocates and supports for their children in preparing for college and careers. The students deliberated in a systematic fashion about their career plans, linked these plans to appropriate courses of study, and became strengthened in their desire to earn a college degree. Only four of the 48 students dropped out of the project during the 3 years. At the project's conclusion, all but one senior enrolled in college, and all the juniors were promoted. (SW)

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**College and Careers Project
Final Report to
The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education
November 27, 1996
Cover Sheet**

ED 417 624

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Philadelphia Education Fund
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Suite 700
Philadelphia, PA 19103

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21st Street & the Parkway
Philadelphia, PA 19103

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**THE PHILADELPHIA EDUCATION FUND
COLLEGE ACCESS PROGRAM**

COLLEGE AND CAREERS PROJECT: 1993 - 96

**Final Report
to the
Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education
November 27, 1996**

Summary of Project

The College and Careers Project was designed as a vehicle to keep at-risk students in the Philadelphia public high schools on the road to college and to help them link their college and career planning, in order to render both more realistic and successful. A total of 48 students from four neighborhood high schools participated in this project. Students took part in college preparatory and career awareness activities throughout the year. Special activities were conducted for participants' parents in order to help them become stronger advocates and supports for their children in their college and career preparation. During the summer, students participated in five-week internships to provide them with practical experience in the world of work, while familiarizing them with different career opportunities. Students also took trips to college campuses during the summer.

Only four of the 48 participants left the project during the three years. At the end of the project, all but one senior enrolled in college, and all of the juniors were promoted to the next grade. The students deliberated in a systematic fashion about their career plans, linked these plans to appropriate courses of study and became strengthened in their desire to earn a college degree.

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Executive Summary

A. Project Overview

The College and Careers Project was designed as a vehicle to keep at-risk students in the Philadelphia public high schools on the road to college and to help them link their college and career planning, in order to render both more realistic and successful. In developing this project, the College Access Program recognized that students in the Philadelphia neighborhood high schools were largely unaware of the careers for which college could prepare them, and that their deliberations about future professions for the most part occurred in isolation of their academic pursuits. In addition, they were attending school in a context that did not focus on college as an expectation for most students.

A total of 48 students from four neighborhood high schools participated, with one cohort of tenth graders selected in Year One and another cohort of tenth graders added in Year Two. Students participated in college preparatory activities and career awareness events throughout the year. Special activities were conducted for participants' parents in order to help them better support their children in realizing their postsecondary aspirations. Seventy-five percent of the parents had not attended college themselves. During the summer, students participated in five-week internships to provide them with practical experience in the world of work, while familiarizing them with different career opportunities.

B. Purpose

In designing this project, the College Access Program recognized that students in the Philadelphia neighborhood high schools were largely unaware of the careers for which college could prepare them, and that their deliberations about future professions for the most part occurred in isolation of their academic pursuits. In addition, they were attending school in a context that did not focus on college as an expectation for most students.

The goal of this project was to better motivate students to perform well in school, to enter higher education and to bring focus to their college studies through a more conscious choice of studies. It was to open their minds to the plethora of career options available to them and to help them deliberate their choices. And the project aimed to help parents become stronger advocates and supports for their children's educational and professional future.

C. Background and Origins

The Philadelphia Education Fund (PEF) is a non-profit educational organization dedicated to improving K-12 teaching and learning and advancing post secondary success for students within the School District of Philadelphia. It is the third largest of 58 local education funds affiliated with the Public Education Fund Network in Washington, D.C.

The College Access Program, a division of PEF, was established in 1989 as part of a larger school reform effort to improve educational opportunities for students in Philadelphia's neighborhood high schools. Today the program maintains a staff of 20 who work in three College Access Centers, 13 neighborhood high schools, and 9 middle schools. Through a wide range of college and career preparatory activities, College Access annually serves approximately 30,000 students and their families, most of whom come from the city's poorest neighborhoods.

D. Project Description

Students participated in five-week summer internships. One day a week during this internship period, students visited a college as a group. Career related activities during the school year included: goal setting workshops, career development activities with the Young Professionals of the Urban League, presentations by professionals in various fields, employment skills workshops, participation in Career Shadow Days. College related activities during the school year included: college application and financial aid workshops, tutoring in science, math and English, essay writing workshops, SAT preparatory courses, college and career expos, motivational speakers, college visits. Parents were invited to a variety of activities aimed at helping them build a support network and learn about their children's educational and career opportunities. Activities included social get-togethers, workshops and presentations.

E. Evaluation/Project Results

The results of this three-year project are encouraging. Only four of the 48 participants left the project during the three years. At the end of the project, all but one senior enrolled in college, and all of the juniors were promoted to the next grade. The students deliberated in a systematic fashion about their career plans, linked these plans to appropriate courses of study and became strengthened in their desire to earn a college degree. Through contact with professionals both on the job and in career exploration activities, many were introduced to career options that they had not considered in the past. Some changed their career plans after experiencing these fields first-hand in summer internships. Most of the students were able to articulate clearly their career desires at the end of the project.

Participants' parents noticed positive changes in their children's interest and performance in school at the conclusion of the project: increased initiative, a more outspoken demeanor, better grades and a more serious attitude toward school.

Parents perceived their children as having gained a more positive overall attitude toward school, career and college aspirations. To both parents and project staff, student participants appeared more interested and focused in their college and career pursuits at the end of the College and Careers Project.

What we learned from this project:

- Students were more fixated on specific career options than we had imagined, and as a result we had to work consciously to open their minds to other possibilities.
- One of the students' main motivations in joining this project was financial enhancement through summer internships; however, we were not able to identify internships for all students. In the future, paid work experiences must be a prime consideration for this type of program. Though company recruitment is a staff intensive activity, it is essential and will need to be budgeted in future programs of this type.
- It proved difficult to bring parents to project activities, and thus telephone contact became critical. In the future, we would stress systematic telephone contact with parents from the start and develop a parent network in this fashion.
- The importance of the college mentor and work site supervisor cannot be stressed enough. In the future, we would develop better mechanisms to keep students in contact with these individuals throughout the entire year. This would underline the link between the academic and work worlds. In addition, we would select and train work site supervisors to function as mentors.
- College related activities helped break down the mythical grandeur of college for students and parents. After many encounters with college students and professors on college campuses, students and parents developed a clearer understanding of what college is: who makes admissions decisions, what are classes like, where can you go with different types of problems, what do facilities look like.

F. Summary and Conclusions

The College and Careers Project has provided the Philadelphia Education Fund through its College Access Program an opportunity to take its program design and implementation to the next level. As a program aimed at improving access to college for students of the Philadelphia neighborhood high schools, College Access has increasingly recognized the importance of preparing students holistically for postsecondary success in both college and careers. The development of the School to Career initiative nationwide in the past several years has provided College Access with an important context for pursuing this goal. Through the College and Careers Project, FIPSE allowed us to experiment with this holistic design with a small group of students. The College and Careers Project ultimately will benefit many more than the 48 students who received direct services from project activities. Benefit will accrue to the entire School District in its efforts to develop a School to Career initiative that places a premium on postsecondary success in both college and careers.

**THE PHILADELPHIA EDUCATION FUND
COLLEGE ACCESS PROGRAM
COLLEGE AND CAREERS PROJECT: 1993 - 96**

**Final Report
to the
Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education
November 27, 1996**

A. Project Overview

This project was designed as a vehicle to keep at-risk students in the Philadelphia public high schools on the road to college and to help them link their college and career planning, in order to render both more realistic and successful. A total of 48 students from four neighborhood high schools participated, with one cohort of tenth graders selected in Year One and another cohort of tenth graders added in Year Two. Students participated in college preparatory activities throughout the year, including campus visits, college application and financial aid workshops and academic enrichment activities.

They also participated in career awareness events such as visits to companies, presentations by professionals from different fields and career shadow days. Special activities were conducted for participants' parents in order to help them become stronger advocates and supports for their children in their college and career preparation. Seventy-five percent of the parents had not attended college themselves.

During the summer, students participated in five-week internships to provide them with practical experience in the world of work, while familiarizing them with different career opportunities. Students also took trips to college campuses during the summer.

The results of this three-year project are encouraging. Only four of the 48 participants left the project during the three years. At the end of the project, all but one senior enrolled in college, and all of the juniors were promoted to the next grade. The students deliberated in a systematic fashion about their career plans, linked these plans to appropriate courses of study and became strengthened in their desire to earn a college degree. Through contact with professionals both on the job and in career exploration activities, many were introduced to career options that they had not considered in the past. Some changed their career plans after experiencing these fields first-hand in summer internships. Most of the students were able to articulate clearly their career desires at the end of the project. Furthermore, the combination of work experience and conversations with professors and students during college visits helped many of them clarify the college/career linkage.

Participants' parents noticed positive changes in their children's interest and performance in school at the conclusion of the project: increased initiative, a more outspoken demeanor, better grades and a more serious attitude toward school. Parents perceived their children as having gained a more positive overall attitude toward school, career and college aspirations. To both parents and project staff, student participants appeared more interested and focused in their college and career pursuits at the end of the College and Careers Project.

B. Purpose of Project

In designing this project, the College Access Program recognized that students in the Philadelphia neighborhood high schools were largely unaware of the careers for which college could prepare them, and that their deliberations about future professions for the most part occurred in isolation of their academic pursuits. In addition, they were attending school in a context that did not focus on college as an expectation for most students.

Data from the School District of Philadelphia describe a student body generally not well prepared for college. A large number of the city's 52,000 high school students experience schools marked by low achievement.

- Nearly 3 out of 10 students from the 1989 freshman class dropped out before their senior year;
- 49% of high school freshmen failed the 9th grade in 1992;
- On the SAT, only two high schools and three middle schools in the District scored above the national average score;
- Feeding into the high schools, 39 of the 42 middle schools ranked below the national norm in reading;

Because these figures include data from the District's selective magnet schools, they do not paint an accurate picture of the high school experience for most of Philadelphia's high school students -- the 39,000 who attend the neighborhood schools. For the neighborhood high school students, who last year were 64% African American, 10.7 % Latino, 5.1 % Asian, and 20 % white, the picture is even grimmer. School District data indicate that students are not prepared for college financially or academically:

- In 1994-95, 75.5 % of neighborhood high school students were eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch programs;
- SAT scores in the neighborhood high schools averaged 205 points below the national norm. Scores generally were lowest in the city's highest poverty areas.

- Of the ninth graders in June 1996, only 51% passed math; 57.3 % passed English; 60.5% passed social studies; and 59.7% passed science; these numbers increased slightly for students in the higher grades mainly because the lowest achievers dropped out as they moved through the grade levels.

The College and Careers Project was designed to support neighborhood high school students in their efforts to be admitted to college and ultimately earn a college degree. In addition, through career awareness activities and practical work experience, they were to be exposed to the broad spectrum of career options available to them, to the educational preparation necessary for these careers and to the practical demands of the work site. The goal was to better motivate students to perform well in school, to enter higher education and to bring focus to their college studies through a more conscious choice of studies. It was to open their minds to the plethora of career options available to them and to help them deliberate their choices. And the project aimed to help parents become stronger advocates and supports for their children's educational and professional future.

According to a study recently conducted by the University of Chicago and National Opinion Research Center (Sloan Study of Youth and Social Development), students in American middle and high schools know little about their future career options. The exception that researchers found was a small group of students who had taken part in internships. This study also observed that supportive families play a positive role in children's school performance. Children with supportive families "... tend to view school-related activities as more relevant to their future and tend to get higher grades. Children whose families encourage hands-on learning also have higher educational aspirations and clearer career interests." ("The Career Game," Lynn Olson, *Education Week*, October 1, 1996, pp. 31-33.)

Several years ago, the College Access Program began introducing students to different professional fields while advising them about college. College preparatory workshops increasingly became college and career activities, as the need became clear. And staff began working more with parents to support students in their educational aspirations. The College and Careers Project grew out of our need to develop more specific vehicles for combining college and career preparation for Philadelphia inner city high school students, and for helping students persist to postsecondary success.

Too frequently we found students working hard to be admitted to college, but lacking a clear understanding of their career options. Many floundered in their first two years of college before identifying a major, many dropped out of college as a result, and many more entered the work force with unrealistic expectations.

What We Learned

- Students were more fixated on specific career options than we had imagined, and as a result we had to work consciously to open their minds to other possibilities. It was not our goal to provide job training, but to make them aware of the options available to them and to help them consider these. Students needed to recognize that our quickly changing job market demands an increasingly flexible work force. They needed to view college not as preparation for a narrow job, but as the place to develop a clear focus with the ability to adapt. College graduates need to be able to maneuver through constantly changing professional fields.
- One of the students' main motivations in joining this project was financial enhancement through summer internships. We had underestimated the importance of this financial motivation. We found that it is essential to find paying internships for students in a timely fashion. In Year One of this project, the Private Industry Council (PIC) was unable to fulfill its promise to provide paid job placements due to reductions in its funding, and the tight employment market rendered it difficult for us to identify paid placements. We ultimately were able to locate unpaid placements for the students with stipends from our umbrella organization; however, the insecurity of placements until the last minute detracted from students' enthusiasm. In years two and three, PIC did provide placements; however, their eligibility criteria excluded several students. As a result a few students were unable to work in paid internships. Instead, we placed them in academic enrichment programs. In the future, paid work experiences must be a prime consideration for this type of program. Though company recruitment is a staff intensive activity, it is essential and will need to be budgeted in future programs of this type.
- It proved difficult to bring parents to project activities. They were too busy or too afraid to venture out to evening activities, regardless of the topic or season. As a result, we developed more extensive telephone contact with parents in the course of the project. In the future, we would stress systematic telephone contact with parents from the start. In addition, we would develop a parent network to serve as a support group. This, too, would have to be managed largely over the telephone.
- The importance of the college mentor and work site supervisor cannot be stressed enough. In the future, we would develop better mechanisms to keep students in contact with these individuals throughout the entire year. This would underline the link between the academic and work worlds. In addition, we would select and train work site supervisors to function as mentors. During this project, work site supervisors served only as on the job monitors because their time did not permit them to assume additional mentoring responsibilities. In the future, however, we would ask each company/organization to participate in this project with the agreement that year long mentoring would be required. Incentives like company recognition would be necessary to recruit companies/organizations.

- In the future we would only recruit students who would be able to participate through their high school graduation. Since we added a second cohort of sophomores in year two, these students were entering their senior year at the conclusion of the project. While we are integrating them into other College Access activities, such as Talent Search projects, so that we can follow them through to graduation, they will not receive the same consistency of service that the first cohort did. Too frequently, educational projects on limited budgets are introduced among neighborhood high school students, and services are discontinued before all “promises” to the students can be fulfilled. This detracts from the motivation and self-confidence the projects are intended to nurture in students.
- In future projects, we would recruit a larger critical mass of students from fewer schools. This would allow us to conduct more in school programming that would be convenient for students to attend. In addition, it would encourage greater bonding among the student participants.
- The Young Professionals of the Urban League worked with us to develop a mentoring program for College and Career students. At initial meetings, students and parents alike showed enthusiasm for meeting young professionals in various fields. Especially the African-American students were eager to meet young African-American professionals. As we determined that the Urban league group had underestimated the time commitment necessary to mentor young students, we changed their involvement to conducting group activities around different professions. This component proved useful in exposing students to professionals in different fields, professionals who were only 7 - 10 years older than themselves and thus could relatively easily identify with their college and career deliberations.
- College related activities helped break down the mythical grandeur of college for students and parents. After many encounters with college students and professors on college campuses, students and parents developed a clearer understanding of what college is: who makes admissions decisions, what are classes like, where can you go with different types of problems, what do facilities look like. In future projects, however, we would develop a clearer sequence of activities so that juniors and seniors are exposed to different levels of the college information and experiences. The seniors in this project felt a degree of repetition in project activities in their last year.

C. Background and Origins

The Philadelphia Education Fund (PEF) is a non-profit educational organization dedicated to improving K-12 teaching and learning and advancing post secondary success for students within the School District of Philadelphia. It is the third largest of 58 local education funds affiliated with the Public Education Fund Network in Washington, D.C. Overall, PEF aims to improve K-12 teaching and learning and post

secondary achievement by building partnerships among the School District of Philadelphia, parents, higher education, and the business community and by strengthening curriculum and instruction through professional development, technical assistance and support. PEF was created in March, 1995, by a merger of Philadelphia's two largest public education reform organizations, the Philadelphia Schools Collaborative and PATHS/PRISM: The Philadelphia Partnership for Education.

The College Access Program was established in 1989 as part of the Philadelphia Schools Collaborative's school reform effort to improve educational opportunities for students in Philadelphia's neighborhood high schools. Today the program maintains a staff of 20 who work in three College Access Centers, 13 neighborhood high schools, and 9 middle schools. Through a wide range of college and career preparatory activities, College Access annually serves approximately 30,000 students and their families, most of whom come from the city's poorest neighborhoods.

Each College Access Center in West, North and Center City Philadelphia has an extensive array of college resources -- catalogues, videos, college and financial aid applications, reference manuals, and an interactive computer college search program. Activities in the Centers and in the schools include individual college advising; workshops on college prerequisites and survival skills, college application processes, financial aid, resume writing, application essay writing; motivational activities, college visits; college and career fairs; academic enrichment programs and cultural activities. Staff provide technical assistance to teachers and counselors regarding college prerequisites and application, financial aid, and standardized testing. They help teachers integrate college into their instruction. All services and publications are provided free of charge, including SAT preparatory courses for over 600 high school students. College Access works closely with area colleges and universities, and staff regularly conduct presentations and workshops for community organizations, such as Boys and Girls Clubs, Police Athletic League, neighborhood groups and churches.

The main organizational characteristics of the Philadelphia Education Fund and College Access Program that affected the College and Careers Project include:

- As a not-for-profit working in partnership with schools, universities, communities and businesses, we were not identified exclusively with any one of these sectors. We maintained our independence, while touting a positive track record in our work with each of the sectors. Thus, it proved relatively easy for us to access the schools, the universities and communities. We did not have to spend precious project time building channels to these key areas. Unfortunately, however, our business access proved inadequate for our project purposes in a tightening employment market.
- The College Access Program had extensive experience in college preparation for high school students. Many of our staff previously held positions in college admissions offices. All staff kept their knowledge of the field current through

participation in the relevant professional associations and through in-service professional trainings.

- A merger of our umbrella organization, the Philadelphia Schools Collaborative, with another educational not-for-profit, PATHS/PRISM, occurred halfway through this project. The organizational changes that accompanied this merger caused some disruption in the project. In addition, the position of project director (College Access Director) changed hands one year after the project began, resulting in some discontinuity. The Executive Director of our umbrella organization changed as well. On the other hand, the project coordinator remained in this position for the duration of the project.

D. Project Description

We selected participants for the College and Careers Project from four Philadelphia neighborhood high schools with similar profiles. College Access staff and school counselors recommended students who typically were interested in attending college, demonstrated an average to slightly above average school record and expressed an interest in attending college. In selecting the second cohort, we asked parents to attend initial recruiting meetings with the students.

Summer Internships

Students participated in five-week summer internships. One day a week during this internship period, students visited a college as a group. Work sites included not-for-profit organizations and businesses, e.g. Thomas Jefferson Medical College, PECO Energy, West Philadelphia Empowerment Zone, WCAU-TV, African-American History Museum, FMC Corporation, Philadelphia Water Company, University of Pennsylvania. A work site supervisor was named at each site and a work plan developed for each student. Orientations were conducted for students and for work site supervisors. In addition, two college students served as mentors for the students in year two and one college student in year three. These mentors visited the students and the supervisors at their work sites on a regular basis to help students view their internship experience linked to planning for college and careers. They also helped the project coordinator troubleshoot for problems.

School Year Activities

Career related activities included:

- ° Goal setting workshops
- ° Career development activities with the Young Professionals of the Urban League
- ° Presentations by professionals in various fields, e.g. representatives of the National Organization of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers

- ° Employment skills workshops
- ° Motivational speakers
- ° Participation in Career Shadow Days

College related activities included:

- ° College application and financial aid workshops
- ° Tutoring in science, math and English
- ° Essay writing workshops
- ° SAT preparatory courses
- ° College and Career expos
- ° Motivational speakers
- ° College visits.

Parents were invited to a variety of activities aimed at helping them build a support network and learn about their children's educational and career opportunities. Activities included social get-togethers, workshops and presentations. Parents were invited to virtually all of the students' events. For example, they were pleased to be present when a young African American writer impressed upon students the importance of steadfastly pursuing educational goals. They appreciated a "dry run" of filling out financial aid forms one year before their children were applying for college. Unfortunately attendance at most of these events only ranged from 25% to 45%, so that regular telephone contact between project staff and the parents became the main mode of communicating with them. This contact allowed us to assist when problems arose and to work with parents in identifying issues of concern for their children.

A College and Careers Project Advisory Committee composed of educators and parents helped project staff refine plans as the project progressed.

E. Project Results

Most of the students who began the College and Careers Project expressed an interest in attending college at the start of the project. However, we knew from the context of their peers in the Philadelphia neighborhood high schools that this was far from a guarantee that the project participants actually would remain on target toward college. As the profile of the larger student body described earlier indicates, Philadelphia neighborhood high school students are attending school in a context that is frequently is not supportive of the pursuit of higher education. Thus, College and Careers project students needed continual encouragement and assistance.

Participants in the College and Careers Project will mainly be first generation college goers (75%), and 65% of their families receive public assistance. During the three

years of the College and Careers Project, they experienced their share of personal difficulties that demonstrated they were not significantly different from other students at their schools. The students changed home addresses frequently, as they moved from one family member to another, and it was a challenge for our project staff merely to remain in regular contact with every student. Several of the students became homeless intermittently. Our project staff assisted families where possible with referrals to appropriate agencies. Three of the students had babies during the project, but all remained in the program. This is a credit to the young women's persistence, but also to the project staff's ability to work well with both the students and their parents.

Parents of several of the students were participating in drug rehabilitation programs, creating special stress for the youngsters. Two students lost their prime adult contacts: mother, father and grandfather. Another student was forced to miss a great deal of school while babysitting her younger siblings as her mother had to be in court regularly with an older brother.

Despite all of these difficulties, a majority of the students remained with the project and showed good success. Of 48 participants, only four withdrew from the project over three years: two succumbed to familial problems, with one of them running away from home, and two moved away from the project site. Of the remaining 44 students, 17 of the 18 seniors enrolled in college, and all of the juniors were promoted to the 12th grade.

An evaluation of this project was undertaken through focus group interviews of students and parents, questionnaires submitted by students and work site supervisors, and ethnographic observations. Twenty-seven students (61%) and 16 parents (36%) participated in focus group discussions. Each of the four schools participating in the project had at least 60% student participants present for the focus group discussions. Written questionnaires were collected from 18 students (41%). Observations of program activities were undertaken that encompassed 85% of the students. In addition, student log books were reviewed and personal discussions conducted.

The college preparatory component of the project was the easiest to evaluate. The desired results were clear: keep students on track in the college search, admissions and financial aid processes. Students claimed to value the admissions and financial aid workshops least of all project activities, as they felt the information was repeated to them too often. For future programs, we suggest developing a clearer sequence of information, so that seniors do not hear the same items as the juniors, but different and more accelerated versions appropriate to their stage in the college admissions process. By the same token, the results -- 17 of 18 seniors going on to college -- suggests that repetition may have been useful.

By far the most challenging component of this project was the career portion and its linkage to college study. We learned that students mainly defined the College and

Careers Project through its college preparatory component. They tended to see the summer work experience as separate. This tells us that the career related activities conducted during the school year could have been better linked to students' actual work site experience.

The two most important reasons that students identified for having participated in the summer work experience were 1) financial rewards and 2) direct exposure to careers of interest to them. They recognized that they learned about general workplace issues and behaviors. For some of the students, this was their first work experience. They admitted that it helped them learn to interact with co-workers and supervisors, as well as understand what is expected from an employee, and the importance of promptness, appearance and communication in the workplace. Nonetheless, a significant number felt they had not been exposed to enough careers in their field of interest. And indeed it was difficult to identify placements for all students in their areas of interest.

For many of the students, the routine and more clerical tasks of the workplace proved uninteresting. One student actually strengthened her desire to earn a college degree because she did not wish to be relegated to the types of clerical tasks that she was assigned during her summer job. Nonetheless, many of the students recognized the value of learning basic workplace skills: "Even though my job experience was not in my field, I gained skills in office etiquette, taking dictation, faxing, e-mail and increased computer literacy, all of which will benefit me down the line."

During the summer, most of the students reaffirmed their career choices, changed their career goals or learned about other options within their field. The work experience helped some students more fully understand career choices they had made by providing them more knowledge of various professions and exposure to professionals in their field. All of them learned that college is the place to learn about a myriad of subjects and one need not limit his/her options by only taking courses in his or her narrowly defined major. For instance, two students who wanted to pursue careers in law recognized "You do not have to ... take only law/criminal justice related classes to become a lawyer."

Several students who were able to work in their field of interest changed their minds about their chosen careers. This was especially true of those who had chosen law, once they recognized that this field is not as glamorous as it often appears on television. Another student has decided not to become a teacher based on her summer experience working with children.

For a number of the participants the project crystallized the linkage between going to college and their career goals. They gained greater insight into their career interest by being exposed to different professions and career paths within a specific field. As one student noted, "I saw different aspects of nursing due to my work experience....I never knew there were so many different kinds of nurses."

As a result of her work experience, another students thought she might like to engage more in research than in the retail aspect of pharmacy: "Research seems more active than over-the-counter pharmacy....I don't want to be stuck behind a desk filling prescriptions." Other students became aware of increased career possibilities within the medical field and some now recognize options of several different majors.

Most of the students were able to articulate clearly their career desires at the end of the project. And some stated that the combination of work experience and conversations with professors and students during college visits helped them clarify the college/career linkage. While no serious bonding occurred between work site supervisors and students, students were able to observe adults in the workplace and draw conclusions for their own lives. **Overwhelmingly, students expressed the desire to major in subjects in college that would support their career aspirations.** These may sound like simple results, but they are significant given that most college freshmen have unclear career goals and many flounder and drop out of college after changing majors several times.

One student whose summer work experience was at the University of Pennsylvania actually found that she had the best of both worlds -- college and the workplace. While she gained important insight into the workplace and was assigned administrative tasks at a University institute, she was able to interact every day with university students, faculty and staff. While this placement was an exception to the usual placements, which were not for profit agencies and business companies, it provided us with a good suggestion for future placements which would link college and career preparation.

In the third summer of the College and Careers Project, only 14 students participated in the work experience: 11 juniors and 3 seniors. Fourteen of the 18 seniors had left for college in early July to participate in bridge academic programs prior to their freshman year, and thus they could not take on a summer work experience. Five participated in summer academic enrichment programs that conflicted with the work experience. And 11 students independently located their own permanent part time jobs. As low income students, they were very eager to find jobs which they could continue during the school year.

In the previous spring, when it still was unclear whether the Private Industry Council would be able to provide jobs for the project participants, many of the students took the initiative to search for employment themselves. The College and Careers Project Coordinator assisted them with their resumes and other preparation. In the end we were quite proud that these students had developed the independence, self-confidence and presentation skills to find employment themselves. While they could not join us for the last summer of the project, their employment confirmed for us their parents' observations that they had indeed developed important skills, matured and grown quite independent during their participation in this project.

From students' own statements, we knew that the prospect of earning money had been a prime motivation for their joining this project. The importance of financial enhancement was confirmed when four of the 14 students in summer work experiences left these positions prematurely because they had located part-time employment that they could continue into the school year.

Parental Involvement

Meetings with parents were scheduled on a biweekly basis for the second year of the project; however, we found that many parents either were too busy or too afraid to venture out in the evening to attend. From time to time we rented vans to transport them to activities, which increased attendance. Nonetheless, it was difficult for them to fit these activities into their busy and complicated lives. The alternative which we developed was a combination of regular telephone contact, with activities conducted only twice per half year. Parents were invited to virtually all of the students' activities, and we sometimes ran special meetings for them concurrent with the students'.

Parents suggested that staff could have organized parental networking more effectively, and that some of the meetings should have been scheduled at more convenient times. Indeed some weekend meetings were scheduled in year two, but dropped in year three when they proved inconvenient.

Before participating in the College and Careers project, the majority of parents were by their own admission uninformed about the college going process, even though many of them hoped their children would attend college. As a result of their participation in this project, they claimed to have become better equipped to motivate their children in the college admissions process. They became aware that financial aid and scholarships are available to them. And they recognized that college was a real option for their children because they saw them talking about it and sharing their aspirations with friends and family.

Most parents saw the need to encourage their children in the college admissions process, but they were not able to state clearly how they might accomplish this. Most of the parents felt that their children bore the primary responsibility for the college admissions and financing process. When asked how involvement in this project enabled them to assist their children make career and college decisions, most focused on the encouragement and motivational aspects. More than one parent became strengthened in their determination: "I push because I think it is necessary to push....From the time she was knee high I encouraged her to attend college -- not to make it my desire but to make it hers. I see the difference in what's available to people with degrees versus people without them. I don't want my daughter to be sacrificed to welfare so I push for self-sufficiency."

Most parents felt that college was an option for their children after high school, even before enrolling in this project. What the project provided was an opportunity for

parents to better support (and understand) the college admissions process. Parents now engage in frequent discussions with their children about activities in the College and Careers Project, and they have noticed positive changes in their children's interest and performance in school since joining the project. Parents cited increased initiative, a more outspoken demeanor, better grades and taking school more seriously. Parents perceived their children as having gained a more positive overall attitude toward school, career and college aspirations. Students appeared more interested and focused in their college and career pursuits. As one parent described her daughter: "She has more knowledge of what is available to her."

Through this project, parents claimed to be less intimidated by the college admissions and financial aid processes and feel more secure that assistance is available to them through the project and more broadly through the College Access Program. Furthermore, there seems to have been real communication between parents and students regarding the college going process and summer workplace experiences.

Summer College Mentors and Work Site Supervisors

Students' comments and our own observations tell us that mentors and supervisors from the summer work experience should have remained a consistent part of the students' school year program in the College and Careers Project. College mentors in year two did not follow through with their students well enough during the summer to develop a close relationship with them. In year three, the one college student who served as a mentor for 14 students was, however, exceptional. An older student and a mother herself, this mentor was at one and the same time a college student and a figure of authority for the high school students. She was able to reinforce messages about college and career pursuits from a different perspective than their parents, teachers or project staff. And her maturity allowed her to develop good relationships with work site supervisors and to troubleshoot problems in a timely and effective fashion.

In future programs, we would greatly develop the role of the mentor and recruit more of them. They serve the important function of motivating students, speaking about college from recent experience, and convincing them that they can succeed. In addition, we would seek more means to integrate work site supervisors into the school year programming of the project. While these are busy professionals, longer term involvement would be extremely beneficial to the participating students and parents.

Work site supervisors varied in the degree to which they became involved with their students'. They were not recruited as mentors, nor did they serve as such. They were to help introduce students to major facets of their organization or business, to monitor students' performance and to promote students' professional interpersonal development. In future projects, we would utilize the potential that work site supervisors have as professional mentors. This would include structured contact with

the students throughout the school year after completion of the summer job and continued involvement in students' college and career planning.

We would call upon work site supervisors to host groups of students at their business during the year to strengthen the continuity between the summer work experience and college and career activities during the year. The Young Professionals of the Urban League provided excellent career models at activities conducted during the school year. And business visits during the year provided further knowledge of the professional world. But these could have been better linked for the students through a consistent group of adult role models throughout the year.

Similarly, visits to universities were frequently designed to mix college and career information, but students did not maintain contact with the individuals they met at these events. For example, during a visit to Drexel University, students learned about academic opportunities there, and in conversation with faculty and students they also were made aware of the many career opportunities offered in engineering. While this visit proved fascinating for the students, they did not follow up with the students or faculty later in their college and career planning. In the future we will plan such events with an eye to continuity throughout the project. We will expose students to somewhat fewer individuals and campuses, but seek greater continuity of these contacts for the students. Our goal will be to bring students closer to individuals who take a personal interest in their future and can help advise them in their preparation for college and careers.

Student Bonding

Students who participated in this project studied at four different high schools and for the most part did not know each other before the project began. At the end of year two, we observed important bonding taking place among the students, leading to the students supporting each other in their academic pursuits. This is important in a climate that typically does not consider it "cool" to take school seriously. However, at the end of year three, our observations and students' own statements indicate that their bonding did not develop further.

In future projects, we would recruit a critical mass of students from fewer schools in order to be able to focus on promoting better bonding among the students of each school. We would conduct more in-school activities during the school day which would facilitate our contact with the students, as well as help them form a more closely knit group among themselves. In addition, we would conduct several overnight trips to colleges at strategic times during the project. The one overnight trip that project participants took to Lincoln University helped link students across the four schools; however, it remained an exception.

Continuation and Dissemination

We will follow the students in the College and Careers Project in the years to come to monitor their success in college. It will be especially important to us to monitor their selection of majors, their college persistence, and their later career choices. The seniors will become part of other College Access activities so that they continue to receive assistance in their college search, application and financial aid processes.

More broadly, the results of the College and Careers Project will greatly assist us in our work on the School District of Philadelphia's School to Career Initiative. The College Access Program is an active member of the School to Career Work team at the School District of Philadelphia. It is our program that is providing the major college preparatory input into this initiative, to ensure that students participating in School to Career programming have college as an option subsequent to high school graduation. The goal is for all children to have access to and success in postsecondary education and productive careers, rather than to prepare one group of students for work and another group for college. All children should have exposure to the world of work, and they should receive the motivation, encouragement and preparation necessary to succeed in postsecondary education.

The School to Careers Project has helped us recognize how students' preparation for postsecondary education and for careers can be linked. This is critical in our current work. Besides providing direct service to students as part of the School to Career initiative, we will provide professional development to teachers and counselors who are involved in School to Career. This will be planned and implemented together with our colleagues at the Philadelphia Education Fund whose work focuses on implementing high standards in the classroom. The professional development will revolve around teaching and learning based on high standards and how this connects to preparing students for college and for careers.

In addition, we are exploring together with the Philadelphia High School Academies ways to help the Academies better prepare their students for college while they conduct career exploration and preparation. At the same time, we would like the Academies to help College Access staff enhance the career awareness component of College Access activities.

The College and Careers Project has served an important function for the College Access Program and its umbrella organization, the Philadelphia Education Fund. It has allowed us to pilot work with career preparation and to learn how we can link this with college preparation for inner city Philadelphia public high school students. As a result of this project, we are able to play a much more active and productive role in the School to Career initiative in Philadelphia and can help the initiative become a program that does not place students on separate college and vocational tracks, but better prepares students for postsecondary success, with college and the career doors a college degree opens as an option for all students.

The benefactors of the College and Careers Project are not only the 48 students who participated, but ultimately many more Philadelphia public school students who will benefit from an education that prepares them for success after high school, and that leads them to make informed decisions about their further studies and later professions.

F. Summary and Conclusions

The College and Careers Project has provided the Philadelphia Education Fund through its College Access Program an opportunity to take its program design and implementation to the next level. As a program aimed at improving access to college for students of the Philadelphia neighborhood high schools, College Access has increasingly recognized the importance of preparing students holistically for postsecondary success in both college and careers. The development of the School to Career initiative nationwide in the past several years has provided College Access with an important context for pursuing this goal.

Through the College and Careers Project, FIPSE allowed us to experiment with this holistic design with a small group of students. It was significant that within this project we could change our plans quickly and on an ongoing basis, in order to identify appropriate vehicles that would help Philadelphia public school students achieve postsecondary success. Throughout the project, FIPSE remained extremely flexible in permitting this type of development, and it was critical that FIPSE staff were encouraging and supportive during the process. Our FIPSE program officers served as much more than monitors. They offered us critical professional advice that helped our organization derive maximum benefit from this project.

The College and Careers Project ultimately will benefit many more than the 48 students who received direct services from project activities. Benefit will accrue to the entire School District in its efforts to develop a School to Career initiative that places a premium on postsecondary success in both college and careers.



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