project finish line

Steps to Create Campus and Community Partnerships

About Project Finish Line
Over two years, Green River College, South Seattle College, Seattle Central College, and North Seattle College have brought completion coaching to their campuses. Completion coaching involves reaching out to students close to completion who experience barriers and might not graduate without additional support. This Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation grant specifies that once Completion Coaches identify barriers, they should work with their campus to create institutional change.

① Know Your Purpose for These Partnerships

Importance of Campus Partnerships
- Contribute to campus goal of degree completions.
- Integrate Student Services (part of the "guided pathways" approach).
- Identify students to contact for direct, "high touch" service.
- Create "buy in" from partners, making it easier to create systemic change in areas on campus where students struggle the most.

Importance of Community Partnerships
- Practice a holistic advising approach to provide additional support to address non-academic barriers.
- Refer students to community resources such as housing and free healthcare that the college is unable to provide.

② Identify Key People to Contact

Identifying Campus Contacts
- Input and track student barriers, services and resources in a database to inform your practice.
- Identify key steps and touchpoints throughout students' college navigation such as admissions, registration, advising, and financial aid.
- Embed the work of completion coaches in key departments.
    o Example: South and Central had completion coaches as part of TRiO.

Identifying Community Contacts
- Ask for recommendations through working with other offices.
    o Example: Community Based Organizations (CBOs) connected through the Worksource office at South Seattle and through Women's Programs at Seattle Central.
- Identify connections and referrals based on student need such as legal clinics, mental health counseling, prescription glasses, and mobility access equipment.

③ Approach Key People

Approach Key People on Campus
- Contact department leads of relevant departments to stay informed, collaborate, and receive cross training in appropriate areas such as Financial Aid.
- Meet with departments weekly or quarterly either one-on-one or as a larger group.
- Reach out to each department when a student case arises. Meeting frequency will depend on student needs.

Approaching Key People in the Community
- Schedule one-on-one meetings to meet key people, trade materials, and gather materials to distribute across college campus as appropriate.
- Attend (or create if not in existence) monthly CBO meetings to stay informed on community issues and services. Be willing to share and be a resource for college specific knowledge.

④ Track Results of Partnerships

Result of Campus Partnerships
- Increase in degree completions, and commencement student attendance.
- Change in institutional polices to improve student services and support.
  - Example: PFL completion coaches worked with credential evaluators to streamline the graduation application process. Green River College created an "auto confer" degree process.
- Due to these partnerships, students have benefitted from the collaborations and policy changes.
  - Example: Green River College, Seattle Central, and North Seattle College created a scholarship with the support of each college's Foundation to help students with financial barriers to completion.

Result of Community Partnerships
- Students receive holistic support services.
  - Students connected with off campus resources such as housing, public assistance, and childcare.

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