

Looking At The ISSUES

October 20, 2006

Finding Solutions: *On Course for Success* – A College Freshman Support Program

In Ohio, only 54% of first-time, full-time, degree-seeking college freshmen graduate within six years.¹ Stark County has been addressing this challenge through P-16 strategies as we look to meet the challenge of raising the college going rate by 30% by 2015.

- We have increased the number of students who apply to and enter college in Stark County - Fall 2006 undergraduate headcount increased 6.16% (1857) over Fall 2004.
- We have increased the number of college degrees in Stark County by 1.5% (8,000) between 2000 and 2004.

Among the many factors impacting a freshman student's success is the ability to acclimate and thrive in the college environment. With the support of the Stark Education Partnership and an Ohio College Access Network Best Practice grant, Canton South High School and Kent State University-Stark have created "On Course for Success." On Course, an on campus freshman support program modeled on the "I Know I Can" program in Columbus, is staffed by Ryan "Coach G" Gracia, and housed at the college's Campus Center.

Ryan has been working at Canton South High school as an OCAN access advisor for two years. Now his presence at Kent provides a familiar face to students making the transition. He has been on the Kent-Stark campus twice a week since September 2006 and has developed a working relationship with 21 Canton South freshmen as well as with numerous campus support service providers. He has helped



Looking At The Week

India's Engineer Shortage

On October 18th, a New York Times article reported that India is facing a shortage of competent English speaking engineers. Recent study data reveal that one in four engineering graduates are employable. The others lacked technical skills, English fluency or requisite soft skills. The study reveals the inability of high quality universities to meet quantity demands and the inability of new private colleges to meet quality demands. The results include rising entry level salaries and a shortage of professionals forecast at 500,000 by 2010.

students, from their first day, connect with the financial aid office, academic counseling services, special needs services, and individual faculty.

“Some of our students needed to access special needs services. I was able to call on the high school guidance counselors who contacted Kent to make the accommodations students required,” Ryan explained. “Sometimes students only need a suggestion of how to solve a problem. More often than not, I help them frame their questions and walk them up to the office door. Then they address the problem themselves.”

“Kent has been very supportive of this program and of our students. Because I’m right here on campus, I’ve been able to help students understand that the university has many services which are here to help them succeed – but that it’s the student’s job to ask for support.” Students have high praise for Ryan’s work as one freshman reported: “College is a lot to take on, but Coach G won’t let us quit. Trust me, I tried!”

Student surveys and interviews are providing ongoing feedback to those involved in the program. Final evaluation will be made based on the number of freshmen from Canton Local who persist to the second year increasing over the number of students from previous years. If the program proves successful thought will be given to how to scale up the program to serve more Stark County students attending other colleges.

¹ The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. *Measuring Up 2006: The State Report Card on Higher Education*

Ohio Grantmakers Conference

On October 18-20, Drs. Adrienne O’Neill and Joseph Rochford were in Cincinnati attending the Ohio Grantmakers Forum annual conference entitled “*Philanthropy today: New perspectives on a valued tradition.*”

Global Tutoring

For those who doubt that U.S. education must now compete in a global market, there’s TutorVista offering unlimited tutoring on-line at \$99.99 a month elementary school through college. TutorVista is based in Bangalore with a staff of 150, mostly Indian tutors.



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