

RE-CONCEPTUALIZING OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT TO UNDERSERVED STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

HECC Student Success and Institutional
Collaborations Subcommittee, August 13, 2014
Jessica Nguyen-Ventura, Oregon Fellow

BACKGROUND

- **Embedded in the 40-40-20 goals is the need for the inclusion of underserved students**
 - Low-income: 40% of low-income students enroll in a postsecondary institution immediately upon high school graduation v. 85% of students with family income over \$100,000
 - FGS are significantly less likely to graduate due to the lack of family support, financial strains, poor academic preparation, and other barriers.
 - Students of color are changing the demographics of the student body.
 - Rural student also s face limited geographical access to Oregon's public university.

AIMS

- **To gain a better understanding of underserved students/communities perceptions and expectations of higher education that can lead to the possibility of more effective relationships within and across postsecondary institutions**
 - **To provide & equip HECC with additional understanding of how to outreach & engage to underserved students & communities.**
 - **To develop a better understanding of how perceptions vary across student group, communities, and regional settings.**
- 

METHODS

- Qualitative research tools help explain patterns produced by previous quantitative analysis .
- Interviews personalize the data for us and provide new answers that quantitative analysis may not offer.
- Interview both community leaders & underserved students.

Characteristics of Participants

Community Leaders		Characteristics	Total
<i>Non-profit Agencies</i>	12	<i>Male</i>	12
	13	<i>Female</i>	13
Total	25		25
Underserved Students			
<i>Male</i>	7	<i>API</i>	2
<i>Female</i>	3	<i>Hispanic/Latino</i>	4
		<i>African American/Black</i>	3
		<i>White</i>	1
Total	10	<i>FGS/Min/LI/R</i>	10
GRAND TOTAL	35		35

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS BASED ON INTERVIEWS WITH COMMUNITY LEADERS

Themes	Meaning
O & E	All the activities and practices that organizations used to assist underserved students in their postsecondary career: Mentoring, advising, financial literacy to family support & parent education
Communication	How the development & implementation of communications strategies (Websites, Stakeholder Outreach, or visual identity) & tactics fail when it comes to outreaching and engaging underserved students/populations
Education	How underserved students are informed about postsecondary institutions and what type of information is needed for the success of underserved students in postsecondary institutions.

SUB-THEMES

Sub-Themes	Meaning
Relationships	Taking the time to build trust, consistency, and partnerships with either underserved students, community leaders, or community organizations.
Representation	Those who perform outreach and engage underserved students, community leaders, underserved communities or community organizations, should be culturally aware or are direct representatives of the underserved community that they are engaging with.
Support Systems	These are all the wrap around services that underserved students need to succeed in higher education such as mentorship, advising, transitioning from high school to a postsecondary institution, financial aid education, parent education and such.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. WHAT TYPE OF OUTREACH DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION USE TO ENGAGE UNDERSERVED STUDENTS?

•“Building relationships with folks that understand what these students are going through, is critical. We can’t be everything for everyone...so building relationships with others that are also doing the work, helps spread the load and provides multiple avenues to attacking the issues faced by [underserved] students”.

•Support systems = Mentorship, advising, financial aid assistance, financial literacy courses, scholarship & essay assistance, parent education & accessible information. Also, websites & online tools

• “...an important issue with OSAC is that it does not outreach through the entire state. Students let alone parents don’t know about what OSAC and ASPIRE do or their function. There is great opportunity to put together community forums around the state in different languages and with different community leaders to inform not only us but the entire community about HECC, OSAC, or ASPIRE... and [explain] how they help underserved students.”

• With only 145 sites, there are not enough to adequately provide full statewide support. An OSAC expansion maybe a viable consideration to reach underserved students.

•Hiring staff that are representative of the community they are serving.

2. WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS FACED BY ORGANIZATIONS THAT ATTEMPT TO OUTREACH OR ENGAGE UNDERSERVED STUDENTS?

•Many noted that communication is barrier for most organizations because they do not hire the staff that can communicate to the population that they are attempting to serve

•“ A lot of organizations don’t have the proper bi-lingua or bi-cultural staff to communicate and outreach to those students. Organizations have to make a conscious effort in hiring staff that can relate to students, can communicate and maintain relationship and who do not give up on them.”

•Possible solution can be found with OSAC and how they outreach and engage underserved students.

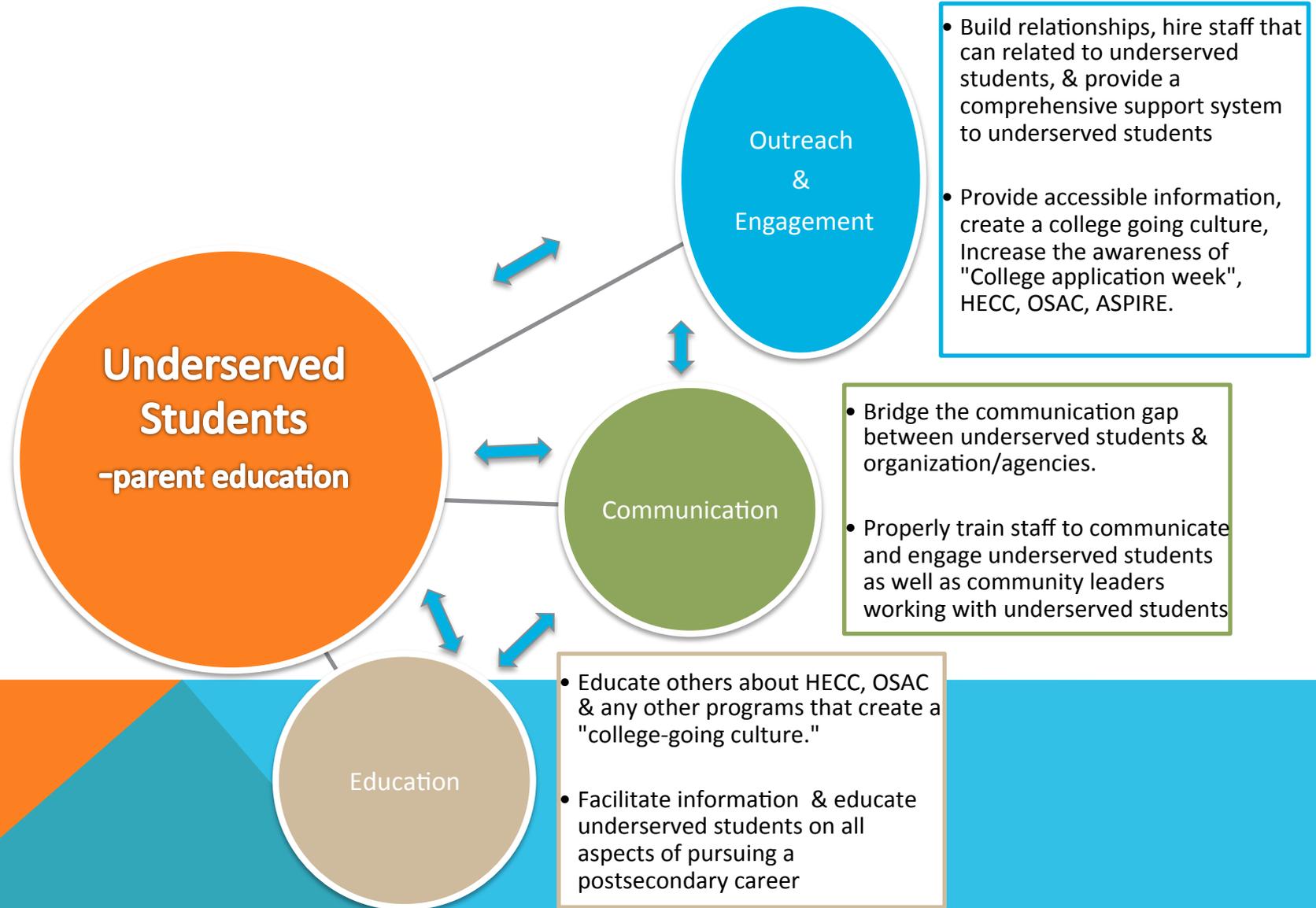
FINAL QUESTION ASKED

What are the factors that higher education policy should take into account when attempting to engage/outreach to underserved students?

- **One of the biggest factors was “realizing that there are different cultural needs for every single one of the students and proactively seek to understand those needs” and work with community organizations when it comes to outreach and engagement.**
- **Among other factors to consider is that “these kids are working, they are helping their siblings, they are paying bills, their cell phones are not working, their parents don’t really understand and there’s just so many factors that should be taken into account.”**
- **Most comments centered on outreach and engagement policy to consider most if not all factors affecting underserved students.**

“wow...the equity lens...that’s a great lens and we can apply it...but how do we embrace it? Just creating a policy is not enough...where is the website, the resources, the staff?”

CONCLUSIONS



Themes	# Of References	Meaning
1. Mentorship	32	This includes advising, integrating into a postsecondary institution, transitions, building confidence & preparing how to be a “college student”.
2. Environment	22	The surroundings conditions that influence student postsecondary experience such as culture, campus organizations, or diversity.
3. Support Systems	21	This includes not only academic support but also the whole array of student support programs that provide guidance to students such as educating the family on postsecondary institutions.
4. Financial Aid/Literacy	18	This involves the student’s ability to get access to information that leads to an understanding of how postsecondary education can be finance and the impacts on their own personal finances.
5. Outreach & Engagement	6	This is how student’s expectations of how they should be outreach or engage, which includes building relationships and using technology as means to get information as well.