To College Together: Learning and New Approaches to College Success from 10 Years of Act Six

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2013 WCAN State Conference
Western Washington University
March 26-27, 2013

The Origins of Act Six

- Lincoln High School
- The Posse Foundation model
- Northwest Leadership Foundation
- Whitworth College

Why Our Students Leave

Recall the story of one or more students you have known or worked with that went to college with great potential, but left short of a degree.
- What were the primary reasons they left?
- What could have helped them persist?

Act Six Mission

- The mission of Act Six is to connect local faith-based community affiliates with faith- and social justice-based colleges to equip emerging urban and community leaders to engage the college campus and their communities at home.

Act Six Model

- **Recruit and Select:** Annually recruit and select diverse, multicultural cadres of the Northwest’s most promising emerging urban and community leaders.
- **Train and Prepare:** Intensively train these groups of students in the year prior to college, equipping them to support each other, succeed academically, and grow as service-minded leaders and agents of transformation.

Act Six Model

- **Send and Fund:** Send the teams together to select faith- and social-justice based colleges across Washington and Oregon on full-tuition, full-need scholarships.
- **Support and Inspire:** Provide strong campus support and ongoing leadership development to nurture these young people as they find their vocation and grow into the next generation of community leaders.
Act Six at 10 Years

- 4 affiliate organizations in 5 cities
- 8 partner college partners
- 37 cadres formed
- 315 scholars trained

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Act Six Scholars

- 28% Hispanic, 27% African American, 19% multiracial, 13% Asian & Pacific Islander, 11% Caucasian, 3% American Indian
- Speak 32 languages & represent 6 continents
- 57% female
- 72% first generation college students
- 77% from low-income families
- 87% first generation or low-income

Act Six Outcomes

- 89% of the scholars who started college have graduated or are still enrolled
- Assuming significant leadership roles on campus, including numerous club presidents and three student government presidents
- Engaged in numerous community internships/service opportunities

Tacoma-Seattle
Whitworth Cadre One (’07)

- 84% of first graduates have returned to work or serve in their home communities
- 27% of first graduates are pursuing or have earned graduate degrees
- A network of leadership is emerging across the sectors of our community
Act Six Theory of Change

Goals of the theory of change are:
- to describe the causal process by which Act Six interventions lead to success, rooted in the college student retention literature; and
- to provide a conceptual framework to guide empirical testing and by which the effects of program modifications and innovations can be anticipated.

Act Six Theory of Change

- While academic preparedness and financial factors play critical roles in underrepresented students success in college, the Act Six theory emphasizes other social and non-cognitive factors that create gaps even among those best prepared and adequately funded.

Act Six Theory of Change

- Extensive and detailed, with 23 coordinated community- and campus-based interventions that influence 40 short- and long-term outcomes from precollege recruitment through post-graduation.
- Grouped into four levels of outcomes:
  - Precollege Outcomes
  - Bridging Outcomes
  - Campus Outcomes
  - Long Term Goals

Act Six Distinctives

- Situates retention outcomes in a larger, comprehensive context of student, campus and community transformation.
- Program designed fundamentally as a community-based approach in collaboration with colleges.
- Bridging outcomes take central focus, developed in precollege training and nurtured through on-campus support.
Act Six Distinctives

Five defining elements of the program:
- Central focus on **leadership**
- **Cohorts** as a core structure
- Importance of **cultural integrity**
- Emphasis on **training**
- Nurturing **sense of purpose**

Literature Highlights

- Rooted in critiques of Tinto’s separation-integration models
- We “seek to enable students to come to grips with the multiple phenomena that hold them back. In effect, we aim to equip students with the necessary cultural capital to succeed in the system that exists, but in doing so we seek to disrupt the process.” (Tierney, 2000, p 218)

Literature Highlights

- Students’ cultural are identities affirmed and valued
  - Tierney (1999, 2000) cultural integrity
  - Rendón, Jalano, & Nora (2000) biculturalism
- Students possess a personal and collective sense of purpose
- Students are supported by a strong cohort
  - Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon (2004) communal potential
  - Kuh & Love (2000) social enclaves
  - Tatum (2003) value of segregated grouping

Cultural Integrity

- What messages regarding their home culture do your underrepresented students experience when they arrive on campus?

Sense of Purpose

- Do your underrepresented students generally feel that they belong when they arrive on campus?
- How do your students understand their role or contribution on their college campus or in the communities back home?

What Does Act Six Mean?
A Platform for Innovation

- What will be the effects of customizing the model to fit local conditions in replication?
- Can a subset of the Act Six interventions be repackaged and delivered to more students while preserving the effect?
- Can we fundamentally rethink the way that urban students and other underrepresented populations go to college?

Act Six Additional Enrollment

For fall 2012, Act Six generated the following from five communities for eight colleges:

- 4,133 recruitment contacts
- 976 applications
- 627 admits
- 59 Act Six scholars
- 153 additional enrollments
- 212 total enrollments

Act Six Additional Enrollment

At one partner college, over the past 5 years:

- enrolled 194 additional applicants from pool
- 33% have not returned to year 2
- 50% have not returned to year 3
- 40% graduated in four years

Act Six Academy

- Take advantage of existing cohorts of students attending partner colleges
- Community-based, paid coach
- Training for cohort May – August
- Cohort support through first year, to start of second year

Act Six Academy Pilot

- Pilot with 14 students to one partner college in fall 2011
- Close integration with full Act Six scholars
- 12 of 14 (86%) returned for second year
- Encouraging feedback from student life staff

Act Six Academy Demonstration Project

- Two-year project with 90 students in 9 cohorts at 7 colleges across Northwest
- Testing program model across a variety of settings within Act Six network
- Plan to carefully evaluate the retention effect as well as implementation learnings
Collective Impact Opportunities

If the model proves as effective as we anticipate, how might a community organize itself to take advantage of the natural college cohorts that already exist every summer?

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References


References