Reach for Your Dreams: A Template for Recruitment of First Generation Students to Higher Education

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This project was focused on creating a template for recruitment of first-generation elementary school-aged students to an institution of higher education. A review of research literature, discussions with school professionals such as teachers, counselors, community members and principals, as well as discussions with representatives from other institutions who are working with various recruitment models, yielded several important findings. First, it was found that teaching templates should convey the importance of higher education in the concrete lives of first-generation students. Second, we discovered that the more first-generation students were exposed to discussions of college/university, the more likely they were to consider higher education. Third, when dealing with elementary school-aged children, the time factor was critical, that is, presentations in short increments of up to 20 minutes seemed to have the most beneficial results. Fourth, these discussions yielded information on specific community needs, information on additional resources, suggestions for useful project names as well as how to integrate family members into the project, the opportunity to test the pilot presentation on groups of community youth, and recommendations on specific sites for presentations. Fifth, representatives from other institutions were less forthcoming; however, information was gleaned on existing templates that proved useful in understanding longitudinal programming. After this information had been gathered, our pilot elementary school template presentation was tested at an elementary school in a western state. The presentation was followed up by a field trip to the university campus for the students who had participated in the presentation. Surveys of the elementary school students will be conducted both pre- and post-the field trip to campus to determine success of project.