

**MINUTES**  
**Immigration & Higher Education Study Committee**  
**Harriet Tubman Center**  
**Tuesday, January 29**  
**5:00 – 7:00 p.m.**

*Members present: John DeSantis, Bright Dornblaser, Anna Farrell, Nick Leitheiser, Malcolm McLean, Linea Palmisano*

*Staff present: Victoria Ford, Annie Levenson-Falk*

**Objectives**

- *Continue to discuss, refine and prioritize culture, information and cost recommendations*
  - *Eliminate recommendations we don't believe in, refine recommendations we want to keep, and identify questions that need to be answered before we can make final decisions.*

**1) Review & approve agenda**

Agenda okayed with no changes

**2) Discussion: Refining recommendations**

*Note: To help stay on schedule, staff suggests that the committee hold the question of how many recommendations to make until a later meeting – after the committee has reviewed all of the current recommendations.*

1. Increase and improve opportunities for immigrant students to receive advising and mentorship outside of school.
  - Along the same lines of the recommendations from last meeting, but combined several under one heading
  - May want to change this to read “outside of *high* school”
  - a. Encourage immigrant college students to serve immigrant high school students in accessing college education via college work-study and AmeriCorps programming.
    - St. Paul mayor is working with colleges to focus work-study goals on higher ed
    - TRIO is another example
    - Culture-based student groups might be a place to start if we can't get colleges to do it – they have some funding
    - Change wording; maybe “via *programs like* college work-study and AmeriCorps”
      - Concerns with AmeriCorps:
        - You have to be a citizen to participate
        - Funding is poor – hard to do without other financial support

- Could call out service learning – many colleges give credit for it or require it
- **[Committee agreement] This point is about current college students, people who have completed college, and people who have completed some college and are working or taking a break from school before completing it**
- Are we trying to encourage students to serve or encourage colleges and universities to offer opportunities for students to serve?
  - Answer is in the results – what approach gets the most immigrant students to participate?
  - Should aim at programs that take a targeted approach
    - If we focus on policy changes, it might have a broader impact beyond immigrant students
    - Resources are available (e.g. imakeithappen.org) but not utilized
    - Information group believes that encouraging programs is better policy approach
    - Information group found that service learning opportunities available to undergrads are often unfunded or so poorly funded that low-income students can't participate
- Suggestion: create a fund for student groups to initiate service learning projects
  - Some money should already be available for this, though work study and student fees that student governments allocate
  - Not stable – this would mean trying to reinvent the wheel each semester based on the students
  - Going through programs would be stronger approach
- Look into potential options through CURA (Center for Urban and Regional Affairs)
  - University Neighborhood Network pays for students to do projects in collaboration with a nonprofit or a community organization
  - At least in the past projects were focused on research, but we could recommend they focus on other kinds of community needs
- Page Foundation Scholarships mandate scholars work with K-8 – could we recommend a scholarship that requires students to work with high school students?
  - Linea had conversation with Page Fdn leaders – they focus on K-8 because college students are looked at as leaders not peers
  - Page scholars sometimes also work with adults through community groups

**[Committee agreement] Goals:**

- **Encourage colleges and university programs targeted at immigrant students serving immigrant students**
  - **Encourage immigrant students to participate**
- b. Create a network of mentor “advocates” to provide information and training to those who professionally or as a volunteer assist immigrant students in navigating the college process.”

- If we make this recommendation, who should create the network? A foundation? Self-organized group of individuals? Other?
  - If it's loosely affiliated, how does it connect with students, schools, etc? It would be better as part of an official entity
  - Information group felt it was good to encourage the more entrepreneurial, neutral party. If driven from a college, will be skewed towards the college. If driven from a high school, becomes more like Achieve Minneapolis, which is good but doesn't accomplish the goals of uniting nonprofits, schools, mentors
  - Could be information professional association – a group of people who've volunteered to organize events, create network, etc
  - Could be a program of MCAN (MN College Access Network)
    - MCAN has relationships with many of the people who might be in this network
    - Ability to be unbiased group that can work with others doing different aspects of this work (works with SEIU, community groups, chambers of commerce, etc). That's something schools don't have capacity for, or politics around working with particular groups might make it difficult for them
    - Could be a hybrid – a loose affiliation of mentors that's housed at MCAN
  - **[committee agreement] Don't need to specify exactly who will organize and lead the network – should create a list of criteria we want in the host organization. We have enough information from this discussion to do so**
  
- c. Encourage increased private and public resources to programs which assist immigrant students accessing higher education.
  - What kind of programs?
    - St. Kate's AA program is good because provides a way for students to transition into college and earn first 1-2 years in the process.
      - Somewhat intrusive help on what students need to be ready for college
      - Program is entirely a feeder into St. Kates and Augsburg – not sure if you can earn a 2-year degree through it
      - Targets students who applied to Augsburg of St. Kates but didn't get in
    - Other kinds of programs include Admission Possible, commanding English Program at the U
  - This is encouraging colleges to use best practices and made state educational money value schools that have stuff like this
  - Could create a fund to support startups or successful programs
    - Would need to get private funds – public funds won't be targeted only to immigrant students

- If we're looking for investment, we'll need to demonstrate a return on investment – don't think there are any studies that do this for this age group and population
      - **[committee agreement] Not a necessary recommendation anymore – this is included in our amendment of part (a) to encourage programs**
        - Also, may not be specific enough to help people actually take action based on this recommendation
2. Encourage higher educational institutions to approach non-traditional/older students as a target population for both financial resources and academic support.
- Information group approach – higher ed funding, etc limits access to older, nontraditional students (traditional students are full-time, entered directly from high school)
    - E.g. many scholarships are only available to high school seniors entering college
  - Could be aimed at scholarship organizations within and outside of colleges, and possibly work-study, other things – we don't know exactly what is limited
  - Why is current system set up this way? Are nontraditional students more likely to drop out, default on loans, etc?
  - Immigrant students seem more likely to be nontraditional
    - Anecdotally we know that many immigrant students age out of high school then complete GED or other education
    - Statistics show that 1<sup>st</sup> generation immigrant population is on average older than their grade-level peers (Linea found a statistic – not sure of source)
  - **[committee agreement] tune up language – talk about equalizing opportunities; make clear it's about funding, information, etc, not about admissions**
  - Might not be necessary for the report to specify how this should be done – flexibility could be good
3. A formal study of how immigrant students in college received their information. What programs, high schools, colleges and other methods are successful?
- Information group looked extensively for this and couldn't find it – could be valuable and potentially cost-saving in the long run
  - Could be expanded to look at what helps successful immigrant students be successful
  - Could add a “further research” section in the report – we've found a number of holes in the research
    - Would challenge us to identify those other holes – currently, this recommendation stands out because we don't call for further study on any other topics
    - Other studies could include looking at how counselor-to-student ratio impacts immigrants (or other groups) going to college
    - Not all members present agree this is the best approach – could keep this as separate recommendation because of its importance
    - Staff will solicit input from rest of committee members
  - Does it need to be extensive, scientific survey?
    - Could learn a lot by talking with 100 students

- We've done a fair amount of this and have gathered a lot of anecdotal evidence, but there's not the statistical data to back it up. Need formal study

4. As a part of the Minnesota state grant, provide students enrolled in an institution of higher education \$500 per semester in cash.

- Background: cost group found that most cost issues were really rooted in other causes (e.g. lack of information), but that relatively small financial roadblocks (e.g. paying for books, dorm deposit, etc) were major for some students
- People we've shopped the recommendations to were quite concerned about the politics around this recommendation
- Lily Moua's suggestion – require students to earn this money by meeting specific requirements (meet with advisor X times per semester, maintain certain GPA, etc)
  - But a lot of the costs are incurred at beginning of semester
- Should we make it more structured? E.g. grant bus passes, book gift certificates, etc.
  - Cost group specified cash to make it flexible
  - But giving \$500 towards books will free up students' money for other things
- **[committee agreement] Propose to eliminate this recommendation, pending input from other members**
  - This is not a huge issue – other factors are much more important to cost issues – many good arguments have been raised against this recommendation

### 3) Next steps and evaluation

- Staff will get feedback from committee over email – since low attendance, we'll need to get comments from those who weren't here
- Suggestion for future meetings:
  - Hoping to get through preparation and status recommendations in next two meetings
  - Staff then draft part of report, then committee meet to comment
- Evaluation: 4-4/5 – good meeting, but not enough attendance to make decisions

*Side note: Malcolm was asked to have a blog regarding immigrant students and higher education. He declined but said he would pass on the opportunity to members of the study committee – contact Malcolm if interested*