Degrees with Less Debt:
Effective Higher Education Strategies for Underrepresented Student Populations
Project Organizations

St. Louis Graduates – Commissioned Study

- Network of K-12 and higher education leaders, college access/success non-profits, business and philanthropy
- Primary goal is to increase postsecondary degree attainment for low-income, first-generation, and students of color in the St. Louis region

Illinois Education Research Council, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville – Research Lead

- Education policy research organization
- Provides objective research evidence for P-20 education policy audiences in Illinois and throughout the region
Motivation– Labor Force Needs

BY 2020

2/3 OF JOBS in Missouri and Illinois

WILL REQUIRE AN ASSOCIATE’S DEGREE OR HIGHER

Motivation – Degree Attainment Equity Gap

Goal: 60% by 2025

National Average: 45.8%, Missouri: 42.5%, St. Louis region: 42.3%

- Adults overall
- African Americans

14% gap
Motivation – Degree Attainment Equity Gap

Equity Indicator 5a: Bachelor’s degree attainment by age 24 for dependent family members by family income quartile: 1970-2013

Source: The Pell Institute
Motivation - Declining Buying Power of Pell Grant

Equity Indicator 3a (i): Average college cost and maximum Pell Grant award (in 2012 Constant Dollars): 1974-2012

Source: Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States, 2014 Historical Trend Report, The Pell Institute
Student debt now totals $1.4 TRILLION
Effective Higher Education Strategies for Underrepresented Student Populations

Dr. Janet K. Holt
Professor Emeritus of Educational Leadership, Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville
1. Identify higher education institutions that are most successful in supporting and graduating underrepresented students from St. Louis.

2. Examine the programs, services, and strategies these institutions are using to graduate underrepresented students with less debt.
Universities in the Study

- Fontbonne University
- Harris-Stowe State University
- Lincoln University
- Lindenwood University
- Maryville University
- McKendree University
- Missouri Baptist University
- Missouri State University
- Missouri S&T
- Saint Louis University
- Southeast Missouri State University
- Southern Illinois University-Carbondale
- Southern Illinois-Edwardsville
- Truman State University
- University of Central Missouri
- University of Missouri-Columbia
- University of Missouri-Kansas City
- University of Missouri-St. Louis
- Washington University
- Webster University
Success Formula

• Ranking calculation based on predicted vs. actual 6-year graduation rates and median student loan debt at graduation

Minimal Thresholds:

• Institutions needed a minimum 6-year graduation rate of 50%
• At least 25% of the student body must be Pell Grant eligible
5 INSTITUTIONS EFFECTIVELY GRADUATING UNDERREPRESENTED STUDENTS WITH LESS DEBT
• University leadership
• Just-in-time academic support
• Flexible and sufficient financial aid
• Early college experiences
• Coordinated and caring community
University Leadership

• University commitment to college access and affordability
• Goal setting and strategy development for student success
• Professional development for faculty & staff in the areas of diversity and inclusion
• Intentional engagement with underrepresented students
Early College Experiences

• Summer Bridge Programs
• New Student Orientation Programs
• First-Year Experience Courses & Programming
• Learning Communities
• Early Alert Systems & Learning Analytics
• Easy Access to Tutoring & Supplemental Instruction
• Co-requisite Remediation
• Guided Pathways to Success
• Mentoring Programs
Keeping Unmet Need Low for Financially At-Risk students

Providing Need-Based Aid to Supplement the Pell Grant

Offering Flexible Aid to Adapt to Changing Student Circumstances

Financial Literacy and Knowledge of Financial Resources
Coordinated & Caring Communities

• Providing a “Family” atmosphere
• Caring Means Believing in Students
• Wrap-Around Support Services
• Coordination of Care
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