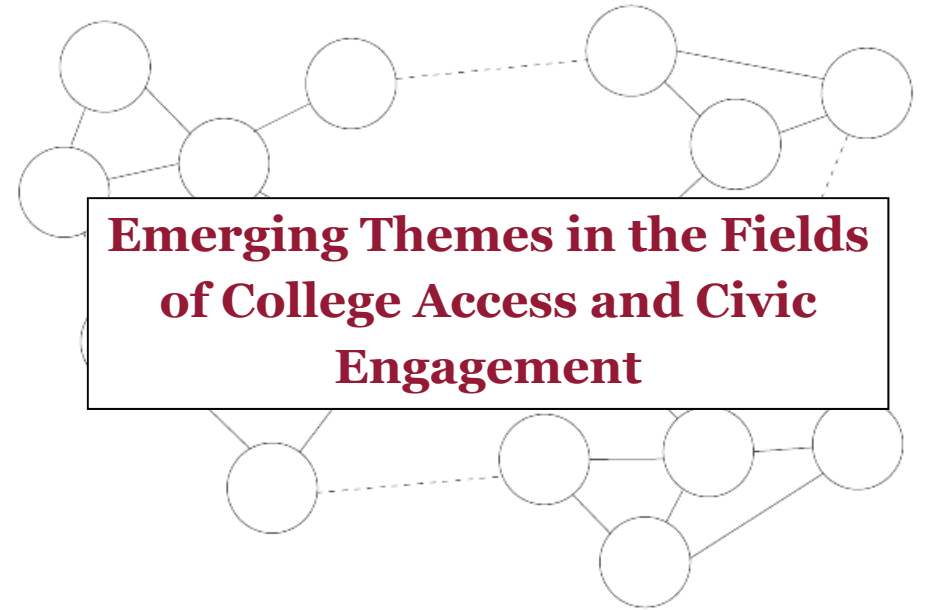




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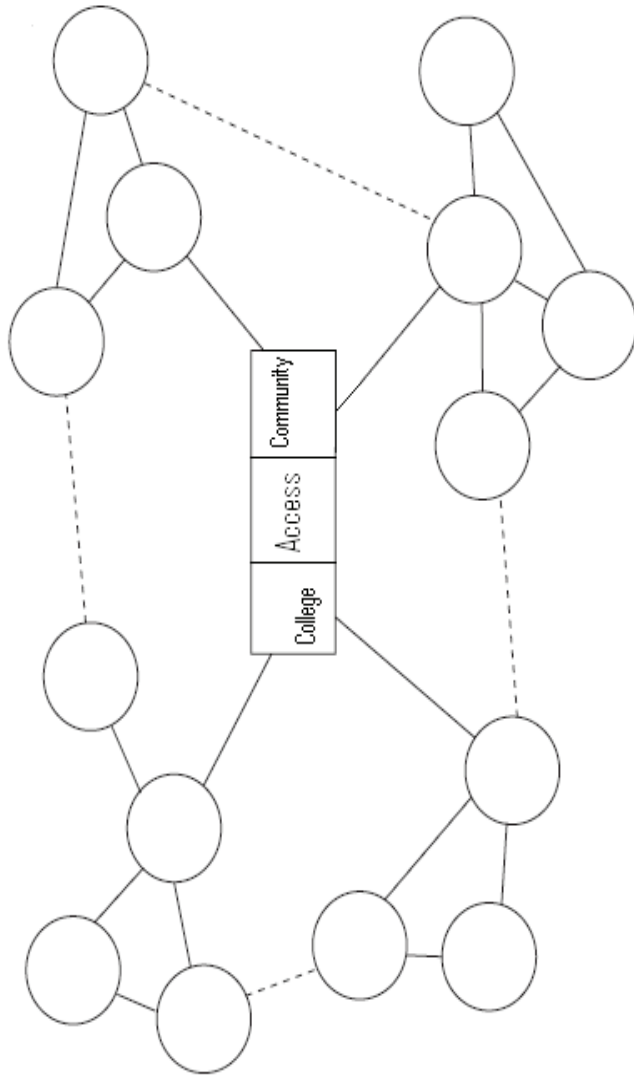
College Access Fellows Mapping Report

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Overview of College Access and Civic Engagement

The divide between the rich and poor continues to grow in our nation, with immigrant and minority populations being particularly hard hit. This divide is reflected in students' access to, and success in, college. A college education can translate not only into individual economic and social improvement but also civic participation. However, the financial, educational, and social obstacles that exist, particularly with low-income and first generation students, are challenging to overcome when doing so alone or without the necessary resources.

Access to higher education is a multifaceted issue which affects higher education, k-12 and local communities, and it requires a unique and creative solution. While literature and sound bites tend to define the issue of college access in terms of policy, with a focus on the offices of admissions, financial aid and local and state governments, civic engagement leaders on campus and in the community are working to address the financial, academic, and social barriers of attaining higher education success. There is no doubt that policymakers, leaders of higher education and elected officials play an essential role in expanding college-going opportunities; however, civic engagement is a component that often gets overlooked.

In outlining its vision for the next 20 years, Campus Compact, a national coalition of over 1,100 colleges and universities dedicated to promoting community service, civic engagement, and service-learning in higher education, identified the goal of bridging the opportunity gap by improving educational access and success. Building on the success of civic engagement and community organizing strategies, Massachusetts Campus Compact (MACC) has developed programs with various institutions of higher education to identify ways to increase the opportunity for local students to attain a college degree. MACC encourages campuses and communities to work more collaboratively to address the issues of college access and success.

Massachusetts Campus Compact College Access Fellowship (CAF)

Purpose

In the spring of 2007, this College Access Fellowship was created to help assess the infrastructure of college access and success across the state. This program featured student College Access Fellows who 1) mapped the infrastructure of their campus to more effectively address issues of college access; 2) performed direct service in the community through strategic college awareness outreach; and 3) recruited and trained college volunteers to be “college positive” – serving as more than just role models and educators but as a bridge for young people on the path to college.

Procedure

With a grant from the Massachusetts Service Alliance (MSA), Massachusetts Campus Compact (MACC) identified and trained 17 student leaders across 13 different campuses to become College Access Fellows. These Fellows identified existing access programs on campuses and in the community, the key stakeholders and worked on ways to strengthen those programs. Because MACC had already established strong working relationships with those colleges, the College Access Fellows were able to leverage valuable resources and established partnerships the colleges had within their communities. The fellows underwent an extensive training in order to prepare before they began their projects. The training was designed in collaboration with ACCESS Boston, a non-profit organization whose mission is to ensure that every Boston Public School student has the financial information and resources necessary to achieve their dream of higher education. Through ACCESS Boston and other outside consultants, we designed a training that can be replicated in similar programs.

In this guide, you will find some themes and highlights from the College Access Fellowship program, a list of the Fellows and their sites, information to get you started, and a tool to help you begin the college access mapping process in your own community.

Activity IV: Next Steps: Action Plan

- 1) Work with your supervisor to devise a strategy for implementing the action steps from Activity III.
- 2) Share your assessment with the people you interview on campus and in the community.
- 3) Make your assessment of the campus public:
 - Write a letter to the student newspaper
 - Meet with faculty to present your assessment and recommendations
 - Meet with administrators to present your assessment and recommendations
 - Meet with students from other schools and compare notes (both regionally and with peer institutions)
 - Meet with student government and ask them to sponsor your mapping and support your recommendations
 - Meet with community members to present your assessment
- 4) Gather feedback from the various constituents and meet with your supervisor to revise action steps as necessary.

REFLECTION

What did you discover about yourself as you did this mapping? Do you feel more connected to your community as a result of this activity? Do you feel excited/discouraged about the prospects of making your campus more effective in its approach to college access? Do you find yourself thinking differently about your own role as a student leader/activist? How did you share with the stakeholders what you discovered? Were they receptive? What was their reaction? What are your hopes/dreams about raising awareness of college access on your campus and in your community?

So this activity, while sometimes daunting, should be fun and meaningful. Try to get to know what motivates this person to be involved and how this person might be enlisted as an ally in your efforts on campus.

Activity II: Helping and Hindering College Access Programs

As you look at the people and places you identified (and potentially interviewed) above, think about the “strengths” and “gaps” on your campus and in your community in addressing the academic, financial, and cultural barriers that hinder local youth from attending college. Use the following questions to guide your discussion in determining the strengths and the gaps on your campus and in your community.

STRENGTHS—SUPPORTING COLLEGE ACCESS PROGRAMS

- In what areas are your campus and community strong in addressing college access barriers on campus and in the local community?
- How does your campus help support these programs?

GAPS—HINDERING COLLEGE ACCESS PROGRAMS

- What areas of college access does your campus and community need more support in addressing?
- What on your campus and in your community prevents greater collaboration?

Activity III: Recommendations for Change - Action Steps

- Ideally, how could your campus best address college access barriers in the local community?
- What are some concrete ways that your campus and community can work together in addressing college access for local youth?

Follow up question:

- What steps need to be taken in order for your recommendations to be realized?

Activities

I. Mapping Project: Each College Access Fellow was required to conduct a campus and community mapping project which explored existing access programs and how they were interconnected. This piece was crucial for the Fellow in building support for their work.

II. College Access Workshops: The goal of these workshops was to overcome the information barrier by working to make the idea of college a reality for young people. This was done primarily through presentations to high school students and their families. These presentations addressed the steps in the college admissions process, from completing the FAFSA to selecting the right school, and securing the best financial aid package. If the student understands the college admissions process, the goal of higher education will be more attainable.

III. College-Positive Training for Volunteers: Addressing issues of college access extends beyond the admissions and financial aid offices. As tutors, mentors and active community volunteers, college students can have a profound impact on how young people, beginning as early as first grade, view the possibility of going to college. By taking a college-positive approach with young people, college students can serve as more than just role models and educators. They can be a bridge for young people to discover college. Some College Access Fellows developed a sustainable training curriculum for the college students that was incorporated into the training of all volunteers who work with young people. In doing so, College Access Fellows increased the number of direct one-on-one interactions supporting youth in college access.

There are various levels on which college students can be involved in college access work – activities include wearing college apparel when working with young people, giving a campus newspaper to them, leading a campus tour for high school students, going through the FAFSA with the student, reviewing college applications, and helping students write personal essays.

IV. College Success Seminars: While it is essential to reach as many students as possible and work with them to gain access into higher education, it is irresponsible to not prepare these students for the college experience. Success in higher education is as equally important as access. Therefore, some College Access Fellows organized a College Success Seminar which was held at their host site college for local high school students preparing to enter college.

Massachusetts Campus Compact College Access Fellows

Name	Institution	Supervisor
Kelleigh Eastman	Bristol Community College	Mary Zahn
Leah F. Manangan	Bunker Hill Community College	Casey Moffatt
Kaylen S. Mallard	Gordon College	Valerie Buchanan
Henry Agbo	Harvard University	Robert Bridgeman
Marjorie Belizaire	Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts	Spencer Moser
Crystal Anderson	Mount Wachusett Community College	Rebecca Sonn
Darcel Hunt	Simmons College	Jill Taylor
Grace McDonald	Simmons College	Jill Taylor
Melissa Jaquez	Springfield College	Charlene Elvers
Katerina Lucas	Tufts University	Lee A. Coffin
Walker Coppengde	Tufts University	Lee A. Coffin
Vanessa Snow	University of Massachusetts, Amherst	Mishy Leiblum
Elizabeth Corcoran	University of Massachusetts, Amherst	Mishy Leiblum
Atonia Moler	University of Massachusetts, Boston	Kunthary Thai-Johnson
Adam Ouellette	University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth	Shannon Jenkins
Sergio H. Sanchez	University of Massachusetts, Lowell	Michael Belcher
Castro-Yves Arboite	University of Massachusetts, Lowell	Michael Belcher

people on campus and in the community to understand where the leverage points for change and collaboration are; but it requires much more time. Due to the amount of time that interviewing takes in scheduling and performing, interviews should not be seen as a stopping point, but rather as a constant activity that you participate in and return to as schedules permit. You may want to continue doing interviews after your mapping project is complete to further your understanding.

After the initial mapping, the next step is to do one-on-one interviews with some of the people you identified. This can seem intimidating, but the stakeholders you identified are most often excited to talk with people about their work, especially students. It is also an essential aspect of understanding power on campus and in the community, building allies, and seeing how to accomplish your goal (which could range from hosting a dialogue, to recruiting more students to join your cause, to increased collaboration between university and community partners on the issue of college access). The following are questions to ask your identified stakeholders:

- How did you first become involved in your work? (depending on how the person is identified as a stakeholder, this can be made more specific to the organization or college access work this person is doing)
- What drives you to be involved?
- How can we increase student and institutional involvement in addressing college access with the local community? (to ask both campus and community stakeholders)
- What changes would you like to see on campus or in the broader community? Do you think change is possible?
- Who else do you know on campus or in the community that is working on these issues?

Be sure to follow-up on interesting answers and observations. Build on what your interviewee has already said, rather than following a set script of questions. An interviewee who feels listened to is likely to talk more than someone who feels ignored.

College Access Mapping: Activity Guide

Activity I: Who's Around?

Step I. Mapping Stakeholders

The first step is to identify key stakeholders. The following questions will help inform the mapping process. During this mapping activity, you may want to complete the mapping tool (see page 18) individually and then with your supervisor to draw the map of your campus and community. In this process, you may wish to start with the general (i.e. Service Learning Center/Admissions Office, Boys and Girls Club), but then get *specific*, including names and contact information of people (i.e. Sam Grant, Director, 555-555-5555). The more specific you can get, the better, especially as you go out to talk with people.

A “stakeholder” is any person or group that has a real interest (or “stake”) in something.

- Who are key “stakeholders” (on campus and in the community) for creating, developing, and managing college access programs? Who has a real interest in providing local youth with opportunities to attain their goal of a college education? Here you might think of student organizations, key community partners, faculty, student affairs, administrators, etc.
- What programs target college access (including volunteering, service-learning, or institutional and community work)?
- Which offices support college access programs?
- What college student groups are organizing or involved in college access programs?
- What community based organizations are organizing or involved in college access programs?
- What community and neighborhood organizations can/does the college partner with in regards to college access?

Step II. Interviews

Conducting interviews is important for building relationships with key

Massachusetts Campus Compact CAF Mapping Project: Emerging Themes

Once the mapping was complete and the reports had been processed, several overarching themes clearly emerged. These themes were primarily focused on ways to improve access and success services to high school students. All themes found are in some way helpful to the local community and future Access Mapping Projects.

I. The lack of coordination, collaboration, communication, and centralization that exists within and between offices on college campuses, area school systems, existing programs, and community organizations with a focus on access. For example, college campus offices such as Admissions, Enrollment, Financial Aid, and Student Services were extremely decentralized and did not seem to communicate with each other on a regular basis in any kind of formal, structured manner. This made it challenging for community members and new students to find information. The lack of collaboration meant that first-generation and low-income students were often not receiving the kind of financial and logistical support they needed.

II. Many programs and initiatives on campuses were transient and unstable because they were not institutionalized. Faculty members or student groups were working on projects for a short period of time, but when funding ran out (e.g., from a grant), or there was not as much time to devote to such projects, or leadership/staffing changes, the partnerships faltered and programs faded out. Without permanent funding these programs were difficult to sustain. Additionally, a college or university that funds these initiatives is showing a commitment to college access for the community.

III. Admissions decision criteria and policies at the institutions could be changed to be more inclusive and supportive of students coming from various backgrounds.

IV. While admissions may be somewhat of an issue, retention was an equally imperative issue that was often overlooked and under-funded. Retention programs for first-generation, low-income, minority, and non-traditional students could be created, supported, and/or expanded to keep these populations at school. These programs could include summer bridge programs and remedial courses that can be completed before the fall semester begins.

V. The growth in tuition and fees continues to far exceed the growth in scholarships and grants. Students may be accepted to an institution, but the lack of appropriate financial aid is still a barrier that some will not be able to overcome. Many of the fellows' reports offered recommendations for increasing scholarship programs for local students and/or students from low-income backgrounds.

VI. Many Fellows reported that area high school students ought to have multiple opportunities to visit college campuses. This along with mentoring, consistent parental involvement, and SAT preparatory classes were noted as important components of a college access project or program. The responsibility for achieving these initiatives falls not only on the high school, but on the institution to offer its resources, such as students, knowledge and money.

VII. Numerous Fellows noted that "more work needs to be done." They viewed this Mapping Project as one small step in a much larger process. While some Fellows proverbially threw the ball back into the institution's court by making recommendations that they believe would be beneficial to the institution, others said that they would continue to work on these issues on their campus and in their community.

Financial Aid (examples):

- Establishing centers on campus that allow the community to access FAFSA forms, tax breaks, and scholarship information
- Working with local youth to complete their FAFSA forms
- After-school programs that work with youth to research scholarship opportunities

College Awareness (examples):

- Bringing local students to campus for tours, classes, activities
 - Giving presentations to the parents and the community about preparing their children for college and planning for college
 - Kids 2 College programs that send college students to local schools to give classes to students
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Massachusetts Campus Compact CAF Mapping Project: Highlights

Springfield College separated their interview results by stakeholder group, such as high school students, community centers and college administrators. This way, the concerns for each group were able to be pinpointed and addressed effectively.

The report from the **University of Massachusetts, Amherst** made the important point that college access work must address immediate needs in tandem with systematic issues. Taking into consideration the root causes is a must in order to create statewide change.

The **University of Massachusetts, Amherst** report also discussed incentives for faculty and students to become involved in Access work. For example, there should be more opportunities for students to do service-learning as elective coursework. Faculty efforts should be encouraged and recognized in tenure, promotion, through benchmarking and with campus awards.

One set of data from the **Tufts University** interviews came specifically from new Tufts students from Boston-area high schools. These interviews were focused on their experience while applying to the institution, getting financial aid, their perception of support systems once they were on campus, among other issues. Targeting this population gave the Tufts University Fellow a crucial set of data from a direct source.

Overview of College Access Mapping*

Students from around the country are working on ways to reduce the barriers to a college education— from tutoring and mentoring in their local communities to advocating for more need-based aid—to ensure that higher education is an attainable goal for all regardless of background. As a way to support those efforts and support the broader goal of helping you take action on the issue of college access, Massachusetts Campus Compact has created this college access mapping tool. This will help you not only identify existing programs and resources, but also potential assets and allies that exist on your campus and in your community. After the initial mapping, you will be able to determine where greater collaboration and awareness is needed.

Mapping is a core community building skill and is a way of life for the best community organizers. When you hear the word “mapping” you probably think of a traditional street map that tells you where something is located and how to get there. Mapping college access programs does the same thing, except the purpose is to evaluate your campus and the methods and programs being used to address the issue of college access. It will give you a framework for understanding where change needs to happen on campus and in your community. It can help you start implementing those desired changes. Most importantly, mapping is a tool that initiates a community building process on a campus which helps locate allies and resources so that change is possible.

We suggest beginning this activity by working with colleagues to create a strategy for completing this mapping project. One strategy is to recruit students who can assist you in the project. You will also want to get the assistance of key administrators, community leaders, and faculty who can bring an institutional memory that students may not have. They can inform you of the history of college access programs on the campus and in the community.

* based on language from the “Raise Your Voice” Campaign