

LINKING COLLEGE ACCESS AND SUCCESS

Selected lessons from two OMG evaluations —BY VICTORIA DOUGHERTY, MEG LONG, MARCELA GUTIÉRREZ

Over the past several years, OMG deepened its expertise in higher education through work on five national college access and success evaluations for the Lumina Foundation for Education, the John S. and James Knight Foundation, and the Posse Foundation. Much of this work is heavily informed by the lessons learned as national evaluators of the Lumina Foundation for Education's McCabe Fund and the Partnerships for College Access and Success (PCAS). The goal of these two

evaluations was to identify characteristics of effective college access and success programs at the student and systems levels.

Findings from McCabe suggest that programs that develop youth college aspirations and capacity to pursue college goals through leadership development, academics, and study support activities seem to be most effective in getting students into college. These seem more effective than traditional counseling and guidance approaches.

PCAS findings indicate that partnerships comprised of decision making representatives across the high school and college system are highly effective in removing systemic access and success barriers for underserved students. These types of partners can effect change within their own institutions as well as influence other institutional policy makers to join their efforts. Also, PCAS results reveal that to be successful, these college access and success partnerships need to be led by experienced facilitators with high visibility, recognition, and influence in the higher education community.

COMPREHENSIVE, LONG-TERM SUPPORTS FOR THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT

Lessons from the McCabe Fund and Partnerships for College Access and Success

The McCabe Fund helps students, particularly first-generation college students, low-income students, and students of color gain access to post-secondary education. OMG Center evaluated the third cycle of the Lumina Foundation's McCabe Fund grantees (McCabe awarded funding to thirty organizations between June 2005 and June 2007). These organizations represent a mix of community-based organizations, public and private schools, and institutions of post-secondary learning throughout the country. The evaluation's purpose was to determine which of the thirty funded programs most effectively increased college enrollment.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF RON NICHOLS



Student attending Philadelphia Education Fund's Know Before You Go workshop.

(Linking College Access and Success continued from cover)



Students participating in a McCabe Fund-supported college access program in Brooklyn, NY.

The evaluation looked at two different types of programs. Development/empowerment programs nurture youth aspirations and capacity to pursue college goals through leadership development workshops, peer-support groups, academics, and study-support activities. Addition/replacement programs provide guidance services and college counseling in under-funded environments.

OMG used a combination of qualitative and secondary data analysis of college outcomes for a sample of over 1,100 high school seniors in McCabe Fund programs to identify practices that promoted college enrollment. OMG found that 60 percent of the students who said they participated in development/empowerment access programs enrolled in college in the fall following their senior year of high school. This is a much higher rate than the rate among students who said they participated in addition/replacement programs before enrolling in college after their senior year — i.e., 34 percent).

These findings suggest that building self-motivation and a sense of empowerment may be more important for first-generation college students than simply guiding them through the complexity of college enrollment

requirements. Moreover, successful college access programs under the McCabe Program began working with students at the start of high school, and in some cases, as early as in junior high school. This suggests that to provide maximum exposure to college options and a college-going culture by the time they graduate, it is important to start early and follow students through time. While the McCabe programs we evaluated recognized the need to provide more support to their students once in college, very few have been able to do so.

The Partnerships for College Assess and Success (PCAS) evaluation also identified effective college access and success practices targeting first-generation, low-income students in eight urban centers across the country.

Two of the PCAS sites, New York and Seattle, focused on unique populations: students who had dropped out of school and adult airport workers, respectively. These sites learned that to successfully re-engage this group of disconnected students in college, they needed to develop comprehensive, highly individualized services to support their needs. Services provided at these sites included childcare support, employer-supported leave for college classes, peer-support structures, and dedicated case managers to help students navigate in the higher education environment. In Seattle and New York, services were provided by social service, community college and university, and community-based organizations that were part of the PCAS partnership. Student referrals and partner services were coordinated by the Lumina grantee organization, ensuring that student needs were met. The models developed by these two grantees and their partners have become national examples of successful college access programs for non-traditional student populations.

PARTNERSHIPS AS A VEHICLE FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE IN COLLEGE ACCESS AND SUCCESS

Lessons from PCAS

In many communities, students who want to attend college face formidable systemic barriers that keep them from enrolling and completing their education. For example, access to financial aid, policies related to transferring from two- to four-year institutions, and lack of adequate educational preparation continue to keep many out of college. These types of challenges do not respond to programmatic solutions implemented by individual organizations; they can only be addressed through policy and systems changes undertaken by groups of complementary organizations working in partnership to impact large numbers of students and change institutions from within.

To begin addressing some of these systemic and institutional college access and success barriers, the Lumina Foundation launched the Partnerships for College Access and Success (PCAS) initiative. The foundation envisioned that these PCAS partnerships would be comprised of representatives from K-12 schools and school districts, two- and four-year colleges, community-based organizations, access programs, financial aid providers, the business community, education advocates, and others. Together, the local partnerships worked to identify practice and policy obstacles and then created effective strategies to address them. The partnerships used the lessons they learned from their PCAS work to inform the change of larger systemic barriers limiting educational opportunities in their community.

OMG's evaluation found the most successful PCAS partnerships shared two important characteristics. The programs involved partners with

decision making power and capacity to influence policy within and outside their own institutions (e.g., community college presidents, school superintendents, provosts). And, the partnerships were well supported and facilitated by strong leaders from the grantee organization. Sites that combined these partnership assets, such as San Antonio, Burlington, Chattanooga, New York, and Seattle were able to successfully influence systemic change during the life of the initiative.

In Chattanooga, for example, high school and college partners worked together to improve the math alignment of the high school graduation and college entrance requirements. This went far to reduce the high remediation needs of incoming college students. San Antonio's post-secondary partners worked on aligning the academic

requirements of two- and four-year colleges so students could be better prepared to transition from the former to the latter. New York City's Promising Practices Partnership made recommendations to CUNY about removing a variety of institutional barriers that kept students who had dropped out of school from succeeding in college. Recommendations included the provision of public transportation vouchers, college fee waivers, and changing enrollment practices to provide individualized attention to this growing sub-population of students in New York.

SYSTEMS AND PROGRAMMING SOLUTIONS

To help underserved students enter and graduate from college, it is necessary to provide a full array of supports and work with students over time, laying the groundwork for

college access throughout high school and continue to support students while in college. Moreover, the most effective way of delivering these supports is not through single programs working in isolation of each other, but through the provision of a full array of coordinated supports through partnerships among community-based organizations, educational institutions, and other partners working together. Finally, to effectively promote and implement systemic changes, these college access and success partnerships need to involve senior-level policy stakeholders and decision makers from the beginning. These partners need to be supported and led in their efforts by seasoned, recognized leaders in the field of college access and success in their communities.



College access counselors working at Franklin K Lane High School in New York City.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR COLLEGE ACCESS AND SUCCESS (PCAS) INITIATIVE GRANTEEES

The PCAS initiative supported the development of multi-stakeholder partnerships as a vehicle to improve institutional policies and alignment of programs and student supports in eight communities throughout the United States:

- Linking Learning to Life, Burlington, VT
- Public Education Fund and the College Access Center, Chattanooga, TN
- Little Village Development Corporation, Chicago, IL
- COMPASS Guide, Milwaukee, WI
- Youth Development Institute, New York, NY
- Linking Education and Economic Development, Sacramento, CA
- San Antonio Education Partnership, San Antonio, TX
- Port Jobs, Seattle, WA

ASSURING QUALITY WHILE SCALING UP IN COLLEGE ACCESS

OMG Assesses the Posse Foundation's Capacity for Expansion —BY VICTORIA DOUGHERTY

Founded in 1989, for the first ten years the Posse Foundation college access program existed only in New York City. It is now in six cities: New York, Boston, Los Angeles, Chicago, Washington DC, and Atlanta with established partnerships on nearly thirty campuses. In 2006, the Posse Foundation (Posse) received a three-year grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to expand the program to more cities and more campuses.

The Posse Foundation hired OMG to evaluate the program's capacity for expansion as a component of the Kellogg Foundation grant. Since the OMG evaluation is occurring simultaneously with the expansion, the evaluation is part of an ongoing feedback loop to inform Posse leaders about the expansion as it unfolds.

As a national exemplar college access program, the Posse Foundation identifies, recruits, and trains public high school student leaders and sends them as teams, called "posses," to top-tier colleges and universities to pursue academics and promote cross-cultural communication on campuses.

Posse scholars receive eight months of pre-collegiate training their senior year of high school followed by a four-year campus program including two years of support from a mentor on their college campus, the support of the nine other students that are part of their posse, annual PossePlus retreats, and campus visits by Posse staff including a career program manager who assists scholars secure competitive internship and employment opportunities.

When a successful program moves from an independent, locally-based, grassroots model to a multi-site national program, how does it ensure consistency and quality across multiple cities? Posse has devoted a lot of attention and resources throughout its expansion to promoting the Posse

brand and spreading the Posse culture in each local site. The local sites are clearly part of one national program, and they are also a reflection of the local environment in which they operate, the high schools from which they draw their students, their local advisory board, and of course, the local staff and local site director.

Posse strives to maintain the balance between ensuring adherence to the national model, culture, and brand and taking advantage of local creativity and local context. The OMG evaluation team is assessing how Posse manages this balance and is looking at the role of training, internal communication, and infrastructure.

To inform the Posse team's efforts to ensure consistency and quality throughout their efforts to scale up, OMG is pursuing three primary questions in the evaluation:

1. What does it take to replicate programming successfully across different cities?
2. What does it take to maintain consistent quality programs and strong partnerships on campuses?
3. What infrastructure and organizational design elements best support an expanding program?

To assess what it takes to replicate programming across a larger array of new sites, OMG is examining the training, materials, assistance, and oversight provided to the sites via document reviews, and interviews with all levels of staff at each site and with the national office staff. Areas of examination include the understanding of the program model, consistency in implementation and training, and assistance utilized from the national office.

Each of the on-campus programs brings its own unique college culture. However, consistency and quality in the campus component of the program is critical for scholar success as well as for Posse's ability to recruit more college partners. Increasing the number of college partners is one of the key goals Posse strives for as it seeks to expand to serve additional students.

OMG is visiting five current college partners, interviewing faculty and staff, observing Posse meetings, and conducting focus groups of Posse scholars. The OMG team aims to understand what kinds of efforts from the Posse staff best support the college partnerships and which deliver the strongest campus programs.

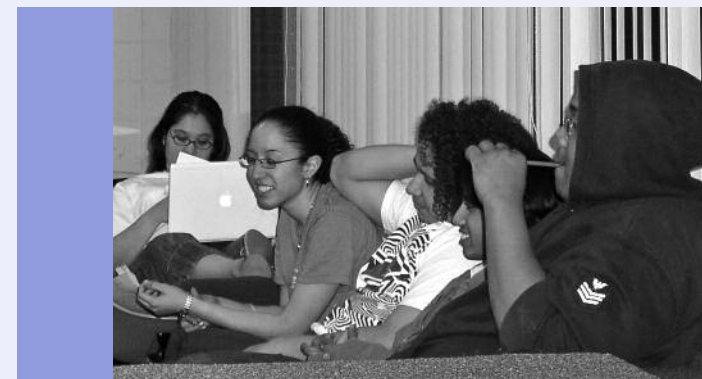
The third primary component to the OMG evaluation is an examination of the organization infrastructure and design of the Posse Foundation. The foundation grew from one site to six over a period of ten years, during which time the organization naturally modified roles and responsibilities, lines of internal communication and oversight, and methods

of providing training and assistance to local sites. As the organization embarks on the next expansion stage, further attention to these structures and supports is being paid.

Using OMG's collaborative learning approach to evaluation, the OMG team works with the Posse Foundation leadership in an ongoing dialogue to share the team's insights regarding the key program replication, partnership, and infrastructure findings of the evaluation. Through this partnership, the OMG team is able to help the Posse leadership take informed steps as it continues to balance its national growth with its grassroots heart.

partnership

evaluation college access



Students in Posse 8 Group meeting with a mentor at Brandeis University



Mentor and Posse at Brandeis University

OMG Projects and People

OMG Projects

The **William Penn Foundation** engaged OMG to assess its investment in the Children's Literacy Initiative (CLI). Using reading coaches in the classroom, CLI aims to increase early literacy development in Philadelphia schools. For this evaluation, OMG will use student-level data in a comparison group design, qualitative data from surveys, and interviews with school faculty and program staff. The evaluation will help inform investment and expansion strategies.

The **John S. and James L. Knight Foundation** and the **Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board** engaged OMG to document the work of Graduate Philadelphia (GIP), a multi-faceted initiative aimed at increasing college re-enrollment for adults ages twenty-five through forty-five. OMG is also conducting an evaluation of the partnership development process over the first two years to assess its capacity to affect systems change.

For the **John S. and James L. Knight Foundation**, OMG is conducting a two-year study of college enrollment, progress, and completion for public high school graduates in the Philadelphia and Miami public schools. Findings will inform current and future Knight Foundation investments and the district efforts in both cities. OMG will also assess the feasibility of replicating this effort in other cities.

OMG has received funding from the **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation** (RWJF) to provide evaluation training and capacity building to its Human Capital grantees to help them improve their internal capacity to assess program impact over the eighteen months. In addition, OMG will work with foundation program officers and grantees to identify cross cutting outcomes and indicators related to human capital development in the areas of leadership, diversity, and alumni engagement.

John S. and James L. Knight Foundation engaged OMG to conduct a multi-year evaluation of the University Park Alliance (UPA) partnership, a university/community partnership to revitalize the diverse neighborhoods surrounding the University of Akron. This evaluation is expected to inform and guide UPA as well as provide information to the foundation on the sustainability and replicability of such partnerships.

The **Center for Intergenerational Learning** at Temple University engaged OMG to evaluate the Coming of Age (COA) initiative. The initiative builds the capacity of community-based organizations to engage people fifty-years-of-age and older in civic opportunities through outreach and education. OMG will refine and expand the program components to engage diverse communities, identify effective replication practices, and inform other communities seeking to replicate COA.

OMG is evaluating **Wireless Philadelphia's Digital Inclusion Program** (DIP), a two-year assessment of a unique demonstration program aimed at improving the lives of low-income Philadelphians through home access to the Internet. OMG's evaluation's focus is the implementation and impact of DIP on families, partners, and wireless-communication policy.

OMG is conducting a twelve-month interim assessment of the **Corporation for Enterprise Development's** five-year Innovations in Manufactured Homes (I'M HOME) initiative. I'M HOME's goals are to help manufactured homebuyers receive similar benefits as those of traditional, site-built homes. OMG will make recommendations regarding the initiative's investment strategy, and devise an evaluation plan for a two-year implementation period.

OMG HELPS PHILADELPHIA BUILD SUSTAINABLE ARTS EDUCATION FOR ALL CHILDREN THROUGH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.

Over the past five years, OMG has worked with national and regional foundations — including the Ford Foundation, The Heinz Endowments, and the Chicago Community Trust — to help design and evaluate sustainable integrated arts initiatives as part of a quality education. This year, through a grant from the William Penn Foundation, OMG is serving as thought partners and facilitators of a community planning process to bring arts and education to scale for all children in our home, the greater Philadelphia region. Equipped with lessons from across the country, OMG is working with over 120 community stakeholders to develop a ten-year plan — the Arts4Youth Blueprint — to bring arts education and arts experiences to all children during the school day and after school in the community. In addition to facilitating community meetings and developing the Arts4Youth Blueprint, OMG is researching the Philadelphia environment to assess the current amount and quality of arts education experiences. This scan will help inform the ten-year plan and guide community decision making and priority setting. OMG will share additional information as the work develops. In the meantime, please visit the OMG website: www.omgcenter.org/Arts4Youth.

Other OMG Work at Home

OMG significantly increased its work in Philadelphia over the past year. Along with the Arts4Youth work described above, OMG is evaluating the following programs in the Philadelphia region: Graduate Philadelphia; the Coming of Age Project for the Center on Intergenerational Learning at Temple University; Wireless Philadelphia's Digital Inclusion Project; and the Center for Literacy's Reading First Coaching Program in the Philadelphia School District. We also continue to manage the Pew Fund's Health and Human Service Capacity Building Program.

OMG Presents

In April 2008 **Gerri Spilka** and consultant **Rose Miller** presented a workshop on **Leadership Succession Planning** to Pew Fund grantees, which kicked off the second round of the program and introduced frameworks for grantees for their own leadership succession planning.

At the March 2008 Grantmakers for Effective Organizations Meeting in San Francisco, **Anita Baker**, OMG Associate Project Director, joined colleagues from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, the Duke Foundation, and the Dee Norton Lowcountry Children's Center to present a session on **Coaching Grantees to Build Evaluative Capacity**.

At the October 2007 Grantmakers in Education meeting in Tamayo, NM, **Gerri Spilka** co-presented with **Sue Bodilly**, from the Rand Corporation, on **Arts Education System Building**. Gerri presented early findings on the Ford Foundation's National Arts Education Initiative in nine cities.

Other

OMG's study in 2006 for the Forbes Fund, **"How is the Region Doing?"** was cited by Elizabeth Boris, of the Urban Institute, at a recent U.S. House of Representative's Ways and Means Committee hearing. In her testimony, she used this Allegheny County, PA human service assessment to illustrate the important roles charitable organizations play in responding to the needs of diverse communities.

OMG IS EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE THE LAUNCH OF THE ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION EVALUATION FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Evaluation Fellows is a new four-year program managed by the OMG Center for Collaborative Learning and Duquesne University to build diversity in the evaluation field. The program will train and nurture a pipeline of post graduates and professionals from under-represented and ethnically and racially diverse groups from across the country to bring different perspectives to the work of researchers and evaluators in the non-profit sectors. The first cohort of five to seven fellows is expected to start in January 2009. The program incorporates intensive workshops, practice placements, mentoring, and the development of a learning community. We are currently recruiting fellowship applicants and organizational placements. For further information, please contact Vivian Figueredo, Vivian@omgcenter.org.

New Staff

Emily Byrne (1) joined OMG in August 2007 as a Project Coordinator. Emily previously worked in public sector management consulting and evaluation, focusing on organizational strategy and governance structures at nonprofits and government organizations.

Tina Armando (2) also joined us as a Project Analyst in August 2007. She has a background in applied research and program evaluation, predominantly in the areas of education, family well-being, and social mobility.

Howard Walters (3) joined OMG in January 2008 as a Project Coordinator. Prior to joining OMG, Howard worked in data and policy analysis in the areas of homelessness, neighborhood development, and minority student academic achievement.

Michele Lempa (4) joined us in January 2008 as a Project Manager bringing twelve years of experience in community-partnership evaluation, largely in public health.

Tony Hall (5) joined OMG as Associate Project Director in January 2008. Tony has a background in the design, evaluation, and assessment of technology solutions and management-information systems to address strategic program and organizational problems in the nonprofit sector.



New Board Members

President and Chief Executive Officer, **Dr. Richard Cohen** leads the Philadelphia Health Management Corporation, a nonprofit public health organization committed to improving community-wide health through outreach, education, research, planning, technical assistance, and direct services. Dr. Cohen is a fellow of the College of Physicians in Philadelphia and of the American College of Health Care Executives.

Executive Director of the Center for Urban Redevelopment Excellence at the University of Pennsylvania, **Valerie Piper** directs a program that places early-career fellows with real estate developers who work to improve the quality of life in distressed communities.

For additional highlights of our work, download our latest report by visiting our web page at www.omgcenter.org and selecting the "What is New" tab.

The OMG Center for Collaborative Learning



THE OMG CENTER FOR COLLABORATIVE LEARNING provides a broad range of consulting services to national philanthropic institutions, and nonprofit and government organizations that address quality of life issues in communities. Established in Philadelphia in 1988, OMG's diverse team of professionals work throughout the country to develop innovative solutions to difficult challenges through evaluation, strategy and program development, and intermediary and capacity building services. We rely on a collaborative action research approach that builds new learning and problem solving capacities with our clients and also contributes knowledge to the fields in which we work. Areas of established expertise include children, youth and families; education; arts; leadership; community building; human service systems; the environment; and electronic media policy. For more information about OMG, please call us at 215.732.2200 or visit our website at www.omgcenter.org.



Top: Gerri Spilka, Victoria Dougherty, Meg Long, Anita M. Baker, Patricia Ohlott, Vivian Figueredo, Michele Lempa
Bottom: Tina Armando, Emily Byrne, Howard Walters, Tony Hall, Patti Patrizi, Anna Jungclaus, Steve Schuler

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