

Committee Name (College for Texans?)

Committee Members (still open)

Wednesday, February 19, 2003

College for Texans Campaign Report by Lynn Denton, Campaign Director

Update on campaign strategic plan and especially strategies involving and of interest to TASFAA members, including contracts with local community-based outreach contractors; on-going roll-out of local training via 25 sessions in 22 cities; the motivational performance team project; the children's book project; and plans for creating College GO Centers in high schools around the state.

Handout attached: Latest version of the campaign strategic plan.

Note: If TV and VCR can be available, TV spots, news coverage of statewide kickoff, and recent TV coverage of the children's book project will be shown.

College for Texans Campaign

GOAL

To bring into higher education by 2015 an additional academically prepared 300,000 people – beyond the 200,000 additional people already expected -- to enroll in Texas higher education.

MISSION

- To ensure that students and their parents and other influencers understand the benefits of higher education and the steps necessary to prepare for higher education academically and financially.
- To motivate students and their influencers = via advertising, marketing, grassroots outreach, stakeholder support, and curricular resources:
 - 1) to believe that higher education maximizes life's choices and is desirable, attainable, and affordable, and
 - 2) to make choices and take actions throughout the student's life that place and keep the student on the path toward attaining a higher education.

OUTREACH STRATEGIES

The campaign will initially target school-age students and their parents because SB 573, the legislation that established the campaign, requires a focus on these groups. Strategies are also based on the understanding that the college freshmen of 2015 are in kindergarten this year, and reaching them early and continually will make the campaign more effective. The campaign will target adult career-changers and other older groups as well in coming years.

Another initial premise is that a campaign must work simultaneously on several fronts: at the state and local level; through the mass media and the web; and through caring local people who work one-on-one, taking the campaign responsibilities and goals personally to reach people where they live and work.

The campaign also recognizes that our student's social and emotional concerns must be considered along with issues of academic and financial preparation.

Strategy 1. Paid Mass Media Advertising

In the summer and fall of 2002, the campaign's advertising contractor conducted extensive research (including a statewide "benchmark" telephone survey of 2,100 parents and students and focus groups in six cities) to determine baseline attitudes, knowledge and behaviors; key advertising messages; and primary and secondary target audiences for the advertising campaign. Based on the research, the campaign selected parents of middle school students as the primary audience, and middle school students as the secondary audience.

Two key messages were identified: *money* and *mentoring*. The research showed that the target audience is most concerned about paying for higher education, and that adult "believers" play a critical role in the educational advancement of young people at all stages of their lives.

The campaign slogan '*Education. Go Get It*' was selected because it appeals better than other proposed slogans, to the target audiences. "Branding" around this active concept was developed. TV and radio spots featuring real students and their mentors (parents, grandparents, counselors) – not actors – were introduced in November 2002, and movie theatre advertising was purchased in cinema complexes in lower-income areas of the state's largest cities throughout the holidays, a heavy movie-going period.

Desired outcomes:

- 1) Parents and students will see that the cost of higher education is not as much of a barrier they thought it was, will understand that significant financial aid is available, and will call the campaign phone number or visit the collegefortexans website to learn more about financial aid;
- 2) Adults will understand the critical role they play in influencing the higher education decisions of students and will decide to be an effective "believer" for the students in their sphere of influence; and
- 3) Students will seek out an adult mentor or "believer" for help and information with whatever they need to succeed in school.

Next steps:

The TV and radio spots will show in major markets for several months beginning in February 2003. Colleges and universities in smaller media markets are recruiting TV and radio stations to show the ads as free public service announcements (PSAs) in those areas. The advertising company has already taped a number of interviews that can be used to economically produce a subsequent generation of TV and radio ads for the second year of the campaign. In the winter of 2003-04, another statewide telephone survey will measure and evaluate changes in attitudes, awareness, and behavior one year after the launch of the campaign.

Strategy 2. Earned Media

The campaign was publicly launched November 12-15, 2002 with a statewide kickoff event in Austin that was followed by 30 other media events around the state in which almost every Texas college and university president participated. School officials, representatives of community-based organizations and businesses, and elected officials joined thousands of public school children and college students in high-energy events that resulted in dozens of TV, radio, and newspaper news stories and editorials in every major newspaper in the state.

Desired outcomes:

- 1) Thousands of leaders around the state will rally around the campaign and participate in the local launching of the campaign, creating a "buzz" among all significant stakeholders; 2) Local campaign stakeholders will be recruited and commit to the campaign;

- 3) Elected officials will participate in local events and understand that their communities are committed to local campaign success;
- 4) All Texas citizens will be introduced to the campaign and its goals through news media coverage of events.
- 5) Students participating in the events will receive motivational higher education messages from their mentors; and
- 6) Campaign information will be disseminated through “earned media” rather than paid advertising, important for a campaign with a limited advertising budget.

Next steps:

Planning is under way for several regional media events in the spring of 2003, with another statewide push planned for fall 2003.

Strategy 3. Awareness Actions

Action 1. ESL Lessons. Campaign staff worked with the Special Populations Tech-Prep Consortium in the summer of 2002 to develop and disseminate an English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) curriculum for adult learners of English. The content and vocabulary of the curriculum stressed the importance and accessibility of higher education for themselves and their children, and how to prepare financially and academically for it. The curriculum was distributed free-of-charge to adult literacy and ESL programs throughout the state.

Desired outcomes:

- 1) Adults learners of English, especially those not educated in their country of origin, would learn about the greater accessibility of the educational system in the U.S. for themselves and their children; and
- 2) ESL students would learn basic information about the U.S. higher education system and how to help their children and themselves prepare for it.

Action 2. Children’s Book. Campaign staff is working with the Southwest Texas State University Creative Writing Program’s Young Writer’s Program to develop a culturally and age-appropriate book targeted to elementary school students learning to read. The goals of the activity are to help students learn to read and to instill in them the desire to go to college and the belief that they can go. The project is described as a *Harry Potter Goes To College* book for children. By July 2003, the first full manuscript of the book will be completed.

Desired outcomes:

- 1) Elementary school children = especially first-generation children = will learn about college, gain an enthusiasm for college, and begin asking questions about college;
- 2) Parents – especially those without higher education – will read the book to their children and thereby convey an explicit message to their children that going to college is expected;
- 3) Children’s reading skills will be improved because parents and literacy volunteers will read the book *to* them, read the book *with* them, and have them read the book themselves;
- 4) the campaign will receive considerable free attention by the media through book promotional tours and human interest stories about the writing and use of the book; and
- 5) new campaign partners (e.g., public libraries, elementary school libraries, and literacy programs) recruited for this project will develop special events and other promotional activities around the book and the issue of going to college, thereby greatly increasing the reach of campaign information to additional families.

Next steps:

In the fall of 2003, the book will be edited and illustrated, with the camera-ready copy ready by January 2004. The book will be printed and distributed by a national publishing house in the spring and summer of 2004. The book will be distributed for free to low-income and minority

children through the America READS statewide network, the Texas Reach-Out-and-Read network, public libraries, and elementary school libraries. It will be sold throughout Texas by a major retail book store corporation, and in-store profits will be shared by the campaign foundation and SWTSU. Campaign staff plan to approach Texas Book Festival and National Book Festival organizers to propose that the book be introduced at each of the important literary events.

Action 3. Campaign Websites. Campaign funds paid for an extensive improvement of the collegefortexans.com website, which services as the campaign's website for students and parents, during the summer and fall of 2002. Another website (www.thecb.state.tx.us/SAMC) helps the campaign staff ensure that campaign partners have the latest information on campaign progress, recognizes partners, and provides useful tools such as the outreach kit, promotional products, logos, and related items. Both websites will continue to evolve as the campaign develops and grows.

Desired outcome:

Ever-increasing hits to the website, indicative of the greater number of people who are hearing and acting on campaign messages.

Strategy 4. Motivational Actions

Motivational Performance Teams. In 2003, five "demonstration" regional performance teams of "cool" and "diverse" university and high school students versed in mentoring and theatre arts will work to motivate hundreds of hard-to-reach middle and high school students to examine and explore ways around personal barriers to staying in school and to plan, prepare and apply for college. These teams will perform in high schools with the lowest college-going rates. Teams will model and demonstrate successful college students' convincing views about the challenges many high school students face to staying in school, and about the advantages and processes of overcoming those difficulties and preparing for college. Many team members will be successful first-generation college students. Professional recruitment staff from area colleges and universities will support and sustaining the teams' efforts.

Desired outcomes:

- 1) High school students – especially first-generation students – who have not decided to pursue higher education will consider it and seek the support they need;
- 2) High school students will learn that personal concerns and challenges in their lives can be overcome, that they are not alone in having those concerns and challenges; that they can succeed in school and pursue higher education;
- 3) High school students will have the opportunity to discuss and explore their personal concerns and challenges in a safe and accepting environment; and
- 4) High school students will receive the individual attention and support from caring adults that they need to overcome their concerns and challenges and pursue a higher education.

Next steps:

A professional evaluator was hired to evaluate the processes and outcomes of this strategy. Should it prove effective, the five regional demonstration teams will be used to train many more motivational performance teams to expand the reach of this strategy to thousands of additional high school students across the state.

Strategy 5. Direct Student and Parent Support

Action 1. College Enrollment Workshops. Sponsored by the Coordinating Board, these workshops ninth through 12th grade students and their parents at approximately 90 public high schools with the lowest college-going rates in the state

Desired outcomes:

- 1) High school students will complete and submit financial aid and college admission applications; and
- 2) High school students will enroll in a college or university the fall semester after graduating from high school.

Next steps:

College Enrollment Workshops will be offered in these target high schools annually through the campaign.

Action 2. Community-Based Organization Partners. The campaign staff have successfully recruited a network of community-based organizations (CBOs) throughout the state, mobilizing thousands of community leaders to engage in campaign outreach activities to parents and students. To date, 260 CBOs responded to a Request for Proposal call for campaign partners. More than 200 of them received “mini-grants” to support local campaign outreach activities. CBO partners include 4-H groups, churches, health and social service agencies, scouts, Boys and Girls Clubs, service clubs, and Parent-Teacher Organizations, and other groups. Campaign staff will provide training for these new partners in January and February 2003 in 22 cities around the state. As an added bonus, dozens of additional CBOs that did not apply for grants have registered to attend the training as well. At the training, CBOs will be given free outreach kits, developed by the campaign staff over the past year, with ready-made presentations for both parents and students. Interest in the outreach materials is high. Regional technical support teams of college and university staff have been recruited to provide information and support to CBOs in their outreach efforts with families. An evaluation of volunteer presenters and participants in local outreach efforts will measure the success of this extensive grassroots outreach project.

Desired outcomes:

- 1) Community-based organizations throughout Texas that have trusted, ongoing relationships with parents and students will adopt the campaign as an added “mission” and take responsibility for giving parents and students higher education information;
- 2) New relationships will be established between community-based organizations and colleges and universities that will benefit them and families directly;
- 3) Parents will learn practical information about how to support their children at each stage of the child’s life to stay on a college-bound path; and
- 4) Children will hear from many significant adults and in a variety of settings about the importance of higher education and how to prepare academically and financially.

Next steps:

If the evaluation shows that this strategy is successful, another RFP will be issued in the fall of 2003 to more expand this network of community-based partners, and outreach materials will be updated and distributed annually through regional trainings provided free-of-charge by campaign staff.

Action 3. College GO-Centers. Campaign staff have gathered much evidence that a large number of students (especially first-generation students) require month-by-month, one-on-one support if they are to successfully negotiate college-application and financial-aid processes. The campaign will seek private funds to establish College GO-Centers within several high schools with low college-going rates. Centers will be staffed by one full-time counselor. Ten full-time regional VISTA volunteers will help develop on-going commitments to working in these centers by adult volunteers from the community and especially by successful college students. Area colleges will be encouraged to “adopt” nearby high schools and to plan active reciprocal social and academic exchange between the high school and college communities.

Desired outcomes:

- 1) Adult mentors will get to know students personally, take an interest in them and their futures, and work to motivate and monitor the students through every step necessary to prepare for and gain access to higher education; and
- 2) With such personal support, more students will commit to attempting all steps necessary to gain access to college, and will perform those steps in a timely and effective way.

Next steps:

The “prototype” GO-Centers will be evaluated. If successful, further support will be sought to expand the network of GO-Centers around the state.