Case Study: Intervention Identification

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1. **Over two thirds of community college students report that they intend to transfer to a four-year college. However, around 20% actually ever transfer to a four-year school.**

State government could assist through providing transfer agreements to ease the credit transfer process on students. There could also be more communication from counselors at the community college about options for funding through grants if the students who hope to transfer are low-income students. Increased collaboration between the community college and the four-year institutions could also increase the percent of students who follow through on this transition because less well-known opportunities could be discussed and proposed to prospective transfer students.

Lack of information could be a deterrent in this situation. Information regarding cost, sources of financial aid, the application process, credits accepted, or the increased opportunities available to four-year college graduates could be overwhelming for students to find and compare. Needing to search for this information could become a huge deterrent especially for non-traditional or underrepresented students who are juggling other responsibilities as well as their studies. This yields the question: are there councilors available to provide this guidance, or are the student left to figure this out by themselves?

Guidance and information accessibility would be most successful if it came from the community college. Routine meetings could be set up with students hoping to transfer to a four-year college to help guide them through the previously mentioned questions. Educational aspirations are largely influenced by the environment of a student. Often, in a high school learning environment, a student's work is monitored and the instruction is very hands on. If a student is not attending class or is falling behind on their daily or weekly assignments, a high school teacher must report this to the student's parents and the administration. This is not the same in college where a student is responsible for keeping up with the assignments and attending class. This shift in responsibility comes easily to some students but is a struggle to others. Peer dynamics could influence a once driven student who thrived under close supervision in high school to become complacent. It's possible that having a difficult transition from high school to community college could deter students from wanting to experience a new transition between community college and a four-year institution. Having access to guidance at the community college could provide support to students experiencing these transitional issues.

1. **Most first-generation college students attend a non-selective college in close proximity to their homes even though they are qualified to attend a more selective college further afield.**

Private organizations like the Posse foundation can provide financial and sociological support to help first-generation students have the courage to step out of their comfort zone and prioritize their education and future. Identifying a group of young leaders and training them in teamwork seems to have a powerful impact on their ability to successfully transition to a more selective college.

Federal loans such as Pell Grants are also helpful to encourage first generation college students to attend college, and they may help make an out of state, more selective college, financially attainable for first generation students.

At a high school level, it is imperative that students are presented with the data proving the value of attending a more selective college. A high school counselor could provide information to prospective first-generation students, so they can decide if sacrificing the ability to help their family in person due to close proximity is worth the potential future professional growth. Figure 10.7 in the notes presents a powerful argument regarding selective universities and graduation rate (Penn, n.d). High school seniors who have the potential to attend these universities should have access to this information so they can make informed decisions.

1. **Freshman students at a four-year college are underprepared for the rigorous academics of the institution. Many are dropping out or focusing their energy on social activities to avoid feelings of academic inadequacy.**

The academic preparation for higher education comes from a students' middle and high school education. In the case of public middle and high schools, the curriculum requirements, teacher salaries, and budget allotments are the result of state regulations. If students are to be academically prepared for college, they need access to resources and well qualified teachers. Unfortunately, these two things are not available without adequate funds. Some schools, such as Oklahoma, have programs in place that allow high school students to earn college credits through concurrent enrollment at local community colleges while still taking high school courses. This helps ease the pressure of teaching higher level material at the high school and also teaches the student that the academic environment of college is different. It also allows students to earn college credit from community colleges that often have transfer agreements with in-state four-year institutions. This incentivizes the high school students to attend either a community college or a four-year university so these credits are not lost.

1. **Freshman students at a four-year college are underprepared for the rigorous academics of the institution. Many are dropping out or focusing their energy on social activities to avoid feelings of academic inadequacy.**

At an institutional level, there could be more support for women pursuing STEM fields, specifically computer science and engineering. Perhaps specialized learning communities could become more common for women in these majors to provide the opportunity to live in dorms with faculty support trained to help women navigate the male dominated field. At North Carolina State University, a highly ranked engineering institution, there is a learning community called women in science and engineering (W.I.S.E.) that provides this support and assists in recruitment of students who are not decided on their major but are concerned about finding a community in college.

Institutional admissions and recruiting officers could inform prospective students of the applications of computer science and engineering that could fit long term goals of working from home or raising a family through a flexible career. For example, these majors aid in web design, software design, digital marketing, and many other fields. Access to information could also be increased through private philanthropic organizations to provide computer science and engineering programs for young girls in middle and high school to increase their interest in the subjects. These organizations could also provide scholarships for women who pursue these fields to provide financial incentive.

At a governmental level, either state or federal, gender equality laws could create a hurdle for how much intervention they could have in incentivizing women to pursue these fields.

Finally, academic preparation for any students to pursue computer science or engineering begins in middle or high school. Teaching and experiments within these fields requires computer labs and access to more expensive equipment which many public middle and high schools can't afford. State governments could intervene through providing financial stipends for equipment to establish more opportunities to learn computer science and engineering in high school.

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