

Alpha Nu Sigma 2015 College Project Hallmark Award Entry

1. Briefly describe your College Project and who from the chapter and the college administration was involved in determining it?

The words "To promote community service and embrace diversity," from Horry Georgetown Technical College's (HGTC) mission statement inspired Alpha Nu Sigma's College Project. We interpreted diversity as encompassing more than ethnicity and wanted to address the diverse needs of our student body. We ultimately developed Finding Available Information and Resources (FAIR) to promote awareness of the multitude of campus and community resources available to enhance student success. Committee members met with College President Neyle Wilson in June and brainstormed student needs and how to promote degree completion. He suggested we also focus on retention due to decreased summer enrollment and recommended we collaborate with Jennifer Overholt-Mau, Director of Campus and Student Services, Carolyn Bodmer, Assistant Director of Student Engagement, and the Developmental Studies department to develop our project.

2. Summarize your objectives for the College Project and the process by which the chapter and college administration set these objectives.

After meeting with President Wilson, the College Project committee brainstormed with several administrators and professors to determine our objectives:

- Host a fair promoting available campus and community resources
- Increase collaboration with HGTC student groups
- Visit Fall Freshman Skills classes to share success tools
- Encourage degree completion utilizing Commit to Complete Pledges
- Host a CollegeFish workshop to share transfer and scholarship information

3. Describe the planning process and strategies developed to complete the College Project.

Committee members discussed potential themes, resources, and collaborative partners. Our belief that it takes a community to cultivate successful students led us to recommend an "enlightenment" themed resource fair during our initial meeting with Director Overholt-Mau. We envisioned a typical college fair, but she took the term "fair" literally. Her enthusiasm toward making the event carnival-like led us to name our project FAIR. Because it was in the evening, we recognized the need for children's activities to encourage student attendance. She committed the Office of Student Engagement to providing a bounce house, face painting, balloon animals, and carnival food. Director Overholt-Mau reviewed our initial resource list and suggested additional ones unavailable on campus. Additionally, we discussed visiting Freshman Skills classes to share success tools with students who tend to have low retention rates. Lastly, we proposed a CollegeFish workshop to provide transfer and scholarship information.

Committee members met bi-weekly and used the collaboration tool, Trello.com, to assign tasks, such as contacting potential agencies, and to track progress. We determined areas where we lacked expertise, such as veterans' affairs, childcare, and counseling. This challenge helped us achieve our objective to collaborate with HGTC student groups by partnering with McNair club, the Early Care and Education department, and the Human Services Honor Society. They attended College Project meetings and helped us secure additional community agencies. One member used his expertise in AutoCAD to create a digital layout of FAIR to assign booth, food, and activity locations. Another committee member researched and created a brochure of scholarships available through Phi Theta Kappa. The committee chairperson produced two step-by-step guides to help students access their degree requirements and HGTC scholarship information. A member, studying Digital Arts, designed separate advertising flyers for faculty and students. We submitted the flyers to Director Overholt-Mau for approval. She requested revisions to the student flyer to incorporate a carnival-like theme, which we completed. As FAIR evolved, we realized the CollegeFish workshop was not feasible with an outside event, so we decided to delay it until Spring.

To address our objective to share success tools with students, we contacted the Assistant Chair of Developmental Studies and College Skills. She supported our goal to visit Freshman Skills classes and we emailed each professor to schedule visits. We developed an outline to ensure we presented consistent information to all classes and to encourage students to sign the Commit to Complete Pledge. To promote FAIR attendance from Freshman Skills students, we planned a drawing for a \$50 campus bookstore gift card exclusively for them. To boost overall attendance, we decided on an additional drawing for a backpack of school supplies. We designed exit surveys to assess the impact of our presentations and the value of resources for FAIR attendees.

4. What were the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of your project, including the lessons learned by your chapter members and others?

Our visits to all seven Freshman Skills classes provided success tools to over 100 developmental studies students, most of whom signed the Commit to Complete Pledge and completed an exit survey. A committee member took the initiative to program an Excel worksheet for tabulating survey responses. On a scale from 1-5, with 5 being "most valuable," over 75% of students rated our visits at 4 or 5 and none rated them a 1 or 2. Although some commented, "I heard most of this before," our survey results revealed 43% of students learned about and were likely to use tutoring and degree tracking. One student wrote, "I would really like to make a commitment to graduate college and go into my field," validating our Commit to Complete efforts. Committee member Carey Fulp said, "This was fun! I've never seen people so excited to learn." We were disappointed only five Freshman Skills students attended FAIR, indicating our gift card incentive did not encourage attendance as we anticipated. Honors in Action committee members were so impressed with the Excel tabulation worksheet that they requested Carey teach them how to design one for their project.

Carolyn Bodmer, Assistant Director of Student Engagement, distributed over 200 of our faculty FAIR flyers. Unfortunately, committee members did not follow-up and the revised student flyer was not utilized. Assistant Director Bodmer used another design to advertise the event to our entire student body of 7,000 students through HGTC's website, social media, and mass emails. We provided resource information from seventeen agencies to approximately 250 students and collected exit surveys. Agency representatives, including HGTC Career Resource Center, HGTC Public Safety, Conway Housing Authority, Waccamaw Mental Health, and South Carolina Department of Education and Workforce, reported an average of 30 people visited their booths and requested information. An unexpected outcome was Horry County Veterans Affairs Office acquiring two interns.

In true fair fashion, we had corndogs, music, popcorn, a clown, and student success resource booths around the common area on campus. Families loved the carnival-like atmosphere with the funnel cakes, balloon animals, bounce house, reading circle, and face painting. We discovered good food and fun activities for students' children encourage campus involvement. Exit survey comments included: "It was fun to come after classes and learn about different things" and "HGTC is a family organization that cares about community and children." In retrospect, our survey did not specifically target HGTC students, which led to many children completing it. We only collected 50 surveys because a member did not submit hers before leaving, nor did she respond to repeated attempts to contact her. Therefore, we were unable to accurately assess the impact of FAIR on HGTC students. We learned to screen survey respondents and to appoint a specific person to collect the surveys at the end of an event.

After FAIR, Director Overholt-Mau thanked us and stated, "It was awesome and it was because of your hard work. We look forward to partnering with you again real soon." We grew as scholar-servant-leaders and learned important lessons while planning and implementing this project.

5. What is left undone or what opportunities remain for the future?

Our CollegeFish workshop will be in 2015. At the request of two Freshman Skills professors, we will address their Spring classes. Due to positive feedback from administration, we will host FAIR on HGTC's additional campuses in March.