Proposal

Washington Achievers Program/Career Services
Matching funds – Washington Campus Compact Retention Project

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Introduction:

Washington Campus Compact has initiated a three year (2006-2009) grant funded project designed to improve retention of first generation college/university students and promote the advancement of economically disadvantaged, college/university bound high school students. The project provides EWU with two full-time AmeriCorps staff that will be responsible for the coordination of mentoring and service learning efforts on behalf of the university and partnering high schools.

Project guidelines state, in part, “...first generation college and university students will engage in service learning (mentoring) with first generation college/university bound high school students. As a result of the service learning experiences, both college/university and high school students will strengthen their commitment to their own education, will stay in school and will advance in their academic careers. In addition, high school students will see the value, and increase the possibility of attending postsecondary education institutions.”

Our Washington Achievers Program provides mentoring and comprehensive support services to a highly diverse, first generation student population. Career Services, through the Students Offering Service and Community Engagement units is heavily involved in community service partnerships. These programs represent a positive ‘fit’ for the management of the WCC Retention Project. Project goals and objectives connect solidly with Academic Affairs Strategic Plan priorities, including retention, recruitment, community engagement and diversity.
Funding Request:

The matching requirement for participation in the grant is $5,000.00 per fulltime AmeriCorps position. We are requesting two (2) AmeriCorps positions in conjunction with this project.

Project Goals:

For this Washington Campus Compact retention project, Eastern Washington University would like to place two full-time AmeriCorps in the EWU Washington Achievers program and connect them to the Cheney Youth Mentoring Project through the Students Offering Service office in Career Services and West Valley High School in the Spokane Valley.

The Washington Achievers Program, launched in 2001, is designed to assist low income and underrepresented students prepare for and succeed in college. Funded trough a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation grant and administered by the Washington Education Foundation, the program awards scholarships annually to 550 “first generation” students who attend designated Washington Achievers high schools.

At EWU, the program is a collaborative effort jointly managed by the Academic Support Center and Career Services. Successful retention of the “Achievers” is enhanced through consistent student/staff contact and intensive advising. College mentors are also a source of support, assisting Achievers with academic and social concern. Eastern is one of only three state institutions that has gone above and beyond and established a full-time staff position and a designated office for the Achievers. This has resulted in Eastern experiencing a high rate of participation and retention of Washington Achiever students, the second largest enrollment of achievers in the state.

The AmeriCorps will work directly with the freshmen Achievers as part of their required program. In addition to college mentors, Washington Achievers participate in seminars during the course of their freshman year. The seminars range from educational and cultural subjects and are designed to assist the Achiever in transitioning successfully to college life. With the assistance of the AmeriCorps, these seminars will be enhanced with a strong community service emphasis. The AmeriCorps staff will help to design a service-learning component to these seminars with special emphasis on working with middle and high school students in Cheney through the Cheney Youth Mentoring Project and partnering with West Valley High School (a Washington Achievers feeder school) to expose future achievers to Eastern through community service projects.

The Cheney Youth Mentoring Project is coordinated in the Students Offering Service office and provides a selected number of school sites with a team of EWU student mentors who work at each site throughout the academic year. The sites are the Cheney Middle School, the Cheney High School, Sunset
Elementary School and the Cheney Hangout – a program for at-risk middle school children. College student mentors plan and supervise after school activities, tutor high school students in math and promote these mentoring opportunities to other EWU students on campus.

The AmeriCorps will recruit EWU students to participate in the mentoring project with special emphasis on recruiting current EWU Achiever students. The AmeriCorps will also provide mentoring training to the student volunteers in the Cheney Youth Mentoring project and coordinate reflection and assessment exercises in conjunction with the program. The West Valley High School projects will be coordinated with Ken Ormsby and designed to link current achievers with future achievers to continue to expand our strong partnership.

The goal of this project is to build upon the successful programming already in place at Eastern. 52% of the incoming freshmen entering EWU this past fall identified themselves as first-generation college students. By starting with a successful program targeting this population, we can improve retention and expand this program to other students at Eastern.

**Connection to the Academic Strategic Plan:**

This project will increase meaningful student experiences and support Goals I of the EWU Academic Strategic Plan -**Goal I** which seeks to provide a rigorous and engaged student learning experience. By engaging in this mentoring program, the first generation students of the Washington Achievers program will strengthen their commitment to their community, develop leadership skills and reinforce basic academic concepts.

**Assessment, Evaluation and Outcomes:**

There are a number of site assessments developed by Washington Campus Compact’s AmeriCorps program that assess the impact of the service on both the community and the students involved. Some of the instruments are filled out by the site supervisors, some of the instruments are completed by the students and others are completed by the student mentees.

**Results:**

If funded, a core group of Washington Achievers will be available at each of the Cheney mentoring sites. The following results should be experienced from this project:

- The rate of Washington Achievers staying at EWU and graduating will increase
- Cheney High School student math scores in the WASL will increase
- More children will participate in the After School Activities Program at the Cheney Middle School
- More children will participate in the Cheney Hangout
There will be increased involvement by EWU students in these programs because of the volunteer recruiting done by the Achiever mentors.

The partnership between the Cheney School District and Eastern Washington University will be strengthened.

Eastern’s enrollment will benefit from our current student’s participation with local middle and high school students.

**Implementation Timetable:**

The position will commence with the start date for the Washington Campus Compact Retention Project (anticipated dates: September 1, 2006 thru July 2007).

**Matching Resources:**

The matching amount of $5,000 per AmeriCorps will be sustained through the remaining two years of the grant by the reallocation of Career Services resources.