Secondary Success and Beyond

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NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Secondary Success and Beyond

A Capstone Submitted to the
University Honors Program

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Baccalaureate Degree

With Honors

Department Of
Family and Consumer Sciences

By

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Capstone Title (print or type)  
Secondary Success and Beyond

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Abstract:

This project was conducted to assist incoming First-Generation College Students (FGCS) complete the steps needed to get into college and the tools needed to be successful once there. Research methods included secondary source research. It was found that FGCS are in need of resources in high school to improve the likelihood of college completion. Students tend to engage in social media based “mentoring” rather than individual counseling. It was concluded that helpful tips and information can be provided to students through most social media outlets and students find it equally helpful as individual advising.

Introduction:

The growing number of First-Generation College Students (FGCS) has been a beacon of hope for those individuals and their families for a successful future. However, there are many obstacles that stand in the way of achieving their goal of attending and completing university. Factors such as family income, perceived academic competence, and social belongingness can have a negative impact on FGCS to be able to be accomplished in their collegiate endeavors (Pratt et al, 2019). For example, FGCS are 71% more likely to leave college during their first year than non-FGCS (Pratt et, 2019). The risk factors that cause college students to leave college before they have earned their degree are the same for FGCS and non-FGCS. The difference is that FGCS tend to experience these risk factors at higher rates and are less likely to have the resources to overcome obstacles (Pratt et al, 2019). Studies show that FGCS are not likely to finish their first year of college due to a lack of financial resources. However, FGCS need more than financial support to stay in school long enough to finish their degree. They also need moral support. Mentors have been proven to improve outcomes for first generation college students. FGCS often get access to resources once they become college students. However, studies have shown that intervention at the high school level can increase students’ completion rate. In order to address some of these risk factors, a nonprofit organization, Secondary Success and Beyond was established to offer guidance, mentoring, and financial assistance to incoming FGCS.
Method:

In order to address the concerns of limited financial resources, perceived academic competence, completion rate and social belongingness a mentorship program was developed at Secondary Success and Beyond to provide guidance and support to sophomores, juniors and seniors and high school preparing to be FGCS. Students received mentoring through one-on-one mentoring sessions, social media content, and speaking engagements. For students who were interested in individual mentoring, they were able to partake in it. However, most of the students who received assistance through the organization did so through social media content. Content that was created included tips for the college application process, empowerment, and time management. In an effort to mitigate financial troubles for students, SSAB accepted donations and sold t-shirts to raise money for a scholarship fund.

Results:

Secondary Success and Beyond was established in August 2020 and social media accounts were created for the organization during that same month. Between August 2020 and April 2020, 22 Instagram posts were made, 22 Facebook posts were made, 36 Twitter posts were made, a LinkedIn account was created, and a website was created. Instagram was the most popular social media app for the organization amassing an average of 23,000 views of the posts made on that platform. The individuals who viewed these posts are on average between the ages of 15-18. This is the age of the target audience. Between the months of January 2021 and April 2021, SSAB gained a total of 50 followers between Instagram and Twitter and 100 likes on Facebook. Several of the posts on Instagram received dozens of saves. When a post is saved by a user on Instagram, it is saved to a collection of posts to be viewed later. The implication here is that the information present in that post should be revisited at some point in time for its usefulness. During a speaking engagement at 4-year University, social media followers increased, and engagement improved across all social media platforms. One-on-one mentorship has also been effective. One student who received mentoring through the program had a substantial increase in grade point average and became engaged in extracurricular activities.
References