

Data Entry and Analysis Assists UCSF in Improving Program Recruitment and Content Delivery

About the Program

Plan on College is an annual event intended primarily for San Francisco Bay Area eighth-graders and their families, to assist them in preparing for high school with the goal of attending college. Run by UCSF's Early Academic Outreach Program (EAOP) unit, the event is one of the ways in which EAOP carries out its mission of providing support to underrepresented and educationally disadvantaged students on their path to academic success and fulfilling careers.



The Challenge

UCSF has coordinated Plan on College annually since 2000, at its height welcoming nearly 1,000 students and family members to the event. However, UCSF's EAOP unit was not able to retain its continued capacity to evaluate the event, including marketing/recruitment efforts and information delivery. By 2008, barely 100 students and family members attended the annual spring semester event. The program organizers briefly reviewed participant surveys and then boxed them up, hoping there would be time for later study.

The Solution

Dr. van Stelle was hired by UCSF's EAOP unit in late 2008 as its program evaluator, prior to co-founding Actionable Insights. After assessing the unit's evaluation needs, it was agreed that Dr. van Stelle would begin by data-entering the 2008 Plan on College registration forms and participant surveys and evaluating the event.

The 2008 Plan on College registration data showed that the average event attendee was not from the EAOP unit's target population of underrepresented and educationally disadvantaged students. In addition, fewer than half of the student attendees brought a parent or guardian, even though specific event information was aimed at parents.

The 2008 event survey data showed that the program did a good job of delivering information about about how to get and keep students on track for college, how parents can help students prepare for college early, and the importance to students of a college education in making career opportunities possible. However, it was clear that the organizers could improve the delivery of information to students about how to prepare for college early, more usefully assist students in determining whether they are taking college preparatory courses, better explain public college entry requirements to parents of students in their target population, and better inform all parents in how to finance college.

Benefits and Results

- Clear evaluation findings showing the results of marketing/recruitment efforts and information delivery with actionable suggestions for the improvement of the program based on data-driven insights.
- As a result of having the evaluation report and discussing their evaluator's suggestions, the Plan on College program organizers were galvanized to improve recruitment and content delivery the following year:
 - ✓ About 575 students and family members attended the 2009 event, with greater representation from the underrepresented and educationally disadvantaged populations that are the focus of the EAOP unit's mission.
 - ✓ The organizers better conveyed to students how to prepare for college early and how to find financial aid information on-line.
 - ✓ The organizers helped all attendees better understand college entry exam requirements and the differences among California's college systems (UC, CSU, community college).

“Dr. van Stelle's [work] and the insights gained provided us with information to focus our energies and efforts on the areas where we knew we could make the most significant impact with the resources available in a short amount of time. Our results were impressive – we not only improved the reach but also the quality of the participant experience.”

**Adriana Carrillo, M.A., former UCSF Campus and
Community Programs Manager**

About Actionable Insights, LLC

Actionable Insights helps organizations discover and act on data-driven insights to achieve better outcomes. Co-founders Melanie Espino and Jen van Stelle, Ph.D. lend their expertise to clients in the areas of health, early childhood development, youth development, STEM education, aging, and community collaboration efforts.

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