

APPLICANT FEEDBACK - Program Design

2011 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, National College Advising Corps	Application ID: 11ED125689
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Below are the comments from each External Peer Reviewer that read and evaluated the application. While Reviewers did engage in discussion about their evaluations, consensus was not required as part of their review. Therefore, there may be differing views in their feedback on the quality of the proposal.

COMMENTS: (+) Applicant provides persuasive evidence of compelling need by describing obstacles that exist for qualified low-income, first-generation college students which cause them to be underrepresented in post-secondary education across the country. (+) Applicant effectively identifies compelling need by using local, state and national statistics to describe low-income students’ minimal contact with guidance counselors for college advising while in high school. (+) Applicant demonstrates plans for recruiting qualified members as evidenced by collaborating with colleges and universities in 14 states to target recent college graduates with backgrounds similar to those within population served. (+) Applicant shows clear plan of orienting, training and supervising members by networking within and receiving support from specific communities where members serve. (+) Applicant has ability to positively, directly impact target communities as evidenced by its ability to leverage resources for program support and sustainability. (-) Applicant provides academic information specific to Chicago, but not other cities served by program. (-) Applicant does not adequately describe measurable impact of volunteer and member activities on community problem.

COMMENTS: (-) While applicant plans to serve multiple schools in each of eight states, no information regarding the rationale for selecting specific schools or problems faced by students in those locations was supplied. (+) A well planned recruiting effort will result in 86 full time AmeriCorps slots filled by graduating seniors who are representative of the neighborhoods to be served and interested in serving as near-peers to high school students in high risk schools. (-) Job descriptions lacked specific requirements for the advisor positions and specific selection criteria. (+) A well developed and on-going training and professional development plan is in place for the AmeriCorps advisors. Supervision by a program director from the university will include reflection logs and regular site visits, while a trained on-site person will be an important resource and advocate. (+) Each member, with help from the program director, will develop and follow a strategic plan to increase college enrollment through a variety of self-directed activities. The responsibility and ability to create and coordinate events such as workshops, college fairs and field trips will give members the feeling of “ownership” that makes volunteers willing to do ever more.(-) While members may elect to serve a second year, the proposal is for a one year commitment. One year does not provide for AmeriCorps members to follow-up on graduating seniors nor does it allow for the development of long term

relationships with under classmen who would benefit from longer exposure to positive role models. (-) Specific information regarding exactly why AmeriCorps personnel would be highly effective for this project was not provided. (-) Specific evaluative measurements were not included for the stated goals of increased college enrollment and persistence. (-) Minimal comparative data was supplied regarding success of efforts since the NCAC's national expansion in 2007. (+) Applicant provides convincing evidence of strong collaborative partnerships between the applicant, the universities and the communities to be served. (+) The training and supervision of AmeriCorps members is well designed and supportive of their development.

COMMENTS: (+) The applicant provides evidence of a well-designed program that will promote AmeriCorps member engagement through service in high-need schools and in the target local communities. (+) The applicant described a recruitment model (near-peer) in which a majority of AmeriCorps members are themselves underrepresented or first generation college students, so that they may serve as role models who can more closely relate to local students. (+) The applicant provided data suggesting a significant (14%) increase in college enrollments as a result of their program's efforts in Providence, Rhode Island and rural North Carolina communities.

COMMENTS: (+) The applicant employs a 'near peer' model that selects AmeriCorps members who themselves are personally familiar with the obstacles faced by those being served. Members are to have a bachelor's degree, and 60% of them must be underrepresented or first generation students. The members must live and interact in the communities where they serve to further cement their connection with the participants. (+) Members participating in this program will receive the equivalent of a master's level, year-long practicum in student affairs. With both training and direct service in advising, admissions, recruitment, financial aid advising, retention and research, members who wish to pursue a career in this field will have received a substantial boost to their employability. (-) As members are hosted across the country, it is likely that there will be differences in individual experiences, and that member impact will largely depend on local college resources and personnel, which are inadequately described. (-) This is a national program with multiple sites throughout numerous states. Figures are not included that shed light on drop-out rates, low college matriculation or achievement rates, or any other data specific to the communities being served.