

NSF-STEP Workshop Break-out Session I-11: Strategies for Promoting Diversity

Wendy Bohrson, Jessica Nye, STEP faculty and staff

bohrson@geology.cwu.edu, step@cwu.edu

www.cwu.edu/step

Central Washington University



Primary goal of STEP at Central Washington University (Grant No. 0653094)

Recruitment and retention of freshmen, sophomores and community college transfer students, particularly those who are traditionally underrepresented in STEM fields. Our program has a high percentage (~77%) of underrepresented students (including female, minority, low-income, disabled, and first-generation).

Strategies to Achieve this Goal

(1) Developed strong collaborations with the CWU Office of Enrollment Management/Admissions:

- Collaborated on hire of STEP recruiter who is developing long-term relationships with high school staff in central Washington. Position to be fully institutionalized by July 1, 2013.
- More STEM information incorporated into CWU recruiting presentations. We have worked closely with the CWU bilingual recruiter, Andres Moreno.
- Offer partial tuition waivers to all eligible STEP freshmen (fully institutionalized).
- Offer community, high school events to help familiarize students/parents with college, application processes, and what STEM majors and jobs have to offer.
- Host events to bring students to campus (e.g., CatTracks) for tours/resource fair about departments. Provided discount transportation for students living in central Washington.

(2) Curricular and co-curricular support:

- Freshmen Science Seminar Series fosters interaction with faculty and departments in exploring inquiry-based projects.
- Bridging Program for sophomores and transfer students engage students in faculty-mentored research, teaching and proposal development.
- Financial support (book stipends, support for being RA/TA).
- Living Learning Community with dedicated community programmer and residential adviser.
- Lecture series with STEM professionals, many of whom are underrepresented.

(3) Accessible, supportive environment:

- Staff, faculty, students (including many underrepresented) are role models.
- STEP Program Coordinator is single point of contact, meets with students frequently to provide support and advising, and addresses parental concerns (as permitted).
- Collegial relationships between STEP students & faculty developed through co-curricular events.
- Services such as tutoring and supplemental instruction available and encouraged.

Lessons Learned/Continuing Challenges

- Frequent visits to high schools increase exposure of STEM and CWU and help build name recognition and trust.
- Parent and student visits to CWU campus and with CWU/STEP faculty and staff have allowed us to gain momentum in recruiting.
- Continue to identify challenges faced by students/families and address those (time, cultural, inadequate STEM preparation).
- Financial obligations of college attendance and lack of appreciation of possibilities in STEM careers remain challenges.