The OSU-SMILE Program: A University-School-Community Partnership

Support for Underrepresented Youth in their Aspirations and Preparations for Higher Education

The OSU-based SMILE Team
Ryan Collay, Director
Jay Well, Renee O’Neil, Program Coordinators
Abbe Lougee, Brendan Williams, Program Staff

OSU’s SMILE Program Envision . . . Believe . . . Succeed
The Foundation c1987

- “There is no rational reason why we should be able to identify someone’s ethnicity by whether they attend and succeed in college.” paraphrased from Miriam (Mimi) Orzech, founder

- Assure “equal” access to higher education

- Increase the number of underrepresented youth who aspire to and attend higher education

- Help students and their families overcome the intrinsic and extrinsic barriers to a path to higher education
The Oregon SMILE Program is ...

- A university-school-community partnership
- A collaboration linking Oregon State University with fourteen rural communities and their public schools districts/charter schools
- A program of activities that influence student attitudes, behaviors, and aspirations.
The Purpose of SMILE is

To increase the numbers of underrepresented students who:
• Graduate from high school prepared for college
• Enroll in college
• Prepare for careers in STEM fields including:
  • Engineering
  • Mathematics
  • Science
  • Health Professions
  • Teaching
Elements of the SMILE Program

- SMILE Communities
- School Teachers
- SMILE Clubs
- College Connections
- College Student Involvement
- Family and Community Engagement
- Contextual Science/Engineering applied to meet a community need
SMILE Communities

OSU’s SMILE Program
Envision . . . Believe . . . Succeed
Our Community of Practice

A community of practice can be defined as an intentional learning community with the following shared characteristics:

- A sense of membership exists in the community around a common mission, purpose, values, and vision
- A common professional language, understandings, and "tools of the trade" are present
- Each member is defined as a "community leader," with a role in fostering the overall community
  - Takes a direct role in supporting the overarching mission
  - Refines the communities knowledge and tools
  - Uses data collected to reflect and refine practices
Essential Attributes of SMILE’s “Community of Practice”

• Strong sense of safety
• Inclusive, supportive community
• High expectations
• Positive attitudes
• Cooperative contributions
• Mentoring relationships
• Personal connections
• Creativity
Sharing a College Going Culture

Our community of practice is built and maintained upon the belief that: “students who have the parental, school, and community expectations that college is the next step after high school see college as the norm” (The College Board, 2006).
Student Metrics

Foundation
• Reaching underrepresented youth
• Participation/persistence in club
• School engagement/persistence
• High school graduation

Outcomes
• Resilient
• Graduating “College Ready”
• Entry and Success in Higher Education
## The SMILE Program Theory of Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumptions</th>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are substantial barriers that limit underrepresented students' abilities to persist and attain in STEM programs and careers</td>
<td>SMILE students, SMILE teachers, Families of SMILE students, School staff and community members, University faculty, University students, Grant partners and funding agencies, Community partners and programs, A wide variety of teaching tools and resources, SMILE afterschool program model</td>
<td>Instructional materials development, Planning team meetings, &quot;College Connection&quot; development, Development of SMILE clubs, Teacher workshop presenters and materials, Family and community involvement, Coordination with grant partners, SMILE outreach courses, College student mentor training</td>
<td>Weekly club meetings in each school, Teacher professional development workshops, Annual &quot;College Connection&quot; events, Community Family Math and Science Nights, &quot;Bridge to College&quot; programs, College readiness programs and materials, Engaging STEM teaching materials, Program/event evaluation based on program model</td>
<td>Improved student attitudes about their capacity to learn and succeed, Improved academic success, Increased attributes of college readiness, Increased teacher content knowledge, Increased family knowledge about college and STEM careers</td>
<td>Increased school attendance and persistence, Increased high school graduation rates, Increased college enrollment, Increased participation in STEM programs leading to STEM careers, Increased teacher capacity to engage students in STEM content and careers, Increased community awareness of STEM programs in higher education and related careers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Professional Development for Teachers/SMILE Club Leaders
SMILE Clubs are weekly afterschool meetings- “A Learning Community”
College Connection Model

Preparation
• Gaining knowledge in SMILE clubs
• Team-based learning and problem-solving

Defining the Challenge
• Meeting a community need
• Connecting to interests
• Linking to people
• Building aspirations

Learning Outcomes
• Increased “Identities”
• Learning makes a difference
Quotes--Teacher and adult chaperones on student gains at the “College Connection” events:

• Communication, teamwork and all the variables that go into making a desirable community
• How to assemble a broad range of data and skills to achieve a group goal
• How to communicate with others
• Getting out of their shells
• Teamwork, productivity, planning, co-operation
• Teamwork, community planning, problem solving
• How to step into necessary/needed roles. Sometimes even when uncomfortable
Elementary- “Becoming Scientists”
Middle School- “Problem-Solvers”
High School- “Valued Voices”
Students quotes: Being a part of SMILE

• College will have challenges that would take the brainpower of more than 1 person
• Never stop learning
• You must work hard to succeed
• Don’t be afraid to try new things
• [College] prepares you for the future
• It gives you more choices in life
• It will help me do the job I want and enjoy myself
• It’s fun
• I want to go far in life
• I have courage and a vision
• A sturdy work ethic and a good sense of persistence to power through tough years
Adult Mentors and Role Models

- Adult involvement is essential
- We have 50-60 volunteers each year
- Engaging young people develops skills and attributes that add to college student’s learning
- They serve as role models, team mentors, and help make “college” real
- They support students’ specific and general academic aspirations
Family and Community Involvement
Family Math and Science nights
Enrollment by Gender and Ethnicity

Female 63%
Male 37%

- Hispanic 41%
- White 24%
- Native American 20%
- African American 1%
- Pacific Islander 1%
- Asian 1%
- Multiracial 12%
The SMILE Program
18 Gladys Valley Ctr
Corvallis OR 97331
541-737-2388

smile.oregonstate.edu
Program Highlights

In 25+ years SMILE has:
• Served over 7,500 students in SMILE clubs
• Involved 370+ teachers
• Reached 11,000 students each year
• Raised over $13M
• Awarded over $280K in college scholarships