

2009 Pride of CASE V awards

Title of entry: *Make College a Part of Your Future*

Category 49: Best Diversity Program

Submitted by: Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system

Web link: <http://www.yesyoucan.mnscu.edu/>

Contact: Linda Kohl, associate vice chancellor for public affairs and editor
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system
Wells Fargo Place; 30 7th St. E., Suite 350
St. Paul, MN 55101-7804
Phone: (651) 296-9595; fax (651) 296-0872; e-mail: linda.kohl@so.mnscu.edu

General description

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system has a history of outreach to groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education – particularly students of color, students for whom English is a second language, first-generation college students and low-income students. Recognizing that extra steps were needed to encourage college participation, the system’s Board of Trustees adopted a strategic plan in 2002 with a priority of increasing access and opportunity.

In 2001, the system developed an integrated marketing and public relations campaign, “Make college a part of your future,” that included special brochures in four languages to reach out to underrepresented students in middle school and high school and to their families. That initial campaign continued over several years and contributed to a 40 percent growth in the system’s minority students, who totaled 36,323 or 15.7 percent of total enrollment by 2008.

The Board of Trustees remained steadfast in its commitment to expanding access and opportunity for underrepresented students. But by 2008, the outreach campaign needed major revamping to refresh its messages and visual appeal and to take advantage of new marketing media that could reach diverse communities. Three focus groups were conducted with high school students from underrepresented groups and counselors to gather their feedback and learn about their current perspectives on college and possible barriers to enrolling in preparation for a new outreach campaign.

A collaborative program by the Public Affairs and the Diversity and Multiculturalism divisions over the past year has resulted in fresh new diversity outreach initiative that includes:

- **“Make college a part of your future” brochures in nine languages** – English, Spanish, Hmong, Somali, French, Russian, Vietnamese, Ojibwe and Dakota – that feature students in the system’s colleges and their stories, plus basic information about college, why it’s important, financial aid and how to get started
- **A companion poster** with the same eye-catching colors and photograph for use by high school and college admissions counselors that incorporates all nine languages
- **Advertisements** in minority newspapers, public transit buses, bus shelters and light rail transit cars, both in the Twin Cities metropolitan area and newly diverse outstate cities. The ads used some of the same students and key messages as the brochures.

- **A new student Web site**, yesyoucan.mnscu.edu, based on content, graphics and photographs in the diversity brochures and available in the same nine languages
- **A counselor Web site**, www.mnscu.edu/counselors, that enables high school counselors to order posters and the brochures in the nine languages at no charge and have them sent directly to their schools.

The program was launched with a news release and several mailings to:

- High school counselors in Minnesota and adjacent areas of Wisconsin, Iowa, North Dakota and South Dakota, including a letter from system's chancellor, sample copy of the brochure in English, one copy of the poster and an order sheet for unlimited additional copies of the brochures.
- American Indian tribal list and the Diversity and Multicultural Division contact list and education leaders with a letter from the chancellor.
- Presidents, cc'd to admission directors, diversity directors, key communicators, with letter from chancellor, one English brochure and ordering form.

Ongoing distribution includes college fairs, community events, community centers and minority service agencies.

Goals and objectives

The program's overall goal is to increase enrollment of underrepresented students by encouraging these students and their parents and mentors to consider college and take the first steps toward enrolling. Welcoming and supportive messages convey that college is possible for everyone, it leads to a more fulfilling life, and it's easy to get started.

The campaign aims to:

- Increase awareness among underrepresented groups and diverse populations that the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system is an affordable way to obtain an excellent college education.
- Build an understanding that higher education is the key to a good job and having independence and choices in life.
- Generate interest among students, parents and mentors in obtaining more information about college and visiting colleges and universities.

How project fits into overall institutional and/or advancement goals

The underrepresented student outreach campaign supports the system's mission statement, adopted in January 2006 by the system Board of Trustees: *"The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system of distinct and collaborative institutions offers higher education that meets the personal and career goals of a wide range of individual learners, enhances the quality of life for all Minnesotans and sustains vibrant economies throughout the state."* The campaign specifically supports the first priority in the system's strategic plan for 2008-2012: To increase access and opportunity.

Audience

High school students, counselors, parents and mentors are the primary audience. Secondary audiences are community and diversity organizations, and adults who could benefit from a college education.

Staff

Ten staff members from the Public Affairs and Diversity and Multiculturalism divisions.

Budget

Total budget: \$290,589

Brochures: \$87,000 for brochure and poster design, photography and file production in nine languages, \$17,460 for translations, \$58,853 for printing 82,500 brochures; \$2,776 for printing 10,000 posters, for a total of \$166,089

Advertising: \$17,000 for design of black-and-white newspaper ads, \$23,000 for minority newspaper placements; \$40,000 for transit advertising and \$27,000 for bus shelter placements (including design and production) for a total of \$107,000

Web site design: \$17,500

Special circumstances or challenges faced

The biggest challenges were photography and arranging translations into the nine languages, which include Dakota and Ojibwe, neither of which are widely spoken at this time in Minnesota but were deemed essential to the campaign to support the system's outreach to American Indian groups. The translation company took innovative steps to find native speakers and academic specialists in those languages who could translate, proof and review those translations accurately. The photographs needed to be of current students who reflected the range of diversity needed to appropriately illustrate all nine translations, who were attractive and appealing, and whose stories would inspire and encourage other students to consider college. Not only that, the 11 selected students needed to be available the same day for the campus photo shoot.

Documented results, measurements of effectiveness

During the first six months, the campaign already has begun meeting goals, particularly:

- Enrollment of students of color increased this spring semester over last spring by 8.9 percent, compared to the overall enrollment increase of 3.7 percent over last spring.
- "Make college a part of your future" brochures and posters are being received enthusiastically, and counselors began ordering quantities almost immediately after they received samples in late 2008. Within the first six months after that initial distribution, 33,600 brochures and 2,900 posters have been sent to counselors.
- Generated 12,298 visits and 12,196 page views for the new Web site, www.yesyoucan.mnscu.edu
- Launched a series of ads that ran in seven publications of the Minority Media Coalition (Insight News, La Prensa, Hmong Times, Spokesman-Recorder, The Circle, Asian Pages, African News Journal). Fifty-four ads were placed in publications with a combined readership of 333,000, predominantly people of color.

- Placed ads featuring the “Make college a part of your future” message and graphics on bus and light rail sides and in interiors on routes that traveled through areas of high concentrations of populations underrepresented in higher education. The transit ads created 31.5 million total impressions with a frequency of 20.
- Advertised on 54 bus shelters in neighborhoods in the Twin Cities metro area with high concentrations of populations underrepresented in higher education using messages and graphics from the “Make college a part of your future” campaign. The bus shelter advertising generated 8.4 million impressions.
- Conducted an internal launch for the “Make college a part of your future” campaign to inform Office of the Chancellor employees about it. Copies of the brochure were displayed and elements of the campaign presented. The launch had a standing-room-only crowd of about 70 people.
- The press release generated several stories in Minnesota minority newspapers, including a reprint on the cover of *Eventos*, a Spanish-English newspaper, with a side-by-side Spanish translation in May 2009; and a reprint in *China Insight*.

In addition, the system will continue to track:

- Visits to the new Web site, www.yesyoucan.mnscu.edu
- Calls to 1-888-345-2537
- e-mails to start.here@so.mnscu.edu
- Enrollment of minority students

Supporting documents

Research: Summary of high school student group discussions and counselor interviews

Launch plan: 2008 "*Make college a part of your future*" campaign

News release: "*Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system takes additional steps to recruit more underrepresented students*" (prepared for sending in January 2009, timed so that school counselors already would have received sample brochures and posters)

Minority newspaper reprint and translation of news release

Make college a part of your future brochure and poster order form for school counselors

Make college a part of your future brochures in nine languages:

English, Dakota, French, Hmong, Ojibwe, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Vietnamese

Make college a part of your future poster

Bus exterior photo and ad sample

Bus interior ad sample

Bus shelter ad sample

Minority newspaper ads in English, Spanish and Hmong

Student Web site screen grab: yesyoucan.mnscu.edu