

# **Duke School Days Program Assessment**

Karen Dash  
Dash Consulting  
July 29, 2010

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Brief Overview of the School Days Program/Events	4
ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK ONE: NATIONAL CONTEXT	6
National Context: Precollege Programs History	6
National Context: Economics of a College Degree	6
National Context: Trends in College Attainment	6
National Context: University Precollege Program Offerings	7
ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK TWO: LOCAL CONTEXT	12
Local Context: Durham Public Schools	12
ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK THREE: COLLEGE DECISIONMAKING CONTEXT	
College Decisionmaking Context: Key Factors	14
College Decisionmaking Context: Timing of Programs	16
ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK FOUR: PARTICIPANT EVALUATION	17
Participant Evaluation: Survey, Focus Group, Interviews	17
Goal 1: To Increase College Attendance Rates among DPS Students	17
Goal 2: To Increase Opportunities for Outreach Among Large Numbers of Duke Staff Members and Students	23
Goal 3: To Create Value for DPS Staff and Administrators	26
Goal 4: To Generate Goodwill Between Durham and Duke	27
SUMMARY OF EVALUATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	29
Overall Evaluation	29
Overall Recommendations	30
Detailed Evaluations and Recommendations	31
APPENDIX	36
Program Logic Model	37
Survey for Guidance Counselors	39
Survey for Students	41

## Executive Summary

The Duke School Days program represents an effort to introduce and promote the idea of attending college to Durham middle school students whose family history may not include college. As such, it is one of thousands of pre-college programs aimed at students from underprivileged, underrepresented, or first generation college backgrounds across the country.

This assessment will review the School Days program in the context of national efforts to increase college attendance among similar populations and in the context of the local school system. Research regarding the dynamics of college-related decisionmaking will provide an additional benchmark for studying the effectiveness of School Days. Finally, the review will evaluate the stated goals of the program as evaluated by DPS students, teachers, and guidance counselors, and Duke volunteer staff and students.

In our modern economy, a college degree has never been so valuable. Nonetheless, gaps in college attainment levels still persist among different racial and socioeconomic groups. At the same time, resources available to address these gaps are dwindling in Durham.

Duke School Days fulfills an important role in creating enthusiasm for college among eighth graders in some of Durham's most troubled middle schools. The extensiveness of the program, which provides middle schoolers with interactions with Duke students, specially-designed classes, informational sessions, and tours of Duke facilities, makes it a standout among such university programs nationwide.

The students targeted are at a critical stage in the college decisionmaking process, and many students and their teachers and administrators report increased interest in college as a result of attending School Days.

Durham Public Schools (DPS) senior leadership and staff express their appreciation for the value of School Days in their public statements and in their participation within the program. Seventy Duke faculty and 42 students volunteer their time to the day, which increases interactions among Duke and the broader community. The program has received favorable media coverage and a single School Days event has the potential to reach nearly 7,300 Durham residents, generating increased goodwill for the university.

With the loss of nearly all AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), a college prep course, funding among the participating Durham middle schools, School Days is positioned to assume a more vital role in these students' hopes for college. Developing some low-cost follow up components can multiply the impact of School Days by deepening relationships with participating students, with other students in their schools, and with other members of the Durham community.

Providing some sort of college credit for community service can increase the number of Duke students involved in the program and leverage their special role in increasing the younger students' enthusiasm for college.

**Brief Overview of School Days**

The School Days program, begun in 1999 under then President Keohane, serves approximately 330 students each year and has nearly 3,300 alumni. School Days focuses on Durham Public School (DPS) eighth graders who have college potential but may not be considering college as an option.

Currently, 70 Duke faculty and staff and 42 Duke students volunteer their time and energy to the program, which operates on a budget of \$10,000, nearly all of which is spent on t-shirts, lunch, and transportation for the students. The Durham School Board chair and senior DPS leadership have been active participants of School Days.

**The School Days Program/Events**

For over ten years, School Days has provided DPS students with a school day introduction to college life at Duke.

Each fall, guidance counselors at nine Durham middle schools select a number of eighth graders (the number per school varies by the school population) to attend. Some schools elect to send their AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) students to the program. Guidance counselors distribute and collect signed parental permission forms, register the students, and ensure that two school representatives – administrators, guidance counselors, parents, or teachers – are signed up to accompany each group of 10 students.

School Days administrators recruit Duke faculty members to create academic presentations and recruit Duke staff members, including the Duke Admissions Latino Outreach Specialist, to accompany visiting groups. Duke students, including those from the Black Student Alliance and Mi Gente, are invited to provide tours, escort students to Duke dorm rooms, and talk with the Durham students about the life of a college student.

School Days arranges transportation with DPS for the students, who arrive in buses in the morning greeted by Duke cheerleaders. Each group of 10 and their chaperones are paired with one or two Duke students and a Duke volunteer staff member. Students begin their day by enjoying various entertainment, including an obstacle course meant to represent the challenges of getting into college. They then attend a welcoming ceremony in Cameron Stadium in which Duke athletes discuss the importance of academics and leadership. After a brief talk by a senior DPS official, a Duke Admissions representative talks about how to plan and pay for college.

Student groups then take a tour of the campus, including Duke Chapel, Perkins Library, and the Bryan Student Center, and visit with a student in a dorm room. Each group attends a specially-designed 20-minute academic or lab class presented by a Duke faculty member; in 2009, 32 sessions were offered.

Students eat lunch together with Duke students. They end the day by viewing a slide show highlighting the day's activities and participating in a short talent show. Students receive a t-shirt commemorating their day.

After the event, DPS teachers, guidance counselors, and Duke volunteers are surveyed about their participation in the program. School Days staff make adjustments to the program logistics and content based on the feedback received.

The goals of School Days are four-fold:

- To increase college attendance rates among DPS students
- To increase opportunities for outreach among large numbers of Duke staff members and students
- To create value for DPS staff and administrators
- To generate goodwill between Durham and Duke

These goals are explicitly examined within Assessment Framework Four. In addition, the Appendix contains a Program Logic model of these four goals.

## Assessment Framework One: National Context

### National Context: Precollege Programs History

Recognition of the importance of precollege programs has increased significantly over the last 20 years. While no definitive count exists, a Google search for “precollege programs” offers 2,190,000 hits; a similar search for “precollege programs for underrepresented middle school students” offers 26,000 hits.

With passage of the Economic Opportunity Act (1964) and Higher Education Act (HEA, 1965), federal programs, including the TRIO programs – Educational Talent Search, Upward Bound, and Student Support Services, targeted economically-disadvantaged students and underrepresented minority students. While considered successful, current programs are funded at a level that can serve only about 7% of the eligible population, according to the Council for Opportunity in Education.<sup>1</sup>

### National Context: Economics of a College Degree

The advantages to a college education have become more clear over the last two decades. A 2002 Census Bureau study projected \$1.8 million in lifetime earnings for a college graduate, while a person with some college would earn \$1.3 million; a high school graduate can expect to attain \$1 million in lifetime earnings, and someone without a high school diploma would earn \$767,000 during their working lifetime.<sup>2</sup>

In the shorter term, a college diploma provides better protection against difficult economic times: according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate for college graduates as of April 2010 was 4.4%; for those with some college, 8.1%, for high school graduates 10.5%, and for those with less than a high school diploma 14.5%.

### National Context: Trends in College Attainment

Despite recognized advantages to a college degree, troubling evidence shows persistent or growing gaps in college attainment. Recent trends suggest that younger Americans are not attending college at the rates of older cohorts.

A recent Brookings Institution study reports that, from 2000 to 2008, the share of 25-34 year olds holding a four-year degree was lower than that of 35-44 year olds, a reversal of the 2000 pattern. The same study showed that college attainment continues to vary significantly by race/ethnicity, with 36% of White adults in large metropolitan areas holding four year degrees, compared with 19% of Black adults and 14% of Hispanic adults.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Council for Opportunity in Education, [http://www.coenet.us/ecm/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Talking\\_Points&Template=/CM/HTMLDisplay.cfm&ContentID=7326](http://www.coenet.us/ecm/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Talking_Points&Template=/CM/HTMLDisplay.cfm&ContentID=7326)

<sup>2</sup> Jennifer Cheeseman Day and Eric C Newburger, “The Big Payoff: Educational Attainment and Synthetic Estimates of Work-Life Earnings,” US Census Bureau, July 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Alan Berube, “The State of Metropolitan America: Chapters – Educational Attainment,” Brookings Institute, p 105, 2010.

Similar disparities exist by income levels. Despite significant government and private efforts, Census Bureau data from 2001 highlights the college-attainment gap between lower- and higher-income families. While 57% of 18-24 year olds from low-income families enrolled in college, 86% of high income students had enrolled in college, a nearly 30% gap that persists from the 1960s.<sup>4</sup>

With recent Supreme Court rulings regarding college admissions practices,<sup>5</sup> many organizations in the public and private sectors have refocused their admissions efforts toward preparing historically underrepresented students to compete strongly in the college admissions process.

### **National Context: University Precollege Program Offerings**

An internet search of Precollege access programs suggests that thousands are available through universities, the federal government, and nonprofit and business groups, ranging from intensive summer academies to academic services to scholarship support.

A telephone survey of precollege programs among the nation's most selective universities shows a variety of approaches to helping more students attain college. Table One summarizes those elements common to day programs most similar to School Days.

Of note is the relatively small number of Precollege Day programs offered to middle school students. Of the 22 campuses surveyed, 11 had no Precollege Day offering. Among the 11 featuring such days, 7 were initiated and organized by the individual school or nonprofit group, and most of the 11 did not offer the range of activities School Days offered.

Because most participating universities do not initiate visits, the vast majority of programs are not tailored to the first-generation, underrepresented, or underprivileged populations. Among those that do initiate contact, Tufts University comes closest to a similar clientele, through its partnership with its Boston-area host community schools in Medford, Chinatown, and Somerville.

Except for the Tufts and MIT programs, none of the middle-school-oriented efforts appear as formalized or logistically-developed as School Days; rather, they are run in a more ad hoc fashion through the university's Admissions or Community Relations departments or through the school's Visitors' Centers.

All campuses except MIT offer a campus tour; eight feature the option for a campus lunch, although only Tufts makes this an official part of the day. Seven schools offer information sessions on various topics, and three offer the opportunity to sit in on live

---

<sup>4</sup> Mortenson, T. , "Trends in College Participation by Family Income: 1970-1999," Postsecondary Education Opportunity, p 1-8, April, 2001.

<sup>5</sup> Grutter v. Bollinger, Supreme Court (2003), Hopwood v. Texas (1996), Fifth Circuit.

classes. Three of the universities surveyed offer special demo classes tailored to younger students, and three offer opportunities to visit facilities, including dorm rooms, if available.

At one end of the spectrum, UC Berkeley only offered a campus tour, which was reduced from the standard 90 minutes to 60 minutes for middle schoolers. Of the more developed programs, Tufts University, through students' community service projects, included visits to middle schools by Tufts students and career speakers to emphasize the importance of college. Similar to DukeSPLASH, MIT's SPLASH program, the largest in the country, is also student-run, and features a weekend of 2,200 free classes to interest students in college and MIT, but had no specific college recruitment component.

**Table 1: University Precollege Day Programs for Local Middle Schoolers**

University	Features	Notes
Appalachian State University <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By Teacher Request</li> <li>➤ Group Size: 20-30</li> <li>➤ University coordinates</li> <li>➤ Length: School day</li> </ul>	Tour campus Lunch on campus optional Visit dorms Sit in on live classes	Agenda is tailored to what teacher is interested in students' seeing  Source: B. Long, Math-Science Education Center
Harvard University <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By Teacher Request or School Invite</li> <li>➤ Group Size: up to 50</li> <li>➤ University coordinates</li> <li>➤ Length: 2-3 hours</li> </ul>	Tour campus Admissions Info Session Lunch on campus optional	Harvard has dedicated minority recruiters. Info sessions include discussion of good study habits.  Source: A Grant, Visitors Center; S Vigil, UMRP Summer Coordinator
Massachusetts Institute of Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ University coordinates</li> <li>➤ Length: Weekend</li> </ul>	Live demo classes Lunch on campus optional	SPLASH is a student-run weekend featuring 2,200 free classes for young students from around country. Not an explicit recruiting tool, but likely interests students in college.
Princeton University <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By Teacher Request</li> <li>➤ Group Size: under 25</li> <li>➤ Local school coordinates</li> <li>➤ Length: 1-2 hours</li> </ul>	Tour campus Lunch on campus optional	Tours available to middle schoolers if high schoolers do not request time slot. Info session available only to high school students.  Source: Elaine, Admissions
Rice University <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By Teacher Request</li> <li>➤ Group Size: up to 50</li> <li>➤ Local school coordinates</li> <li>➤ Length: 2 hours</li> </ul>	Tour campus Info Session Lunch on campus optional	30-minute Info Session on what it takes to get into college, importance of good study skills  Source: J Adair, Admissions

<p>Stanford University</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By Teacher or Nonprofit Request</li> <li>➤ Group Size: 10-100</li> <li>➤ Local school coordinates</li> </ul>	<p>Tour campus  Visit dorms  Visit facilities  Sit in on live classes  Visit student clubs  Admissions Info session available thru Discover Stanford</p>	<p>Agenda is tailored to what teacher is interested in students' seeing</p> <p>Discover Stanford session at Visitor's Center features admissions/financial aid info</p> <p>Source: B Davis, Admissions</p>
<p>Tufts University</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Schools invited through Tufts students Community Service Project Club</li> <li>➤ Group Size: 30-40</li> <li>➤ University coordinates</li> <li>➤ Length: School day</li> </ul>	<p>Tour campus  Boxed Lunch on campus  Visit dorms if available  Visit facilities if available  Special demo classes  Admissions Info session  Other: Tufts students visit middle school classes</p>	<p>Tufts Community Service program features Tufts students visiting local schools, sitting in on classes and discussing importance of college. Local students are then invited to tour Tufts one class at a time.</p> <p>Tufts faculty develop special demos, eg., building Lego robots or levees. If available and things not too busy, students can tour dorms and facilities.</p> <p>Source: Carrie, Community Relations</p>
<p>UC Berkeley</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By Teacher Request</li> <li>➤ Group Size: any*</li> <li>➤ Local school coordinates</li> <li>➤ Length: 60 minutes</li> </ul> <p>* Any size group can sign up if space available on tour schedule; broken into 35-member groups for each tour guide</p>	<p>Tour campus</p>	<p>UC-B website has tour reservations calendar, where schools can sign up for tour. Any size group can participate, if tour guide capacity for that day available. Standard 90 minute tour reduced to 60 minutes for middle schoolers.</p> <p>Source: Visitor Services</p>
<p>UNC-Chapel Hill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By Teacher Request</li> <li>➤ Group Size: up to 100+</li> <li>➤ Local school coordinates**</li> <li>➤ Length: School day</li> </ul> <p>** UNC-CH has some partnerships with local schools,</p>	<p>Tour campus  Lunch on campus optional  Special demo classes, if available  Admissions Info session</p>	<p>Agenda is tailored to what teacher is interested in students' seeing</p> <p>Student groups may be from whole classes, specialized science programs, honors society</p>

but mainly initiated by local school staff		Admissions/Financial Aid session includes importance of doing well in middle and high school  Source: H Davis, Admissions
University of Pennsylvania <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By Teacher Request</li> <li>➤ Group Size: under 50</li> <li>➤ Local school coordinates</li> <li>➤ Length: 2-3 hours</li> </ul>	Tour campus Info session Some lunch available for certain nonprofit precollege programs	Info session includes admissions, financial aid, and course offerings information.  Source: Suzy, M. Dantis, Admissions
University of Texas-Austin <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By Teacher Request</li> <li>➤ Group Size: 20-100</li> <li>➤ Local school coordinates***</li> <li>➤ Length: School day</li> </ul> <p>*** New Visitors Center will likely begin coordinating these visits later this year.</p>	Tour campus Lunch on campus optional Sit in on live classes Admissions Info session	Schools make independent arrangements with academic departments to see classes or eat lunch with tour guide.  Student staff in Admissions office give 30-min info session on steps to take in high school in applying for college. Discussion emphasizes importance of reading and writing, starting a planner and becoming organized, developing good study skills in high school.  Source: D. Weathers, Elba, Admissions

Schools canvassed that do not participate in such middle school programs include Carnegie-Mellon, University of Chicago, University of Michigan, Yale, Columbia, Notre Dame, Emory, Dartmouth, Cornell, Brown, UNC-Wilmington. Schools who did not respond to several phone requests include Georgetown and Northwestern.

### EVALUATION

At a time when the value of a college degree is greater than ever, disparities in college attainment levels persist and in some areas appear to be growing. School Days fills a distinct need to create interest and enthusiasm among students and families who might not be fully apprised of the benefits of college. Among other leading universities, the School Days program is unique in its formal logistical arrangements, size, and extensive offerings.

### RECOMMENDATION

Many leading institutions that do host middle school visitors also include opportunities to sit in on live classes, which School Days might also consider. School Days might also consider adding an info session devoted to developing good study habits in high school.

If School Days can partner with Duke student organizations or academic departments offering credit for community service, Duke students might deepen relationships with participants by visiting middle schools to reinforce the School Days themes.

## Assessment Framework Two: Local Context

### Local Context: Durham Public Schools

The ten middle schools served by the School Days program enroll students who may not have family backgrounds that include a college degree. As Table Two below shows, the ten schools have a combined 2009-10 total enrollment of 7,292, of which 0.2% are American Indian, 2.2% are Asian, 17.6% are Hispanic, 55.9% are Black, 20.2% are White, and 3.9% are Multi-racial.

Over fifty-one percent of the student population is eligible for free or reduced lunch. Four of the schools, Lowe’s Grove, Githens, Chewning, and Neal, have been cited by NC Superior Court Judge Howard Manning for poor reading scores.<sup>6</sup> Six of the ten schools did not meet their expected ABC growth for the 2008-09 school year.

In the past, School Days was an important supplement to the five-year old DPS AVID program (Advancement Via Individual Determination), which supports students with college potential and boasts a 100% college enrollment rate among its graduates. AVID funding has been cut substantially; for the 2010-11 school year, none of the ten schools will offer an AVID program.

Guidance counselors interviewed at participating schools report that most of the students who attend School Days are AVID students; one school without an AVID program asks teachers to recommend students who show some interest in college. Outside the context of the AVID program, schools have no formal follow up program for School Days visits.

Channa Pickett 7/22/10 12:10 PM  
**Comment:** Can you double check this? I think it keeps flip-flopping.

**Table 2: 2009-10 Enrollment of School Days Participating Schools By Race/Ethnicity and Free/Reduced Lunch Eligibility**

School	Amer Indian %	Asian %	Hisp %	Black %	White %	Multi %	Total	Free/Red Lunch %
Brogden	0.0	2.0	18.8	48.6	26.3	4.3	761	56
Chewning	0.4	1.2	26.3	61.5	8.3	2.3	483	77
Carrington	0.4	1.9	13.6	47.8	32.3	4.1	1,113	43
DSA	0.3	2.6	12.8	43.8	35.3	5.3	1,405	29
Shepard	0.0	1.0	11.4	84.0	1.2	2.4	413	53
Lowes G	0.0	2.5	20.6	68.6	5.4	2.9	630	76
Neal	0.0	0.2	21.5	69.3	5.4	3.7	629	70
Githens	0.2	4.4	22.6	50.7	17.9	4.1	893	60
Rogers-H	0.0	3.4	16.2	58.5	18.8	3.1	643	36
WG Pears	0.3	0.9	19.6	68.0	8.4	2.8	322	n/a
Total	0.2	2.2	17.6	55.9	20.2	3.9	7,292	51.4

Source: Analysis based on data from Durham Public Schools website

<sup>6</sup> Sommer Brokaw, “DPS Officials Present Plan for Low Performing Schools,” The Triangle Tribune, May 7, 2010.

For the Durham district as a whole, the NC New Schools project reports that 66.3% graduate high school and 47.5% go on to college, while 69.5% of NC public school graduates complete high school and 54.2% attend college.

### **EVALUATION**

Durham lags behind other NC school systems in its graduation and college enrollment rates. Participating Durham middle schools are struggling with improving the educational environment for their students. School Days outreach, especially in the context of reduced AVID funding, will serve an even more critical role in encouraging and focusing students on pursuing four-year degrees.

Because many of the students whom the participating middle schools select to participate are AVID students or students already somewhat interested in college, School Days may want to shift its focus from building enthusiasm for college to encouraging further commitment to a college track.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

In light of reduced AVID funding, School Days may consider developing low-cost methods of engaging potential college students and reinforcing the importance of college. Follow-up with participants, perhaps in the form of an email newsletter, can provide students with encouragement and information about the steps needed to stay on the college track.

A simple School Days web page for middle school students that provides links to FAQs about college admissions, financial aid, college planning, and college course offerings/college life would prove a good resource for students. Periodic electronic surveys can engage students and provide longitudinal data for School Days strategic planning and promotional efforts.

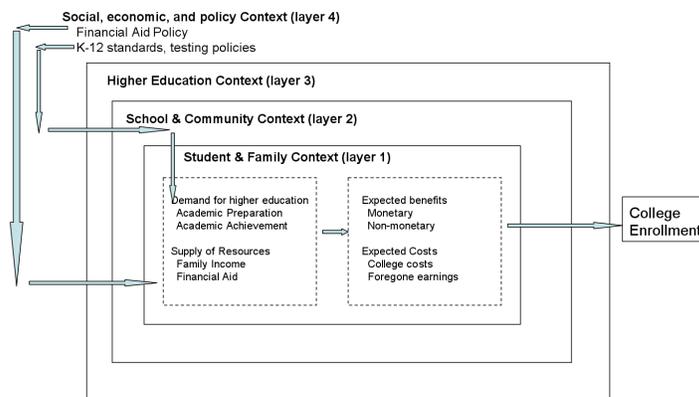
## Assessment Framework Three: College Decisionmaking Context

### College Decisionmaking Context: Key Factors

In contemplating the decision about whether to send a child to college, students and families undergo a complex decisionmaking process that contains many layers and decision variables.

Table Three shows one such conceptual model of student college enrollment and the policy linkages that can affect that decisionmaking process. The student and family's decision essentially results from their own cost-benefit analysis of a college education, as influenced by their school and community, the overall higher education system, and societal policies at large.

Table 3 – Conceptual Model of Student College Enrollment and Policy Linkages<sup>7</sup>



At heart, the decisionmaking process focuses on two key components: (1) the perceived value and desirability of a college education and (2) the availability of that education to the child. A multitude of factors play into those two key questions, several of which are outlined below.

<sup>7</sup> Perna et al, "A Typology of Federal and State Programs Designed to Promote College Enrollment," The Journal of Higher Education, Vol 79, No 3, p 248, May/June 2008.

### **Value and Desirability**

In determining whether college is a desirable option, students and families need to understand what it means to be a college student and whether the college life is a good fit for them. Recognizing that potential fit, especially among children who might be first generation college students, is helped enormously by developing:

- A connection to college institutions
- A connection to college students and college life
- A connection to college academics and activities

Research indicates that students who develop relationships to colleges and college students have a stronger chance of pursuing a college education.<sup>8</sup>

### **Availability**

In determining whether the college experience is feasible and available to students and families like themselves, students need to understand:

- Have others of similar backgrounds followed this path?
- What steps do I need to take in considering and applying to college?
- What kind of resources can assist my family financially?

The cost of a college education currently seems out of reach for many families, and especially those with lower incomes. As reported in *The New York Times*, a National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education study found that published college tuition and fees increased 439 percent from 1982 to 2007, yet median family income rose 147 percent.<sup>9</sup>

One school of thought suggests that education is increasingly seen by society as a private good, whose benefits accrue to the individual student rather than to society's utilization of the educated worker. Thus, posit two Minnesota researchers, taxpayers and legislators feel less pressure to keep college affordable, which, combined with a lack of information about financial aid, in turn discourages nontraditional students from seeking college.<sup>10</sup>

### **EVALUATION**

School Days provides students with an early connection to college life, students, and academic experiences. Admissions counselors introduce students to resources that can help them pay for college. By providing student role models to highlight the benefits of college and providing informational sessions on admissions and financial aid, School Days addresses two of the key issues surrounding college decisions.

---

<sup>8</sup> Yorke, M, and Thomas, E, "Improving the Retention of Students from Lower Socioeconomic Groups," Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 25, p. 63-74, 2003.

<sup>9</sup> Tamar Lewin, "College May Become Unaffordable for Most Americans, Report Says," New York Times, Dec 3, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Geoffrey Maruyama and Maggie Burke, "The Role of Pre-collegiate Partnership Programs in Environments Ambivalent about Affirmative Action: Reflections and Outcomes from an Early Implementation," Journal of Social Issues, Vol 61, No 3, p 431, 2005.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

School Days might consider strengthening the ties between volunteer Duke students and participant schools in order to reinforce its message of the value, affordability, and availability of college. As mentioned above, some low-cost followup, including a website or electronic communications, can reinforce those ties and messages.

### **College Decisionmaking Context: Timing of Programs**

Research has shown that creating enthusiasm for college among middle school students plays the greatest role in ensuring actual college attendance.<sup>11</sup> By encouraging student expectations prior to high school enrollment, programs can help focus that student on college prep courses. According to one study, parental encouragement plays a role as early as 7<sup>th</sup> grade in initiating the college planning process, which peaks by a student's ninth grade year, in which s/he is forming educational and career aspirations.<sup>12</sup>

A coordinated effort by teachers and school administrators, parents, friends, and other members of the community works best in getting students focused on working toward a college goal, including taking college prep courses, maintaining good grades, and researching ways to apply and pay for college.<sup>13</sup> By creating a connection and inculcating high expectations in younger children whose family backgrounds do not include college, programs can increase enthusiasm for the value and desirability of a college education.

## **EVALUATION**

School Days' focus on eighth graders reaches students at a critical point in the decisionmaking process.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

To assist in the coordinated effort that sustains the students' college-bound momentum, School Days can provide followup communications to reinforce student commitment. Further, consistent contact can assist the student's preparations for college during their high school years. Periodic surveys can track students' progress as well as any roadblocks which School Days might help remove.

---

<sup>11</sup> Balz, F. and Esten, M., "Fulfilling Private Dreams, Serving Public Priorities: An Analysis of TRIO Students' Success at Independent College and Universities," The Journal of Negro Education, 67, 333-363, 1998.

<sup>12</sup> Alberto F Cabrera et al, "Increasing the College Preparedness of At-Risk Students," Journal of Latinos and Education, 5(2), p. 79-97, 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Cabrera et al, 80-81.

## Assessment Framework Four: Participant Evaluation

### Participant Evaluation: Survey, Focus Group, Interviews

The goals of School Days are four-fold:

- To increase college attendance rates among DPS students
- To increase opportunities for outreach among large numbers of Duke staff members and students
- To create value for DPS staff and administrators
- To generate goodwill between Durham and Duke

Each of these goals will be evaluated through participant interviews, a student focus group, and surveys of 95 school representatives, volunteers, and Duke staff members conducted over a three-year period. (NOTE: Where information is available, survey respondents are identified by the school they escorted or are affiliated with.)

### Goal 1: To Increase College Attendance Rates among DPS Students

As stated on pages 14-16, the decision to attend college results from the interplay of countless different factors. However, a reasonable measure for School Days role in increasing college attendance rates, and a well-established intermediary variable, may be the degree of student awareness and enthusiasm generated by School Days.

Specifically, School Days can (1a) generate enthusiasm for college as a valuable and desirable opportunity; (1b) demonstrate that college is academically feasible; and (1c) demonstrate the college is financially feasible.

Feedback among participants suggests that School Days ignites excitement about college.

#### *Goal 1a: Generate Enthusiasm*

The program is successful in generating student interest and enthusiasm in pursuing a college degree. Students participating in a May 2010 focus group at Brogden Middle School reported being very interested in pursuing college as a result of School Days, and nearly half said that their enthusiasm had increased after their visit to Duke.

In particular, students and escorts expressed excitement about meeting real college students and visiting the facilities, especially the dormitories. One guidance counselor stated, "Many of the students live with four, five, six colleges or universities around them and never set foot on campus. If nothing else, seeing the campus and seeing kids walking around and getting to (the) university makes it a little more real."

After her group witnessed Duke students working on projects at the library, a Durham School of the Arts (DSA) escort said, ". . . at least one student said, 'I'm ready to go to college – this is the greatest school ever!' If one student from every group was 'sold,' that is great!"

***Goal 1a: Generate Enthusiasm – Meeting Duke Students***

Several respondents expressed their appreciation for their Duke student guides and other Duke students whom their students encountered during the day. Many felt that their eighth graders learned the most from actual Duke students, especially the student-athletes who spoke briefly at the opening sessions. In the student focus group, several students mentioned enjoying meeting the athletes.

“The students look like ‘big kids’ to them, whereas I’m just a silly adult!” said an escort to Lowes Grove. A Brogden group enjoyed a dorm visit with a “lively and engaging” student, and their escort added “Good activity for the 8<sup>th</sup> graders to see it, and have someone that tried to relate to them.”

Adult volunteers felt that more time with the Duke students, perhaps in a panel discussion, would be immensely helpful to students. Said a DSA escort, “One of our students asked this question, and as a recruiter, I am certain he hit on something meaningful. He asked, ‘Are we going to get to talk with students?’ I believe this would be a great forum – a sit-down Q&A session for each group – needs to be kept to small groups for personal interaction.”

A Brogden escort suggested: “. . . having each group do a quick sit-down Q&A with current students would be useful as the middle school students have little concept about the life of a college student – how classes work, who takes responsibility for class attendance, ‘bed time,’ what a weekly class/extracurricular/ life schedule looks like; etc . . . Maybe that’s a Q&A panel at the end?”

***Goal 1a: Generate Enthusiasm – Touring Duke Facilities***

Students enjoyed their tour of the campus, and students and escorts reported special student interest in The Link, the library’s floor-to-ceiling whiteboards which students could write on, and in Cameron Indoor Stadium.

“It was fun to see how the college looked and worked,” said one student.

Some escorts suggested adding more minority interest stops on the tour, such as the Mary Lou Williams Center, the Multicultural Center, and the Perkins Art/Photo Hallway. “We went to the Mary Lou Williams Center first and the director and staff assistant spent a lot of time with the kids explaining who Mary Lou Williams, Reggie Howard, John Hope Franklin, etc. were, which provided a great history lesson for the students,” said a Duke staff volunteer. A Chewning escort stated; “Several of the students spoke about the Mary Lou Williams Center. They liked knowing it was there.”

Several escorts indicated that their students raised the most questions about living in dormitories. Said one escort, “. . . I think the dorm visit helped to make college more ‘real’ for them.” Said another, “It was very interesting for the kids to see what dorm life is like, as opposed to what they presumed it would be like.”

“It was exciting for the students. They are always amazed by this part of college life. Some of them don’t understand what it’s like to have a place of their own . . . your own bed . . . own bathroom,” said one escort. “They were very curious about the dorms, so that was good b/c I think they started thinking about actually living at college,” said an escort to Shepherd. Many reported that their dorm “hosts” were very friendly and informative, and one even served cookies to the students.

Escorts whose groups had seen RA rooms rather than student rooms noted their students’ interest in seeing an actual student room, and perhaps a one-person room vs. a two-person room. “The Duke student was an RA, and, as the students said, had the room hooked up!” noted one Rogers-Herr escort. A Githens escort said that “The kids really wanted to see a double; they sort of knew right away that the RA’s room was too big and wasn’t what they would really get as freshman. I think they were pretty skeptical of it.”

Some escorts reported that they had difficulty gaining access to the dorm rooms or even finding the entrance to a particular dorm. In a few instances, the host of the room was not there or asleep when the tour group arrived.

### **EVALUATION**

It is clear that the range of activities and interactions with Duke students and staff make a strong positive impression on the visiting eighth graders. Two thirds of focus group students found School Days “Very Helpful” in thinking about colleges, and the other third found the program “Somewhat Helpful.”

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

As mentioned earlier, if School Days can partner with Duke student organizations or academic departments offering credit for community service, there may be more opportunities for middle school engagement with Duke students, who are the strongest ambassadors for college. For example, a brief formal or informal discussion with Duke students about college life would likely resonate with the middle school visitors. One escort even suggested a brief appearance by the Duke mascot.

Including more tour stops of cultural interest to the students would engage their interest further. Leveraging the students’ obvious enthusiasm for dorm living as a vehicle for emphasizing the importance of the college planning and preparation necessary to live in that dorm room may resonate with students.

School Days may wish to confirm dormitory visits with student hosts, and to provide more visible signage regarding dormitory entrances. Because Cameron had such a big impact on the students, perhaps spending additional time in the stadium would further ignite student enthusiasm.

Garnering input directly from students on how to generate enthusiasm and make the most of their visit would also maximize School Days’ impact. “It would be good if there was a pre- and post evaluation form that the students could fill out so that we can hear from

them how the Duke Days experience has impacted them,” suggested one guidance counselor.

***Goal 1b: Demonstrate that College is Academically Feasible***

One escort from Sheppard stated, “No one activity stands out, but overall the message of self-respect and you can be an achiever seemed to penetrate.”

Based on guidance counselor estimates, on average 68% of each school’s participants were first generation college students. Therefore, role models from similar socioeconomic or demographic backgrounds reinforce the message that students from all backgrounds can contribute to a university environment.

One guidance counselor felt that the idea of college has not been engrained in her 8<sup>th</sup> grade students prior to School Days. “They’re not expecting to go to college. We need to continue to reinforce and engrain a lot earlier.” She explained, “I think what’s missing is the piece that says here are the facts: if you want to go to college you need to be this kind of student. To be this kind of student, do this . . . (the students) need a reality check, you can’t go to parties and hang out with friends. That’s not being a serious student.”

Half of the guidance counselors surveyed felt that some of their students begin to focus on college prep courses after School Days. “They begin to understand the importance of being challenged and registering for more challenging classes,” said one counselor. An AVID coordinator at the Brogden focus group discussion felt that one or two students began to focus on college prep work after attending School Days.

Two thirds of the focus group students plan to take college prep courses. However, in student surveys and focus group discussion, it was clear that some students have many questions about what preparation is necessary for college. One student asked “I would like to know if you have homework before you start school (besides the application to the school.)” Another student said, “I would like to learn more about time management and what schools have to offer me.” A third expressed interest in understanding college credits “how the credits are and how they work.”

One student, who in the Focus Group session indicated that he doesn’t worry about the cost of college because he intends to get a scholarship, nonetheless noted in his survey that he wasn’t sure he’d take college prep classes in high school “because I don’t know what to expect.”

Several respondents noted that their student groups especially enjoyed opportunities to connect with Duke students from similar backgrounds. Enjoyment of the Duke faculty’s special academic sessions, discussed in the next section, also aided in building the students’ confidence.

Said a Githens escort, “Also, if you could recruit African American or Hispanic undergraduate students to serve as the student guides. Our group had a good experience,

but that was because the teacher from Githens graduated from Duke in 2008 and was able to share so much of his experience with the kids. Being an African American, who attended Duke on a scholarship, he was a fabulous role model.” Said a Rogers-Herr escort, “I think that it was most valuable to them when they can see students who look like them on campus. It makes Duke seem like a more attainable goal.”

One student suggested she would like to understand “What are the challenges people go through when attending Duke University?” The same student suggested receiving “pamphlets explain what goes on in the school.” Another stated “They (School Days) were very helpful, but to be more helpful is to find out what jobs they all have.”

An AVID coordinator also expressed her interest in the students having opportunities to engage with the Duke student-athletes, perhaps in an informal discussion or a pick-up game. “Students did not have an opportunity to talk with Duke students, especially athletes. I think that it would add to the experience.”

A follow-up visit later in high school was also mentioned. As one student suggested, “School Days could make another trip to the college to see more about it.”

### **EVALUATION**

School Days’ efforts to recruit a diverse group of student guides are well-received. Students and their escorts enjoyed and found inspirational opportunities to interact with students from similar socioeconomic and demographic backgrounds. The students have many questions about the challenges of college planning and could benefit from additional guidance through the process, a role previously performed by the AVID program.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

While encouraged by School Days activities and interactions, students need additional information and support through the college decisionmaking process. Although another high school version of School Days for previous attendees may not be feasible, other low-cost follow-ups may be useful to students.

With a lack of AVID funding for the 2010-11 school year, School Days has an opportunity to provide more detailed information to students interested in college – including reinforcing why it is important, why it is obtainable, and how to prepare for it. Students also expressed interest in a brief overview of college courses and credits and majors. Periodic e-newsletters, supplemented with brief surveys to ascertain what information would be most useful to School Days alumni, could further the impact of the program at a low cost.

To maximize the impact of the eighth graders’ visit, School Days might recruit more Duke students from similar backgrounds, or perhaps invite a group of students to present a panel discussion to the group as a whole about preparing for and excelling at college.

***Goal 1c: Demonstrate that College is Financially Feasible***

Escorts expressed appreciation for the admissions information they received on the tour. ‘I think that the admissions person that spoke did a great job of letting the students know that they can afford college, even if their parents do not have a lot of money. I think that had a big impact on our students,’ stated a Githens volunteer.

Several respondents expressed interest in acquiring more followup information for their students, especially focusing on admissions and financial aid. A Brogden volunteer stated “It would be nice to give them more info about what it takes to get into a college, what can they do now, besides studying, or to help them with their studies. And more info about the financial aid might give them more hope also. Although they just might be too young to take it all seriously. It would be great if more students got to do this, and even more than once – maybe once more when they’re in high school.”

Of special interest, according to Rogers-Herr representative, was that “. . . the students had lots of questions about college and Duke: how to pay, what to do to get in, how to fit in, how big is Duke, what do students major in, etc.”

Suggested vehicles for providing this information included a “Website for kids, with detailed information on some of the things they learned on their visit – a four year plan, financial aid, healthy eating, time management and study tips, etc – an information card with the website or a pencil or key chain with the web address could be given to the children.” One escort suggested handing out Duke brochures with information about the costs of college, financial aid and majors.

**EVALUATION**

Escorts appreciated School Days inclusion of admissions and financial aid information within the day’s program. Such discussions helped visiting students to look past the high costs of college and understand that sources of financial aid were available to them.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Followup information, or a website to which students can refer as they progress through the college planning process, would be very helpful.

Going forward, School Days may consider providing pre- and post-surveys of students’ intentions toward college to assess areas of greatest informational interest and need.

**Goal 2: To Increase Opportunities for Outreach Among Large Numbers of Duke Staff Members and Students**

In addition to their major contribution to students’ enjoyment of the day and their increased enthusiasm for college, faculty academic sessions/presentations provided ample opportunities for Duke staff outreach.

Student groups have experienced a variety of academic experiences, including a visit to a virtual 3D lab or the Human Patient Simulator, or experimenting with an earthquake simulator. A brief list of 2009 academic sessions offered includes “String Theory,” “Mushroom Ecology,” “Games Parents and Teens Play: How Economics Thinks About How Families Work,” “Rice, Malnutrition, and Small Farmers in Africa,” “3D Motion and Its Applications,” “Native American Cultures,” “Biological Molecules in Virtual Reality,” “What Does Duke Have To Do With Children and Families?” “Lemur Science,” “The U.S. Constitution and Why It Matters,” “Love in the Middle Ages: Medieval Love Poetry,” and “Birthdays, Game Shows, and Probability.”

As Table Four below illustrates, the academic sessions were considered very successful. Participants in the 2008 and 2009 sessions were asked to rate the academic presentations they attended, and the number of sessions rated as “great” and “good” increased significantly from 2008 to 2009. By 2009, 86% of all respondents rated their academic sessions as “great” or “good.”

Table 4: Ratings of School Days Academic Sessions, 2008-09

	2008	2009
Great	35%	48%
Good	26%	38%
Fair	21%	10%
Poor	18%	5%

Said a Carrington escort of his students’ academic experience, “They were engaged and had a sense that learning can be fun and relevant.”

The sessions that seemed most engaging were those that spoke to a middle schooler at his or her level of understanding and allowed for some hands-on and interactive discussions or activities.

A DSA representative said of her session: “The speaker was really open to questions and talked on the children’s level about pollution.” Other speakers made time to discuss why they had chosen a career in science. A Rogers-Herr volunteer stated “The session that we attended was hands on and the students loved it. The instructor was excellent and explained everything in a way in which the students could understand.” A Brogden escort appreciated a professor’s working to make his demonstration relevant to the students and engaging them in talk.

Said a Lowes Grove respondent, “They interacted with DNA double helix attached to a protein which the students loved . . . hands-on sessions makes such a big impression at

this age!” A Githens escort stated, “We got to visit the Virtual Reality ‘Dive Tank.’ The kids were very engaged in the activity that was planned for us. They also loved the sound room.”

Sessions that didn’t work as well were those in which the presenter didn’t relate as well to the students, either because he or she mainly lectured to the students or because the topic was too advanced. Based on participant feedback, School Days staff work with the faculty member to revise or drop the sessions that don’t work as well.

Said a Githens escort, “(The professor) didn’t have a good understanding of why he was there, and it was a lot of talking – I’m always in favor of more hands-on stuff with younger kids. He did a good job, though, of bringing them into the conversation and engaging them in ideas . . .” Another Githens escort felt that: “Topic was way beyond students grasp. Professor had poor understanding of his audience. There are so many cool experiments . . . that there should have been a better way to connect to these students and perhaps generate a spark. . .”.

In praising the academic sessions, a DSA guidance counselor also suggested that presenters “Make the conversation relevant to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students and how to accomplish their goal of going to college.” Another guidance counselor echoed, “The professor presentations could not only emphasize their field of study but make the conversation relevant to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students and how to accomplish their goals of going to college.”

While enjoying the academic sessions, a student suggested he would like to see a real college class, and several other focus group participants echoed this interest. A Rogers-Herr escort stated “As we toured, they peeked in on several lectures, and seemed to really love seeing a live college class.” A Lowes Grove escort suggested “(H)ave students sit in on a real lecture (15 minutes or so) and see actual students and how they act.”

Also, a Duke staff volunteer suggested, “. . . it would have been good to have some classrooms available for them to go into, small and large sizes.”

## **EVALUATION**

School Days provides a significant platform for interactions among Duke faculty and students and Durham middle school students. Foremost among those interactions are the special academic sessions, which are highly rated by participants. In a few instances, DPS escorts expressed some concern about a particular course not speaking to an eighth grade audience. School Days staff have worked with Duke professors to help adjust their courses more appropriately to their young visitors.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

School Days can continue to work with faculty to tailor presentations to a middle school audience. Hands-on presentations are highly effective in engaging students. The

opportunity for students to sit in on 'live' classes would also increase Duke-DPS student interactions while offering a 'real' college experience.

**Goal 3: To Create Value for DPS Staff and Administrators**

Many comments by DPS school staff and administrators express deep appreciation and interest in the School Days program. In its earlier years, according to School Days officials, Duke would send reminders to administrators about the event. However, it has become such an important component of the schools' college preparation process that reminders are no longer necessary.

School Days makes the logistics of the day simple for DPS participants by arranging transportation, lunch, and the day's agendas. As noted previously, School Days is unique among the nation's leading universities in offering such a well-coordinated and comprehensive program.

Senior DPS officials endorse School Days by participating in the event, such as the welcome address offered by the Chair of the Board Minnie Forte-Brown for the 2008 and 2009 event. The event has received mention and praise in School Board meetings, including those of October 23, 2008 and October 25, 2007.

The following comments were noted by DPS staff members.

"School Days is a positive thing for our kids and we really appreciate it." Guidance counselor

"Thanks for all that you do to support young people. I think the Duke Days experience is very valuable and I hope we continue to have it for many years." Guidance counselor

"Please keep the program. I know that in these times of economic hardships many programs are cut. I believe this is a rewarding experience for our students and I hope it continues." AVID coordinator

"I really appreciate what the university does for kids and I look forward to working with you next year." Guidance counselor

**EVALUATION**

The value of School Days is apparent to DPS senior leadership and staff.

**RECOMMENDATION**

School Days can continue to partner with DPS officials and staff in the shaping of the program, particularly as AVID funding cuts create a need for more services. School Days can perhaps expand efforts to educate DPS leadership on the benefits of the program, especially any follow-up efforts instituted in the schools.

#### **Goal 4: To Generate Goodwill Between Durham and Duke**

Many of the 330 annual attendees discuss the program with family and friends, and their participant T-shirts likely engender more conversations. One guidance counselor noted that other students who hadn't attended School Days were interested in hearing about the day's events. Student focus group participants reported discussing School Days with, on average, 20.2 people, which, if applied to the entire group, could result in over 6,600 Durham-area residents becoming aware of School Days.

In addition, the 66 escorts affiliated with the participating schools – including teachers, parents, and administrators – are also likely to share information about the program with other students or members of the community. “All of our 8<sup>th</sup> grade students would benefit from School Days and always inquire about attending,” said one guidance counselor. At a conservative estimate of five contacts per escort, another 330 people would be apprised, for a total of nearly 7,300 “touches” in one day. Based on a budget of \$10,000, each touch works out to \$1.38.

Two prominent articles in the Durham Herald-Sun over the last four years have highlighted the program to the larger Durham community, including mentions of Chair Forte-Brown's welcoming address.<sup>14</sup>

#### **EVALUATION**

School Days generates significant goodwill between Durham and Duke. The program reaches many more Durham residents than the 330 annual student attendees. It has received favorable mention in the local media.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

Opportunities exist to build on the goodwill generated. Simple followup communications discussed earlier, and perhaps a simple website for area parents, could provide other low-cost outreach to School Days participants' families and other members of the community.

“Most students always SAY they want to go to college because it sounds like the right thing to say, however, I think by attending school Days shows them that it is possible,” stated one guidance counselor. The impact of School Days is an important story that many Durham residents would care about. Proposing stories to local media about School Days participants, including African-American media like the Triangle Tribune, can magnify goodwill.

---

<sup>14</sup> 2009 article  
[http://www.heraldsun.com/pages/full\\_story\\_news\\_durham/push?article-A+taste+of+Duke%20&id=4029331-A+taste+of+Duke&instance=main\\_article](http://www.heraldsun.com/pages/full_story_news_durham/push?article-A+taste+of+Duke%20&id=4029331-A+taste+of+Duke&instance=main_article)

2006  
[https://community.duke.edu/news\\_events/stories/2006\\_stories/schooldays\\_oct21\\_2006.php](https://community.duke.edu/news_events/stories/2006_stories/schooldays_oct21_2006.php)

Developing profiles of alumni can provide powerful information for School Days to share its success with the larger community. Developing and administering annual alumni surveys to collect longitudinal data about alumni high school, college, and career paths, can provide School Days staff with the empirical data to tell its inspiring story as well as shape its program for future generations of students.

Channa Pickett 7/23/10 9:04 AM  
**Comment:** Could you add a summary of the evaluation and recommendations sections?

## Summary of Evaluations and Recommendations

### OVERALL EVALUATION

School Days is a unique, successful program that plays an important role in the lives of Durham students who may be the first in their families to consider attending college. Among leading universities, School Days offers one of the few programs focused exclusively on middle school students from underprivileged backgrounds, and it is easily the most comprehensive and detailed university-sponsored program of its kind.

The importance of a college degree to career and financial security has grown substantially over the last twenty years. As budget shortfalls eliminate DPS's college preparation programs, the School Days experience becomes even more crucial for Durham's students.

School Days targets middle school students at some of Durham's most troubled schools, including schools that Judge Howard Manning has deemed failing. Through word of mouth, up to 7,300 Durham residents become aware of the program, and hence the availability and desirability of college, each year. At approximately \$1.38 per contact, the program is extremely cost-effective. Newspaper coverage to the broader Durham community is also positive.

School Days is well-received by Durham Public Schools leadership and personnel, as evidenced by DPS leader involvement, School Board dialogue, and the feedback of teachers and guidance counselors. Students also express appreciation and enthusiasm for their relationship with Duke; in Fall 2009, 70 Duke faculty and staff and 42 Duke students enjoyed engagement with 330 DPS middle school students and their escorts.

School Days is designed to engage with young students at a critical point in their college decisionmaking process: the middle school years, during which they begin to explore the high school coursework needed for college admissions. By engaging during this important time, the program maximizes the effect of its outreach.

Additionally, the design of the program, featuring diverse Duke student participation, gives middle school students a sense of the possibilities of college life. Special classes, glimpses into residential life, and information regarding admissions, financial aid, and the many campus resources available to them, spark students' further interest in a college career.

## **OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS**

Duke is in a unique position to build deeper relationships with School Days participants and extend its outreach to the wider community. Because many DPS students involved in School Days have some interest in college, the program might shift its emphasis to sustaining and increasing enthusiasm for college.

To do so, Duke may consider facilitating more Duke student involvement; meeting current Duke students was clearly the most effective way to create enthusiasm among DPS students. For example, Duke might award academic or community service credit to its students who engage more fully in the program, such as in visiting with schools or developing mentorships with School Days participants.

The DPS students were especially interested in meeting more college students from similar backgrounds. Many also expressed interest in more opportunities to engage formally or informally with Duke students, perhaps in a Q&A session.

Allowing DPS students to sit in on live classes or visit more stops of cultural interest would also deepen the impact of the day at Duke.

Finally, an ongoing relationship with program participants can be maintained at minimal cost by utilizing electronic communications with School Days alumni. A simple website for students and parents with information regarding college requirements, the admission process, financial aid, and other frequently asked questions would be a useful resource. Electronic newsletters could strengthen engagement and foster student communications with the School Days staff.

Developing a database of School Days participants and alumni could provide valuable longitudinal information regarding program participation, effectiveness, planning, and assessment. Periodic low-cost electronic surveys could track alumni as they progress through their high school and college years. In addition, the surveys may identify DPS student needs and concerns about college decisionmaking that School Days might address.

The program is quite effective and offers an excellent platform for deepening and strengthening Duke's commitment to DPS and the Durham community.

## **DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **National Context**

#### **EVALUATION**

At a time when the value of a college degree is greater than ever, disparities in college attainment levels persist and in some areas appear to be growing. School Days fills a distinct need to create interest and enthusiasm among students and families who might not be fully apprised of the benefits of college. Among other leading universities, the School Days program is unique in its formal logistical arrangements, size, and extensive offerings.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

Many leading institutions that do host middle school visitors also include opportunities to sit in on live classes, which School Days might also consider. School Days might also consider adding an info session devoted to developing good study habits in high school.

If School Days can partner with Duke student organizations or academic departments offering credit for community service, Duke students might deepen relationships with participants by visiting middle schools to reinforce the School Days themes.

### **Local Context**

#### **EVALUATION**

Durham lags behind other NC school systems in its graduation and college enrollment rates. Participating Durham middle schools are struggling with improving the educational environment for their students. School Days outreach, especially in the context of reduced AVID funding, will serve an even more critical role in encouraging and focusing students on pursuing four-year degrees.

Because many of the students whom the participating middle schools select to participate are AVID students or students already somewhat interested in college, School Days may want to shift its focus from building enthusiasm for college to encouraging further commitment to a college track.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

In light of reduced AVID funding, School Days may consider developing low-cost methods of engaging potential college students and reinforcing the importance of college. Follow-up with participants, perhaps in the form of an email newsletter, can provide students with encouragement and information about the steps needed to stay on the college track.

A simple School Days web page for middle school students that provides links to FAQs about college admissions, financial aid, college planning, and college course offerings/college life would prove a good resource for students. Periodic electronic

surveys can engage students and provide longitudinal data for School Days strategic planning and promotional efforts.

### **Decisionmaking Context**

#### **EVALUATION – AVAILABILITY**

School Days provides students with an early connection to college life, students, and academic experiences. Admissions counselors introduce students to resources that can help them pay for college. By providing student role models to highlight the benefits of college and providing informational sessions on admissions and financial aid, School Days addresses two of the key issues surrounding college decisions.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

School Days might consider strengthening the ties between volunteer Duke students and participant schools in order to reinforce its message of the value, affordability, and availability of college. As mentioned above, some low-cost followup, including a website or electronic communications, can reinforce those ties and messages.

#### **EVALUATION -- TIMING**

School Days' focus on eighth graders reaches students at a critical point in the decisionmaking process.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

To assist in the coordinated effort that sustains the students' college-bound momentum, School Days can provide followup communications to reinforce student commitment. Further, consistent contact can assist the student's preparations for college during their high school years. Periodic surveys can track students' progress as well as any roadblocks which School Days might help remove.

### **Participant Evaluation Context**

#### **EVALUATION – GENERATING ENTHUSIASM**

It is clear that the range of activities and interactions with Duke students and staff make a strong positive impression on the visiting eighth graders. Two thirds of focus group students found School Days "Very Helpful" in thinking about colleges, and the other third found the program "Somewhat Helpful."

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

As mentioned earlier, if School Days can partner with Duke student organizations or academic departments offering credit for community service, there may be more opportunities for middle school engagement with Duke students, who are the strongest ambassadors for college. For example, a brief formal or informal discussion with Duke students about college life would likely resonate with the middle school visitors. One escort even suggested a brief appearance by the Duke mascot.

Including more tour stops of cultural interest to the students would engage their interest further. Leveraging the students' obvious enthusiasm for dorm living as a vehicle for emphasizing the importance of the college planning and preparation necessary to live in that dorm room may resonate with students.

School Days may wish to confirm dormitory visits with student hosts, and to provide more visible signage regarding dormitory entrances. Because Cameron had such a big impact on the students, perhaps spending additional time in the stadium would further ignite student enthusiasm.

Garnering input directly from students on how to generate enthusiasm and make the most of their visit would also maximize School Days' impact. "It would be good if there was a pre- and post evaluation form that the students could fill out so that we can hear from them how the Duke Days experience has impacted them," suggested one guidance counselor.

#### **EVALUATION – ACADEMIC FEASIBILITY**

School Days' efforts to recruit a diverse group of student guides are well-received. Students and their escorts enjoyed and found inspirational opportunities to interact with students from similar socioeconomic and demographic backgrounds. The students have many questions about the challenges of college planning and could benefit from additional guidance through the process, a role previously performed by the AVID program.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

While encouraged by School Days activities and interactions, students need additional information and support through the college decisionmaking process. Although another high school version of School Days for previous attendees may not be feasible, other low-cost follow-ups may be useful to students.

With a lack of AVID funding for the 2010-11 school year, School Days has an opportunity to provide more detailed information to students interested in college – including reinforcing why it is important, why it is obtainable, and how to prepare for it. Students also expressed interest in a brief overview of college courses and credits and majors. Periodic e-newsletters, supplemented with brief surveys to ascertain what information would be most useful to School Days alumni, could further the impact of the program at a low cost.

To maximize the impact of the eighth graders' visit, School Days might recruit more Duke students from similar backgrounds, or perhaps invite a group of students to present a panel discussion to the group as a whole about preparing for and excelling at college.

### **EVALUATION – FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY**

Escorts appreciated School Days inclusion of admissions and financial aid information within the day's program. Such discussions helped visiting students to look past the high costs of college and understand that sources of financial aid were available to them.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Followup information, or a website to which students can refer as they progress through the college planning process, would be very helpful.

Going forward, School Days may consider providing pre- and post-surveys of students' intentions toward college to assess areas of greatest informational interest and need.

### **EVALUATION – CREATE OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES FOR DUKE STAFF AND STUDENTS**

School Days provides a significant platform for interactions among Duke faculty and students and Durham middle school students. Foremost among those interactions are the special academic sessions, which are highly rated by participants. In a few instances, DPS escorts expressed some concern about a particular course not speaking to an eighth grade audience. School Days staff have worked with Duke professors to help adjust their courses more appropriately to their young visitors.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

School Days can continue to work with faculty to tailor presentations to a middle school audience. Hands-on presentations are highly effective in engaging students. The opportunity for students to sit in on 'live' classes would also increase Duke-DPS student interactions while offering a 'real' college experience.

### **EVALUATION – CREATING VALUE FOR DPS STAFF AND ADMINISTRATION**

The value of School Days is apparent to DPS senior leadership and staff.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

School Days can continue to partner with DPS officials and staff in the shaping of the program, particularly as AVID funding cuts create a need for more services. School Days can perhaps expand efforts to educate DPS leadership on the benefits of the program, especially any follow-up efforts instituted in the schools.

### **EVALUATION – GENERATING GOODWILL BETWEEN DURHAM AND DUKE**

School Days generates significant goodwill between Durham and Duke. The program reaches many more Durham residents than the 330 annual student attendees. It has received favorable mention in the local media.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Opportunities exist to build on the goodwill generated. Simple followup communications discussed earlier, and perhaps a simple website for area parents, could provide other low-cost outreach to School Days participants' families and other members of the community.

“Most students always SAY they want to go to college because it sounds like the right thing to say, however, I think by attending school Days shows them that it is possible,” stated one guidance counselor. The impact of School Days is an important story that many Durham residents would care about. Proposing stories to local media about School Days participants, including African-American media like the Triangle Tribune, can magnify goodwill.

# **APPENDIX**

**Program Logic Model**  
**Survey for Guidance Counselors**  
**Survey for Students**

**PROGRAM LOGIC MODEL**

The following Program Logic Model delineates the School Days approach.

The goals of School Days are four-fold:

- To increase college attendance rates among DPS students
- To increase opportunities for outreach among large numbers of Duke staff members and students
- To create value for DPS staff and administrators
- To generate goodwill between Durham and Duke

**Table 5: School Days Program Logic Model**

Assumptions	Activities	Anticipated Outcomes
The Duke School Days Program increases the likelihood of Durham Public School Students (DPS) attending college	DPS students are exposed to a college campus, including: College students (as guides, speakers, hosts) College life (dorms, lunch, entertainment) College academics and faculty College facilities	DPS college attendance rates increase as students begin to see college as desirable and attainable. Attainability of college is reinforced by students': Recognizing college students as role models Being excited and inspired by academic possibilities Seeing college as a place to pursue academics but also a rewarding place to grow as an individual
	DPS Students are engaged as 8 <sup>th</sup> graders	DPS middle school students will be engaged at a critical time in their family's decisionmaking process. They will begin to focus their high school coursework on college prep.
	Students are engaged in hands-on activities that interest them in college curriculum	Students are engaged in academic possibilities and begin to see college as academically attainable. They are excited about college.
	DPS students receive introduction to the college application process, including admissions and financial aid	DPS students and parents begin to see college as affordable goal

Assumptions	Activities	Anticipated Outcomes
The program provides an opportunity for a large number of Duke staff and students to engage with the Durham community.	<p>Program recruits over 110 Duke faculty, staff, and students as volunteers</p> <p>Program asks DPS guidance counselors to recruit teachers, parents, and other administrators to serve as chaperones</p> <p>Duke volunteers accompany each group to provide information and share experience, build relationships</p>	<p>Duke students provide role models and Duke shows the students that the college is interested in their future</p> <p>Members of the Duke community may extend and deepen their ties to the School Days participants, their schools, or other members of the community.</p>

Assumptions	Activities	Anticipated Outcomes
Durham Public School staff and administrators believe the program has value	<p>Durham Public School administrators and staff are educated on value of program.</p> <p>DPS guidance counselors, teachers, staff, and parents are engaged in the program</p> <p>Program seeks input of DPS administrators and staff.</p> <p>Program staff make logistics as streamlined as possible for school staff through: Arrangement/cost of transportation Creation of permission forms Providing meals and snacks</p>	<p>DPS administrators and staff make a continued commitment to the program, returning annually. DPS senior leadership endorse the program.</p> <p>Program incorporates feedback of DPS administrators and staff into planning</p> <p>School Staff find School Days to be enjoyable and simple to implement, thereby focusing on value and not effort to engage in program</p>

Assumptions	Activities	Anticipated Outcomes
The program creates goodwill between Duke and Durham	DPS students, staff, and administrators feel welcome and engaged by Duke	<p>DPS students, staff, and administrators, and the larger Durham community, recognize Duke's commitment to its neighbors</p> <p>Durham media recognizes value of program</p>

School Days Assessment, Spring 2010  
Questions for Guidance Counselors

1. What do your students take from the day? What are their impressions? Do they seem more excited about or committed to attending college and/or Duke?
2. As a result of attending School Days, do you feel students begin to focus their coursework on college prep courses?
3. As a result of attending School Days, do you feel students' grades increase?
4. Do more students apply to and attend college as a result of attending School Days?
5. Thinking about those students, what percentage of their decision to attend college resulted from their participation in the School Days program? 0% 10% 25% 50% 75% 90% 100%
6. Do non-School Days participants express interest or learn about the program? How many people would you estimate does the School Days student talk to about School Days? (MULTIPLIER EFFECT)
7. What percentage of your School Days participants would you estimate are first-generation in college students?
8. What would you add to the Duke School Days program?
9. What would you change?
10. What elements of the program did you or your students not find as helpful?
11. How does this supplement or work with AVID? Were your School Days participants members of the AVID program?

12. Is the length of the School Days program too short, too long, or just right?

13. Are there any other comments you'd like to share?

School Days Evaluation, Spring 2010  
Questions for Students

1. How helpful did you find the School Days experience in thinking about college?  
Very helpful      Somewhat helpful      Not very helpful
  
2. How interested were you in attending college before the School Days visit?  
Very interested      Somewhat interested      Not interested
  
3. How interested were you in attending college after the School Days visit?  
Very interested      Somewhat interested      Not interested
  
4. Are you planning to take college-prep courses in high school?  
Yes    No  
Why or why not?
  
5. Who did you talk to about your School Days experience? Please circle all that apply.  
Friends    Parents    Brothers and Sisters    Teachers    Guidance Counselors  
Principals    Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. How many people do you think you shared your School Days experience with?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
7. What was the best part of the School Days experience?
  
8. What could School Days do to make the day even more helpful to you?

9. What would you like to learn more about in planning for college?