

Meeting the Needs of Students and Stakeholders: Increasing Student Access and Admissions for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

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Issues: North Carolina State University and the College of Agriculture and Life Science (CALs) have two major admission issues that we are addressing: increasing access for students from rural areas, agricultural families, and legacy families, and increasing the number of students in CALs programs where there are more job opportunities than graduates.

What has been done:

A. Access goals:

- Increase number and percentage of students admitted and enrolled from rural areas, agricultural backgrounds and legacy families.
- Increase awareness of stakeholders regarding efforts that NC State and CALs are making to increase student access.

We are accomplishing these goals by:

1. *Increasing participation in ASPIRE (ACT Supplemental Preparation in Rural Education).*
2. *Assisting students with the application process and identifying students with a high likelihood of college success.*
3. *Developing an Agricultural Institute (AGI) transfer plan.*
4. *Implementing PackTrac - a community college cooperation plan.*
5. *Increasing STEAM (Student Transfer Enrollment Advising and Mentoring Program) participation.*
6. *Working with the University Office of Undergraduate Admissions to reach the target number of admissions for under-enrolled programs.*
7. *Developing protocols for NC State's new Spring Semester program, Spring Connection.*

B Admissions goals:

- Increase number of students in under-enrolled programs, particularly, those with the highest demand for graduates.
- Increase awareness of stakeholders regarding efforts that NC State and CALs are making on increasing admissions.

We are accomplishing these goals by:

1. *Developing college and departmental recruitment plans.*
2. *Increasing elementary, middle and high school outreach.*
3. *Implementing PackTrac - a community college cooperation plan.*
4. *Developing an AGI transfer plan.*
5. *Developing a CALs General Education Program course.*
6. *Working with the University Office of Undergraduate Admissions to reach target number of admissions for each program.*
7. *Enhancing the pre- and post-admissions experience.*
8. *Increasing the number of Freshman Admissions Scholarships from CALs and Departments.*
9. *Developing a CALs Agriculture First-Year Program.*

Impacts/new partnerships: The development of the CALS Access/Admissions Plan depended on the ideas and concerns of our stakeholders and was only possible due to the strong connections the college already had with our stakeholders, both internal and external. In addition, the process of working with stakeholders to develop the Access/Admissions plan improved relationships with them.

Outcomes: Most of the action items on our Access/Admissions plan have been implemented and the plan is showing results, in part due to an overall increase in university admissions. Fall 2017 CALS welcomed 110 more freshmen than last year and we have 50 students in the inaugural class of Spring Connection, who are freshmen students starting in the Spring semester. In addition, we have 176 transfer students starting Fall 2017, 23 more than last year. The number of transfer students starting Spring 2018 will be available in Dec. 2017.

One of our new programs, Nominate a Student, was particularly successful, in which teachers, advisors and other stakeholders were able to tell us about students they thought would be great for CALS. The online nomination form asked for the name and email address of the nominator, the name and email address of the student, and why the student would be a good fit for CALS. We contacted both the nominator and nominee, with the intent to help students navigate the admissions process and advocate for them with university admissions. The process worked very well and we received 278 nominations for 159 students (many students were nominated more than once). We successfully reached our target audiences as over 95% of the nominated students were from rural counties and most students who were nominated intended to major in one of the under-enrolled programs.

Regarding our goal of increasing access for rural and agricultural students, over 50% of North Carolina applicants came from Tier 3 counties, representing 0.0128% of the populations in those counties. The number and percentage of applicants decreased to 406 (0.0102%) for Tier 2 and 119 (0.0096%) for Tier 1 counties. Tier 1 counties had fewer Fall and Spring admissions, who also had lower SAT and ACT scores, but had higher unweighted GPAs than those from Tier 2 and 3 counties. The tier status of each county is based on an annual ranking by the N.C. Department of Commerce. The 40 most distressed counties are designated as Tier 1, the next 40 as Tier 2 and the 20 least distressed as Tier 3. Counties are classified into the tiers using average unemployment rate, median household income, percentage growth in population, and adjusted property tax base per capita. For Tier 1, 2 or 3 counties, 64%, 62% or 63% of applicants, respectively, were admitted for Fall or Spring admission or invited to participate in STEAM programs. Thus, our alternative pathway programs allowed students from all three tiers to have equal access to NC State University.

Impact of FSLI on project: FSLI provide me with the skills to take bold steps in addressing these major issues for the college. To develop the Access/Admissions plan it was crucial to actively listen to the concerns and ideas of all stakeholders: students (both future and current), parents, industry groups, NC State faculty and staff, university admissions officials, community college officials, CALS Academic program staff, and many more. With their input, we developed various drafts of the plan and refined it in response to stakeholder suggestions and concerns, before producing a final action plan. The Access/Admissions plan is a living document – we are adjusting it as we learn what works and what does not work well.

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