

NEW INITIATIVE PROPOSAL

Heritage University Institute for Student Identity and Success

Rationale: Heritage University was founded 30 years ago to provide higher education opportunities to the unserved residents of the largely Hispanic and rural white agricultural Yakima Valley and the Yakama Indian Reservation in Washington State. These new participants in higher education had previously been unable to honor their key identities – such as their culture, their gender, their geographic location, and their economic situations – and also participate in existing four-year degree opportunities. More than 7,000 degrees later, Heritage University’s hands-on educators and successful students have gained significant insights into how to help students utilize their relevant identities as assets and not handicaps in completing four-year and master’s degrees. The Institute seeks to share and compare Heritage’s findings with other higher education institutions which are seeking to increase the number of low-income, first-generation college graduates. It will also collaborate in these endeavors with the Yes We Must Coalition of which Heritage University is a founding member.

Mission: To increase the number of four-year degree recipients among low-income, first-generation-to-college students by assisting faculty and administrators to acquire new research knowledge and skills that foster degree completion by “New Majority” students.

Structure:

An Executive Director will head the Institute, assisted by clerical help as needed.

Research assistants, drawn from Heritage University’s advanced students whose personal stories illustrate student success, will assist in preparing and delivering services.

A nationally-drawn Think Tank of recognized experts on “what works” in fostering the college success of New Majority students will design the content of ISIS clinics / workshops / coaching materials. Another Think Tank on infusing the campus with catalysts for strengthening students’ spirituality / inner search for meaning / vocation will also meet.

An Advisory Council of experts will provide periodic advice on appropriate offerings to be developed and delivered by ISIS.

Research projects, focused on specific interventions provided by or facilitated by ISIS, will be built into the development and delivery of ISIS services. Analysis and reporting will utilize both Heritage graduate students and faculty and colleagues at other institutions.

Projected Activities: Below are the range of activities which will be explored initially. Priority will be given to activities which 1) show the most promise of being effective; 2) which attract interest and requests for delivery from colleges and universities; 3) and which are financially feasible.

- A. **Clinics (Workshops / Seminars / Professional Development):** new research about student identity / identities and college degree attainment, offered to faculty, staff, and administrators at interested institutions, and presented by experienced ISIS faculty and successful H.U. students. A menu of offerings will allow interested institutions to choose the most appropriate topics and delivery modes, which might include distance learning and distance individualized coaching. All offerings would address “New Majority” students, would include content on

institution-level support for student success & institutional climate, and some may be packaged for delivery by local Centers for Teaching & Learning. Topics might include these:

- Designing Faculty Research on Student Success and Degree Completion;
- Effective Interventions & Activities by Mentors;
- Effective Pedagogy Practices for New Majority Students;
- Successful Pedagogy in STEM subjects for New Majority Students;
- Systemic College Initiatives to Build a Culture of Student Success;
- Student Success Tips for Adjunct Faculty;
- Designing New Faculty Orientation Programs;
- Developing Students' Cultural Strengths and Support Systems
- Developing Students' Inner Selves and Spirituality as Empowerment for Success

- B. Traveling [Chautauqua] Conferences** delivered on-site to a requesting college or university and serving its faculty / administrators and those from other institutions within commuting distance.
- C. Consultancy** with a single institution to prepare an assessment of challenges and opportunities to increase the success of their “New Majority” students in degree attainment
- D. Seminars for Future College Faculty** offered for Ph.D. students at research institutions which prepare a significant number of new faculty for the nation’s colleges and universities
- E. Certificate in the Pedagogy of Student Success** offered when a participant finishes a required set of workshops and/or research projects
- F. Colloquium on Preparing Coaches for New Faculty** in which a “training the trainers” approach equips key faculty or department chairs to work with colleagues on student success strategies.
- G. Conference** held bi-annually at either Heritage University or Holy Names University, Oakland, or an East Coast location, on “New Majority” success in earning 4-year degrees, showcasing promising practices by institutions in the Yes We Must Coalition or related institutions
- H. Research Projects and Publications** to enhance the useful literature available to colleges and universities which wish to implement the best strategies for improved student retention and completion. Specific research project reports could be suggested or requested by members of the **Yes We Must Coalition**, or by other institutions. Two initial research projects will focus on 1) Heritage University success strategies, providing evidence that ISIS is capable of completing a sound research project and reporting on it in a manner that is useful to other institutions; and 2) identifying a data-gathering process for calculating more accurate graduation rate data, as an alternative to the current IPEDS unsatisfactory methodology.

Funding: Initial funding will be provided by Heritage University and by a two-year grant from the College Spark Foundation (Washington State). Further funding for specific initiatives will be sought from NSF for preparing future faculty, private foundations already interested in low-income student success, and appropriate federal grants targeted to Hispanic Serving Institutions and/or Native-American-Serving Non-Tribal Institutions (Heritage University has received both designations).