

Lending a helping hand to transfer students

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After transferring from Pasadena City College (PCC) to the University of Southern California (USC), Scott Stimpfel realized that his peers at USC had a competitive advantage when it came to landing internships and full-time jobs.

Stimpfel, now a financial professional and MBA student at New York University, said that PCC did a great job of preparing him academically to succeed at USC. But, as at many other community colleges, PCC did not have the same support from corporations as four-year institutions to provide professional development seminars and workshops to students.

Stimpfel is now working to level the field for community college transfer students on a local scale. He and USC alumnus Chad Edwards founded Resources for Educational and Employment Opportunities (REEO), a non-profit organization focused on providing community college students planning to transfer to a four-year institution with some of those professional, financial and social services.

PCC and Glendale Community College are among the two-year colleges that have partnered with REEO. Most of the students REEO serves are first-generation college students, are economically disadvantaged or are from traditionally underrepresented ethnic backgrounds.

REEO invites community college freshmen to attend speaker panels and workshops to learn how to succeed at a four-year institution and in the business world. The panels serve as a platform to motivate and encourage freshmen to start thinking about the transfer process. For example, Dean Beatty of USC's Leventhal School of Accounting, will speak in March to more than 300 PCC students about the academic demands of his department.

Sophomores at community colleges can participate in the Rising Stars Program (RSP), which provides them the resources to help with transferring, including academic and professional development support. To participate in the program, applying sophomores must excel academically, demonstrate leadership and volunteer in the community. Currently, there are 36 students in the program.

An increase in corporate support for REEO has helped it to expand. KPMG, an international accounting firm, has staff members volunteer to man the workshops and it has pledged scholarship funds for students in the program. Another corporation, Heller Ehrman, is providing REEO with pro-bono legal services.

Volunteer mentors from USC's Marshall School of Business, community leaders, business professionals and students who have transferred to four-year institutions also often serve as mentors to the RSP participants.

"The mentor program provides students with an additional support structure," Stimpfel said.

Assimilation, lack of self-confidence and professional guidance often prevent community college transfer students from succeeding at four-year institutions, he said. To help with that, REEO continues the relationship with its students once they've transferred to a four-year college.

Community college students who move on to a four-year institution often encounter myriad hurdles, Stimpfel said. REEO hopes to change that by offering advice on topics from preparing a resume to building a professional wardrobe.

Source: <http://communitycollegetimes.org/Article.cfm?ArticleId=765>



<http://www.reeo.org>