



San Antonio Education Partnership - Scholar Success Program Practice Brief

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This brief summarizes key takeaways from the Urban Education Institute's work surrounding the San Antonio Educational Partnership's (SAEP) Scholar Success Program (SSP) between June and October 2023. These takeaways come from interviews with college students (n=16), two focus groups with college professionals (n=5), and one focus group with SAEP administrators.

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM STUDENTS

Supports They Rely On:

- All students had some supports in place, but those supports varied.
- Most students talked about the role of their family and friends.
- Some students relied on advisors or counselors.
- Many students talked about how receiving the scholarship was an important source of support that alleviated financial stress.

What is Hard About College:

- Many students talked about challenges in making friends.
- Students also talked about the challenges of figuring out how to manage work and school.
- Many struggled with how to navigate the academic decisions of college (e.g., how to pick and register for classes, how to find good professors).
- A few students talked about challenges in figuring out basic life skills (e.g., financial decision-making, cooking, paying bills)

A Focus on First-Generation Students — Specific Assets and Challenges:

- First-generation students praised their families as a key source of emotional support while at the same time, wishing their families could offer college-specific guidance/advice.
- First-generation students all talked about the need for more help with the college-going experience in general (with some praising counselors, others friends, and others still seeking added support systems).
- First-generation students also wanted more financial literacy and basic life skills support.

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM COLLEGE PROFESSIONALS

- They struggle with how to ensure students feel they belong in college.
- They struggle with how to ensure students have all the information they need, as well as how to encourage them to take part in seeking out and utilizing resources.
- They struggle with how to ensure students understand how to navigate the financial aspect of going to college.

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM SAEP STAFF

- SAEP staff are keenly aware of the types of support students need and continue to work on building the infrastructure and partnerships required to address these.
- The number of students SAEP serves is significant, creating challenges such as how to establish more personalized connections with all scholarship recipients.
- Colleges that serve SAEP scholarship recipients vary in size and approach to student success initiatives, creating a complex ecosystem that SAEP is working to navigate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue to improve communication with students to keep them informed on scholarship logistics, SSP events and programs, and college-going tips and resources.
- Work to fill the gaps that SAEP scholarship recipients recognize in their support systems.
- When possible, develop relationships with multiple points of contact at partner institutions to reduce the impact of turnover.

¹The views expressed in this brief are from the authors, not the funder.

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