



AGRICULTURE

helps youth explore college and careers

Situation:

Most high school graduates are confident they have done everything necessary to receive a high school diploma; they have completed four years of high school, taken required courses, and are excited and ready for college.

Are they ready? In reality, the answer is no for many.

According to Jon Whitmore, president of ACT, Inc., "Only 34 percent of students have skills and a plan in place to be successful." He says youth need three things to be successful: 1) College readiness, which includes critical thinking skills, analysis, problem solving, and reasoning skills; 2) Academic behaviors, which include time management, note taking, self awareness, and reading comprehension; and 3) College entrance skills, which include admissions process, placement testing, financial aid, and expectations of college life.

4-H programming provides youth hands-on educational opportunities to develop knowledge and life skills. Skill sets include team work, responsibility, confidence, public speaking, decision making, problem solving, time management, critical thinking skills, and more. Compared to Whitmore's three things needed to be successful in college, 4-H does an excellent job preparing youth for college and developing academic behaviors. However, the program could play a stronger role in relation to college entrance skills, such as providing guidance and educational opportunities, admission processing, placement testing, financial aid awareness, and college life expectations.

In November 2009, West Area 4-H educators Robin Schamber, Jesica Lozier, Kelli Kilpatrick, Tabitha Fleak, and Dawn Sanchez from Lincoln, Sweetwater, Sublette, Teton, and Uinta counties teamed to develop a program opportunity for youth ages 14-18 years old. Thirty-three

youth and 11 parents traveled to the University of Wyoming in Laramie on a career exploration adventure. Participants engaged in department tours, career assessments to match their personalities to possible careers, financial aid education and updates, life on campus, extra-curricular activity engagement, a community service project, and leadership activities.

Impacts:

A post-evaluation sought to identify if their college entrance skills had been enhanced. Using a scale of 1-4, with 4 being high, the results were:

- Department tours – 3.64
- Career assessment – 3.26
- Financial aid tips – 3.29
- Community service project – 3.37
- Leadership activities – 3.22
- Extracurricular activities – 3.79

When asked if participants had a better understanding of degrees available to them, 88 percent said absolutely; 75 percent indicated they had a better understanding of what careers fit their individual strengths.

Prior to spending time on the UW campus, 76 percent were interested in attending UW. At the conclusion of the program, 100 percent said they were interested. Youth said they were motivated to participate in the program because they wanted to explore UW, they were recruited, they wanted to get a taste of college life, they wanted to tour the campus, explore classes, and the available degrees.

Dawn Sanchez
University Extension Educator
Uinta County
(307) 783-0570
dasanchez@uintacounty.com

