

**THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
PARENTS AND FAMILY PROGRAMS
PARENTS AND FAMILY ASSOCIATION GRANT PROPOSAL**

PROGRAM TITLE

**ACHIEVING RETENTION AND SUCCESS FOR LOW-INCOME STUDENTS:
CONNECTING FACULTY FELLOWS TO ARIZONA ASSURANCE SCHOLARS**

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY

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ACHIEVING RETENTION AND SUCCESS FOR LOW-INCOME STUDENTS: CONNECTING FACULTY FELLOWS TO ARIZONA ASSURANCE SCHOLARS

OVERVIEW OF THE ARIZONA ASSURANCE FACULTY FELLOW PROGRAM:

Like many states, Arizona struggles to support access to college for low-income students. Seeing this need, President Robert Shelton is excited to take on the task of creating the Arizona Assurance Program which ensures a free college education to Arizona students whose family incomes are less than 200% of the poverty line. Beginning in Fall 2008, The University of Arizona will welcome 650 Arizona Assurance Scholars, who will benefit from a program that will enable them to graduate debt free and get the critical support that they need in order to graduate. Similar programs have been instituted in North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Illinois, Nebraska, Florida, and elsewhere.

Research shows that it is not enough to provide access to college for low-income students. Due to lack of academic preparation (Chen, 2005; Twigg, 2005; Venezia and others, 2005) and lack of knowledge about various aspects of college culture among first-generation students (Laden, 2004; Rendon, 1996; Twigg, 2005), low-income students are particularly in need of a variety of support services. In addition, academic mentors have been shown to boost a college student's self-esteem and academic self-efficacy, as well as overall satisfaction with their academic program (Boyd, 1997; Fogg, 2003). As a result, essential components of programs like Arizona Assurance are the academic and social support programs, like the faculty mentoring program, that ensure that students don't fall through the cracks.

It is precisely for this reason that the Office of Student Affairs has been asked to increase the number of Faculty Fellows who could serve in the capacity of mentors to the Arizona Assurance students who will soon be on our campus. Established in 1984, Faculty Fellows is a nationally recognized, award-winning program in Student Affairs. Faculty hold office hours where students live and congregate. By encouraging a regular presence in residence halls, cultural resource centers, athletics, Greek houses, and providing funding for programming for enhanced interaction, students have a more personal association with faculty that can be lost in a large university setting.

The program's goal is to create an increased connection between faculty and students by supporting meaningful interactions in a non-classroom setting, leading to a smooth transition from high school to university, more effective decision making, an ever-deepening love of learning and, ultimately, graduation from the University.

The office of Student Affairs has found that our Faculty Fellow program produces results for both faculty and students. The involved faculty consistently indicate their passion for helping students with everything from personal to academic issues. And the students at Faculty Fellows sites consistently praise the fellows for their caring support and insight. Indeed, life-long friendships result from this special association between students and faculty.

WHY THE FACULTY FELLOW MODEL WORKS:

Dr. Supapan Seraphin, Professor, Materials Science & Engineering

"My job as a Faculty Fellow is to make students feel good about being here.[...] This is a more relaxing environment than my office. Informal tutoring goes on here and students feel comfortable telling me things they may not in an academic setting."

Dr. Mark Riley, Associate Professor, Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering

"As a Faculty Fellow, I believe that I have an opportunity to gauge the pulse of the students and get a sense of what is important to them. My Faculty Fellow activities are a reminder of why I wanted to become a professor in the first place."

Clayton Hamilton, a junior in Management Information Systems

"My favorite experience with Dr. Riley would have to be a tutoring event we put on at the beginning of October. Mark sat at a table with 8 to 12 different students and did an excellent job helping them get a grasp on what they were working on. Afterwards, we sat around and he gave me some tips on how to approach a letter of intent I was having a tough time completing."

ARIZONA ASSURANCE FACULTY FELLOWS PROGRAM PROPOSAL:

The Arizona Assurance Faculty Fellows will support the mission of the Arizona Assurance program by working very closely with qualified students during their time at The University of Arizona. The Fellows would meet regularly with a small cohort of students to monitor and ensure their academic success and provide social activities for the students in order to assist them in their integration into campus life. At UNC, the connection with a faculty mentor was important for junior Nichole Nettleton, who discovered early on in college that she had a great deal of difficulty completing exams on time. She reported that, "I probably would have still done OK, but I know my grade-point average would be a lot lower" than the 3.6 she achieved due to her mentor's recognition that she had a learning disability; he helped her learn techniques to compensate and succeed.

The Arizona Assurance Faculty Fellows will feature the following:

- Intensive advising support from a Faculty member affiliated with the college in which the student is enrolled.
- Social activities designed to expand the horizons of the Arizona Assurance Scholars and acquaint the students with college culture.
- Regular meetings with the cohort in the Arizona Assurance Scholars, which will be composed of students with similar scholarly interests.

STATEMENT OF NEED:

In the fall of 2008, approximately 650 Arizona Assurance scholars are expected to be on our campus. In order to retain and graduate those students, it will be important to have mentors in place for these students when they arrive on campus. In other programs the retention rate for the population of targeted students increased 3% from 2003 to 2004. As with these programs, the student to faculty ratio must be small to ensure success. There will be a need to have no more than 20 students assigned to each mentor. This will require approximately 30 new Fellows.

PROJECTED BUDGET:

ITEM	COST PER ITEM	TOTAL COST
30 AZ Assurance Faculty Fellows	\$ 4,000	\$ 120,000
Funds to be committed from the President's Office		- \$ 120,000
Funds for activities with students for each new fellow	\$ 700	\$ 21,000
Funds for training and materials for each new fellow	\$ 130	\$ 3,900
Total		\$144,900
Total funds requested		\$24,900

PROGRAM OUTCOMES:

- Increase the retention of a diverse group of low-income students.
- Promote academic success (for instance higher gpa's, increased research and career path opportunities) for a diverse group of low-income students.
- Enhance communication between students and faculty.
- Encourage collaboration between students involved in the AZ Assurance program.

ASSESSMENT:

A study of first year retention for the AZ Assurance freshman will be conducted at the end of the 08/09 academic year. Additionally, we will survey the student and faculty participants to ensure that our goals of student learning, engagement, and retention are being met.

RECOGNITION FOR PARENTS ASSOCIATION/PARENTS AND FAMILY PROGRAMS

If this proposal is accepted, the Student Affairs Office will ensure acknowledgement of the Parent and Family Association at Arizona Assurance activities, and in Arizona Assurance grant correspondence including 3-D memos, grant applications, award letters, and on the Student Affairs web site. Print recognition will be provided in Student Affairs publications.