

Evaluation of Keys to Degrees Replication

Summative Report to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Endicott College received a two-year grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to support replication of the Keys to Degrees program at a new institution, Dillard University in New Orleans, Louisiana, and further support for two Michigan institutions that had been part of an earlier replication grant—Eastern Michigan University and Ferris State University.

The Keys to Degrees program model includes seven core components:

1. Full-time enrollment in a bachelor's degree program leading to a professional career or graduate program upon graduation.
2. Affordable access to high quality early childhood programs and/or before/after school care to meet the parents' needs to cover class, study, and work hours;
3. Safe, affordable housing in the college community (preferably on-campus);
4. Intensive student monitoring and support including assistance with navigating and securing on-campus and community-based resources, program offerings, and other services (e.g. tutoring, career services, public assistance benefits, food security programs, and state and/or local child care assistance voucher programs);
5. Keys to Degrees program-specific meetings and programming (e.g. workshops, courses, extra-curricular activities, group meetings, family events, and mentorship programming);
6. Year-round programming and support, including the opportunity to take summer coursework and to live on campus year-round, including summers and school breaks.
7. Post-graduation support to help students as they transition to careers or graduate school.

Dillard University is a private, highly-rated Historically Black College and University (HBCU). Dillard students are overwhelmingly first-generation college students and low-income, with over 77% receiving Pell grants. According to recent FAFSA data, at least 9% of students (109) have dependents.

The Keys replication initiative got off to a slow start, as the president who had committed to the grant was no longer there, and the new Dillard president and his mostly-new cabinet needed to be educated about the project. The vice-president for Student Success has been the champion for Keys to Success at Dillard, and views it as a retention program. The Keys program has had a full-time director since January 2015.

The program has resulted in many immediate outcomes for students and their children, including five new residential units; two graduates of the program, both currently in graduate programs; three families currently housed on campus; partnerships with local childcare centers and community organizations; establishment of administrative infrastructure for supporting student parent families on campus; and a wide array of individual and group services and educational programming for parents and their families. As a result of the program, there has been a change in the culture at Dillard; parents and their children are no longer invisible, and there are new levels of informal support for student families by faculty, staff, and students.

Students living on campus with their children described their experience in the Keys to Success program as “life changing.” The program has provided them with a stable environment and ongoing support, and streamlined the daily challenges of juggling childcare, classes, meals, and work schedules. Families feel part of a supportive community, both with other Keys families and with students, faculty, and staff. Children feel that they are in college, as well as their parents. In addition, many non-residential students have been served by the program.

With the ending of the Kellogg grant, Dillard will continue housing existing Keys families on campus, and a new block of apartments near campus will be available to families. They will use institutional funds to support the Keys director in a part-time capacity, and the Residential Life staff will continue to support student parents living full-time on campus.

Over the next year, Dillard will also develop plans for a family resource center on campus to support all student parents and their families, both residential and commuting; Dillard has not been successful to date in raising funds for the program, nor to provide assistance to the many student parents who would like to live on campus but who can’t qualify for enough financial aid to pay for housing.

Both EMU and FSU faced numerous challenges in replicating Keys to Degrees on their campuses, but for different reasons. FSU tried to fold their Keys program into their existing student parent resource center and did not attempt to build the partnerships that are needed to make a Keys program viable, nor to include the intensive wraparound support that Keys provides for its participants. EMU’s program director forged strong partnerships and developed a program modeled closely on Keys to Degrees. Students received free housing and intensive support from Keys staff, but early decisions to accept a cohort of entering freshmen and to not replace students who left, as well as to fully fund housing, made it difficult to develop a sustainable program.

Lessons Learned

- All stakeholders, including institutional leadership, need buy-in from the start of the proposal process.
- A program needs to be clearly defined, including what it offers to students, and to the institution.
- A program needs extensive infrastructure. Clear policies and procedures need to be in place before the program starts, for safety, for liability, etc.; institutional staff need to be ready to handle financial issues, training for security officers, etc.
- A financial plan needs to be in place from the beginning, especially at a low-resourced institution.
- Housing must be year-round, and priced affordably.
- Summer can be challenging for student parents in terms of institutional, state, and federal loan and childcare subsidy policies and their relationship to summer classes and employment. Institutions may need to help students maximize their options.

Conclusion

While all of the Keys replication schools have found the process of establishing a wrap-around program for student parents on their campuses challenging, three conclusions may be taken from this effort that the Foundation may want to consider as opportunities for future work: 1) The Keys to Degrees wraparound model supports two generations on a

pathway out of poverty through college completion; 2) both wraparound and open programs are needed; and 3) there is a big need for student parent programs in HBCUs. Each of these is discussed below.

- **Keys to Degrees supports two generations on a pathway out of poverty through college completion**

As we have seen at Dillard and at EMU, Keys to Degrees provides critical support for students who are at high risk of not being able to complete their degree programs due to a variety of challenges, through creating stability for the students and their children, and a web of supportive services and relationships. While not explicit in the description of the Keys to Degrees model, it incorporates a strengths-based social work¹ approach that seeks to both support and empower participants. In our *Research Study of Baccalaureate Student Parent Programs*, we also found that student parents in schools with small, Keys-type wraparound programs had many more positive experiences and outcomes than those in schools with large open-type programs only. This is significant: it demonstrates that high-need students with children who might not otherwise be able to make it through school and attain the education necessary for a family-sustaining career, can, with support, achieve that goal. The long-term social and economic benefits for both generations are large.

- **Both wraparound and open programs are needed**

In the *Research Study of Baccalaureate Student Parent Programs*, we learned the importance of both wraparound and open programs for serving student parents at four-year colleges and universities. The open programs, which are more prevalent, can serve large numbers of students with an array of important services that students access based on need and interest. The much less common wraparound programs, while requiring more extensive financial resources, provide critical services to small numbers of high-need students and their children.

One of the outgrowths of this Keys replication grant has been increased awareness of the Keys model. With funding from another source, two of the most well-established university open programs are conducting a planning process to add a residential, wraparound Keys program to support their most vulnerable students. They already have the commitment, resources, and infrastructure in place to support less vulnerable student parents and their families. Perhaps this is a more viable starting place for growing Keys to Degrees programs across the country.

- **There is a big need for student parent support programs in HBCUs**

Dillard's student population is similar to that at other HBCUs. As one administrator told us, 70% of the children born in the African American community are born to single mothers; and the majority of students enrolled in Historically Black Colleges and Universities are low-income women. Dillard is apparently the only HBCU with a student parent program to date. An initiative to support other HBCUs, with Dillard's help, would have the potential to assist many African American families to break the cycle of poverty through degree completion.

¹ Saleebey, Dennis. 2005. *The strengths perspective in social work practice*. 4th ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon

INTRODUCTION

Endicott College received a two-year grant from the Kellogg Foundation to support replication of the Keys to Degrees program at a new institution, Dillard University in New Orleans, Louisiana, and further support for two Michigan institutions that had been part of an earlier replication grant—Eastern Michigan University and Ferris State University. (In addition, the grant also supported a research study of programs for student parents seeking bachelor's degrees and their children. See separate report, *Research Study of Baccalaureate Student Parent Programs*.)

The Program Evaluation and Research Group (PERG) worked with Endicott College leadership and the director of the Keys to Degrees National Replication Project, Dr. Autumn Green, to carry out this work as the external evaluation research team. (See Appendix for a description of PERG's history and work.)

The two-year grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation was to support the replication of the Keys to Degrees Program, which includes the following core components:

1. Full-time enrollment in a bachelor's degree program leading to a professional career or graduate program upon graduation;
2. Affordable access to high quality early childhood programs and/or public school education with before/after school care to meet the parents' needs to cover class, study, and work hours;
3. Safe, affordable housing in the college community (preferably on campus);
4. Intensive student monitoring and support, including assistance with navigating and securing on-campus and community-based resources, program offerings, and other services (e.g. tutoring, career services, public assistance benefits, food security programs, and state and/or local child care assistance voucher programs);
5. Keys to Degrees program-specific meetings and programming (e.g. workshops, for-credit courses, extra-curricular activities, group meetings, family events, and mentorship programming);
6. Year-round programming and support, including the opportunity to take summer coursework and to live on campus year-round, including summers and school breaks.
7. Post-graduation support to help students as they transition to careers or graduate school and from Keys program housing.

Evaluation of Keys to Degrees Replication

Evaluation Focus

This evaluation focused primarily on Dillard University's efforts to replicate the Keys to Degrees program. The bulk of the grant's resources and Endicott's efforts have gone toward establishing a Keys-type program there during the period of this evaluation, and PERG evaluators have been able to observe and study that implementation process.

The evaluation of the replication at Dillard has focused on:

- Program development and implementation
- The experiences of students and their children
- The impact on students and their children
- Overall benefits and challenges
- Lessons learned and lingering questions

It also included follow-up assessment of the development and current status of the Keys programs at earlier replication schools—Eastern Michigan University and Ferris State University. (See section II of this report.)

Evaluation Activities

The primary data collection activities at Dillard have included:

- Bi-weekly or monthly conference calls with Endicott and Dillard program staff
- Annual site visits to Dillard, including tours of facilities, student focus groups, and extensive interviews with Dillard program staff and others involved in providing services to student parents; these have included the vice president for student success, deans, student support staff, housing staff, faculty, as well as the university president
- Review of program documentation

Evaluators also conducted interviews with program directors and reviewed documents to assess the current status of Keys replication at Eastern Michigan University and Ferris State University.

I. DILLARD UNIVERSITY

Findings

Dillard University, a private, undergraduate, faith-based Historically Black College and University (HBCU), was founded in 1869. In 2012, U.S. News & World Report ranked Dillard among the nation's Top 10 HBCUs. Located in New Orleans, Louisiana, it was heavily affected by Hurricane Katrina, including two years of having to operate out of a hotel. Before the storm, 60% of Dillard students were from out of state, and almost all attended directly from high school. Afterwards, with heavily damaged residence halls, recruiting focused on potential students within a radius of 50 miles and on transfer students who did not need to live on campus. This increase in commuter and older students also increased the number of students with children. Prior to the Kellogg grant, Dillard used federal funds to establish the *DuBois House*, which paid for childcare at selected early childhood centers near campus for the children of student parents.

All residential students are only recently again housed on the main campus. Current enrollment is approximately 1,200 students; before the storm, enrollment was 1,500. Fifty-two percent of Dillard's students now live on campus, with many upper-class students deciding to live in college residences: approximately 90% of on-campus housing is occupied during the 2015–16 school year.

Like other HBCUs, Dillard has a culture of providing a strong personal commitment to each student, and a historical dedication to serving students who find it hard to get an education elsewhere. Dillard students are overwhelmingly low-income, with over 77% receiving Pell grants. Many experience high levels of dislocation and violence, either directly or through their families. The majority of students are the first in their families to go to college, and almost all identify as Black. Seventy percent of Dillard students are women.

Dillard places a strong emphasis on student retention. After an in-depth study, the administration determined that they lose more students due to financial need than due to any other factor, including academic issues. The graduation rate, currently at 46%, has been rising. It compares favorably with the national baccalaureate graduation rate for Pell-eligible students—51% in 6 years,² and the baccalaureate graduation rate for African-American students—41% in 6 years³, but has not reached its current goal of 50%. Retention of freshman has also been rising, and was 74% last year.

Dillard's top administration, including the president, turned over just as this grant began. The new administration's initial focus was to stabilize the finances of the University, and to finish the Katrina recovery process. With a small endowment and a student body in almost universal financial distress, the president is hesitant to provide additional institutional resources to one group of students, parents. However, the size of this population is hard to gauge, since like at almost all four-year institutions, student parents are largely invisible on campus. According to recent FAFSA data, 109 students, or about 9% of the student body, indicated dependents (the

² The Pell Partnership: Ensuring a Shared Responsibility for Low-Income Student Success, Andrew Howard Nichols, The Education Trust, September, 2015

³ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2001 and Spring 2007 through Spring 2014, Graduation Rates component. (Table prepared November 2014)

number is likely higher), which is a far greater number than most on campus realize. 87 of these, or 7% of the total student body, are single parents. In addition, in the last semester, 16 expectant mothers asked the Keys director for help.

Dillard Replication Accomplishments

Dillard used the grant funding to set up the *Keys to Success* program, with the guidance of Endicott College. Launched in January 2014, it has had a full-time director for the past year. The director is a graduate of Dillard, a social worker, and a former single student parent. The program resulted in many immediate outcomes for students and their children. Its accomplishments will also continue to affect the future conditions for student parents at Dillard. Program accomplishments include:

- **5 units** prepared for student family occupancy
- **7 total student parent families housed on campus** year-round in Keys units over two years; 3 currently housed on campus
- **2 Keys student graduates**; one currently in law school, one in graduate school
- Evaluation of and **partnership with 5 local childcare centers**; assistance with enrolling children in quality childcare and securing state subsidies
- **New partnerships with several community organizations**, including Total Community Action, Health Start, Family Service of Greater New Orleans, and NOLA Dads
- **Individual assistance for parents** with housing, SNAP benefits, food stamps, WIC benefits, other public assistance, clothing, job referrals, and other miscellaneous, sometimes urgent, needs
- Informal and formal **parenting education**; free parenting and **new baby resources**; access to donated clothes and toys
- **Counseling assistance** for emotional issues particular to pregnancy, parenting, and family life
- **Monitoring of academic progress** of all Keys students
- Monthly **student parent meetings**
- Family support and community-building **cultural events for families**
- **Education about Title IX** for students, faculty, and staff
- **Lactation area** for breast-feeding mothers
- **New playground** near family housing on campus
- Establishment of **administrative infrastructure** for supporting student parent families on campus, including the establishment of:
 - Student family housing fees (charged 1 adult bed rate)
 - Free or discounted dining hall rates for children
 - Year-round housing occupancy with no breaks
 - Referral sources
 - Staff trained and dedicated to student parent and family needs
 - Communication and coordination with other departments and programs across campus, from financial aid to tutoring and academic support services

- **A change in the culture** at Dillard, such that student parents are more comfortable being visible and open about their parenting status and needs, and their issues are commonly discussed by faculty and staff; children are now commonly seen on campus
- **New levels of informal support** by faculty, staff, and students for student families, especially those living on campus

The Student Parent Population at Dillard

Like at almost every other institution of higher education, Dillard does not know how many student parents are matriculating at their school. Recent access to FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) data indicated 87 students claiming dependents on that form for this academic year. Others may also have dependents but may not be eligible to claim them on FAFSA; some students may not fill out FAFSA forms, which would raise these numbers. However, some students' children may be living with relatives while they get a bachelor's degree at Dillard. In addition to these numbers, a sizeable number of women become pregnant before or during each semester at Dillard. This past fall, after the Keys director spoke to many classes about the program and her role, 16 pregnant women asked to meet with her. This represents a significant number of Dillard students who may need to stop out or drop out of Dillard this year. Students have described feeling invisible and self-conscious as parents before the Keys program made their existence as part of the student population seem more "normal." Faculty and staff concur that Keys has normalized being a student with a child on campus.

The director administered a survey to the 109 student parents identified by the FAFSA data, and 38 responded (35% return rate.) These responses provided the following information about the status of these Dillard student parents.

- Half are single, never married; about 18% are married and about 18% are divorced or separated; the rest are in a committed relationship.
- 37% are under 22 years of age (16% are under 20); 32% are 23–26 years old; 32% are 27 years or older.
- 13% are freshmen; 24% are sophomores; 34% are juniors; 29% are seniors.
- Most have 1 child living with them (77%); 9% have 2 children, and 14% have 3 or more children living with them.
- 32% have a child 2 years or younger; 37% have a child 3–5 years old; 11% have a child 6–10 years old; 3% have a child 11 or 12 years old; and 18% have a child 13 or older.
- Almost all of these children live with Dillard students; 8% of these parents do not have their children living with them, and 1 student has joint custody.

The survey also queried students about their experiences at and with Dillard.

- Students indicated that scholarship opportunities from Dillard would be most helpful to them in achieving their goals as a student (42%), followed by childcare (24%) and housing (16%).
- 37% of the students indicated that they are extremely or quite satisfied with their experience at Dillard, and another 29% are somewhat satisfied; another 16% are quite or extremely dissatisfied with their experience at Dillard.

- When asked what Dillard could do or provide to engage them more as a student and make their experience more positive, students wrote about a variety of unmet needs.
 - Many students asked for on-campus childcare—An on-campus childcare center with playground would help tremendously and prevent parent-students from missing class.
 - Students asked for more understanding of issues of mothers with newborns, including extra doctor appointments, sicknesses, etc.; one student asked for “respite care”—*Dillard does not offer respite care for their student parents. As a single parent it is very difficult to attend events, work on projects, attend study group because the option is not available.*
 - More financial aid was mentioned by several students, including more scholarship opportunities for non-traditional students; they feel that Financial Aid is not very helpful when it comes to assisting students with ways to find the resources to continue their education at Dillard.
 - Several students referred to challenges related to being non-traditional students, including the extra burdens of community service requirements and a need for better class scheduling—I *do understand Dillard is a university for traditional students, however, there are several non-traditional circumstances and Dillard appears not to have any options for these students.*
 - Other requests included more and closer parking spaces, more kid-friendly activities, support groups for student parents, and more communication with the commuter student representative.
- 38% of the students do not or hardly ever participate in on-campus activities at Dillard; 30% indicated that they participate slightly often; 27% participate moderately often; 5% participate very often.

Focus groups held with 3 residential student parents and 6 off-campus student parents also revealed a number of important needs and issues.

- Childcare: students need subsidies, closer or on-campus location, after-hours care, sick child care; several young children are being cared for by relatives only.
- Transportation to and from school and childcare, by car or bus, is time consuming and stressful.
- Several, but not all, off-campus parents would like to live on campus (to ease stress, to have more time for children and school, to be better able to participate in campus activities, for community support, etc.) but need additional institutional funding to make that possible, since they cannot qualify for more loans.
- Student parents would benefit from a space to gather, to build community and counter isolation and invisibility on campus, with resources and staff support.

Voices of Dillard’s Student Parents

These “voices” are from Dillard student parents living both on and off campus, as recorded during two focus groups and one interview.

Help from the Keys program and the program director

I am a single father with two daughters, and I have a son as well. I have three semesters left. The Keys program took me and my daughters off the street, gave us housing, food, basic necessities. There are people here who genuinely want you to do good.

I enjoy living on campus. At one point I was really struggling, there was personal stuff going on, and I wasn't studying as much as I should. Stacey helped me . . . I thought I might drop out but I want to do it for my daughter so she'll make the choice to finish school.

My daughter just started daycare six weeks ago. Before that I was failing, not able to focus. Ms. Knockum assisted me to get focused on school . . . I was making 72s—you have to make a 77 to pass the class. Now I'm making 88s. Now I'm able to study.

Housing

If I didn't live here, I don't think I'd be in school. It would be too hard to go to school, work, and watch her. Also, it would be hard to get here, take the bus to daycare, then come.

If I had a better means to pay for off-campus living, that would have been my first choice . . . The silver lining is that my babies get the college experience . . . They assume they will go to college, too.

I wanted to live on campus but I didn't have the funds. I have a hard time traveling to get her to school and then here, back and forth. I'm also taking care of my mom who has breast cancer, and my older sister who has special needs.

Yes, it would definitely [be worth a larger debt load to live on campus]. I don't have a computer at home, and I would have a friend living next door.

Yes and no [it would be worth a larger debt load to live on campus.] It would be a lot easier, but my aunt and his father watch him so it would still be a lot of moving around . . . I'm not big on daycares, so I would have to get him to my aunt's.

Academic challenges

I live with my grandmother and two sisters and we all share a car. I get to school early to study, and I have to pick up my daughter by 4:30 . . . When I'm at school, everything is ok.

Last semester I was pregnant and in the hospital when I was supposed to be taking finals. I started over this semester.

When I got pregnant, there was so much negativity about going back to school.

It's very challenging to be a student parent. I don't know how I do it, waiting until she goes to sleep to study . . . I became amputated right after I had a daughter. I had to learn everything new again. I had to hurry to come back or lose my academic standing. I wasn't sure I would come back.

Social challenges on campus

There are other people with kids, but they don't talk about it. I don't know who they are. I ran into one person with a daughter. For a few weeks she wasn't going to class. I told her about the program.

I have been at Dillard since 2012. Things are really crazy, really different [as a parent]. I was used to being at school all day . . . Friends wanted to go to Loyola and study until 2 am. I wanted to go, but I couldn't. Who would watch my baby? I never had to think about that before . . . Being in school with a child is very, very hard.

Other students are the same age, but I don't feel like we're on the same level—they don't understand me.

I haven't met any other students who are parents. I know R because we went to high school together.

We learn from each other [other parents]; it makes you feel like you're not alone.

Motivation

I want to show my child that nothing can stop you . . . It may not be as easy as it used to be, but I feel like it's still reachable.

I want my child to have everything I didn't have, not just material things . . . love and support.

I have a vision in my head of where I want to be and what I want for my child. I'm working hard so she can have whatever she needs and whatever she wants.

I thought I might drop out but I want to do this for my daughter so she'll make the choice to finish school.

Approach to Keys Replication

Key senior administrators at Dillard recognized the opportunity provided by trying to replicate Endicott's Keys to Degrees program. After convincing the new president and his cabinet to approve the Keys program, they proceeded to create an approach to fit conditions at Dillard. They decided to focus the program as a retention effort, consistent with a major priority of the school, and to situate it in the new Office of Student Success. They also initiated extensive education and advocacy activities with administrators and faculty. Existing staff, some of whom were single parent students themselves while undergraduates at Dillard, added related Keys responsibilities (and titles) to their workload. One of these alumni, a new social worker, became the part-time director of the program in May 2014, and full-time director in January 2015.

The director started inviting student parents to apply to the program while the University was still figuring out how to offer family housing, and regardless of their financial qualifications. The number of on-campus units was very limited, in part due to ongoing renovations after Hurricane Katrina. However, the number of students who could qualify financially was also very limited. The director decided to enable both on- and off-campus students to be part of the Keys program.

The Keys to Success program goals at Dillard, as detailed in program literature, have been to provide tools for single parent students to:

- Earn a baccalaureate degree at Dillard University
- Successfully balance academic, work, and family obligations
- Become economically self-sufficient in their chosen field of study
- Live and learn on campus with their children
- Thrive in an academic and social setting
- Serve as an educational model for other Dillard University students, teaching them about parenthood, including the difficulties involved and the success that is achievable with support from the University and the community
- Grow as an enlightened and committed parent

The Keys to Success components have included:

- Required regular tutoring and/or counseling services
- Meetings with the academic skills coordinator to help with time management
- Regular meetings with the program director
- Monthly support group for parents of infants and toddlers
- Review of academic standing; coordination with academic advisors, counselors, and other staff
- Advocacy and trouble-shooting of Dillard-related issues
- Programming in parenting and financial literacy
- Family activities
- Assistance in finding childcare and applying for cost subsidies
- Referrals and personal assistance with other needs and access to resources

However, those not in housing did not always participate in all of these activities. Rather, many would ask the director for help as needed, which she provided. About 15 off-campus students fell into this category. She also tracked their mid-term and final grades, and ensured support services for those who were struggling.

The program director decided to raise awareness of the Keys program by presenting information about it in classes, reaching about 150 students and many faculty. This led to a big increase in referrals and interest in the program, and in students receiving services from her. It also contributed to the change in culture on campus, where student parents feel much more comfortable being open about having children.

The director would like to see a Student Parent Center on campus, where students could “feel comfortable and not apologize for their children being children.” It could be a place to connect, access and share resources, trade tips, share a meal, provide a lactation space, etc.

Residential Component

Keys to Success families live in attractive two-bedroom apartments with full kitchens and living rooms, adjacent to each other on one edge of the campus. A new playground is nearby. Three

families currently live in these apartments, with two more available or soon to be available for occupancy. Over 25 additional families applied to the Keys program hoping for residential housing on campus, but could not qualify for enough financial aid to be able to afford the cost.

The residential component of the Keys model has been the most challenging aspect of the replication effort from the beginning. New legal staff initially raised many concerns about liability issues, although that is no longer considered an issue. New business staff were concerned about charging families a single bed rate. With the current 90% occupancy rate, this is also not currently a major concern, although that may change with increasing numbers of students living on campus. Initially, some were concerned about children being disruptive to students on campus. However, most students enjoy their presence, and this is also no longer an issue. Another challenge has been the requirement for students to be enrolled in at least one class during the summer in order to stay in residential housing, which has limited their ability to work full-time. In addition, students who have received PELL grants for the fall and spring semesters have not been eligible for summer PELL funds. They have also not been eligible for financial aid while taking only one course. Meal plans have presented financial obstacles, too; families living on campus have their own kitchens and receive food stamps, but are nonetheless required to purchase full meal plans, although this may change.

Initial obstacles to the residential component also included an unexpected shortage of on-campus housing due to continuing post-Katrina ramifications. The administration had decided to move all students back to the main campus from auxiliary housing, which reduced unit availability for Keys students temporarily until additional repairs were completed.

The Dean of Students and others feel strongly that students who do not live on campus miss a major part of the formal and informal educational experiences that Dillard offers. This can be especially true for parents, who have little flexibility to stay late or return to campus in the evening. Dillard research also shows that residential students generally have higher GPAs than commuter students.

Handling both parenting and being a student requires a tremendous amount of organization and energy. Most of the students feel that the extra expense and accumulated debt of living in campus housing (which is more expensive than living elsewhere in New Orleans) is or would be worth it for them and their children. Students also recognize the decreased stress related to on-campus housing, the time savings, easy community and sharing with other parents, and many benefits for their children. Some who are now living at home would also benefit from getting away from stressful family situations. In addition, many of the children would benefit from extra adult attention.

With the ending of the Kellogg grant, the university will continue to house the three existing Keys families in year-round, on-campus units. Two other units are currently available for additional families. More units should become available next fall or spring, as the university completes negotiations to make an apartment-style complex available for Dillard students near campus. However, without additional funding to help cover housing costs, it is unclear how many families will be able to take advantage of these new units.

Resources and Sustainability

The Keys to Success program, as a replication effort, has required additional resources, primarily for housing and staffing, most notably for a full-time program director. This person has provided individual referrals and assistance with a wide variety of needs, including finding childcare, securing public assistance, and ensuring needed healthcare. She has also become the safe place on campus for newly pregnant women to seek help. Some grant funding has also been used for family events.

Lack of personal financial resources has prevented many interested student parents from being able to live in on-campus housing. For these students, their financial histories or situations have made them ineligible for the loans necessary to pay for campus housing. Since 2014, over 25 students have applied to live on campus with the Keys to Success program but were unable to for this reason.

Dillard twice submitted a grant application to a local foundation to support housing and other program costs, without success. Other local funders that might be interested in helping to fund this program are already giving to Dillard, and thus cannot be approached about this need.

Unlike Endicott, Dillard's experience with event-based fund-raising has not been positive. The institutional development staff has only recently established a method for individual donors to target gifts to the Keys program, so they will now look to promote the program. They are hopeful that the compelling individual stories of Keys students will appeal to some donors, but it is unclear when donations might arrive. New financial support could enable many families to live on campus, as well as provide full-time staff for a robust parenting center, and fund other needed assistance and helpful activities for families.

Dillard developed a transition plan for sustaining staffing support for student parents in the fall of 2015. The Keys director's responsibilities will be incorporated into her role in Student Services, and the director of Residential Life will provide support for families living on campus year-round. The policies pertaining to Keys students and their children living on campus will remain in place, including the cost of housing families in apartments at a single room rate and free or discounted costs for children's meals.

Discussion

Kellogg Foundation funding offered Dillard University the unique opportunity to try to replicate the two-generation, residential approach of Endicott's Keys to Degrees program in their very different context of a hurricane Katrina-battered, resource-challenged Historically Black College and University. Long-time senior staff built support and started the program, and a committed former Dillard student parent took over as program director. The Keys to Success program has established a foundation of support for student parents at Dillard. Despite the changes in leadership that delayed the start of the program, the initial concerns voiced about liability, cost, and other issues have been addressed.

However, no one realized just how much infrastructure, policies, procedures, and other supports were needed to implement the full program. Additionally, ongoing and heavy financial needs of almost all Dillard students, and the fundraising challenges of the university, severely limit the possibility of large numbers of students with children residing on campus. Targeted fundraising has also not been successful to date. Nonetheless, the Keys to Success program will continue at Dillard with the existing residential students, and new family units are expected to be added next spring. In addition, the program will continue to serve student parents who live off campus. Endicott and Dillard are currently working towards a new, separately-funded small innovation grant partnership, through which Dillard intends to further develop efforts toward a student parent resource center to be a locus of community, and a known location to access resources and support for all Dillard student parents.

Job descriptions and resources have been committed so that the program director will continue to provide support for student parents, along with other responsibilities, and the residential life director will continue to support students and their children living on campus.

Current and Potential Benefits for Dillard

- Retention of current students
- Ability to enroll more “emerging scholars”—a special summer residential program for promising students, some of whom have children
- Ability to interest an untapped market of potential students who would come to Dillard because of the extra supports for single parents, and if they could live on campus with their children
- Raise Dillard’s profile—the program can help Dillard stand out regionally and nationally
- Opportunity to take leadership among other HBCUs
- Ability to meet academic and social missions more thoroughly, by providing full educational experiences to young single parents
- Financial gains from bringing more students to Dillard and into campus housing
- Social benefits for many as a result of having relationships with children on campus
- Contribution to ending poverty among next generation of African Americans; (children who live on campus with a parent attending college are more likely to expect to attend college themselves)
- Opportunity to re-examine institutional policies, such as in relation to minor children on campus for other programs, and housing for wards of the state during holiday breaks
- Remodeled apartment housing suitable for parents with young children

Replication Challenges

Dillard encountered two major replication challenges, both of which stem from very different conditions than those at Endicott College:

1. The president (and all but one member of his cabinet) who initiated the process was not the president under whom it was implemented. This slowed the process tremendously, as the program champions had to build support and overcome infrastructure impediments, most of which would probably not have been an issue if the original president were still in place.
2. Financial considerations for the institution and for the students prevented many families from living on campus. While the program eventually readied units and secured permission for several families to live on campus, most (over 25) student parents who desired to live on campus were not eligible for enough financial assistance to make it possible. Institutional financial challenges have thus far prevented special gap funding to help student parents live on campus.

Lessons Learned

- All stakeholders, including institutional leadership, need buy-in from the start of the proposal process.
- A program needs to be clearly defined, including what it offers to students, and to the institution.
- A program needs extensive infrastructure. Clear policies and procedures need to be in place before the program starts, for safety, for liability, etc.; institutional staff need to be ready to handle financial issues, training for security officers, etc.

- A financial plan needs to be in place from the beginning, especially at a low-resourced institution.
- Housing must be year-round, and priced affordably.
- Summer can be challenging for student parents in terms of institutional, state, and federal loan and childcare subsidy policies and their relationship to summer classes and employment. Institutions may need to help students maximize their options.
- Negotiating partial meal plans for student parents will save them money; negotiating free or reduced meal plans for children is also important.
- It is important that students are seen as Dillard University students first, who happen to be single parents.
- Helping student parents to form a supportive community with each other matters; monthly family-friendly activities are important.
- The degree of personal and extended family challenges means that some student parents cannot succeed at Dillard, even with strong supports.
- There are far more students with children at Dillard than was previously understood. Many of these students have connected with the Keys director and are interested in support services and being connected to other student parents.

Recommended Next Steps

- Continue to provide services to student parents, with the program director and others in slightly reconfigured positions.
- Fill two additional on-campus housing units with Keys families.
- Complete arrangements for additional Dillard family housing units in nearby apartments.
- Set up a campus task force with Dillard student family service providers and key administrators.
- Collect more data about student parents.
- Compare academic outcomes for those living on and off campus, and for student parents receiving Keys services and those who are not.
- Define the expectations and offerings of the Keys program more clearly.
- Create a “locus of community”/parent resource center on campus where all student parents can hang out with or without their children, get access to resources and referrals, share tips, etc.
- Publicize components and benefits of Keys and other programs to all parents and for the entire Dillard community; advocate for increasing services for student parents.
- Continue working with development staff on fundraising to assist student parents with costs, and for program operations.

Lingering Questions

Several important, lingering questions remain about how to best increase the academic success and support for two generations of families on college campuses, including at resource-strapped institutions like Dillard and other HBCUs.

- How can top administrators be convinced to buy into the benefits (to two generations) of a program like Keys?
- What is the best way for institutions like Dillard and others to secure additional financing for Keys-type programs?
- Juggling parenting, being a student, working, and commuting can be very stressful and require a high level of organization. When is the extra cost of living on campus worth the extra expense/debt?
- How important are the non-classroom aspects of education that most commuting student parents miss, for learning and personal growth, for access to jobs and graduate school, for the futures of their children, etc.?
- Can Dillard create and sustain a robust “open” program to serve a larger number of student parents/families, given their current constraints? What (support/money/staff/space/backing) is needed? How can those resources be obtained?
- Is it easier/more effective to add a residential student parent program only after a robust support program already exists for all student parents at an institution?
- Could Dillard play a leadership role with other HBCUs around this issue (especially if it could establish robust services for all student parents at Dillard)? Would it want to?
- How can the student parent population at Dillard (and elsewhere) be fully and accurately counted?
- Can the Dillard student parents learn to advocate for themselves with the administration? What effect might that have?

II. EPILOGUE: EARLIER KEYS REPLICATION SCHOOLS

Evaluators conducted a follow-up assessment of the Keys programs at two schools that had received funds in the first phase of Keys replication. Following are findings about the programs' development and current status, followed by a discussion of implications as they relate to what we have learned from the replication effort at Dillard University.

Findings

Eastern Michigan University

The Keys to Degrees Program at EMU began during the previous Kellogg Foundation grant, with students entering the program for the 2011–12 school year. During the year between the hiring of the program director and the enrollment of the first students, much work was done to set up partnerships both on and off campus in order to streamline the support systems for students. On campus, relationships were formed between the Keys to Degrees office and offices such as Admissions, Financial Aid, Housing, and Enrollment, as well as with the faculty. These relationships were key to the success of the program, as they helped to provide an awareness of the needs of Keys students among the university staff, as well as access to the many resources that already existed on campus. Partnership with off-campus resources included relationships with Head Start and the county childcare services, social service agencies, and other non-profit organizations that could provide personal services such as counselors, mentors, and volunteers.

The program accepted single parents with one child, and provided housing, childcare referrals, support services, and other resources to students. Students were initially required to enroll as freshmen, be under 24 years old at the time of enrollment, and have only one child who was at least 18 months old. Based on the original Keys to Degrees model, a main feature of the EMU Keys program has been housing. Students in the program have been provided with free on-campus housing in townhomes, and are expected to support each other and participate in community events. The program has provided one-on-one supports, ranging from weekly meetings with a staff member or social worker, to once-a-month meetings as students progress.

The Keys program at EMU began with 10 students. Five left before graduation for a variety of reasons, some academic, some personal, and some were not ready to meet the challenge of attending college and parenting. Four have graduated, and the last student will graduate in the spring. No new students will be accepted while the university is under the leadership of an interim president. (The program director is also the director of Academic Success Partnerships.)

The director would like to see a more flexible program, serving both on- and off-campus families. She also thinks that taking more transfer and older students would help the program work better; those who had never lived away from home required tremendous amounts of support.

Largely as a result of the Keys program, and the services for other parents that the Keys program has been able to provide, the mission of EMU has shifted to include student parents as a key group in need of extra attention and resources. The program raised awareness around student parents on campus, and single parents, in particular. The director is currently seeking additional funding to enroll more students, through grant applications, private donors, and

networking at conferences and other professional events. She is also hoping that the new president will be a champion of the program, and of services for all student parents.

Ferris State University

The Keys program at Ferris State University (FSU) was never fully implemented. While the university's Students with Children Program (which had been in existence prior to the Keys Replication grant) offers referrals to community and campus resources; workshops, resource fairs, and coffee chats; and social events and field trips for families, as well as some activities for single parents and their children, their "Single Parents Program" has not been based on the goals or model of Keys to Degrees. Endicott made efforts to remedy this situation, but with limited success.

Ferris State was unable to get a program started during the first grant period due to issues related to identifying and recruiting prospective students. After consultation with the Keys to Degrees National Replication Project director and Endicott's director of Advancement about modifying the criteria for student participation, Ferris staff recruited a group of 16 students for the program who lived on campus or within two miles of campus, in the spring semester of 2014. In the 2014–15 school year, the program recruited students each semester. The program has not continued into the 2015–16 school year.

Students in the Single Parents Program received a \$250 stipend each semester. In 2014–2015, half of the students lived on campus in family housing, and half near campus. Their children were in varying childcare and school settings, depending on their family's situation. Ferris has on-campus childcare, plus there are several community-based centers. The university had a federal CCAMPIS grant that afforded sliding scale subsidized child care at the on-campus child care center, as well as full- and part-time Head Start classrooms within the safe facility. Some families relocate to Ferris and bring family members to provide care for children while their parents are in class. Parenting students had access to all of the services of the Students with Children Program, including counseling, referrals, and events. Keys students were also required to meet with the program coordinator monthly, to maintain a GPA of 2.7, and to meet with a career counselor.

The university is committed to the Students with Children Program, but has not made a commitment to establishing, or sustaining, a Keys program.

Discussion

Both Eastern Michigan and Ferris State have faced numerous challenges in replicating the Keys to Degrees model on their campuses, but for different reasons. Ferris tried to fold their Keys program into their existing student parent resource center and didn't attempt to build the partnerships that are needed to make a Keys program viable, nor to include the intensive wraparound support that Keys provides for its participants. Once FSU recruited students for its program, they had to apply each semester: the program was not designed to offer ongoing support for students' advancement through college to graduation or a successful transition to lives and careers beyond.

EMU's program director forged strong partnerships and developed a program modeled closely on Keys to Degrees. Students received free housing and intensive support from Keys staff, but early decisions to accept a cohort of entering freshmen and to not replace students who left, as well as to fully fund housing, made it difficult to develop a sustainable program.

Other than these differences, we could copy and paste the lessons learned from Dillard, starting with the need for institutional buy-in from the start. Keys to Degrees programs are resource-intensive and require an institutional champion to ensure that they are firmly established and sustained within the institution. The financial challenges of cash-strapped universities, particularly institutions such as Dillard, EMU and FSU that serve large numbers of low-income students, make it difficult to gain support for committing resources to a small number of students. Many low-income students may need additional financial assistance, beyond their basic financial aid package, in order to live on campus.

As Dillard moves forward, they will continue to offer the option of on-campus housing for families and provide programmatic support for students with children. At EMU and Dillard, the Keys replication efforts have raised awareness of the significant number of student parents on campus, and the need to provide support for this larger population. Both EMU and Dillard are exploring ways to create a center for student parents that would provide open support services to all students with children. FSU has had and will continue to support a center of this type.

III. CONCLUSION

While all of the Keys replication schools have found the process of establishing a wrap-around program for student parents on their campuses challenging, three conclusions may be taken from this effort that the Foundation may want to consider as opportunities for future work: 1) The Keys to Degrees wraparound model supports two generations on a pathway out of poverty through college completion; 2) both wraparound and open programs are needed; and 3) there is a big need for student parent programs in HBCUs. Each of these is discussed below.

- **Keys to Degrees supports two generations on a pathway out of poverty through college completion**

As we have seen at Dillard and at EMU, Keys to Degrees provides critical support for students who are at high risk of not being able to complete their degree programs due to a variety of challenges, through creating stability for the students and their children, and a web of supportive services and relationships. While not explicit in the description of the Keys to Degrees model, it incorporates a strengths-based social work⁴ approach that seeks to both support and empower participants. In our *Research Study of Baccalaureate Student Parent Programs*, we also found that student parents in schools with small, Keys-type wraparound programs had many more positive experiences and outcomes than those in schools with large open-type programs only. This is significant: it demonstrates that high-need students with children who might not otherwise be able to make it through school and attain the education necessary for a family-sustaining career, can, with support, achieve that goal. The long-term social and economic benefits for both generations are large.

- **Both wraparound and open programs are needed**

In the *Research Study of Baccalaureate Student Parent Programs*, we learned the importance of both wraparound and open programs for serving student parents at four-year colleges and universities. The open programs, which are more prevalent, can serve large numbers of students with an array of important services that students access based on need and interest. The much less common wraparound programs, while requiring more extensive financial resources, provide critical services to small numbers of high-need students and their children.

One of the outgrowths of this Keys replication grant has been increased awareness of the Keys model. With funding from another source, two of the most well-established university open programs are conducting a planning process to add a residential, wraparound Keys program to support their most vulnerable students. They already have the commitment, resources, and infrastructure in place to support less vulnerable student parents and their families. Perhaps this is a more viable starting place for growing Keys to Degrees programs across the country.

- **There is a big need for student parent support programs in HBCUs**

Dillard's student population is similar to that at other HBCUs. As one administrator told us, 70% of the children born in the African American community are born to single mothers; and the majority of students enrolled in Historically Black Colleges and

⁴ Saleebey, Dennis. 2005. *The strengths perspective in social work practice*. 4th ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon

Universities are low-income women. Dillard is apparently the only HBCU with a student parent program to date. An initiative to support other HBCUs, with Dillard's help, would have the potential to assist many African American families to break the cycle of poverty through degree completion.

APPENDIX: ABOUT PERG



About the Program Evaluation and Research Group (PERG)

Founded in 1976 at Lesley University, the Program Evaluation and Research Group (PERG) moved to Endicott College in 2013. PERG is known for its capacity for studying complex projects in diverse settings. PERG has carried out approximately 700 program evaluations and research studies in formal and informal education environments, working with universities, schools, foundations, state and federal agencies, museums and other community-based organizations. PERG also provides consultation and technical assistance, and offers professional development opportunities for individuals and organizations.

PERG researchers aim to help evaluation clients improve their programs through formative evaluation, as well as to provide an external perspective on the effectiveness and impact of their work. The issues and questions of central concern to the program determine our data collection methods. In addition, we are attentive to emergent themes and outcomes. We employ mixed methods to ensure that our understanding of a program is both broad and deep. PERG researchers have expertise in content areas relevant to the projects we study, as well as strong research and assessment skills.

PERG's recent research and evaluation activities—which include both small and large-scale, regional and national projects—fall loosely into the following categories:

- Two-generation programs
- Arts programs and partnerships
- Curriculum development
- Cultural/international exchange
- Informal education
- Museum exhibits and programs
- Out of school time
- Professional development
- Research on learning in science
- STEM programs and partnerships
- Software and web development

PERG's projects have been funded by a range of organizations including:

- W.K. Kellogg Foundation
- Ascend at the Aspen Institute
- Annie E. Casey Foundation
- National Science Foundation
- US Department of Education
- Massachusetts Department of Education
- National Aeronautical and Space Administration
- Institute for Museum and Library Services
- US Department of State
- National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
- National Institutes of Health

For more information, see www.endicott.edu/perg.aspx or contact Debra Richardson Smith, Director at 978-816-7634, email: drsmith@endicott.edu

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