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Adopt-A-Scholar Program for Hispanic Students

About 25 percent of the population in Torrington, Wyoming, area is Hispanic, but most in that group do not reach their full potential or even get a chance because so many youngsters dropout of the public schools or do not go to college. Parents and family members sometimes find it difficult to motivate or encourage the children to accomplish all they can in the education system. Getting parents involved is one of the key factors in Eastern Wyoming College's Adopt-A-Scholar program.

Hispanic youngsters in this program are encouraged to remain in school, to strive for scholastic achievement, as well as to refrain from drugs. The Adopt-A-Scholar program introduces these young people to real role models who present the idea that it is possible to do more with their lives. It is a compilation of other similar programs across the country, as well as four years of listening to common problems and learning about options for our situation.

The scholars are selected in the sixth grade and receive a variety of benefits from EWC starting at the time of selection and continuing through their second year of college. Scholars are selected from among minority students within the county elementary schools whose parents or guardians lack college experience or whose financial support is limited. The scholars must show need for the support and potential for success.

Scholars receive free tuition for many of the programs EWC offers in both community education and credit classes, starting at the sixth-grade level and continuing through four semesters at EWC. Other benefits to the scholars include: recognition of academic progress; EWC hats and T-shirts; participation in EWC athletic and cultural events; development of relationships with EWC student role models (mentors); and participation in a three-day summer youth conference.

The summer program includes opportunities to meet regional and national role models of minority descent, self-esteem enhancement, alcohol and drug abuse prevention, career exploration, on-campus living, and study skills training.

Sixth graders are selected because we felt that not enough attention has been focused on younger students.

By the time colleges contact seniors in high school, they have already made up their minds, or they are past the point when they could begin to prepare for college or a career.

To begin the program, all eligible sixth graders and 10 eligible students from seventh through 12th grade are selected. Each year thereafter, all eligible sixth graders will be included, and all of the previous seventh through 12th grade students will continue to receive program benefits.

To remain eligible, scholars must remain drug-free and maintain a certain grade-point level that gradually increases with their educational progress. Grades six and seven must maintain a 2.00 G.P.A.; grades eight through 10, a 2.50 G.P.A.; and grades 11 through the first two years in college, a 3.0 G.P.A. The scholar must provide a copy of grades and/or transcripts each year to the college to prove continued eligibility. If the scholar's annual G.P.A. falls below the prescribed minimum, he/she must write an appeal letter. EWC has the final decision in determining continued student eligibility.



Benefits To the College

- Builds relationships with the public schools at all levels.
- Builds relationships with students, their families, neighbors, and friends.
- Develops positive public relations within the community.
- Exposes various groups to EWC's resources.
- Creates ambassadors who are walking advertisements throughout the public schools for a full seven years.
- Involves institutions outside of the college.
- Encourages minority enrollment.



Benefits To the Scholars and Their Families

- Scholars are selected during their sixth-grade year. The program is explained to students and their parents.
- During the sixth through 10th grades, the scholar is



given free tuition to enroll each year in two community education classes, including any sports clinic. Appropriate EWC attire is provided.

- Each student is issued a student activity card for athletic and cultural events.
- During the 11th and 12th grades, the scholar is provided free tuition to enroll in college credit courses.
- Upon successful completion of high school and the program, EWC pays for the first four semesters of tuition at the college.
- Opportunities are available for the parent(s) and/or guardian(s) to participate in college activities and/or personal development activities.



Not-So-Obvious Benefits To the Students

- Students who are least at risk in ability but most at risk in other criteria categories (finances, family education background) are offered the chance to succeed.
- Students have had continuing support and experience on the campus (for seven years) during which they could consider and experience college.

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[Note: Authors acknowledge the important work at Johnson County Community College (KS) that provided EWC with the concept of the Adopt-a-Scholar Program.]

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