

D211 POST: FOUNDATION TAPS DISTRICT 211, HARPER COLLEGE, NIU FOR BACHELOR'S DEGREE GRANT

High School District 211, Harper College, and Northern Illinois University have been selected to participate in a one-year "design challenge" that aims to dramatically move the needle on bachelor's degree completion for community college students.

The Michael and Susan Dell Foundation is funding the nonprofit Education Design Lab to lead the Seamless Transfer Pathway Design Challenge. Harper, NIU and District 211 are among just four groups of two- and four-year institutions chosen nationwide for the grant.

"We know that through our partnerships, we are able to achieve more together than we ever could individually," Harper College President Dr. Ken Ender said. "If we are going to increase baccalaureate completion in a transformational way, we must begin to think of the high school, community college and university as a single network."

Research shows about 80 percent of students who enroll in a community college intend to complete a bachelor's degree. Yet, according to the Education Design Lab, only 25 percent make the leap to a four-year school within five years, and just 17 percent complete a four-year degree within six years of transferring.

The design challenge will bring together partners to break down transfer barriers.

Harper, NIU and District 211's proposal aims to reduce the time and cost of earning a bachelor's degree with a goal of a 30 percent increase in the number of Harper students who go on to graduate from NIU within six years. Several initiatives will make this possible including:

- Power of 15: Based on research showing students who enter college with 15 credits are twice as likely to graduate with a four-year degree, the Power of 15 program increases opportunities for students to earn college credit while still in high school.
- Reducing remediation: Opportunities will be expanded for students to take developmental English and math courses during their senior year of high school so they enter Harper automatically eligible for college-level courses.
- Reduction in "wasted" credits: Continued alignment of pathways will ensure students take courses they need to successfully complete their desired program.
- Early college credit: Students will take college credit courses while in high school at a sharply reduced cost.
- Promise Scholarship: Students can earn up to two years of free tuition at Harper by meeting benchmarks in the areas of attendance, rigor, quality, persistence and community service.
- Unified transition advising: Students will be advised through a coordinated, case management effort that will serve them from high school to completing their bachelor's degree at NIU.
- Guaranteed enrollment: If students stay on their pathway and meet minimum

requirements, they will not need to apply for admission to NIU after completing Harper.

Beginning this fall, the design challenge will provide partners with coaches, access to experts in transfer pathways and reimbursement for national cohort meetings and design sessions. Pilot programs developed over the next year will be launched in fall 2018 and results tracked for six years.

“Our partnership with Harper College has made the pursuit of a college degree a real possibility for many of our students,” District 211 Superintendent Dr. Daniel Cates said. “For years, we have envisioned how we might connect more of our high school students with a four-year college program at Northern Illinois University, and we are excited to partner with Harper College and NIU to make this dream a true possibility for our students.”

“We are excited to partner with Harper College and Township High School District 211 on an innovative pathway to increase the number of students earning a four-year degree,” said Ron Smith, NIU Director, Community College Partnerships. “Our collective efforts will better prepare students for success throughout their college and career endeavors.”

For more information on the design challenge, visit eddesignlab.org.

(Release courtesy of Harper College Media Relations Office)