**Project Summary:**

This project aims to increase the academic performance of underserved populations in Macon-Bibb County.

**Target Community:**

Specifically, this project will target middle school Hispanic students, yet on a broader scope the college-readiness curriculum developed during the duration of this project could be used to impact other underserved populations. We originally planned to partner with St. Peter Claver Catholic Church for this project, but since submitting our original proposal, they have decided that it would be best for them not to be a partner in the project due to safety reasons concerning children. We are currently in the process of searching for a new partner for the project, and we have contacted the Hispanic programs coordinator at Family Advancement Ministries in Macon. We cannot yet confirm that they will be our community partner, but if the partnership does not work out with FAM, we will continue to look for another organization in Macon with which to partner. Dr. Piño of Mercer’s Spanish department has voiced a willingness to have Spanish students at Mercer participate in the program as volunteer tutors.

Our contact regarding the need for college-readiness curriculum is Hannah Vann, the director of Mercer’s Center for Community Engagement. Thus far, Mrs. Vann has expressed that ready-made curriculum would be beneficial for use in various settings as is evident in the email below.

________________________________________________________

**Hannah F. Vann** <vann_hf@mercer.edu>
To: Savannah Eichhorn
<savannah.eichhorn@gmail.com>

Savannah,
There is definitely a need for a curriculum for college readiness for BCSD students. We need it for high school but it would be great to have something age appropriate for middle school too.

Thanks,

Hannah Vann
Coordinator of Community Engagement Mercer University
478-301-2870

Project Relevance and Rationale:

Based on data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, there is a significant disparity between the testing scores of white students and Hispanic students in both reading and math (NAEP 2015). Low academic achievement leads to lower graduation rates, lower college enrollment rates, and lower college graduation rates in the Hispanic population compared with the white population. This academic disparity contributes, along with various other factors, to a lower socioeconomic status for the Hispanic population in the United States. Having a lower socioeconomic status then leads to academic disadvantages, and thus the cycle perpetuates itself.

Although Bibb County does not currently have a very large Hispanic population, these numbers are expected to rapidly increase in the coming years (Stucka 2014). Therefore, any problem affecting the Hispanic population will only become a more relevant issue for Bibb County.

Every year, seventh and eighth grade students in the Georgia must take a standardized test at the end of the school year known as the Georgia Milestone Assessment. This test, which covers math and English language arts for eighth grade students, is used to gauge a student’s
level of learning and determine if he or she is ready to progress to the next grade (Georgia Department of Education). By offering free preparation assistance for the math and language arts sections of the Georgia Milestone Assessment, this program hopes to help address the existing academic achievement gap between Hispanic and white students. The transition from middle to high school has been identified as a particularly hard time for Hispanic students, which is why the program will be designed specifically for seventh and eighth graders (Schneider et al. 2006). While Macon-Bibb county schools have ESL programs to provide Hispanic students with academic assistance, these programs are generally in place to help students with their classwork rather than being specifically focused on helping students prepare for the Georgia Milestone Assessment. FAM already has English classes established for Hispanic students, but nothing geared specifically towards preparing students for standardized test taking. Therefore, this project will be filling a specific niche for the Hispanic student population in Macon.

Studies have shown that low income, high minority schools have little college-going culture when compared to primarily middle class, white schools (Welton & Williams 2015). Part of the problem facing low income, high minority schools is the pressure that standardized testing places on both the teachers and the students. The pressure to succeed on standardized tests causes for teachers to focus on how to pass the test during classes rather than teaching students skills to prepare them for college (Welton & Williams 2015). Interviews conducted with college students who come from high minority, low income backgrounds revealed that the students did not feel prepared for college as they lacked resources, skills, and support systems (Hollifield-Hoyle & Hammons 2015). The interviewees mentioned that it would have been helpful to have learned topics such as how to manage time, study effectively, use available resources, and have confidence to remain focused on long-term goals (Hollifield-Hoyle & Hammons 2015).
Macon-Bibb county statistics show that most of the schools in this system can be described as high minority and low-income due to the fact that over 50% of the students receive free or reduced lunch and over 50% of the students are minority (Public Schools K12 2010). Thus, this project seeks to create a curriculum of presentations and handouts that can be used in Macon-Bibb county to address the implementation of a positive college-going culture. After the initial creation of this curriculum, it will be presented to the Hispanic middle school students, but future projects could focus on implementing this curriculum in other Macon-Bibb student populations.

As for the continuation of this project, Georgia Milestone Assessment testing takes place every year, and therefore this project could certainly be continued in the future. At the present time, we do not have anyone in particular picked out to continue the project as the project is still in an early stage of development. We feel it would be better to further develop the project and have more concrete details about the design of the program before approaching anyone about continuing the project in future years.

**Project Objectives:**

**Phase 1:**

- Help better prepare Hispanic students for Georgia Milestone Assessment by holding preparatory classes that allow them to practice important test concepts and gain a better understanding of testing format
- Gives Hispanic students a free opportunity to prepare for state testing
- Give Mercer students taking Spanish classes opportunity to involve themselves in service learning experience and practice language skills in real-world context
Phase 2:

- Develop curriculum to help increase the college-readiness of underserved populations, which can be disseminated to and easily followed by schools, churches, or other organizations wishing to help students navigate college pursuit.
- Continue meeting after the GMA to implement college-readiness curriculum relevant to middle school students, so that they can begin high school with the mindset of preparing for college.
- Visit Mercer’s campus as a capstone event, bringing the students who have attended the workshops to Mercer for a tour and an end of the program party and allowing these students to experience a small taste of college life.

Implementation Plan:

Plan for Phase 1:

- Develop curriculum for Georgia Milestone Assessment preparatory classes from published GMA preparatory books and online practice tests. Originally we said we would be working with a middle school educator to develop the curriculum as this was what St. Peter Claver wanted. However, since we are no longer partnering with them, we feel the prep books and online resources will be sufficient to develop a curriculum.
- Hold Georgia Milestone Assessment preparatory classes 1-2 times per week in the month leading up to testing dates
- Use Mercer Spanish students as tutors for class. As mentioned above, Dr. Pino is eager to involve his Spanish students in a program such as this and will gladly advertise the program to the entire Spanish department as he did for Kim Belanger in her project in order to recruit as many students as possible.
• Will evaluate impact/success of program based on number of students that attended the GMA workshops

• Surveys will gather student feedback about program after students have completed GMA testing. Because we would like our community partner to help us format the survey in order to make it as effective as possible, we have not yet done these surveys. However, we have started researching what types of questions the survey should consist of.

Plan for Phase 2:

• Assess the specific needs of the Macon-Bibb County school system in relation to college-readiness by conducting interviews with community members in constant contact with middle and high school aged students, such as high school counselors and youth ministers. These interviews will address what the interviewee believes students lack in understanding about the college application process and what methods best impact Macon-Bibb County students.

• Create a curriculum focused on ways that students can prepare themselves for college. This curriculum will include PowerPoint presentations, notes for leaders, along with handouts for students that detail aspects of becoming college-ready. Curriculum would cover topics including but not limited to study skills, stress management, SAT preparation, researching colleges, realistic matching, financial aid, scholarships, applications, and essay writing.

• Teach a reduced portion of the curriculum to both the Hispanic students that the attend the GMA course and to the student board of the Macon Ronald McDonald House.
• Present the curriculum to Hannah Vann for use in future endeavors by the Macon-Bibb school system, local churches, or other projects looking to implement a college-going culture.

Resources:
• Curriculum for classes (prep books, online practice tests)
• Snacks for students during program classes, obtained through donations and funding
• Location to host program, possibly FAM in Macon

Challenges:
• Getting middle school students to sign up
  ○ Using community contact (possibly FAM) with established relationship with Hispanic population (advertising through community partner)
• Finding time that allows for maximum participation in program
  ○ Doing a survey asking people what days/times would be most convenient for parents and students
  ○ Coordinate community partner schedule and programs with project times
• Volunteers
  ○ Getting enough volunteers
    - Dr. Pino asks for service requirement from students and will advertise program to the rest of the Spanish department
• Creating a curriculum that can be effectively used in the future
  ○ Do not want to create a curriculum that does not address the needs of Macon-Bibb County students
- Working to combat this by interviewing community members who have experience with minority students pursuing college and the challenges these students face
  - Using Hannah Vann and the Center for Community Engagement as a contact to find organizations interested in using the curriculum

**Proposed Budget:**

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<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum for GMA Preparatory Program</td>
<td>$140 (4 prep books at $35 each from Barnes and Noble)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snacks for GMA Preparatory Program</td>
<td>$40 (4 32-snackpacks at $10 each from Wal-Mart)</td>
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<td>Print Costs</td>
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<tr>
<td>USB Drives for College Prep Curriculum</td>
<td>$45 (9 32-gb USBs at $9 each from Wal-Mart)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Budget</td>
<td>$275</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Project Timeline:**

January:

**Week 1:**

- Determine dates and times for the program
- Identify Mercer Spanish students willing to volunteer as tutors for the program
● Identify community members to interview regarding college-readiness

Week 2:

● Confirm Mercer Spanish students willing to volunteer as tutors for the program (If more tutors are needed, ask students from the general student body)
● Begin compiling curriculum for Georgia Milestone Assessment preparatory program
● Contact community members about possible interviews regarding college-readiness

Week 3:

● Determine what area tutors would be most effective in (math or English)
● Continue developing curriculum for Georgia Milestone Assessment preparatory program
● Interviews with community members regarding college-readiness

February:

Week 1:

● Continue developing curriculum for Georgia Milestone Assessment preparatory program
● Interviews with community members regarding college-readiness

Week 2:

● Begin promoting preparatory classes through community partner
● Continue developing curriculum for Georgia Milestone Assessment preparatory program
● Interviews with community members regarding college-readiness
Week 3:
- Continue promoting program through community partner
- Continue developing curriculum for Georgia Milestone Assessment preparatory program
- Compile information from interviews to determine what types of curriculum would be most effective for Macon-Bibb students

Week 4:
- Continue promoting program through St. Peter Claver and determine estimate of number of participating Hispanic students
- Finalize curriculum for Georgia Milestone Assessment preparatory program
- Begin writing curriculum for college-preparation

March:

Week 1:
- First week of Georgia Milestone Assessment program
- Continue writing college-preparation curriculum

Week 2:
- Continue writing college-preparation curriculum
- Second week of Georgia Milestone Assessment program

Week 3:
- Continue writing college-preparation curriculum
- Third week of Georgia Milestone Assessment program

Week 4:
- Continue writing college-preparation curriculum
● Fourth and final week of Georgia Milestone Assessment program

April:

Week 1:
● Present college-preparation curriculum to Hannah Vann for critical review

Week 2:
● Revise college-preparation curriculum

Week 3:
● Teach reduced version of college-preparation curriculum to the students in GMA course

Week 4:
● Teach reduced version of college-preparation curriculum to the students in GMA course
● Ask Hispanic students to complete survey on effectiveness of program after taking Georgia Milestone Assessment

May:

Week 1:
● Present at BEAR Fair

**Evaluation and Dissemination:**

In order to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the Georgia Milestone Assessment preparatory program, two criteria will be used. The first criteria will be the number of students that participate in the program. The second criteria will be a survey that evaluates the Hispanic students’ opinions on the class and how effective they feel it was at preparing them for the Georgia Milestone Assessment. These surveys will need to be submitted to the IRB before
giving them to the students. As said above, we are waiting to collaborate with our community partner on the surveys before finalizing them. The impact of the college-preparation curriculum will be more complex to measure as only a small amount of implementation will occur during this project. The curriculum will be presented to Hannah Vann to estimate effectiveness and may later be given to other organizations including the community members interviewed to determine need. Results of the project will be shared at BEAR Day and at the Service Scholar senior project presentation. They will also be shared with our community partners.
Bibliography


