College & Me

Young Adult

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Adults

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Jan 5, 2017

Free

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Byline

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College & Me is a multi-series offering — provided in partnership with the local Utah State University Extension office — that provides a comprehensive view of how individuals can prepare to attend college. Open to teens and adults, the class covers basic steps to searching for scholarships and financial aid, along with some application tips and [FAFSA](#) best practices.

The class was taught 21 times in English and three times in Spanish between September 2015 and December 2016. It is our highest attended stand-alone class amongst our class offerings for English speakers

This program is made possible by a grant from the [FINRA Investor Education Foundation](#) through [Smart investing@your library](#), a partnership with the American Library Association.

[Learn more about our Smart investing@yourlibrary grant and access resources and videos.](#)

Advanced Planning

This class offering is a small component of our [Family Prosperity Initiative](#), a partnership between the library and seven other agencies in Salt Lake County. The initiative provides financial literacy education to refugees and new immigrants under a [Smart investing@your library](#) grant.

Our goal for the College & Me class was to provide targeted financial assistance information about college to underserved populations in the library's service area.

General planning started with our grant application in 2014, but we did not begin detailed planning for College & Me until August 2015, when it was determined that the class would be valuable to our target population and others. The USU Extension financial literacy coordinator prepared the class, updated the course and delivered the class alone or with a teammate for the entire run of the grant.

Although the majority of the classes were taught in English, we also included classes taught in Spanish (the instructor is bilingual) to reach even more of the population. We also provided one class at a neighboring library system (Salt Lake City Public) and provided a class to members of the Bhutanese community at a local refugee center.

Our biggest challenge was building awareness of the class to increase attendance. We inevitably succeeded at increasing attendance.

Marketing

From the beginning, classes were promoted with posters and handbills at branch libraries, county facilities and grant partner agencies. The classes were also

promoted on the online library calendar.

In summer 2016, we expanded promotion of this class and our other stand-alone classes by promoting them on online community calendars and in an email blast via [Peachjar](#), a system run by the school districts that sends information about upcoming events and activities to students and parents. Since we started this additional promotion, our classes have doubled in attendance (and sometimes even more).

Budgeting

Library space and staff were provided in-kind from the library as part of the grant. The USU-E instructor(s) were funded by a Depratment of Workforce Services TANF I Grant for Refugees and Newcomers. The Smart Investing grant funding provided instruction and curriculum development, as well as additional efforts in the community.

Funding covered door prizes, including current "how to apply for financial aid" books. We also used recently discarded materials to supplement these purchases. This provided more information about disbursement while also promoting the library's collection.

Day-of-event Activity

We set up the rooms classroom-style with tables and chairs facing the presentation area; an A/V cart and projector or wall TV; and a receiving table for handouts, drawing entry and treats (if any).

One staff member was needed, as well as the instructor(s) from the extension office.

Prior to July 2016, we had 15 or fewer attend the program each time, and a few with zero attendance, too. Once we advertised in the school newsletter, attendance jumped to 65! This unexpected challenge required a bit of adjustment of the space

and adding chairs. Since July's big number we have had 25 to 30 at each class.

Program Execution

Everyone who has provided feedback indicated that they learned a great deal and are more prepared to apply for scholarships and grants in order to attend college. Many have said that they were surprised by how much information, and money, is out there.

In trying to reach underserved populations, we scheduled the classes in lower socioeconomic areas of the county, in addition to more affluent areas. We learned that people will travel for this information, and by providing a number of dates and locations we are reaching a broad spectrum of people ranging in age from 14 to 52.

Advice

Rather than becoming an expert in financial aid to provide these classes, I recommend [partnering](#) with a local extension office or college financial aid office to provide the most accurate and current information.

Even if you are a small library, plan to offer the class more than once, on different days of the week and at differnt times, so more teens and adults may attend together or separately. We found that there is more attention to the topic in the summer and fall, so those are better times to host this programming.

A display of current library offerings on the topic is a great way to highlight your collection and, subsequently, the program.

Use connections with schools to promote the program — that has made a huge difference in our attendance. Be sure to include that effort in your planning!

Supporting Materials

[Download this Program as a PDF](#)

- Feedback (Coming Soon!)
- [Programming Librarian Facebook Group](#)

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