

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

The Civic Service Institute at Northern Arizona University (CSI@NAU) proposes to have 65 AmeriCorps members who will present four modules of post-secondary education and career planning support to economically disadvantaged high school seniors and high school seniors with special and exceptional needs in Coconino, Maricopa, Mohave, Navajo, Pima, Pinal, and Yavapai counties. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for providing one-on-one post-secondary preparedness support to 5,000 students, with 2,000 of those students entering post-secondary educational institutions within one year of the intervention. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 300 leveraged volunteers, who will be engaged in assisting high school seniors and their families in completing the Federal Assistance for Student Financial Aid (FAFSA) application. This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of education. The CNCS investment of \$673,306 will be matched with \$620,906, \$114,597 in public funding and \$506,309 in private funding.

## Rationale and Approach/Program Design

PROBLEM/NEED: According to the Anne E Casey, 2014 KIDS COUNT Data Book, 27% of children in Arizona live in poverty and 23% of high school students do not graduate on time. Nationally, 23% of children live in poverty and 19% of high school students do not graduate on time. Arizona ranked 46th of all states for overall economic well-being for children, 44th in education, 44th in health rankings, and 46th for family and community. Post-secondary education can be a pathway out of poverty for families, but in Arizona not enough young people, especially students from communities of color, enroll in post-secondary education. According to the Arizona Department of Education data from the 2014 cohort, 44% of all high school seniors in Arizona will go on to enroll in post-secondary education. The percentage is much lower for economically disadvantaged youth and students of color. Only 29% of American Indians and 34% of Hispanic/Latino high school seniors will go on to enroll in post-secondary education. The data also shows that the rate of college enrollment is low for socioeconomically disadvantaged high school seniors (35%) and high school seniors with disabilities (20%). The education gap widens as the years progress as Arizona lags further behind the nation with 17.3% of those age 16-24 earning college degrees compared to the national average of 13.8% (<https://sfsfindicators.azed.gov/sfsfindicators/home/C11Report>, 1/11/16).

For generations, families have sacrificed and worked hard to send their children to college. A college degree gives low-income young adults an opportunity to move out of the cycle of poverty. According

## Narratives

to the Federal Reserve, "workers with a bachelor's degree on average earn well over \$1 million more than high school graduates during their working lives, while those with an associate's degree earn about \$325,000 more," (Federal Reserve Bank of New York, Current Issues in Economics and Finance, Vol. 20, Nov. 3, 2014). The median household income in Arizona is \$45,405, which is below the national average of \$48,906. According to the National Center of Education Statistics (<https://nces.ed.gov/>), those with only a high school credential earn an annual median income of \$30,000, while those with an associate's degree earn an annual median income of \$37,500, and those with a bachelor's degree earn an annual median income of \$48,500. Although there is not a causal relationship, higher levels of educational attainment are also correlated with health, marital stability, and many other quality of life indicators (<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/hus/education.htm>, 1/11/16). Arizona has 15 counties; of those counties, NAU will focus on Coconino, Maricopa, Mohave, Navajo, Pima, Pinal, and Yavapai counties in the first year and build partnerships to expand to Apache and Yuma counties in the second and third years. These counties were selected because they have a high number of economically disadvantaged students from underrepresented minorities (American Indian and Hispanic/Latino) and students with disabilities who do not graduate high school on time or enroll in post-secondary education (<http://www.azed.gov/research-evaluation/graduation-rates/>, 1/11/16). NAU will place members throughout Arizona in communities with a high percentage of underserved minority students residing in areas with low on-time high school graduation rates. For the first year of the grant, we plan to serve in the following counties: Coconino, Maricopa, Mohave, Navajo, Pima, Pinal, and Yavapai. By year three, we plan to expand the program to other lower income, high minority counties such as Apache, Graham, and Yuma Counties. In the target counties, 43.66% of high school seniors in 2014 identified as American Indian or Hispanic/Latino.

NAU's partner in this project, the Arizona College Access Network (AzCAN), uses four common measures to gauge the success of college access interventions across Arizona: 1) high school graduation rate, 2) FAFSA completion rate, 3) postsecondary enrollment, and 4) postsecondary completion. NAU plans to focus on post-secondary enrollment rates in the performance measures for this grant with the understanding that this is also a measure of success in high-school graduation. NAU and AzCAN will develop a targeted outreach plan. For the purposes of this grant, economically disadvantaged youth are defined as "students who are eligible for free or reduced lunch (at 185% of poverty or less)". Students with special or exceptional needs are defined as "students who are developmentally disabled, have impairments, are emotionally disturbed or have a language disorder, have other significant health impairment, or have literacy needs. It may also include students who are

## Narratives

abused or neglected; in need of foster care; adjudicated youth; homeless youth; teenage parents; and children in need of protective intervention in their homes".

This grant will further the goals of the My Brother's Keeper Initiative, an initiative launched by President Obama to serve boys and young men of color by connecting them with support systems including mentoring, tutoring, and skills that help them find work or enable them to go to college (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/my-brothers-keeper>, 11/24/15). The proposed program will connect both male and female students in communities of color to the resources they need to graduate from high school and be ready for college and career. For this proposal, the communities of color which are most represented in Arizona are Hispanic/Latino and American Indian communities. Students from communities of color, Hispanic/Latino, and American Indian students, are much less likely to graduate from high school on time and enroll in post-secondary institutions. Nationally, only 31.8% of American Indian youth and 33.8% of Hispanic/Latino youth enrolled in 2 and 4 year colleges in 2013. Those rates are much lower than the 41.6% of White youth and the 62.3% of Asian youth who enrolled in college in 2013 (<http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/statistics/surveys/mbk/index.html>, 11/25/15). The proposed program will focus targeted outreach on disadvantaged youth in communities of color, but will not discriminate against youth of any background.

THEORY OF CHANGE: The proposed intervention is that the AmeriCorps members will deliver four modules of post-secondary education and career planning support to high school. The modules will cover the 1) Education and Career Action Plan (ECAP) review, 2) post-secondary education applications, 3) financial aid, and 4) career planning. Members will provide support to students in setting goals for post-secondary education. This may include applying to a university or applying to serve in AmeriCorps or enrolling in a technical certification program. Each module will last one hour and will be delivered by members in a one-on-one or small group setting through partner organizations with established relationships with high school students. Members will be trained by AzCAN to present the material. In addition, members will recruit and train 300 community volunteers to provide one-on-one assistance to families in completing the FAFSA at existing free tax assistance sites. NAU will be partnering with the United Ways throughout the state who run the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance free tax preparation sites.

High schools in Arizona have guidance counselors who can provide some support to students in post-secondary education and career planning. However, according to Patricia M. McDonough from the National Association for College Admission Counseling, counselors only spend 38 minutes per student

## Narratives

per year on college advising ([http://www.nacacnet.org/research/research-data/Documents/WhitePaper\\_McDonough.pdf](http://www.nacacnet.org/research/research-data/Documents/WhitePaper_McDonough.pdf)). The theory behind this intervention is that increased personal attention for each student focused on post-secondary planning will increase the likelihood that students will understand their options, complete applications for educational institutions and financial aid, and enroll in post-secondary education designed to prepare them for a successful career. This theory is informed by the evidence found in the H&R Block FAFSA Experiment, which is explained in the evidence section. That experiment found that the simple intervention of providing one-on-one help to families completing the FAFSA form increased the post-secondary enrollment rates by 29% for high school seniors compared to students in families who only received information about how to complete the FAFSA form themselves. NAU will replicate the FAFSA assistance intervention by having members recruit volunteers to assist families complete the FAFSA form at volunteer income tax assistance sites. NAU's theory of change is that by combining the FAFSA assistance intervention with one-on-one post-secondary advising at teen centers, the program will have the combined benefits of one-on-one post-secondary planning with students as well as realistic financial aid planning for their families so that they can attain a college education with a sound financial plan.

NAU will partner with key college access organizations within Arizona to accomplish the goals of this grant. AzCAN is a member network, which connects organizations that provide college access resources to youth in Arizona. Through a partnership with AzCAN, NAU will place AmeriCorps members in teen support organizations to coordinate the four modules of student supports during the senior year of high school in order to increase the number of students, especially economically disadvantaged Hispanic/Latino and American Indian students, who complete steps toward postsecondary education. The teen support organizations (such as college access centers, YMCA teen centers, and Boys and Girls Club teen clubs) will work closely with the high schools in their areas in a community school partnership model. This approach will capture students who may not be receiving any existing supports in place at the schools due to absenteeism, distrust or disconnection from school authorities or other problems.

A central tool in the proposed concept is the Education and Career Action Plan (ECAP), which has been required for all Arizona students in grades 9 - 12 since 2008. An ECAP reflects a student's current plan of coursework, career aspirations and extended learning opportunities that lead to the student's academic and career goals.

In completing the four-module education plan with each student, each student will complete steps

## Narratives

toward postsecondary education, leading to increased postsecondary enrollment and attainment in the target communities. NAU will track FAFSA completion through data distributed by the state (Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education) and notify students whose FAFSAs are not complete for individual follow-up appointments. AmeriCorps members will deliver the modules to 5,000 high school seniors with an intended outcome of 2,000 students enrolling in post-secondary education within one year of the intervention. This would be an increase in the enrollment rate for American Indian and Hispanic/Latino students in Arizona from 29% and 34% respectively to 40%. In other words, without the intervention approximately 1700 students would have been expected to have enrolled in post-secondary education from this population. With this intervention, we intend to increase that number by 300 students in the first program year.

EVIDENCE: The proposed program is supported by preliminary evidence as defined in the NOFO. NAU intends to replicate the FAFSA assistance intervention, which was studied through a randomized controlled trial (RCT) in 2009 and then expanded nationally from 2012 through 2014. The FAFSA assistance intervention was first evaluated in the H&R Block FAFSA experiment. The study was originally published in 2009 as a working paper in the National Bureau of Economic research and then published again in 2012 in a peer-reviewed journal, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*. The article has been cited 194 times and was featured as a promising model in the 2014 report on "Increasing College Opportunity for Low Income Students" published by the Office of the President. The research findings were based on research completed from 2007 to 2009 at H&R Block free tax assistance sites.

In the original H&R Block FAFSA Experiment, researchers from Harvard, Stanford, and the University of Toronto partnered with 156 tax preparation sites in Ohio and North Carolina offering free tax assistance through H&R Block. They screened clients for FAFSA eligibility using software that identified families with incomes less than \$45,000 who also had a family member between the ages of 15 and 30 who did not already have a bachelor's degree. The average age of the individuals served was 17.7 years old. The family's average income was about \$23,000, with taxable incomes of \$6,000. After identifying an eligible participant, the H&R Block Tax professional introduced the project and offered the participant \$20 for their time to be in the study. After receiving informed consent for participation in the study, participants were asked general questions about their backgrounds and higher education perceptions. Next, participants were randomly assigned (using an algorithm based on the last 2 digits of their social security number) to one of three test groups: 1) the main treatment

## Narratives

group which received the full intervention, 2) the information-only treatment group, and 3) the control group which received no intervention. Those participants in the information-only group received an aid eligibility estimate based on information they had provided in their tax return as well as a list of tuition rates at nearby colleges and encouragement to complete the FAFSA form on their own.

The main treatment group received the full intervention, which consisted of the tax professional helping them complete the FAFSA form. The majority of questions could be pre-populated with information from the taxes they had just completed and then the person providing the service ran through an interview protocol to gather answers to the remaining questions. The software then computed the total amount of financial aid the client was eligible to receive and provided a written explanation of the financial aid benefits. The financial aid benefits focused on need-based aid and federal loans. They also provided the participants with tuition rates of nearby public four and two year colleges. Finally, they offered to submit the FAFSA electronically to the Department of Education for free. If the participant preferred, they could receive the completed FAFSA form to submit themselves. They also had a separate call center to handle follow up questions if there was missing information for a participant's FAFSA form needed to complete the submission.

Forty percent of the control group went on to file a FAFSA. Participants who received the intervention were 15.7 percentage points more likely to file the FAFSA, which corresponds to a 40% increase. This treatment effect was similar across variables such as race, previous college experience, and parental education and income. The information-only treatment did not have a substantial effect on FAFSA submission. They were no more likely to file at FAFSA than the control group. There was a clear, large effect for those in the treatment group. In addition to the increase in FAFSA completion rates for the treatment group, they were also able to demonstrate a significant effect on college enrollment during the fall immediately following the treatment. Enrollment rates increased from 26.8% in the control group to 34.5% or a relative increase of about 29% for those who received the intervention. In addition, the treatment group saw a significant increase in financial aid receipt, with an increase of 9.8 percentage points or about a relative 33% increase. In later follow up, the researchers were able to measure the effect on college persistence as well. During the first three years after the experiment, students in the treatment group were 8 percentage points more likely to have completed two years of college. The research conclusions found that information plus personal assistance in filing the FAFSA form had a significant impact on both FAFSA submission rates as well as college enrollment rates. The researchers went on to repeat this intervention in a new setting, by partnering with Volunteer Income

## Narratives

Tax Assistance (VITA) sites across the country. Their goal was to expand the intervention in a cost-effective way, measure the impacts of the intervention at scale, and test additional methods of providing the intervention.

The NAU program is closely modeled after this expanded version of the experiment. In the more recent expanded version, started in 2012 and continued through 2014, the researchers have simplified the intervention by working with VITA sites (who already screen for low-income families likely to be eligible for assistance) and using the software that is already used by VITA sites. This software still allows tax preparers to pull data from the tax information into the FAFSA forms. Moreover, tax preparers at VITA sites are usually trained volunteers rather than paid tax professionals.

Reference -- Bettinger, Eric, Bridget Long, Phil Oreopoulos and Lisa Sanbonmatsu, "The Role of Simplification and Information: Evidence from the FAFSA Experiment." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 127(3) (2012): 1205-1242

NOTICE PRIORITY: This grant addresses the Education focus area and the priority outlined in My Brother's Keeper. NAU's intervention will directly impact young people in communities of color to transition from high school to college and career.

MEMBER TRAINING: Members will attend a mandatory new member orientation at the beginning of service, which addresses AmeriCorps regulations, data collection methods, and prohibited activities. At new member orientation, members participate in a quiz about AmeriCorps requirements and regulations and then sign their agreement which details prohibited activities and regulations. Members will also learn about the history of national service, what it means to be an AmeriCorps member, and they have the opportunity to connect with fellow members and begin to build Esprit de Corps. Orientation training will conclude with members taking the AmeriCorps Pledge. Members will also receive training and practice in how to create and deliver an elevator speech about AmeriCorps and their term of service.

During service, members will attend a training series presented by CSI@NAU, which addresses communication and leadership skills such as conflict resolution, inclusion and cultural competency, and telling their story. In addition to the CSI@NAU Training Series, members will be provided with intervention specific training focused on the post-secondary application process, ECAP, and FAFSA completion. AzCAN will deliver the post-secondary access trainings. Trainings will be offered both in person and through webinar to ensure that all members throughout the state can attend for low cost

## Narratives

and minor interruption to their direct service activities. During their second quarter of service, members will be encouraged to attend the Arizona Summit on Volunteerism and Civic Engagement hosted by the State Commission. The budget includes funds to pay for all of the members in this program to attend the summit. The summit offers training about service delivery and personal leadership as well as an opportunity for members to connect with the service community throughout Arizona. In their final quarter of service, members will be offered an all-day summit about "Life After AmeriCorps". This training will provide them with information on AmeriCorps Alums, reflection on their term of service, how to describe accomplishments to future employers, and how to use the Segal Education Award.

**MEMBER SUPERVISION:** NAU will use a multi-site intermediary program model. The Project Director selects partners to serve as the host sites for the AmeriCorps members. The sites are referred to as mentor sites and are selected based on their ability to provide excellent mentorship and meaningful service. Mentor-sites will be organizations that work closely with senior high school students in the targeted counties, such as college access centers and Boys and Girls Club teen clubhouses. NAU will require all mentor sites to identify a primary mentor and a back-up mentor for each member. Mentor sites will be limited to two MSY per Primary Mentor in order to ensure adequate time and attention for each member. Mentor sites must explain what additional training and support they will provide for members. NAU will select mentor sites based on these criteria. After site selection, NAU will require Primary Mentors to attend mentor training before placing a member at the site. NAU will review AmeriCorps regulations, priorities, and expectations. Mentors will sign an agreement and a guidelines document that includes the AmeriCorps regulations, priorities, and expectations. Mentors will complete quarterly member evaluations focused on the member's progress in developing the skills and qualities necessary to be an effective service leader. The quarterly evaluation will also ask if there have been any significant changes at the site that the program should be aware of as well as what training and support the site has provided to the member.

NAU will conduct a minimum of two formal mentor/member site visits to support and monitor members progress during their service term. The formal site visits will take place at the site where the member is serving and the Project Director will use a structured checklist and interview about the member's progress and the support the site has provided to the member. These site visits will allow the program to identify any potential miscommunication about expectations early so that the member or mentor can adjust and complete their term successfully. In addition, NAU will create regular informal



## Narratives

check in opportunities with members and mentors to give them the opportunity to bring up any concerns or questions they may have in a less structured environment. NAU does this through virtual and in person "Coffee with the Director", quarterly check-in calls to every member, bi-monthly email newsletter, and attendance at events hosted by the mentor sites.

In addition to an external program evaluation, NAU will conduct exit interviews and an exit survey to determine how to improve the program. The feedback that NAU receives about individual supervisors and sites will help to determine whether or not to continue working with those supervisors and sites and/or whether or not to provide additional training to them.

MEMBER EXPERIENCE: NAU has hosted National Service programs for thirty years and has an excellent reputation for creating meaningful service opportunities, providing excellent professional development, and powerful mentoring. When members are prepared for service, involved in measurable community impact, and connected with the service community they are transformed by the experience of serving in AmeriCorps. For example, the Director of the Northern Arizona College Resource Center is an AmeriCorps alumna from NAU's Youth in Action AmeriCorps program. Through AmeriCorps, members will be prepared for and given a great deal of responsibility and the opportunity to step up as a service leader. Members have reported in the past that this is one of the most positive and unexpected benefits of serving in AmeriCorps. NAU will give the members opportunities to reflect on their service experience throughout their term in both writing and at AmeriCorps trainings and events. NAU will use the America Learns reporting and reflection software to ask members reflection questions during each month of service. NAU will facilitate group reflection activities during service events and trainings.

AmeriCorps members will be invited to meet other National Service members involved CSI@NAU Programs as they will be invited to the VISTA Esprit de Corps events, to Senior Corps in-service meetings, and National Days of Service events coordinated by CSI@NAU and partners. For the last five years CSI@NAU has hosted service and reflection activities in Flagstaff, Phoenix, and Tucson for 9/11. NAU have also hosted events throughout the state for Veterans Day, Martin Luther King, Jr Day of Service, and Cesar Chavez Day of Service. CSI@NAU will continue to lead National Service events for AmeriCorps members and the rest of the service community. Members will also be encouraged to attend the Arizona Summit on Volunteerism and Civic Engagement. Members who have attended the Summit in the past provided very positive feedback about the Summit and felt that this was a great way to connect with National Service members around the state.

## **Narratives**

NAU will target recruitment of members to recent college graduates or college seniors who can serve as role models for the students they will work with. NAU will publicize AmeriCorps opportunities through the networks of universities and community colleges and target first generation students and/or students from communities of color.

COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION: All members will attend orientation covering the history of AmeriCorps, mission of AmeriCorps, and review the language of AmeriCorps (including the correct pronunciation of the word). At the end of orientation, new members will be sworn in by AmeriCorps alumni, taking the AmeriCorps pledge together. They will keep a copy of the pledge, and be told to put it under their pillow and to review it whenever they are having a challenge during their term. Every AmeriCorps member is issued a shirt, sweatshirt, pins and patches with the AmeriCorps logo. In addition, every site will be issued a sign saying "AmeriCorps serving here". Members and mentors will sign an agreement stating that they will display AmeriCorps signage prominently and wear the logo while serving as an AmeriCorps member. NAU will stress the importance of identifying themselves as an AmeriCorps member when they are interviewed by the media. NAU will be proactive in sending press releases to the media about the accomplishments of members which include AmeriCorps identification.

### **Organizational Capability**

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING: Started as a "Normal School" (a school for training teachers) in 1899, Northern Arizona University has a long commitment of service to the people, and particularly students, of Arizona. CSI@NAU is the sponsor of Senior Corps programs, including Foster Grandparent (FGP), Senior Companion (SCP) and RSVP Programs since 1985. NAU sponsored an AmeriCorps VISTA project with six members from 2008-2011. VISTAs helped with recruitment of first generation students from rural communities in Arizona to attend college at NAU. CSI@NAU has sponsored the Youth in Action (YiA) AmeriCorps for the past twenty-one years, a multi-focus intermediary model addressing education and economic opportunity needs. NAU, partnering closely with AzCAN, is well positioned to bring the resources of AmeriCorps to high school students with the most need throughout Arizona.

NAU has placed AmeriCorps members at the Northern Arizona College Resource Center (NACRC) in Flagstaff through the Youth in Action AmeriCorps state grant for the past five years. AmeriCorps members there have served high school seniors from underrepresented minorities and those who are economically disadvantaged. One member shared that, "One of the students I have been working

## Narratives

with is the first one in her family to go to college. Her parents did not attend college. She is the youngest of 7 children and the first 6 did not go to college or even graduate high school. I have just been to proud of how hard she has been working so that she can go to college!" Not only did that student go on to enroll in post-secondary education, but the AmeriCorps member was hired after her term for a full time paid position in a nonprofit focused on college access.

The Director of CSI@NAU, Carole Mandino, has 33 years of experience serving as a project director for Senior Corps programs as well as a doctorate in Educational Leadership. She is well versed in all aspects of National Service programming and has served on national committees to develop best practices and training resources for Senior Corps. With all three Senior Corps programs, FGP, SCP, and RSVP also housed in CSI, NAU has many opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing between the streams of service.

Sharon Tewksbury-Bloom is the Project Director for AmeriCorps programs at CSI@NAU, managing the program from program development to member recruitment and retention, member training, and program evaluation. She is an AmeriCorps alumna who has managed YiA AmeriCorps for the last four years. She has a Masters in Organizational Development and Knowledge Management, has worked in the field of volunteer management for ten years and specializes in training, conflict resolution, and program development. Carmen Martinjako has 28 years of experience at NAU, with seven years serving as the Business Manager at CSI@NAU. As the Business Manager she has been responsible for managing the financial aspects of National Service grants. She has a Masters Degree in Educational Psychology from NAU. Dayna Brown is the Administrative Assistant for AmeriCorps programs at CSI@NAU where she has served since June 2015. Prior to working for CSI@NAU, Dayna served one term in the YiA AmeriCorps program and one term as an AmeriCorps VISTA with Arizona Serve in Tucson. Dayna has a Bachelors Degree in Social Work.

The proposed program includes a new position for a Program Coordinator to handle recruitment and coordination of AmeriCorps members around the state. This position will be housed in Phoenix in the AzCAN offices in order to strengthen that partnership and make it easier for the Coordinator to communicate with partner sites. NAU is an Employer of National Service and will strongly encourage National Service alumni to apply for this position. NAU will look for an experienced program coordinator who is able to travel and has strong communication skills. Preference will be given to candidates with experience working with Hispanic/Latino and/or American Indian communities. CSI sits within the Social and Behavioral Sciences department at NAU. The Dean of SBS, Dr. Karen Pugliesi is a strong advocate for National Service. Before starting her career in academics she served

## Narratives

as a VISTA volunteer. Before becoming the SBS Dean in 2014, Dr. Pugliesi served for 10 years as the Vice Provost of Academic Affairs and served as the Dean of University College for 2 years. She has extensive knowledge and connections within the University which are a great asset.

Northern Arizona University is a leading public university and a great home for CSI@NAU, as one of their primary goals, outlined in the strategic plan is "Diversity, Civic Engagement, and Community Building". NAU prides itself on service, to students and to the communities in which NAU is embedded. Through University College, NAU recently added a Civic Engagement Minor.

CSI@NAU will be working closely with the AZCAN for implementation of this grant state-wide.

AZCAN is a community of college access and college success programs across the state, all of whom are dedicated to postsecondary success for all Arizonans, especially low-income, first-generation students. AZCAN members include nonprofits, high school staff, college outreach programs, funders, government agencies, and business leaders, all committed to closing the education attainment gap in Arizona. AzCAN's affiliation with College Success Arizona affords it insights into the policies and financial structures that frame postsecondary education in Arizona. Recent AzCAN initiatives include CAP Training, a statewide professional development series for college access professionals, and the AzCAN College Access Standards, a framework of knowledge and behavior competencies that enable students to be college and career ready when they graduate from high school. Both of these large-scale projects have required close collaboration with partners across the state, including the Arizona School Counselors Association, Arizona Department of Education, universities, city government, and community-based organizations. Linda Jensen, Director of AzCAN, is an educator with more than 25 years of experience in education. Before joining AzCAN Linda managed dual enrollment and summer bridge programs at GateWay Community College, giving her hands-on experience in college access programming. Linda also has extensive experience in project management and is able to organize multi-layered projects over several years and regions.

NAU has also received pledges of support from critical community partners such as Arizona Serve, United Way of Northern Arizona, United Way of Southern Arizona, the Metropolitan Education Commission, the Hopi Foundation, Boys and Girls Club, the Arizona Commission on Post-Secondary Education, and the Arizona Department of Education. These partners are interested in hosting members and sharing outcome data.

COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY: NAU has an extensive history of sponsoring national service programs since 1985 and of selecting and managing relationships with other nonprofits and

## Narratives

schools through YiA AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs. CSI@NAU has experience selecting partner sites that are the best match to meet the intervention addressed in grant as well as providing for adequate supervision and mentorship to AmeriCorps members. NAU has partnership agreements that will be updated and executed through NAU's Office of Sponsored Projects and with partner agencies. Mentors are identified and named in the partnership agreements. Mentor training will include information about CNCS rules and regulations as well as the program goals and intended outcomes. As part of mentor training, NAU will host interactive activities in which the mentors create skits and participate in games so as to test the knowledge gained regarding the rules and regulations. Throughout the term NAU will conduct site visits to ensure that the members are serving as intended and are provided with adequate mentorship and support from each partner/mentor site. If a site were not able to provide a member with the experience and support to be successful in this project NAU would move the member to another partner site that is able to provide that environment. Members' time will be tracked through the America Learns Time Sheet System. This system creates an audit trail and has reporting features which allow NAU and CNCS to easily monitor members' time sheets, who is approving them, and any missing time sheets. Members' time sheets will be electronically signed by the mentor verifying that the time and activities reported are in compliance with AmeriCorps service provisions and activities. CSI's Business Manager will track match requirements and spending. The Project Director and Program Coordinator will be available through office hours, one-on-one and group meetings, email and phone communications and formal and informal site visits to monitor member service progress and success.

### **Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy**

**COST EFFECTIVENESS:** As a multi-site program, NAU will collect cash and in-kind match from partner sites. Mentor sites will provide a cash match equivalent to the number of members they are requesting. The site agreement will require them to disclose whether the source of the funds is local, state, or private. The cash match will support a portion of the member living stipend and costs for managing the project that will not be covered by the grant. CSI@NAU has been successful at securing its match in previous grant cycles with the YiA AmeriCorps program. NAU has maintained a cost per MSY below the requirement and has a higher than required match percentage.

NAU will be building on the existing network and work of the AzCAN as well as the United Way VITA programs. This existing infrastructure is crucial to the programs feasibility and NAU is honored that AzCAN is excited to partner. There will likely be the opportunity to tap into additional private resources, such as the Helios Foundation and Arizona Community Foundation. Both foundations are

## Narratives

interested in furthering this type of intervention. If awarded, NAU will pursue these and other fundraising options to lower the cost per MSY over the lifecycle of the grant.

According to the National Center of Education Statistics (<https://nces.ed.gov/>), those with only a high school credential earn an annual median income of \$30,000, while those with an associate's degree earn an annual median income of \$37,500, and those with a bachelor's degree earn an annual median income of \$48,500. If the proposed intervention is successful in empowering more students to successfully finish high school, enroll in post-secondary education, and eventually finish a degree, it will increase that students earning potential by at least \$7,500 per year, or \$18,500 for a bachelor's degree. In impacting 5,000 students, NAU estimates that the intervention would result in an additional 300 students enrolling in post-secondary education who would not have done so without the intervention. According to Breakthrough Collaborative, 85% of students enrolling in post-secondary education enter four year colleges or universities seeking bachelor degrees. Assuming those students have a similar bachelor's degree attainment rate as students from underrepresented minorities at NAU (37.9%) then this intervention would result in at least 97 new baccalaureates from the original 5,000 students served by AmeriCorps members. Those 97 students would earn \$18,500 more per year, resulting in an annual gain of \$1,794,500 for the cohort. That return on investment does not include the increase in income that other students would expect from a two year degree or certification. Better yet, a college degree is an asset that is good for a lifetime and will continue to provide that return throughout a career.

**BUDGET ADEQUACY:** The budget includes all required costs such as branded member gear, member stipends within the allowable range, and health care for full time members. The cost per MSY is below the maximum allowed by CNCS. NAU will collect cash and in-kind match from the partner sites in order to match the federal share at 52%. Leveraging the existing infrastructure from NAU, AzCAN, and volunteer tax assistance sites allows NAU to keep costs for this project to a minimum and maximize the effectiveness of existing initiatives.

### **Evaluation Summary or Plan**

NA

### **Amendment Justification**

NA

### **Clarification Summary**

## Narratives

### A. General clarification items:

1. The executive summary and budget have been revised to reflect an overall change in the CNCS share of \$7,910 and a revised budget total of \$673,306. This change has lowered the cost per MSY to \$13,466 which is reflected in the budget.

### B. Programmatic clarification items:

1. NAU has changed the allocation of staff time to this project in order to reduce the overall cost of the project and lower the Cost per MSY. The revised Cost per MSY is \$13,466.

2. In addition to the four hour modules, members will also be actively engaged in the FAFSA assistance intervention. Members will directly assist families in completing the FAFSA as well as recruit and train volunteers to assist families in completing the FAFSA application at VITA sites and college access events.

Below is a description of the allocation of a member's time based on 1 MSY / Full Time member (the percentages dedicated to each activity would be the same for half time members but the targets would be half that of the full time members).

Full time members will serve an average of 110 students in the four module education program (targeting 5,500 students starting the education program). They would spend four hours of direct teaching time with the students. Some of this time will be working one on one with students and some will be time working with small groups. Based on an estimate of an average group size of 2 students, members will spend 220 hours directly delivering the modules to students (110 students x 4 hours of modules / 2 students per group). For each session with students, members will be required to prepare materials, communicate with students about the appointments, prepare the meeting space, and record and report data about the students' progress. For each hour spent directly with the students, NAU estimates there will be two hours of preparation and follow up work related directly to preparing the materials, communicating with the students about appointments, reporting data, and following up with students. A full time member will spend 440 hours in preparation and follow up based on the education module intervention.

Members will also be engaged in the FAFSA assistance intervention. In addition to assisting families directly, member will recruit and train volunteers to assist families in completing the FAFSA application.

Examples of Estimated Time Allocation based on 1700 hours (Full Time Member)

Delivering Modules: 220 hours

## Narratives

Preparation and Follow Up based on Modules: 440 hours

Assisting Families with FAFSA applications: 400 hours

FAFSA Volunteer Recruitment and Training: 200 hours

FAFSA Follow Up: 150 hours

Member Training and Attendance at AmeriCorps events and service days: 90 hours

Attending Outreach Events to Educate Students and Promote Arizona Ready for College and Career:  
200 hours

3. NAU's lead partner in this project, the Arizona College Access Network (AzCAN) has developed a College Access Professional (CAP) training program which is the intervention specific training that all members will be required to complete before starting direct service with students. CAP consists of an extensive online curriculum that takes 20 hours to complete, although AzCAN also offers the training in person. CAP was designed for professionals in the field of college access and has been approved for continuing education units. Through our partnership, AzCAN is allowing the AmeriCorps members to go through the training program at no cost. In addition, members will receive training from AzCAN on the current FAFSA application and how to assist families in completing the FAFSA.

As described in the Member Training section of the application, CSI@NAU will also deliver ongoing professional development for general leadership and communication skills that will strengthen the member's ability to provide effective service.

All members will be placed at a site that has experience in working with disadvantaged youth. The site will orient members to the local community and the needs of the youth they serve and will also orient members to policies and procedures to ensure the safety and privacy of the youth as well as the safety and professionalism of the AmeriCorps members serving there.

NAU will provide oversight and support to sites and members by reviewing bi-monthly time sheets, visiting sites in person during the service term, convening monthly conference calls to check in with members, and reviewing data collections from members as well as quarterly evaluations from mentors.

C. Budget clarification items: Changes have been made directly in the Budget Narrative as requested. NAU has an approved policy to reimburse mileage at a rate of 0.445 cents per mile in alignment with the State of Arizona General Accounting Office policy. Mileage rates are covered under A.R.S. §§ 38-623.



## Narratives

D. Performance Measure clarification items: Changes have been made directly in the Performance Measures section as requested.

E. Evaluation clarification items: No changes requested or made.

F. MSY with No Program Funds Attached clarification items:  
NAU does not wish to request additional no-cost MSYs.

April 27, 2016 2nd Clarification Responses:

1. Please indicate in ED2 whether completion is defined as the modules and the FAFSA or just the modules.

For ED2, completion of the education program consists of completing all 4 modules (4 hours of direct service) and completion of a FAFSA application. Students will have the option to test out of one module if they have already received counseling in that area from their school or another program. Students will be counted as having completed the program if they have completed all 4 modules and the FAFSA application, which may include completing 3 modules in the CNCS supported education program and testing out of 1 module that was completed through their school or another program. Completion of FAFSA assistance consists of the family filing the FAFSA application with assistance of the AmeriCorps member.

2. Please indicate how ED1 defines the start of service provision that would allow an individual to be counted in this measure.

When starting the program, students will complete an enrollment form. The data from this form will be used to enter them into the America Learns tracking system. Members will track students that they work with using the America Learns reporting system. Students will be entered using an anonymized identifier that complies with FERPA regulations. Students will be counted in ED1 if they have completed an enrollment form. This process will ensure that each student is tracked individually and is not double counted.

3. Please verify that the data for ED10 will only include verified post-secondary enrollments and not

## **Narratives**

include survey data.

NAU will survey students counted in ED2 to collect self-report data on post-secondary enrollment for the ED10 outcome measure. NAU will survey students and report the results before the end of the program year. NAU will partner with the Arizona Commission on Post-Secondary Education and Arizona College Access Network (AzCAN) to identify or design a survey instrument that will meet CNCS requirements and align with the AzCAN common measures framework. AzCAN is currently working with Arizona's United Way network in the Thriving Together collective impact initiative to develop common measures and reliable data collection methods that can be used universally. Students will be counted in ED10 if they enroll in post-secondary education within one year of high school graduation. Additionally, through partnership with the Arizona Commission on Post-Secondary Education, NAU will use data collected by the Arizona Department of Education from the National Student Clearinghouse to verify that the self-reported survey data matches the actual registration records. NAU will receive registration records and be able to verify the first semester of enrollment data by April 2018; and will provide verified actual counts for ED10 in 2018.

### **Continuation Changes**

NA

### **Grant Characteristics**