

PROJECT TRANSITION

Parents are Key to Student Achievement and Success

Syracuse University is committed to helping students from all walks of life have the most successful college experience possible. But we can't do it alone. Parents and other family members also play a critical role in helping students cope with the social and academic challenges of college life. Unfortunately, some parents are at a disadvantage—with no firsthand knowledge of the college experience and limited ability to support their child through the transition from high school senior to first-year college student.

Project Transition was created to help students who may be from low-income families or first in their family to attend college, and *their parents*. With your support, this unique program will continue to make sure *all* SU parents—regardless of socioeconomic or other barriers—have a firm connection to the University and gain the insight and confidence they need to coach, counsel, and cheer on their children to four years of academic success.



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Tough Transitions

In recent years, SU has admitted some of the most academically gifted and diverse entering classes in its history, with a significant increase in low-income and first-generation students. But many of these students find themselves underprepared for the demands of college life in a place that is nothing like their old neighborhood.

Without advice and encouragement from family back home, these deserving students are at risk of dropping out of school. And some parents, because of their own fears, may inadvertently jeopardize a student's resolve to hang in through the rough spots and stay on track for graduation.



A first-year Project Transition student poses for a photo with his proud grandparents during Family Weekend 2009 (top). Craig Tucker, associate director of SU's Higher Education Opportunity Program, greets students at a Family Weekend dinner in 2009.

Maximizing Parent Power

The realization that parents are key to student achievement hit home for SU alumna Jan Strauss Raymond '65 when she was running a learning disabilities program for Dominican families in New York City. "These parents wanted their children to go to college," says Raymond, an active volunteer and longtime champion of NYC youth. "But none of them had ever seen a college and didn't know they lived just two subway stops away from Columbia, one of America's great universities. Without personal experience, it's hard for parents to help their children with the admissions process or motivate them to complete their college education."

Raymond's vision for Project Transition was to maximize parent power to help students make a smooth transition from high school to college, stay in school once they get there, and thrive.

This approach has proven to be successful. Currently, Project Transition students boast a 94 percent graduation rate and consistently equal or surpass the general Syracuse University student population in academic achievement—a significant accomplishment, considering most students from low-income families have less than a 10 percent chance of earning a college degree.

Creating Vital Points of Contact

Project Transition offers eligible New York City School District students and their parents many points of contact throughout the year. Following the first spring information meeting at Lubin House, they are encouraged to participate in a series of cost-free events both on and off campus, including:

- >> **Parent Orientation** Families come to campus for move-in day of SummerStart, a six-week summer program designed to help entering students earn college credits and become familiar with academic, social, and cultural life before the fast-paced fall semester begins.
- >> **Opening Weekend** The fall semester kicks off with an on-campus orientation session for first-year students and their parents to review academic expectations, transition issues, and services offered by the Parents Office.

>> **Family Weekend** A chance for parents to come to campus for a fall weekend and become more familiar with the challenges and opportunities their children will face.

>> **NYC Informational Meeting** A meeting for students and parents at Lubin House to review fall semester grades and discuss academic goals with program counselors.

>> **Capstone Dinner** A special event for seniors and their parents to celebrate the achievement of earning a college degree.

One grateful parent remarked, "Family Weekend was a wonderful experience filled with many activities, such as Dean's Breakfasts, a concert, study abroad information sessions, and sports events. Now, I'm a happier parent because I personally know about my daughter's college life. Sending your child away to school is difficult; I thank you for making it easier!"



How You Can Help

Project Transition—currently sustained through generous financial support from Jan and Chip Raymond, SU parents Barbara and Eric Bodner and Robert and Susan Cohen, and funding from the School of Education—has the capacity to serve 45 families annually. But demand for the program is increasing dramatically.

To continue to serve these students and their families, the project's core operating budget must be stabilized. And to serve those on our ever-growing waiting list and expand services to the greater New York metropolitan area, Boston, Atlanta, Houston, Los Angeles, and Chicago, the budget must grow. Long term, our goal is to replicate this one-of-a-kind program at colleges and universities throughout New York State.

Just as it "takes a village" to raise a child, it takes the combined effort of students, the University, and parents to ensure all academically gifted students have a chance to fulfill their dreams through higher education.

For a closer look at how Project Transition helps students and their parents, visit giving.syr.edu/project-transition.

Bob Wilson, director of Student Support Services, welcomes Project Transition students and their families to Family Weekend.



To Learn More...

For more information on the many ways you can support Project Transition, contact:

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