

Success Through Soccer
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Abstract

First generation immigrants are often at a large disadvantage when it comes to education and opportunity. Through Success Through Soccer at North Hennepin Community College, providing recreational soccer opportunities will help historically disadvantaged students engage and develop socially, physically and emotionally while on campus. In addition, this program aims to help those students who are often unfamiliar with the American education system by connecting them to the college and helping them in the classroom through the “World’s Game” of soccer. An in-depth exploration of *Success Through Soccer* will be described along with supporting research that backs up the program. This report will also cover the evaluation of the program and any limitations.

Success Through Soccer

Opportunity is everything. Success Through Soccer aims to create opportunity in sport for those who have none. The positive developmental benefits that have been linked to sport are too strong to ignore. At North Hennepin Community College (NHCC) a strong segment of the student body is underrepresented. In fact, of the over 10,000 students NHCC enrolls, 45% of those students are defined as low income (Pell eligible), 44% are students of color and 59% are defined as first generational (parents do not possess a bachelor's degree). As a whole, 66% of the student body is underrepresented (see Figure 1) (NHCC Fact Book, 2016). Underrepresented students historically struggle in the education system both in retention rate and with academics. It is the hope of this program that by engaging students in soccer, students will develop life skills that will not only help them be more connected with the college, but more successful in the classroom.

Purpose

Success Through Soccer has many goals for its participants. The main purpose of this program is to help students who traditionally have a tough time adapting to college. It is hopeful that with the positive youth development gained through soccer, the students in the program will be able to take their new skills and confidence into the classroom and be successful.

Success in the classroom is critical for underserved populations. According to NHCC, only 63% of its underserved students (see Figure 2) will still be on campus a year after their original enrollment (NHCC Fact Book, 2016). Many students drop out due to academic struggles, financial problems, or a lack of understanding of what it takes to be successful in college. By involving underserved students in this program it is the goal to help retention rates

and boost this population's academic success. Research has shown the importance of sport as "youth athletes, when compared to their peers not participating in sport, are found to have better school attendance, tend to take more demanding coursework, spend more time on homework, are more likely to report academic aspirations both during and after secondary school, more often pursue higher education, have reduced rates of dropout and received fewer discipline referrals" (Gould & Carson, 2008).

Soccer

The focus on soccer is crucial to the program. There are many sports that could have been chosen for this program, but soccer was selected because of the familiarity that it brings students at NHCC. The underserved population at NHCC consists largely of African immigrants. These students are largely of Somali, Liberian, Ghanaian, and Nigerian descent where soccer is lifeblood. Many students, who once played soccer as kids, have been shut out of opportunity since relocating to the United States. Poor economic status and older adolescent age has shuttered opportunity to register for recreation or has forced students into the work force at an early age to assist their families. While many immigrant students feel uncomfortable and unprepared in attending college, it is hopeful that the comfort of the soccer field will help them adapt to the American higher education system and foster success in the classroom.

In addition to familiarity, soccer provides all of the tools for youth development. It requires physical skills such as speed, agility, endurance, strength and finesse. It requires communication skills for strategy, leadership and teamwork and allows for competition, introducing sportsmanship and emotional development in the process.

One of the indirect benefits of the program is that it is great for fitness and overall cardiovascular health. Today's youth has never been more stagnant. Child obesity rates have continued to rise, while youth sports participation rates have continued to dip (Farrey, 2008). Many communities have lost funding resulting in the termination of older youth programs. The youth that haven't been affected by these financial burdens are often a casualty of the sports culture in America. In today's society, sports organizations have unfortunately shifted into a 'winning' mindset and teams along with their players are being coached to win at all costs (Farrey, 2008). This has led to placing a huge investment in the highly skilled players while leaving the rest of the group behind. More times than not, the group left behind end up quitting the sport all together. Organizations should instead be pushing the mindset of life long sports and recreation, not winning. A very small percentage of kids will go on to play college athletics and even fewer will be able to make a living playing a sport professionally. Instead of coaching to the exception, organizations should be coaching to the rule. In this program, students that have been previously stripped of athletic opportunity due to economic hardship or lack of opportunity will be able to reap the benefits of recreation once again. Success Through Soccer will get youth outside and active. The positive effects on exercise are overwhelming. According to the Center of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), exercise helps develop healthy bones and muscles while increasing self-esteem. Exercise also helps lower stress levels and also reduces the risk of developing obesity and chronic diseases that accompany it (diabetes, cardiovascular disease) (2016). While the program is aware that participants will not see overwhelming fitness results in just a four week time period, it is hopeful that the program can help launch students into a pattern of exercise for the remainder of the life span.

Soccer is also a sport that requires little equipment. A soccer ball and two goals is all that is technically needed to play. NHCC already has a soccer field and goals leftover from the intercollegiate era. All that is needed are soccer balls and practice jerseys to differentiate teams (see Table 1). Player equipment consists of shin guards and cleats – items that some students many already have, but could be easily provided through community partnership.

Perhaps the most relevant part of soccer is that the game is a microcosm of society. Like citizens, players must have discipline and play within the laws of the game. Failure to abide by the rules results in penalty. Within the rules however, there are multiple strategies and paths to success while players can assume a variety of roles (goalkeeper, offense, defense etc.). Similar to the real world, the communication and relationships that are built with others (teammates) are integral to the success of the team.

Participants

Success Through Soccer is aimed at incoming, underserved students at North Hennepin Community College. A strong majority of these students will likely be 18 year olds of East and West African descent with low socio-economic status and reside in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota or the surrounding community.

Leaders of the program will be comprised of staff and faculty volunteers of the college. There will be approximately 30 students participating in the program with the goal of a 10:1 student teacher ratio. While there are several ways to positively affect learning, it is believed that student teacher ratios under 20:1 are more apt to help learners when compared with larger class sizes. In addition, the benefits are even more noticeable with students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Ehrenberg, Brewer, Gamoran & Willms, 2001). The program will be open for 30

incoming and underserved students. This is an appropriate number, as soccer itself will require 22 players to organize a regulation game. The additional amount of students will help allow for substitutions and allow for fluctuations in attendance and cover for any unforeseen injuries.

Location

This program will take place on campus at North Hennepin Community College. The college has a regulation soccer field on campus that will be free for the program to use. Minimal maintenance of the field, such as striping the boundaries of the field will be needed and provided by the Plant Services Department at the college. Not only is the college field very accessible for students before and after class, it is also accessible to students who may not have class on days of the program. A city bus line makes a stop at the college and there is also ample parking for drivers (see Figure 3).

Program Schedule

Success Through Soccer will consist of a 4-week program and will be convene twice a week on Tuesdays and Fridays. The program will commence during the first week of school, which begins Tuesday, August 22nd, 2017. The program will run through Friday, September 15th 2017. All sessions will occur in the afternoon from 3:00pm to 5:00pm. The afternoon was chosen in part because 2pm to 6pm has been shown to be the riskiest part of the day for youth. Between these hours, a disproportionate amount of juvenile arrests occur (Coatsworth & Conroy, 2007). Each week will feature a different speaker at the beginning of the session. Tuesday sessions will work on small group games for skill building. Fridays will include a full 11 on 11 scrimmage and time to give the students a chance to reflect on their week in school.

Success Through Soccer Program Itinerary

Week 1

Tuesday

3:00pm – Welcome/Intro

3:15pm – Speaker of the Week (Academic Advisor assigned to this group)

- Make introduction; explain the importance of education, and the processes of registering for future semesters. Talk goal setting.

3:45pm – Warm up. Small group skills work. Focusing on communication and teamwork.

- Cone dribbling
- Partner Passing Stationary
- Partner Passing while Moving
- 3 on 3 games with no goalie on abbreviated field

5:00pm – Dismiss.

'Homework' - meet with your academic advisor to create a graduation plan. Create one SMART goal for the soccer program and one SMART goal for your academics for current semester.

Friday

3:00pm – Students share their academic interests, future career aspirations and SMART goals they created during the week.

3:45pm – Warm up. Break off into 2 teams of 15 students for a scrimmage 3 passes before a shot can be made. Shout out teammates name as you pass to them.

5:00pm – Dismiss

Week 2

Tuesday

3:00pm – Faculty member speaks on habits of successful students inside the classroom and bridging the culture gap in the classroom. *Homework: Students will try to adopt successful classroom habits this week in school.*

3:30pm – Warm up. Small group Drills

- Dribbling Knockout, keep your ball while trying to kick other balls out of the designated area.
- 2 on 1 passing drills
- Shooting drills without goalie

5:00pm – Dismiss

Friday

3:00pm – Students share how they have incorporated their successful classroom habits during the past week of school and how they can make it a permanent habit

3:45pm – Warm up. Break off into 2 teams of 15 for scrimmage (different teams than previous week.) 3 passes needed before a shot on goal. Players are only allowed to score 1 goal a piece during scrimmage (teamwork, passing)

5:00pm – Dismiss

Week 3

Tuesday

3:00pm – Speaker of the Week (Student Life Director): How to become more involved on campus. *Homework: Students will gather information from Student Life about one club that interests them.*

3:45pm – Warm Up. Small Group Games

- 3 on 3 games
- Shots on goalie

5:00pm – Dismiss

Friday

3:00pm – Students share information they found out about one student club or organization on campus.

3:30pm – Warm up. Scrimmage against students from Inver Hills Community College. Focus on sportsmanship. Referees, but no score will be kept.

5:00pm – Get to know one opponent before being dismissed.

Week 4

Tuesday

3:00pm – Speaker of the Week: Several successful former NHCC students of diverse backgrounds share their success stories.

3:45pm – Warm Up. Group Drills

- 3 on 2 attack drills
- 6 on 6 scrimmage with goalies
- Penalty Shots with goalie for fun to end

5:00pm - Dismiss

Friday

3:00pm – Introduction of staff/faculty that are joining the group today for scrimmage.

3:15pm – Students share how they have benefited from the program with the rest of the group and the staff/faculty on hand.

3:30pm – Scrimmage with staff mixed in with students

5:00pm – Students who have attended 6 or more of the sessions receive a certificate of completion from the program. Dismiss.

Program Discussion

Developing Life Skills

This program is designed to develop life skills in the students who participate. Through mentoring and soccer, the program will help foster a connection between student and college, introducing them to the people who support them along the way in addition to the positive gains that can be developed through the sport itself. According to research from the Search Institute, there are 40 building blocks of developmental assets that can be beneficial to adolescents

(Benson, Leffert, Scales & Blyth, 2008). This program takes specific aim at several of the internal and external assets.

Other Adult Relationships. Success Through Soccer helps create relationships with important adults on campus. By introducing students to academic advisors, members of Student Life, physical education instructors and former graduates, the students can feel more at comfortable on campus knowing there are people who care about them and their success.

Caring School Climate. Through the program and the voluntary support of college staff and faculty, it is obvious the college cares about students' well-being and success.

School Engagement. The program incorporates daily school tasks into its schedule. This engages students to think about their future, but also the individual tasks and support network it will take to get them there.

Cultural Competence. The students participating in this program are likely to be of different cultural backgrounds. In addition, interactions with students and other colleges will help our students understand the values and differences that culture can create.

Positive View of Personal Future. Through interactions with academic advisors students are able to develop a course of action to help them accomplish their goals at the college. Formulating a relationship with their advisor is a necessary step as students who do are more likely to approach their advisor during times of academic need, increasing their chances of academic success.

Safety. Volunteers are instructed to help maintain the program as a safe space for students to express their feelings. Attacks on others and criticism regarding ones thoughts or

feelings are not welcome in the program. When students feel comfortable they are more likely to share and develop.

Youth Programs. Participating in this program four hours a week shows constructive use of time. Youth programs are a great way to build strong and supportive relationships.

Achievement Motivation. Goal setting and praise are some of the programs ways to enhance motivation in the students. Volunteers are encouraged to praise students upon gains or positive contributions in soccer or group conversations.

Mentorship

One of the benefits of the program is the impact older adults can have on the participants. Mentoring is extremely important in youth development. ‘Mentoring enhances young people’s social capital, their knowledge of, and contacts with, a network of people who may be able to help them meet their goals’ (Hamilton et al., 2006). Specifically, natural mentoring is known as the most beneficial type of mentoring.

Natural mentoring. Natural mentoring comes together when both parties gravitate to each other without prior arrangement. In the case of Success Through Soccer both the participants and the adult staff /faculty are volunteering their time. There are several benefits of natural mentoring. Both parties are subjected to less pressure and a less chance of developing a feeling of rejection, the relationship is likely to last longer and logistical issues with meeting etc should be minimal with both parties on campus often (Hamilton et al., 2006). Ideally, it is hopeful that some participants may opt to form a more involved mentor/mentee relationship with a staff or faculty member from the program after the program concludes.

Evaluation

Change Theory

To ensure the program is successful and for future improvements, evaluation is necessary. While there are several outcomes that must be judged in evaluation, it is important to remember that evaluation rarely proves a program successful. Rather, it is important to look for outcomes that can be causally attributed to the program (Izzo et al., 2004). Izzo et al. (2004) helped introduce the “Theory of Change Approach” an evaluation process that focuses on four levels of outcomes. While most evaluations are designed only to evaluate ultimate outcomes, the Theory of Change Approach helps dive into the processes of the program while evaluating all ultimate, intermediate, immediate and activity outcomes. (See Figure 4)

Ultimate Outcomes. The ultimate outcome of Success Through Soccer is to assist underserved students in their academic success. Specifically, the program is interested in improving the current 63% success rate of the college’s underserved students. In this case academic success is defined as graduating, transferring to a four-year university or still being enrolled at NHCC one year from original enrollment. In order to fully compare this data, the program will have to evaluate the success rate of its participants as a whole the following fall, one year after the program. If the success rate of the students in the program turns out to be over 63% it may be possible to link this causation to Success Through Soccer.

Intermediate Outcomes. The intermediate outcomes of Success Through Soccer are those that help drive academic success. The program believes that connections made through staff, faculty and an understanding of other school programs and processes will help facilitate student engagement with the college and develop a sense of belonging. The tasks of the program were designed to do just that.

Immediate Outcomes. The immediate outcomes of this program were to instill a sense of comfort in the participants, introduce participants to peers in similar situations and develop a familiarity with staff members who are key to a student's long-term academic success. These outcomes are the building blocks to both intermediate and ultimate outcomes.

Activities. In order to facilitate outcomes, action is needed. The activities in the program were designed to give participants the chance at all three levels of outcomes. Activities in the program such as meeting with your academic advisor, learning about a student organization and sharing your information with other students and staff should help foster these outcomes with the participants and in the program.

Student Self-Assessment

Student attitudes and feelings are a strong barometer of change as well. Sports and recreation have been shown to develop positive self-esteem in youth who become involved (Gould & Carson, 2008). Perhaps the best way to evaluate is to develop a baseline in which to compare results. After all, how can success be measured if there is no data prior to the program? In looking at Success Through Soccer, a basic baseline of participant attitudes can be created by having participants fill out self-surveys prior to their commencement in the program. Students would assess themselves on several factors including, soccer skills, attitudes regarding their future and college in general, as well as intrinsic feelings such as confidence and motivation. At the conclusion of the program students would then be asked similar questions, while the results are compared to their pre-program assessments to discover how the program may have affected their attitudes towards. (See figure 5)

Limitations

Attendance Limitations. The Success Through Soccer program will not be immune to limitations. Despite the best intentions, sometimes plans do not go as scheduled. The main limiting aspect of this program would be student participation. If student participation is lower than expected, the soccer portion of the program may need to be adjusted to accommodate the numbers. In essence, the program is relying on students to voluntarily sign up for a free program provided by the college. While staff know the possibility that participating students seeing positive results is likely, it's sometimes hard to convince students beforehand to give their time to such a program. In addition, many students attending North Hennepin Community College work part time and may be unable to alter their work shifts to accommodate for this program.

Weather Limitations. Weather also plays a big factor in the program. Unseasonably cold weather would put a damper on turnout. Rain could also be a factor in participation. The program would likely hold sessions in light rain, but anything heavier would lead to postponement or relocating inside to the college gymnasium if available.

Additional Involvement Limitations. Other activities the students are involved in can also have an impact on evaluation and ultimate results. If students are involved in other activities perhaps they are positively or negatively impacting student success as well. It may be hard to differentiate the factors effecting student success.

Sample Size Limitations. At the outset of the program it is not feasible to launch this program across the entire campus with little supporting data. Given the relatively small sample size of 30 participants, significant increases (or decreases) in academic success may not accurately represent the results on a bigger scale. If the sample size had a baseline above or

below the norm, the group may perform better (or worse) regardless of their participation in the program.

Conclusion

Success Through Soccer is a program designed to help increase the academic success rates of underserved students at North Hennepin Community College. Through the implementation of developmental asset building and mentorship, the students involved in this program should become more healthy, confident and academically successful members of campus. The assets and lessons learned through this program are easily transferrable to the classroom and the outside world. The students who have participated in this experience will go on to have a greater chance of academic success at North Hennepin Community College.

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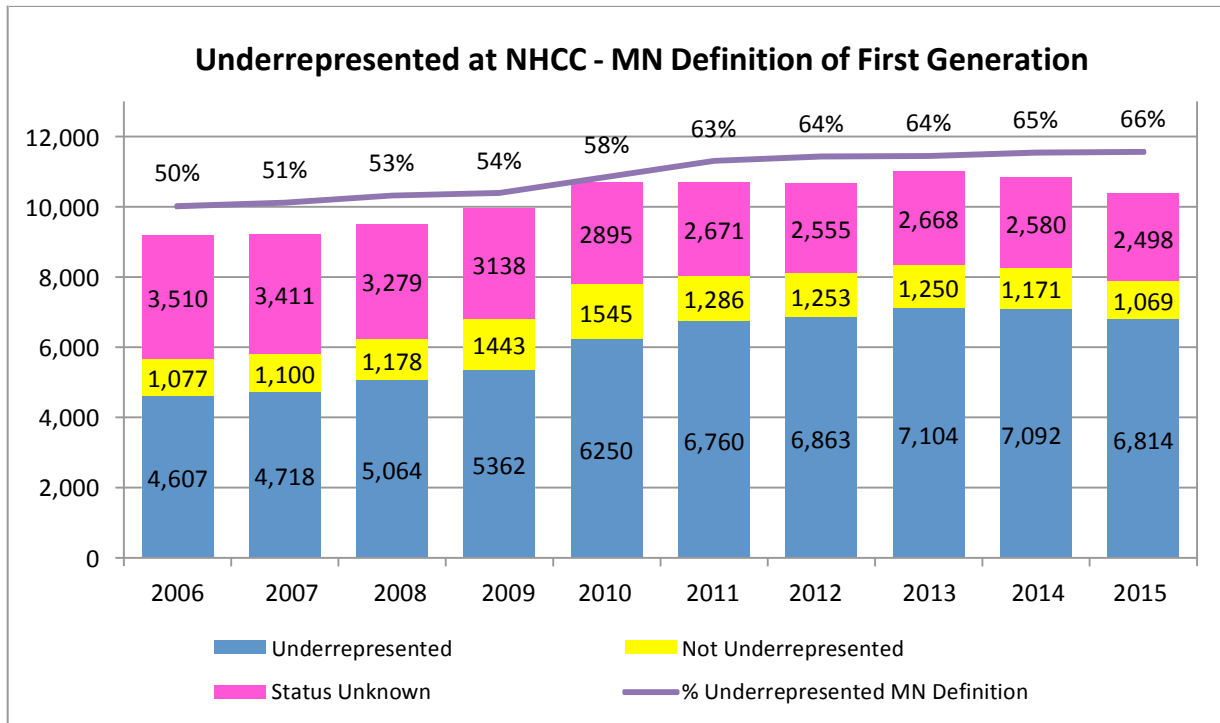
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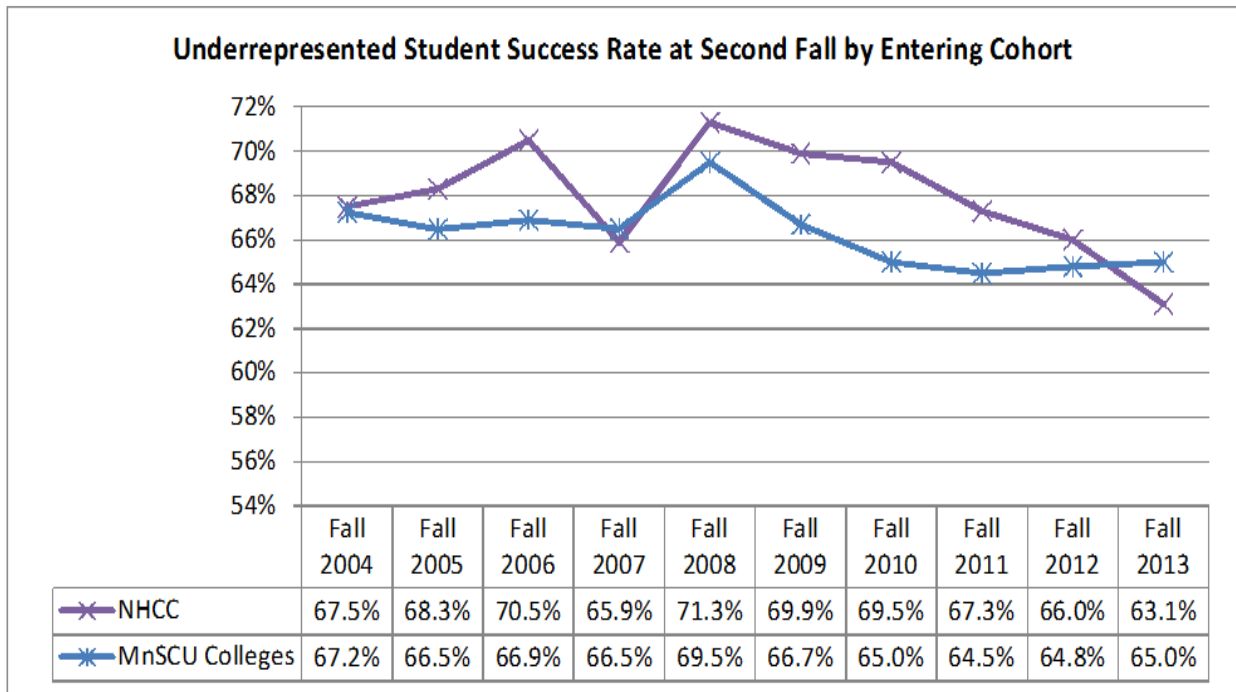
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Figure 1



Source: NHCC Fact Book, 2016

Figure 2



Source: NHCC Fact Book, 2016

Figure 3

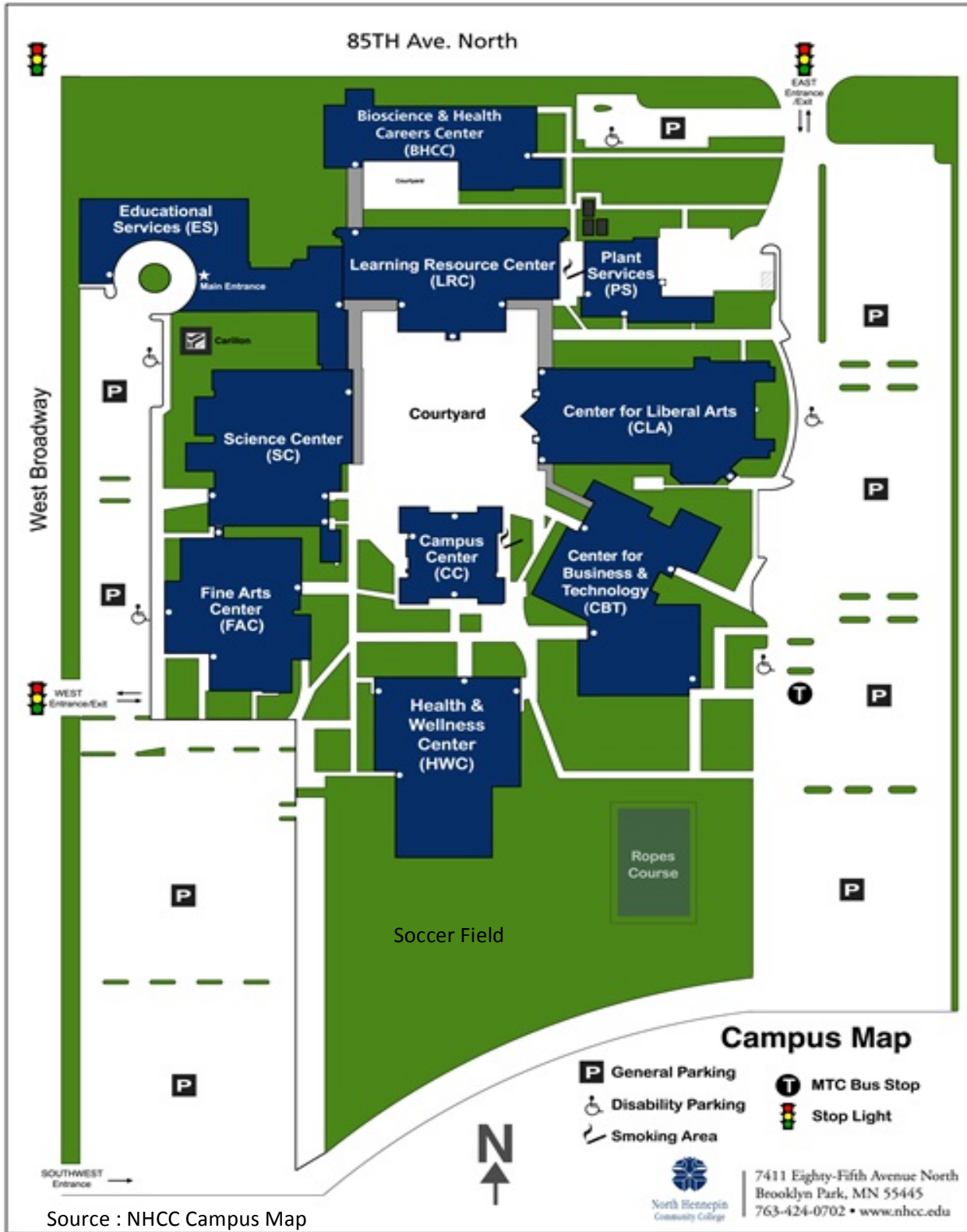


Table 1

Success Through Soccer Budget

Field	\$0 (college already owns)
Maintenance	\$0 (college already provides)
Staff (volunteers)	\$0
Soccer Balls (30)	\$550 (one time expense)
Certificates/Printing	\$100
Cones (for drills etc.)	\$50
Water Jug	\$30
Practice Jerseys	\$100
Total:	\$830 to start up

Figure 4 - Change Theory Approach - Success Through Soccer

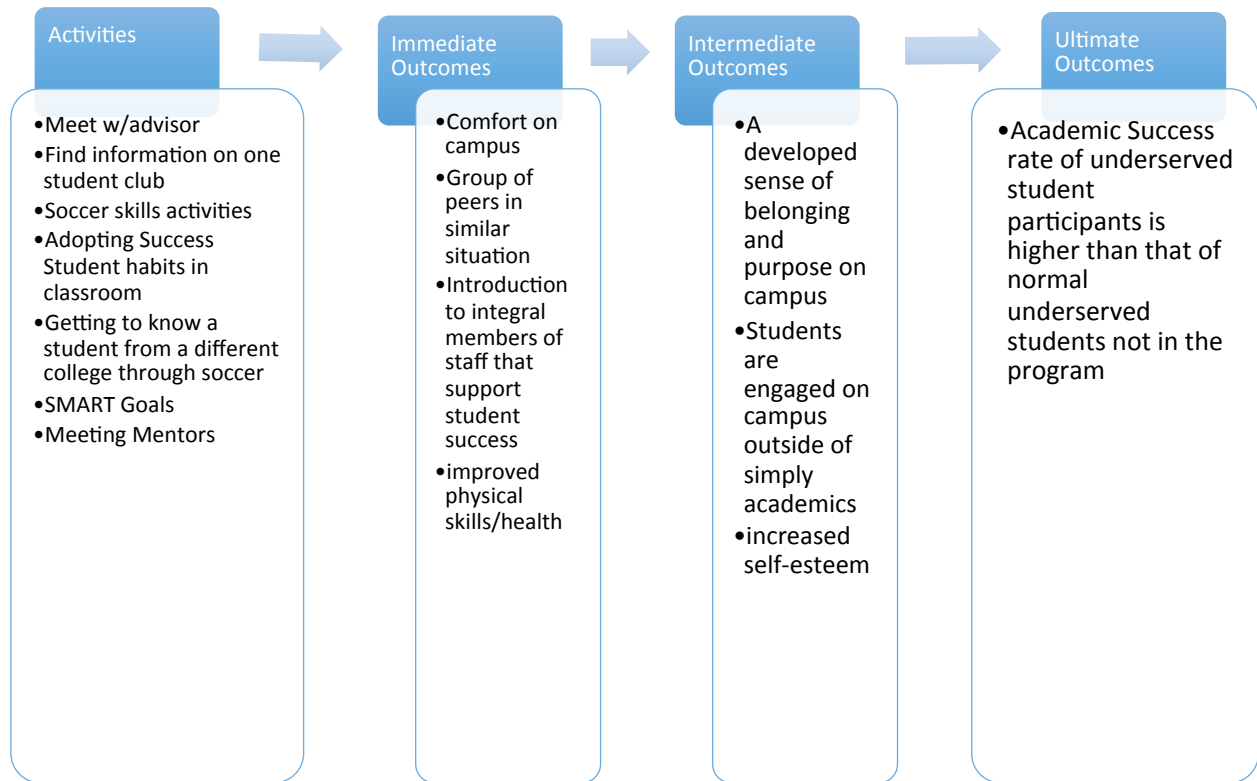


Figure 5

Pre & Post Participant Self-Survey

Please circle how much you agree with each statement

1 – Strongly disagree 2- somewhat disagree 3-not sure 4- somewhat agree 5- Strongly agree

<i>I have fun playing soccer</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>I feel I am physically fit</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>I feel comfortable at NHCC</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>I have friends on campus who I feel support me</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>I enjoy coming to campus</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>I am involved on campus outside of my classes</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>I feel I have the connections within the campus community to succeed</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>I feel that I am prepared to graduate</i>	1	2	3	4	5