

REACHING HIGHER



PROGRESS REPORT

2015–2016 School Year

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

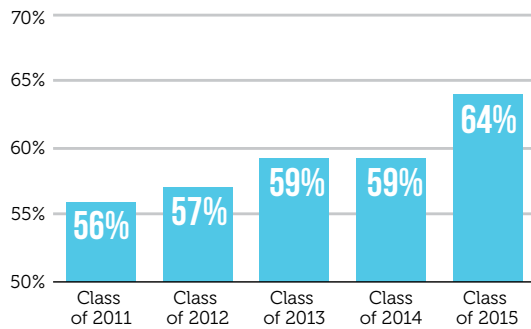


In April 2016, we took part in the Reach Higher National College Signing Day festivities. The First Lady created the Reach Higher initiative to inspire children to continue their education past high school, whether through a certificate program, a 2-year college, or a 4-year university. The program's goals are virtually identical to those of the Future Center.

We know that a child privileged to grow up in a home with a college-educated parent is more likely to go on to college themselves. As the demographics of La Crosse County have shifted over the past 15 years, college enrollment has increased in the suburbs, and until recently had decreased for City of La Crosse students.

We are pleased to share that this trend is beginning to shift.

Percentage of School District of La Crosse Students Enrolled in College



*source: National Student Clearinghouse

This year we experienced a milestone. The Class of 2016 was the first to have benefited from Future Center services for the duration of their high school years. We hope you will enjoy their success stories.

On behalf of all of our students, board, and staff, thank you for your generous support in making the Future Centers a reality.

Jerilyn Dinsmoor

Cover: In May 2016, graduating seniors from Logan High School marched at Northside Elementary School to set an example for the young students. (Photos courtesy of La Crosse Public Education Foundation.)

REACHING HIGHER

Future Center Mission: To connect students and families to all resources necessary to achieve post high school goals and ensure a successful future.

Future Center Vision: To create a culture where every student believes they can go as far in education as they desire.



Future Center Advisor Andrew Lam (center) with some of the graduates of the Logan High School Class of 2016 whom he advised throughout their high school career.

VIEW OUR NATIONAL COLLEGE SIGNING DAY VIDEO FEATURING LOCAL COLLEGE GRADUATES AT LACROSSEPROMISE.ORG



From left to right: Tim Kabat, Mayor, City of La Crosse; Margaret Dihlmann-Malzer, President, La Crosse Promise Board of Directors; Mark Skogen, President and CEO, Festival Foods, Inc.; and Nicole Hirsch, Assistant Soccer Coach, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

“I GOT IN! I GOT THE SCHOLARSHIP!”

ADVISOR HAYLEY MOE, MSW

Since beginning as the advisor at Central High School, I have noticed a definite uptick in the number of students who have come to see me over the last four years.



It begins with one contact with a student.

Taking the initiative, a student will come in to see me and we begin our conversation about their future. Sometimes I reach out to a student; or, school staff might bring them to the center. Students soon find out that our office is a place where they can come without an appointment, to ask a question, spend their study hall

doing homework, catch up on things, or just decompress during a hectic school day.

I've had countless conversations with students about different career paths and how they can reach their goals. Questions range from what courses they need to take in high school to how they pay for college. They are also curious and a little nervous about campus life. I try to be open and honest with them based on what I know personally and professionally. I think it's important that they are prepared for all aspects of the college experience.

Sometimes we spend hours and hours on an application or scholarship essay. Some students need more advice and guidance than others. I do my best to offer something of value to help all of them take the next steps toward a successful future.

For me, it is all worth it when a student comes in and says, "I got in!" or "I got the scholarship!" Knowing I had a piece in that is really special. I am proud of my students. As the Future Center has grown, I have been invited to more and more graduation parties! I see this as a testament to the relationships I have cultivated with students over the years.

“IT'S A GREAT DAY TO BE A RANGER!”

ADVISOR ANDREW LAM, MSW ED.

From freshmen entering the halls of Logan for the first time to the many alumni of the school, we often hear these words spoken: "It's a great day to be a Ranger!"

I began my career with La Crosse Promise having freshly graduated with my Master's degree from UW-La Crosse where I also earned my Bachelor's. I spent six years falling in love with the city but it was not until my time with La Crosse Promise that I finally really understood the true heart of this town.

The Future Center has found success here in great part due to the tremendous support of the counselors, teachers, staff and the administrators. This year has been extra special because the class of 2016 were freshmen when we began the program. I am lucky to have seen many of them grow through the Future Center and my involvement as a soccer coach here. I assisted many with their applications for college and scholarships. I am proud of the relationships I have built with each graduating class.

It is most meaningful for me to connect with former Logan students and hear them speak about their positive experience with the Future Center. I continue to be pleasantly surprised and humbled by the positive impacts we have made in the lives of many of the graduates in the past four years. It is what drives us to continue to work for the students and families in the La Crosse area.



OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE: ASSIST STUDENTS IN DISCOVERING OPPORTUNITIES IN CAREERS THAT ARE SUSTAINABLE AND REWARDING.

During the school year, we conduct exploration interviews with students. We explain what training and education is required to reach career goals. This includes setting up job shadows, career lunch and learns, and special career field trips like Hands on Health Day (left) at Gundersen Health System.



LUNCH & LEARNS: STUDENTS GET PERSPECTIVE FROM GUEST PRESENTERS

Beginning with the 2015-16 school year, we invited professionals from the community to share their experiences in college and careers in small informal groups with students who expressed high interest in the career path.

This year's presenters included:

- Dani Larsen, RN
- Phil Martin, police officer
- Jim Havlicek, software developer
- Dr. Jeff Thompson, neonatologist
- Jennifer Burckart, pharmacist
- Mark Davy, civil engineer

"The representative from Davy Engineering was very informative. He talked about the different aspects of the job and even brought work plans and examples to show us. He made me even more certain about going into this field."

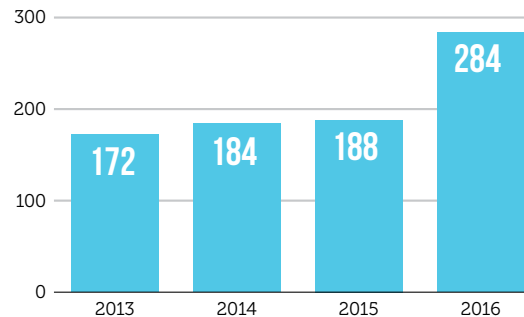
—Logan student

"I am so thankful that I was able to reach an advisor any time of day!"

—School District of La Crosse parent

Career opportunities

Nearly 200 job shadows have been completed since 2012. In the past four years, 828 different students have discussed career opportunities with a Future Center advisor.



This year, 408 one-on-one meetings took place where students were assisted with scholarships.



OBJECTIVE: EDUCATE STUDENTS AND FAMILIES ABOUT FINANCIAL AID FOR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND ASSIST THEM IN THE FAFSA APPLICATION PROCESS.

- Arrange FAFSA workshops, events, and individual assistance
- Help students find employment to earn money for school
- Provide creative ways to help students learn about financing for college, saving money, budgeting and spending
- Interpret financial aid award communications
- Present parent programs explaining the process and the cost of college

76% of the Class of 2016 used the Future Center services at some point during high school.

OBJECTIVE: LEARNING TO EARN, SAVE AND BUDGET WISELY

PRICE IS RIGHT GAME NIGHT

Presented by the Future Centers and UW-La Crosse It Make\$ Cents!, Price is Right Game nights are designed to teach students about good money management for college and beyond. The students participate in fun financial literacy games and have a chance to win great prizes. More than one hundred students and family members attended the Price is Right nights during the 2015-16 school year. Thank you to Trust Point for providing funding and volunteers for the event.

SUMMER EMPLOYMENT FAIRS



For the first time, the La Crosse Promise Future Centers hosted job fairs at Logan and at Central this spring. It was an excellent opportunity for students to be exposed to employment options in La Crosse and the surrounding area. Prior to the event, we posted "Get a Job" advice on social media and in the school announcements. Sixteen local businesses participated and the response was overwhelmingly positive from both the employers and the 300 students who attended.

"The job fairs were very well-organized and we were glad to see the interest from the students. We found a lot of potential candidates for employees."

– 2016 Job Fair employer participant

OBJECTIVE: COLLABORATE WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ON STRATEGIES TO MAXIMIZE STUDENT ENROLLMENT

In April, we survey each member of the senior class to ascertain whether they have completed the required paperwork for their next steps. If they haven't, we call them down to the Future Center and ask how we can help.

Many students have a "fear of the unknown." Worries include not understanding what to pack for college, getting lost on campus, and potential roommate issues. They begin to procrastinate. Often, this can lead to postponing their next step.

Our staff helps with these last minute concerns, even after graduation day. We show

them how to log in to their student accounts. We explain the course registration process. In the last few weeks of school, we help dozens of students who could easily fall through the cracks. The strategy is working.

We have seen an increase in college enrollment. When our alumni look back, they realize the advantage they had over many of their college peers.



On average, 136 students a year join us on our college visits.

OUTREACH

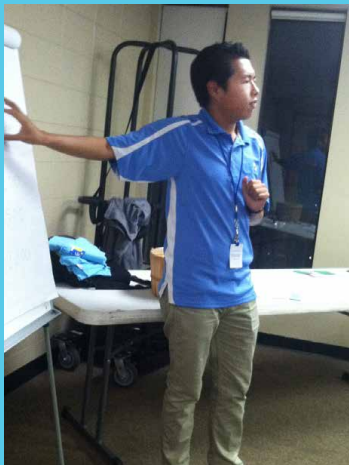
7 RIVERS COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL

The Future Center Advisors also work with students at 7 Rivers Community High School, a project-based learning program in the School District of La Crosse. The students learn why it would be in their best interest to explore career options prior to deciding what they want to study.

We also participated in "Defend Your Final Grade" presentations. Students shared information regarding their achievements as well as identifying their opportunities for improvement. "You could tell students feel a sense of responsibility and really own their grades," said Hayley.

"La Crosse Promise has been a great blessing and resource for 7 Rivers this past year. We are thankful for the help in navigating the waters of post-high school options for our students at 7 Rivers!"

—Matthew Weege, 7 Rivers Advisor



LA CROSSE COUNTY JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER

We work with inmates at the JDC explaining the steps they could take toward a successful future. Some were surprised that they still could graduate and pursue higher education and career goals.

"I explained that just because you made a mistake, you can turn your life around and succeed,"

said Andrew. "I don't think a lot of them understood that. My hope is that when they return to school they will remember me and they will feel comfortable discussing their options."

THE BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF GREATER LA CROSSE

This year, La Crosse Promise Future Centers and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater La Crosse forged a partnership to help students envision life after high school. In October, we held our first session at the Erickson Club. Over 30 students participated in an exciting game of "Career Launch." They learned about careers, salaries and budgeting in the "Real World."

At the Amie L. Mathy Club, kids participated in the College and Career A to Z game. They were asked to find words that relate to college and inspire them to be successful in school. Our goal was to show them how important it is to start thinking ahead to plan for college so they can realize their dreams.

HOPE ACADEMY

The Hope Academy in the Family and Children's Center in La Crosse provides teen parents with the opportunity to complete a high school credential and raise a healthy child. We visit with student moms to discuss what we can do together to help them prepare for the future. They are provided with financial aid materials, including an explanation of the FAFSA process.

PRIVATE SCHOOLS

La Crosse Promise provides services to students from Aquinas and Onalaska Luther that reside within the boundaries of the School District of La Crosse.

Eligible students at Onalaska Luther meet with our advisor at least twice each year. They are reminded of the appropriate steps they can take to plan for their future. In their junior and senior year, a great deal of individual guidance is provided with college applications, financial aid options, and finalization of college admission tasks.

At Aquinas, student outreach takes place on a weekly basis in the commons, where games and activities are presented on topics such as job shadows, scholarships, time management, and campus living. Students also stop by to ask questions regarding college applications, FAFSA, and other general college-related questions.



Megan Britt (above), a Master's degree student from the UW-La Crosse School of Education, assisted with the Boys & Girls Clubs events this year as part of her internship with La Crosse Promise.

WHAT OUR STUDENTS SAY

DUNG (pronounced "young")

Class of 2016 Central graduate Dung first heard about us from his teachers who encouraged him to visit the Center.



At first, Dung was confused about what the future looked like for him and was unsure about what career to pursue. During his freshman and sophomore years, he was leaning toward a career in elementary education. His advisor created a smooth experience for him to job shadow at a neighboring elementary school.

As they continued exploring career options, Dung and his advisor worked together to find his niche, which he decided, would be business management. Dung plans to attend UW-Stout in fall 2016.

HANNAH

Hannah admits she did not visit the Future Center at Central until later in her high school career. When she did talk to her advisor, she learned about the enrollment dates, financial aid requirements, and scholarship deadlines. She



felt more sure of herself after connecting with us.

Hannah enjoyed the fact that every time she visited the Future Center, she accomplished something. She had originally planned to attend Winona State but later decided to attend UW-Stout. She even came in to the Future Center after graduation this year for guidance on how to make that switch.

NICK

Nick heard about the Future Center at Logan High School when he was a freshman. He first utilized the services when creating application essays to send to prospective colleges.



Nick liked the convenience of the campus visits so he didn't have to schedule them himself. His advisor was extremely helpful in answering the difficult questions he had regarding loans and scholarships. Having someone who had been in that situation was reassuring, he said.

Nick plans to attend UW-Platteville and major in civil engineering. Nick feels that the Future Center advisor brings a special set of skills to assist any high schooler in helping to create a bright future.

"Thank you for guiding our students to a bright future!"

The advisors are very professional and helpful to parents, who are trying to get all the necessary paperwork and information to the right places for students transitioning to college. This is especially important when this is the first child looking to continue their education after high school."

—School District of La Crosse parent

MATTIE

Mattie plans to attend UW-La Crosse in the fall of 2016, majoring in biochemistry with a



concentration in biomedicine.

She first came into the Future Center at Central to schedule

a field day at Gundersen Health System. After that, she continued to use the Center's services for college visits, job shadows, scholarships, and application assistance. She was pleased to receive several scholarships, thanks in part to that assistance.

She appreciated that she could get this type of one-on-one assistance during her free periods at school. Mattie said her advisor was not only dedicated to helping her with her plans, but was also a great friend to all of the students during their time in high school.

INSPIRATION

BY ANDREW LAM

DALE

Central grad Dale is eager to embark on his journey to college. He plans to attend UW-Madison—a lifelong dream.



He signed up for a Future Center tour of Madison's campus unaware of the other resources we provided. After his tour he began regularly visiting the Future Center and really taking advantage of the services.

His advisor arranged a job shadow at Gundersen Health System, which led him to his goal of completing pharmacy school. Dale also got help editing numerous college admission essays, completing scholarship entries, and finalizing his FASFA.

Dale says he is confident that he is prepared for college thanks to the advice he received at the Future Center.

EMILY

Emily's eight siblings are first generation college graduates and she is ready to be the ninth!



A 2016 Central graduate, Emily plans to embark on her college journey at UW-Stout to study design.

Her advisor helped her complete all of the necessary forms to apply in an efficient manner. Emily completed the FASFA well before her peers, which motivated her to complete all of the related forms, including loan applications.

She says the assistance she received contributed to a stress-free high school experience, enabling her to focus on academics. She said the Future Center is a fun and productive place where students can relax while also planning their future.

OLIVIA

Olivia, a Logan graduate, plans to attend the University of Texas-Dallas thanks to a scholarship she received to play soccer.



She is excited to travel to a new place and establish roots in Texas. Her intended major is international business.

Olivia believes the application process would have been extremely difficult if she had attempted it on her own. She says her advisor's assistance enabled her to focus on her schoolwork while also applying for college and that helped her succeed in her senior year.

On a campus visit this year to UW-La Crosse, a student approached me at lunchtime and asked if he could sit at my table. I nodded and turned back to my food. At that point, he said, "You don't remember me, do you?" I looked at his face and tried to recall his name. The moment he told me who he was, a part of my brain lit up and I remembered him from Logan.

He told me that college was much harder than he had expected. He had decided to change his major from biology to education so that he could become a high school teacher and he explained that it was because of me.

High school had been difficult for him as a male Hmong student. There were not a lot of role models in the school for him. He said that when I arrived at Logan, he was surprised that someone "like him" could be successful in this field.

That is part of his motivation to be part of the solution, and he wants to be an inspiration for future students. It is the exact same reason I have dedicated my life to serve in this capacity.

There are certain people in my life who I can point to and say, "I would not be here without their help." Now I'm doing the same for other students. In the future, one of this young man's students may say the same thing to him, continuing this positive educational cycle.

FUTURE CENTER ALUMNI

SANDY

Sandy felt ahead of her peers when she started college in 2015.

Sandy is a Logan High School alum attending UW-La Crosse with plans to transfer to UW-Oshkosh this fall. She is majoring in supply chain management.

Along with her older sister, Sandy is a first generation college student. Because of the guidance she received at the Future Center, Sandy felt ahead of her peers when she started college in 2015. She was able to create friendships earlier, explore resources, and become exposed to the rigor of college.

Her advisor helped make the application process go smoothly. Sandy said this helped her become independent and responsible for her own finances. This knowledge inspired her to continue to find resources on the college campus as well.

SCOTT

Scott felt comfortable enough to continue to ask his high school Future Center advisor for advice on how to complete various applications after arriving at the university.

Scott just finished his freshman year at UW-La Crosse. He feels he is readily prepared for the remaining years in college, due in part because of his personal connection with the Future Center while at Logan High School. He appreciated the assistance with college applications, scholarships, and the FASFA. He said this has made a huge impact on his future plans.

Not only did Scott receive help during high school, Scott contacted his advisor throughout his freshman year in college to ask advice about how to complete various applications.

WILL

Without the Future Center, Will felt he would not have been prepared for college.

Will feels that his advisor at Logan gave him the direction he needed at an early stage regarding where he wanted to go to school and which career best fit his future. He knows he would not have been as prepared for college without this assistance.

Now a junior at UW-Milwaukee, Will said he appreciated the extensive help he received while filling out financial aid forms, applying for student loans, and writing essays for college scholarships.

He feels the knowledge will help him with the financial aid applications each year throughout his remaining college career.



Our Future Center Advisors with students they advised through the college enrollment process. These students are well underway to a successful college career and future!

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FUTURE CENTER COMMITTEE

We are grateful for the continued support from the members of our Future Center Committee whose knowledge and expertise has helped us serve so many students in our goal toward future education and success.

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Clockwise from left: Advisor Andrew Lam, Advisor Hayley Moe, Executive Director Jerilyn Dinsmoor, Outreach and Communications Coordinator Kristen Lueth, and Intern Megan Britt

GIFTS

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

MAJOR SUPPORT GIFTS

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Please contact us at 608.789.2049 with any corrections or updates. Thank you.

