OYIBO MICHAEL OGHENENYERHOVWO

18/ENG01/021

CHEMICAL ENGINEERING

GST212

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Problem Every year, 440,000 low-income high school seniors who are qualified to go to college do not enroll; 85% of them never even fill out a college application (Hahn and Price, 2008). This is in large part because low-income students face a college application information gap: they have limited access to information about which colleges to apply to, how to complete a college application, what a good application essay looks like, and how to navigate the complicated financial aid process. Low-income high schools are drastically understaffed: one college counselor may serve as many as 740 students. Moreover, less than half of low-income high school students report receiving help from an adult in preparing for college (Ad Council 2006).

Attending college is one of the best ways to advance economically; without the information and guidance necessary to apply to college, many low-income students are deprived of the opportunity to escape poverty.

Concept AppSuccess bridges this information and knowledge gap so that low-income students who want to apply to college have the same opportunities as their high-income peers.

AppSuccess is a web-based platform where low-income high school seniors ("Applicants") are matched with undergraduate students at top universities ("Mentors") who serve as volunteer college counselors throughout the course of the student's application process. Using an in-depth

curriculum, Mentors will work one-on-one with Applicants on the website to navigate the college application process: where and when to apply, how to write a compelling admissions statement, how to fill out FAFSA—providing the same services for free that currently only privileged students can afford. The entire guidance relationship takes place online, allowing us to overcome geographic and logistical barriers that have impeded the effectiveness of other volunteerMission AppSuccess provides low-income students who are qualified to go to a four-year college with the means to get there. We eliminate the college application information gap by matching our Applicants with students from top colleges who guide them through the college application and financial aid process via our interactive online platform.

Theory of Change If we provide low-income students with personalized college application assistance, then they will get into better colleges and have improved life options and opportunities.

Management Team AppSuccess has five founding members, whose backgrounds span education, computer development, finance, consulting, and nonprofits: • The CEO was a Teach For America teacher, worked at D.C. Public Schools, and founded a small education organization; • The CTO is a computer science student and has extensive experience in web development; • The COO worked at Boston Consulting Group where he advised urban school districts; • The CAO was a Teach For America teacher and works extensively with the YMCA to develop leadership programs for college students; • The CFO served for over 20 years as a portfolio manager at Fidelity and Wellington Management Company.

We will hire web developers to help build the website, and will grow our staff commensurate with the growth of our organization. By our sixth year, we plan to have a total of eleven people on staff.

Market Analysis AppSuccess plans to target the 440,000 low-income students who are qualified to go to college but do not enroll. We will recruit students at Title I schools, which have the largest concentration of low-income students, by reaching out to teachers and staff at those schools. In our first year, we will serve 90 Applicants, and grow to serve over 6,000 by our sixth year.

While there are many organizations that offer college counseling, AppSuccess will be the first to provide free, personalized college assistance to low-income students anywhere in the country. This gives us a first-mover advantage, establishing AppSuccess as the main source for college counseling to low-income students.

Financial Plan Our model projects that we will be cash-flow positive by our third year of operation. Our expenses will be driven mainly by web-development and personnel costs, and will gradually grow from $325,000 in year one to $650,000 in year six as we double our headcount to accommodate increased web traffic and recruitment efforts. We will be financed mainly by grants and individual donations, and will slowly introduce additional revenue streams including advertising and corporate partnership.

Operations In our first year, we will draw Mentors from three universities, and expand to work with the schools on the U.S. News Top 100 Colleges list by our fifth year. In each university that we work with, we will recruit a Campus Leader—a student leader who will serve to recruit Mentors and serve as a liaison between Mentors and AppSuccess.

AppSuccess headquarters will be based in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Employees will be based out of AppSuccess headquarters, though employees will have the option of working remotely.

Incorporation AppSuccess will be incorporated as a 501(c)(3) in Massachusetts.

ORGANIZATION SUMMARY

Key Elements for Success There are four key elements that AppSuccess needs in order to be successful: qualified Applicants, dedicated Mentors, effective Campus Leaders, and a user-friendly and functional web-based platformMARKET ANALYSIS

Market for Applicants AppSuccess targets low-income students who qualify to attend a four-year college. The students we target are on track to become high school graduates who, without our intervention, either would not apply to college at all or would apply to less selective colleges in which they would not be able to maximize their potential.

The National Center for Education Statistics estimates that 2.9 million students graduated from public high schools in the 2008-09 school year, and 1.2 million of those students did not enroll in a four-year college upon graduation, even though many were college qualified. A Congressional Advisory Panel estimated that 440,000 of those students are college qualified students from lowincome backgrounds. (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, 2002).

In a recent survey of college-qualified non-college-goers, only 15% had even applied to college (Hahn and Price, 2008). This means that of the 440,000 low-income college-qualified high school grads who do not go to college every year, 374,000 never apply to college (see Figure 7).

AppSuccess will reach our target population by focusing on Title I schools, where most of the 440,000 low-income college-qualified non-college-goers go to school. Rather than trying to reach 440,000 individual students spread throughout the country, which would be costly and inefficient, we will instead target the nearly 4,600 high schools that receive Title I funds for educating high proportions of low-income students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010).