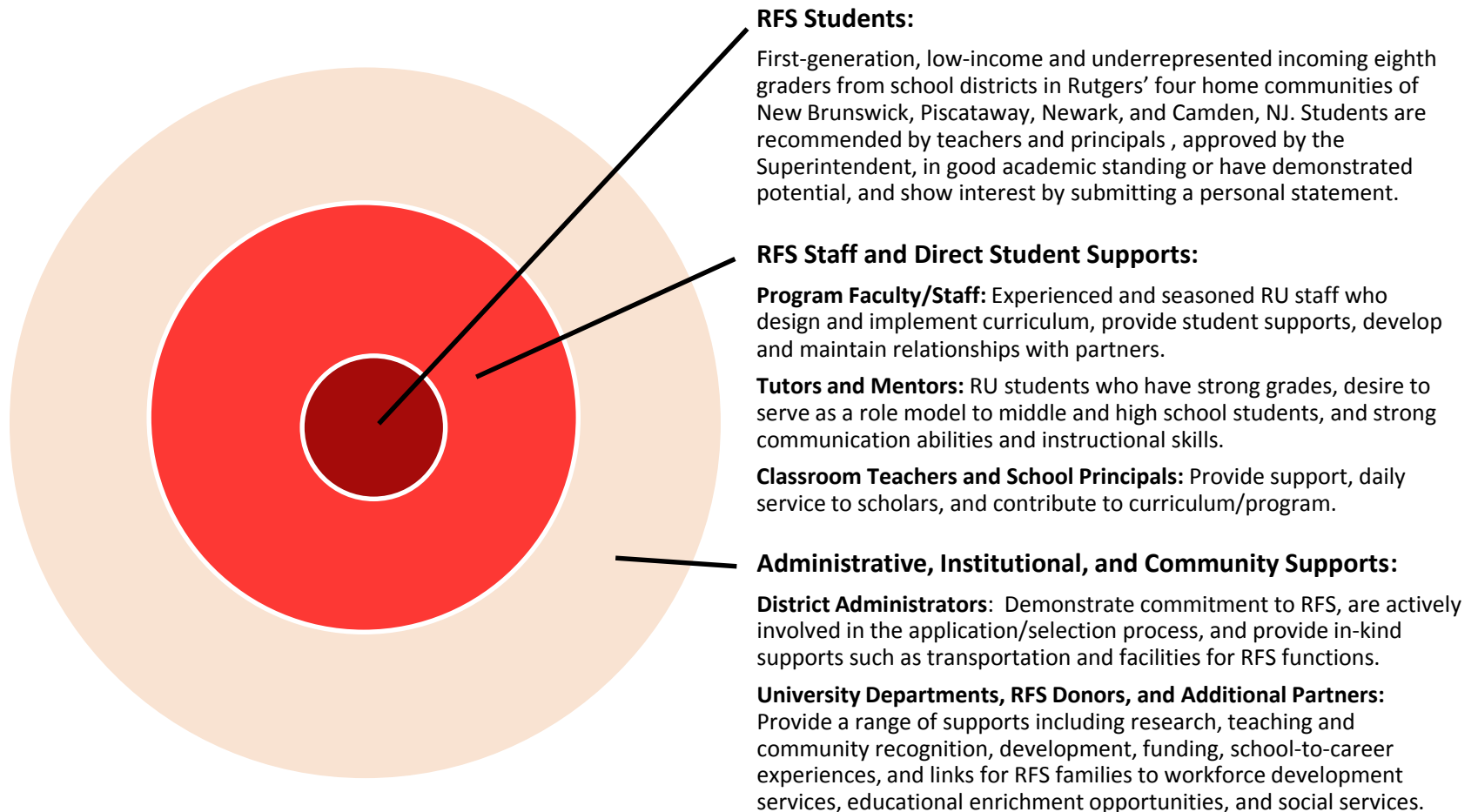




Theory of Change

Rutgers Future Scholars (RFS) Goals: Rutgers Future Scholars aims to 1). increase the number of students who complete high school and apply to and attend post secondary educational institutions, including Rutgers University, and 2). Develop a replicable model to incite peer institutions in-state and nation-wide to partner with school districts to identify, support, prepare and offer tuition scholarships to low income, promising middle school students.

Strategic partners: Rutgers Future Scholars engages school teachers, principals, and district superintendents, Rutgers University faculty staff and students as well as local community based organizations and employers to develop this unique pre-college program for 200 new students every year.



Rutgers Future Scholars Theory of Change

The Context for RFS's Work

Opportunities

- The current administration, the funding community, and the business community are focusing on college access and completion as paramount to the future of our country and our economy.
- “The current and future health of America’s 21st Century Economy depends directly on how broadly and deeply Americans reach a new level of literacy—‘21st Century Literacy’—that includes strong academic skills, thinking, reasoning, teamwork skills, and proficiency in using technology.” -21st Century Workforce Commission National Alliance of Business

Challenges:

- High schools across the nation continue to face a significant crisis with 30% of public high school students—including nearly half of Hispanic and African-American students—failing to graduate in four years (Barton, 2005).
- Data from Abbott schools in New Brunswick, Camden and Newark, NJ show that the percentage of seniors intending to pursue a four-year college education lags significantly below the state average.
- SAT scores, one of the highest predictors of college acceptance, vary significantly by race, with Caucasian students consistently outperforming African-American students and Latino students – sometimes by upwards of 100 points per subject area. These differences are magnified when socioeconomic status is considered (IES, 2011).

Our Assumptions

- RFS students need resources, personal guidance, and individualized support over multiple years to support their educational trajectory.
- RFS students have the necessary capacities and willingness to participate in this program.
- The more students are engaged in their school system and local community, the more likely they are to persist through middle and high school.
- The more students are exposed to and engaged with the university system, the more likely they are to view it as a viable option and apply to a four-year institution.
- The more students are exposed to and engaged with the Rutgers system, the more likely they are to apply to RU.
- District staff and administrators are/will be engaged supporters in RFS design and implementation and are critical factors for its sustainability.
- Each campus brings innovation and creativity to the design of their RFS program, maintaining the core elements but slightly adapting the program differently based on their context.

Our Strategies for Change

Implement a Strong, Sequential Program and Network of Supports for Middle School Students

Implement holistic multi-year program that marries vision and local context; track program and use data for continual improvement; repurpose/secure funds to sustain and expand program; and coordinate learning/information sharing opportunities for staff.

Leverage Program Strengths to Make the Case for Scale to a National Audience

Strategically plan for scale with partners; package and disseminate lessons learned and research findings; serve in an advisory role to others interested in implementing RFS; strengthen partnerships and secure funding for scale and sustainability.

Working Theory of Change:

Providing first-generation, low-income and underrepresented middle school students with a sequential multi-year curriculum including academic enrichment, university programming, social/cultural events, counseling and support, mentoring, and tutoring and incentivizing them with full tuition funding to Rutgers University upon admission will help them develop academically, socially, and personally, and will increase their likelihood of completing high school and applying and attending post secondary institutions. By embedding this work in the mission of Rutgers University, having commitment for it from University leaders, and using data to continually improve it and make a case for its success, Rutgers Future Scholars: 1) will leverage funds to sustain this program locally and 2) can be scaled nationally.

KEY STRATEGIES

Implement a Strong, Sequential Program and Network of Supports for Middle School Students

Implement holistic multi-year program that marries vision and local context; track program and use data for continual improvement; repurpose/secure funds to sustain and expand program; and coordinate learning/information sharing opportunities for staff.

Leverage Program Strengths to Make the Case for Scale to a National Audience

Strategically plan for scale with partners; package and disseminate lessons learned and research findings; serve in an advisory role to others interested in implementing RFS; strengthen partnerships and secure funding for scale and sustainability.

SHORT TERM OUTCOMES

Scholars are empowered to succeed academically, developmentally, and socially through high school and into college; **program outcomes are used to garner support** to support and grow RFS at RU; **RFS develops and sustains national presence**; and **implementation is scaled** to other institutions across the country.

LONG TERM OUTCOMES

Increased **college persistence and completion**; local **policy and practice** changes; solidified **diverse public and private funding streams** for sustained RFS programming and to support similar programs for target group; **RFS seen as national leader** on educational access and success for low-income and first-generation students; increased number of **universities institutionalizing program**.

Rutgers Future Scholars Theory of Change

Strategy 1. Implement a Strong, Sequential Program and Network of Supports for Middle School Students :

Implement holistic multi-year program that marries vision and local context; track program and use data for continual improvement; repurpose/secure funds to sustain and expand program; and coordinate learning/information sharing opportunities for staff.

Activities

Implement sequential, multi-year program that includes:

- Summer programs designed to explore careers and possible majors, bridge connection between classroom and “real world,” and begin orientation to college culture
- Academic enrichment activities such as SAT prep, STEM curriculum, college credit bearing courses, and academic tutoring
- University –based programming including open house and campus tours
- Social/cultural events that promote development of communication and interpersonal skills, independence, self efficacy, self empowerment, and multicultural awareness
- Counseling, support, and mentoring
- Leadership development opportunities for scholars and university mentors
- Connections to local community based organizations and employers
- Full application, financial, and enrollment support to Rutgers, and application and enrollment support to all universities to which scholars apply
- Student perspective in development and revision of curriculum/program
- Elements specific to context/student body in local community

Track program outcomes and commit to using data to drive continual program improvement

Leverage existing funds or secure new ones to sustain/grow program

Coordinate learning opportunities among RFS staff

Short-term Outcomes (Years 1-4)

Overall aiming for student achievement and persistence, increases in college and workforce readiness, identity and social skill development, and college readiness.

Scholars:

- Increased **academic performance** (GPA, standardized test scores)
- Increased **MS/HS persistence** (attendance, on-track course taking, drop out record, likelihood of graduation)
- Increased **identity & 21st century skill development** (future orientation, college aspirations and career planning, self-efficacy, confidence in academic abilities, leadership skills, creativity, imagination, knowledge of professional and life skills)
- Increased **college readiness** (acceptance rate, time between graduation and college enrollment, scores on college entry exam, comfort level with application process and on college campus)

Mentors:

- Increased **connectedness** to the local community
- Increased **civic engagement mindedness**

Community:

- Increased **family involvement** with school district

Long-term Outcomes (5+ Years)

Overall aiming for college persistence and completion for scholars, changes in school districts and at RU, increased capacity to support students in local communities, and diverse funding streams for sustained programming.

Scholars:

- **College persistence and completion**

Program:

RFS is embedded in:

- **Relevant school districts**, as evidenced by policies and practices that encourage and support principal and staff participation and sustainability despite leadership transitions
- **Local communities**, as evidenced by increased family, social network, community based organization capacity to support these students through their educational and developmental trajectory
- **Rutgers University**, as evidenced by financial and in-kind supports from the Office of the President, dedicated faculty and staff across campuses /departments, and being linked to RU mission statement.

There is both internal (RU) and external (private/public) **funding to grow and sustain program** in NJ.

Rutgers Future Scholars Theory of Change

Strategy 2. Leverage Program Strengths to Make the Case for Scale to a National Audience:

Strategically plan for scale with partners; package and disseminate lessons learned and research findings; serve in an advisory role to others interested in implementing RFS; strengthen partnerships and secure funding for scale and sustainability.

Activities

Develop a plan for/pathway to scale that includes seeking resources to sustain and replicate RFS

Capture and package promising practices, tools, and evaluation results, including codification of effective program elements for replication/ transferability to other university campuses

Coordinate learning opportunities and best practice sharing with pre-college programs/representatives from other universities and other relevant stakeholders; use these opportunities to **advocate for additional stakeholder support** and to **integrate RFS** into broader pre-college agenda

Advise potential partners interested in implementing the RFS model at their universities

Build additional/strengthen existing community partnerships – both to become champions of program and also to secure additional funding for sustainability

Short-term Outcomes (Years 1-4)

Overall aiming for commitment to scaling plan, increased national visibility of RFS, awareness about RFS impact, secured financing, support from broad cast of stakeholders, and scaling implementation to other institutions across the country.

Plan for replication, adoption and scale of successful RFS model has been developed in partnership with partners and is supported by RU leadership

High national visibility of RFS program

Increased awareness on the part of key partners including national college networks, philanthropy, practitioners, and policy makers about RFS outcomes and impact

Secured public and private funding toward expanding RFS

Increased engagement, knowledge, and financial contributions from business community and other public and private philanthropic partners

Other universities implementing (key elements of) these models

Long-term Outcomes (5+ Years)

Overall aiming for RFS being seen as national expert, diversified national funding streams to support RFS and similar programs aimed at target group, institutionalization of RFS at growing number of institutions.

RFS is seen as a national knowledge partner and expert on developing/strengthening educational access and success for low-income and first-generation students

National organizations and institutions are committing resources to RFS as well as other strategies that impact student access and success to educational opportunities

Increased # of Universities implementing this model, tracking outcomes, and joining the network to share lessons learned with the field