

**Gen-1 Theme House**  
University of Cincinnati  
PO Box 210002  
Cincinnati, OH 45221-0002

Contact: Dr. Stephanie Cappel  
Stephanie.Cappel@uc.edu  
(513) 556-3611



## The Recognition

The *Gen-1 Theme House* received a CollegeKeys Compact 2010 Innovation Award from the College Board in the 'Getting Through' category. This awards program "recognizes institutions and agencies that are leading this charge (making college access and success a reality for all students, including those from low-income backgrounds) and highlights promising practices from across the country".

The program's success also has been featured by *The New York Times*, *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, WCPO Channel 9 News and the *NBC Nightly News*. Additionally, several professional journals for college admission and college residence life administration (including *Inside Higher Ed* and *College Planning & Management*) have identified the *Gen-1 Theme House* program as a best or promising practice.

## Additional Benefits

### STEM

Our nation and the University are painfully aware of the dearth of economically disadvantaged minorities pursuing college degrees and professional careers in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine. The *Gen-1 Theme House* supports students from these underrepresented populations with STEM aspirations. In 2009-2010, three *Gen-1* residents pursued degrees in computer-related fields, four residents enrolled in the College of Engineering, two enrolled in the College of Applied Science, one is a mathematics major, and three are interested in health-related fields (nursing and medical imaging). As such, the *Gen-1* initiative is directly linked with the *STEM* initiative, and the success of one contributes to the success of the other.

### HEMI and Foster Youth

The University of Cincinnati's *HEMI* (Higher Education Mentoring Initiative) program in collaboration with the Hamilton County Commission and the Hamilton County Department of Jobs & Family Services is designed to improve college access and success for Hamilton County foster youth. In 2009-2010, the *Gen-1 Theme House* supported two students from this underrepresented population for 2009-2010. Once again, the *Gen-1* initiative is directly linked with the *HEMI* initiative, and the success of one contributes to the success of the other. This linkage provides a tremendous opportunity to leverage resources and achieve synergy for foster youth who are first-generation, low-income college freshmen. This possibility already has been recognized by Ron McSwain and the *Insured Success Foundation* with a \$165,000 donation to the *Gen-1 Theme House* to ensure that Hamilton County foster youth have access to this type of program to support their college education.

### College Diversity

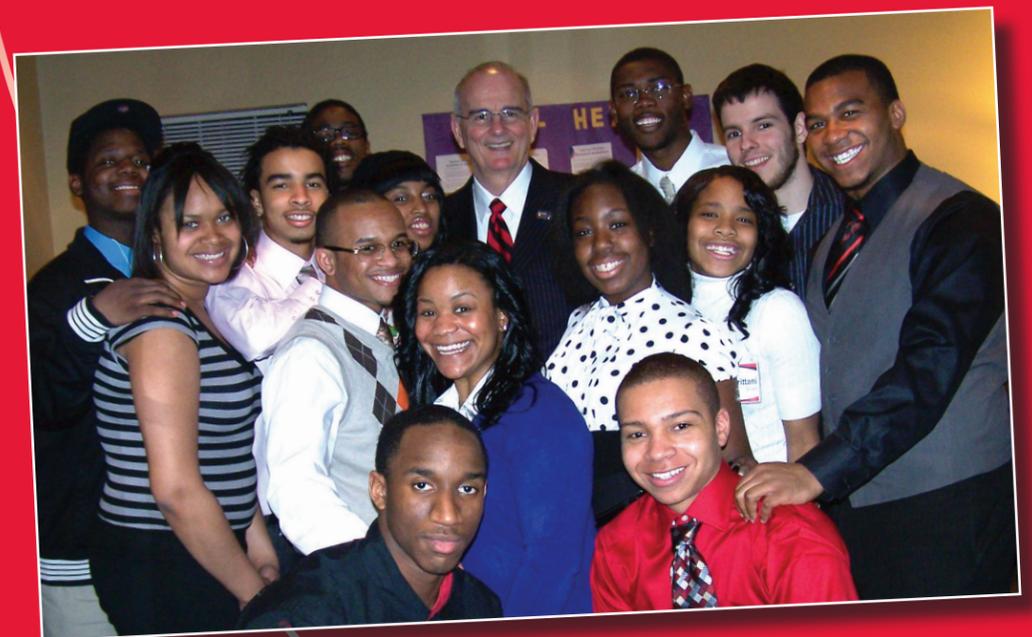
With the elimination of the College Access & Transition (*CAT*) program in conjunction with higher admissions standards, the University is apprehensive of their combined effect on diversity in specific colleges and across the university. As *CAT* ends, the importance of student support programs like the *Gen-1 Theme House* increases dramatically, especially for economically disadvantaged minority students previously supported by *CAT*. Initially, 12 of the 24 *Gen-1* students were enrolled in *CAT*. By the end of their freshman year, six still remained in *CAT*, while the others successfully transitioned into degree-granting programs. The 2009-2010 residents of *Gen-1* completed their freshman year as students in the following colleges: Arts & Sciences (9), CAS/Engineering (6), CECH (3), and *CAT* (6).



# Gen-1 Theme House

@ Stratford Heights

2010 FINAL REPORT



## The Need

According to The Pell Institute (*Moving Beyond Access: College Success for Low-Income, First-Generation Students*, 2008):

- 26% of first-generation, low-income college students do not continue beyond their freshman year (vs. 7% for college freshman with neither risk factor).
- 11% of first-generation, low-income college students earn a baccalaureate degree within six years of admission (vs. 55% for college students with neither risk factor).
- first-generation students are less likely to be engaged in the academic and social experiences that foster success in college, such as studying in groups, interacting with faculty and other students, participating in extracurricular activities, and using support services.

The 'perfect storm' for college failure is the first-generation, low-income freshman who commutes and works more than 20 hours per week. These students often:

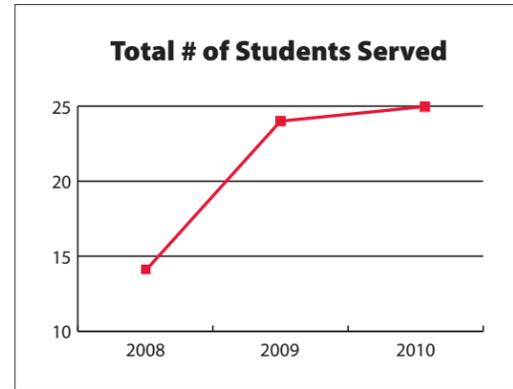
- Have academic and social skill deficiencies.
- Lack college-related guidance and support from a member of their nuclear or extended families.
- Do not become fully immersed in academic life and are less likely to take full advantage of available academic resources.
- Tend to face distracting family and peer pressure.
- Devote more time working than studying.

## The Response

Five critical components of a successful support program for high-risk college students have been identified by Lana Muraskin (*"Best Practices" in Student Support Services: A Study of Five Exemplary Sites*, 1997). These five components define the *Gen-1 Theme House*:

### 1. A highly structured freshman year experience.

*House* residents must sign a contract that includes a curfew, quiet hours, mandatory study/tutoring sessions,



participation in House activities, staff access to all academic records, maintenance of a minimum GPA, and more. Additionally, *House* residents are enrolled in a year-long, 3-credit hour *House* course: *Surviving and Thriving at UC*.

### 2. Emphasis on academic support.

The focus of the *House* is academics. The contract terms cited above (curfew, quiet hours, study/tutoring sessions, access to records, minimum GPA, etc.) are designed to promote academic success. *House* staff ensures that residents meet their academic responsibilities and take advantage of the University's academic resources.

### 3. Active and intrusive advising.

*House* staff practice active and intrusive advising, counseling, mentoring, and 'parenting'. The program coordinator monitors student performance on a daily basis, conducts regular individual student 'success conferences', and works closely with University administration, staff, and faculty to address and resolve student issues. The resident assistant provides 24/7 on-site access and advising.

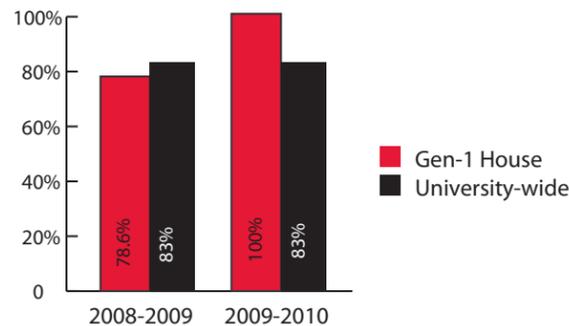
### 4. Promotion of active participation.

The *House* requires likely commuters to commit to a year-long residence in the House and on campus. This is a necessary step to full immersion in college and academic life. Then, the program coordinator and resident assistant promote full student participation in curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities, including *House* programs that support students and build a strong sense of community.

### 5. Strong presence on campus.

The *House* is a 24/7, full-immersion support program. Residents are not simply accessing selected services as needed; they are living the 'support experience'. They are part of a community in which like-minded residents support each other on a daily basis, and they benefit from the full-time attention of a program coordinator who has extensive professional experience and expertise. There is also 24/7 access to an on-site resident assistant.

### First to Second Year Retention Rates



## 2009-2010 University of Cincinnati First-Year Students Cohort

| Housing Status                | First Generation Status | Head Count | High School Scores |                      | End of Freshman Year, Spring 2010 |                  |               |                          |                       |                       |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|--------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|---------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
|                               |                         |            | Mean ACT Score     | Mean High School GPA | Number Retained                   | Percent Retained | Mean Cum. GPA | Mean Credit Hours Earned | Percent below 2.0 GPA | Percent Multicultural |
| Gen-1 House                   | First Generation        | 24         | 19.6               | 2.900                | 24                                | 100%             | 2.799         | 40.75                    | 4.2%                  | 91.7%                 |
| On Campus, not in Gen-1 House | First Generation        | 493        | 22.7               | 3.252                | 437                               | 88.6%            | 2.902         | 37.4                     | 13%                   | 26.2%                 |
|                               | Not First Generation    | 1,901      | 24.9               | 3.394                | 1,772                             | 93.2%            | 3.101         | 40.8                     | 7.9%                  | 14.5%                 |

## The Results

For the 2008-2009 academic year, 8 of 14 residents remained in the *House* through the end of Spring Quarter. Most, 13 of the 14 (92%) remained enrolled in UC through the end of the year. Ten of those 13 returned to UC for the start of the 2009-2010 academic year, while one transferred to another college. Subsequently, another transferred and one withdrew. Thus, 10 of 14 (71.4%) are still enrolled in college, 8 at UC and two at other colleges.

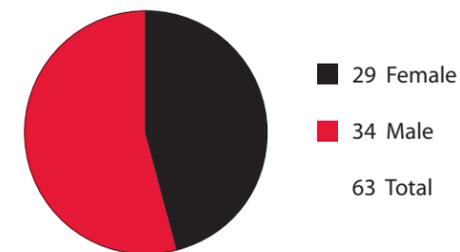
For the 2009-2010 academic year, all 24 residents remained enrolled in UC and remained in the House through the end of the academic year. More impressively, the unweighted House GPA was 2.783 for Fall Quarter, 2.716 for Winter Quarter, 2.759 for Spring Quarter, and 2.771 cumulative, while the weighted GPA is 2.883, 2.750, 2.761, and 2.799, respectively.

## The Cost

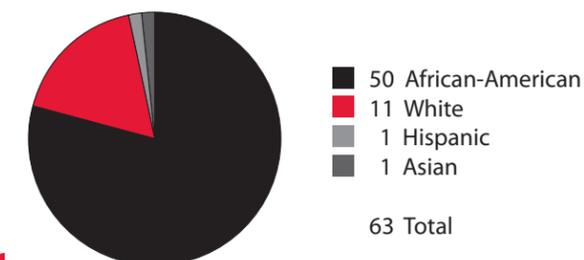
Quality programs staffed with qualified personnel are never inexpensive. The 2009-2010 school year budget for the *Gen-1 Theme House* is \$219,000. It could be argued, however, that this price pales in comparison to the cost to society of lives and economic opportunities lost due to educational failure. How does one place a price tag on our collective responsibility to promote economic, political, and social justice?

And it must be noted that a substantial portion of this budget is designed to provide direct financial support to low-income students in order to make living on a campus an affordable and viable option. A total of \$90,000 in housing and meal plan subsidies were provided to Gen-1 students for the 2009-2010 school year. Charitable contributions were secured during spring 2010 to provide residents a total of \$185,620 in subsidies for the upcoming 2010-2011 school year.

### Total # of Students by Gender



### Total # of Students by Race



### Gen-1 Budget

| INCOME                   |                   |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Charitable Contributions | \$ 17,000         |
| University Contribution  | \$ 225,000        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>             | <b>\$ 242,000</b> |
| EXPENSES                 |                   |
| Housing/Meal Subsidies   | \$ 90,000         |
| Program Staff            | \$ 105,500        |
| Resident Assistant       | \$ 15,000         |
| Program Operations       | \$ 8,500          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>             | <b>\$ 219,000</b> |