Title: The Finish Line Project: A U.S. Department of Education First In the World Grant

Presentation Type: Paper

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Abstract: The Finish Line Project at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH) is funded by a 3 million dollar federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s First In The World (FITW) Program. The goal of this program is to increase access and completion for underrepresented, underprepared, or low-income students. The Finish Line Project just began in late 2014 and will run for at least 4 years. Since receiving the award, peers and colleagues have asked, “How did you get that grant and what are you going to do with it?” This paper tells the story of how a small team at UNC-CH pursued the grant and how we wrote it. Additionally, we share the preliminary work of the project including our three-part approach for (1) curricular innovation, (2) outreach and support, and (3) pathways for timely and affordable degree completion as well as an overview of the project evaluation and research plans. Through sharing our experience and approaches we hope to provide guidance helpful to other institutions interested in applying for a large, federal grant to bolster undergraduate retention.