

Students pitch ideas to change higher ed, college leaders listen: REP4

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GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. -- Some high school students in Pennsylvania believe grit matters when applying for college, and they figured out a way to measure it. They will get the chance on August 5 to pitch higher education leaders on their idea to have college admission counselors look beyond transcripts and other conventional, standardized evaluations when assessing readiness for college.

Their idea is to measure students' stamina and persistence when pursuing goals as another characteristic indicating success in college. They call it a GRIT score, and they are proposing an app that records daily activities and uses an algorithm to formulate a score that represents students' goals, passions and time commitment. Admissions teams could use that score to more fully evaluate students' potential for success.

The students joined hundreds of other high school learners, many who are underserved, to develop their idea as part of [REP4](#), a national alliance that stands for Rapid Education Prototyping. The alliance is made up of six colleges and universities across the country seeking to address issues of equity, access and other pressing concerns faced by many underserved students.

The GRIT score, and other ideas from high school students around the country, could be coming soon to college campuses everywhere.

The innovative and central tenet of REP4 is mining fresh ideas from today's students on how to improve equity in higher education, then actually putting the best ideas into practice at colleges and universities.

The first round of proposals to help shape the future of higher education will be presented Aug. 5 in a [virtual national event](#) hosted by Grand Valley State University, the convener of REP4. The other five founding institutions are Amarillo College, Boise State University, Fort Valley State University, San José State University and Shippensburg University.

Leaders from those institutions will review live presentations of 12 proposals -- including the GRIT score -- by the students who created them. The ideas emerged from recent regional summits for high school students held by the alliance institutions.

Part of the selection process includes voting beginning Aug. 3. Students are encouraged to vote. To see the Aug. 5 presentations and to vote, [register here](#).

This national event is part of an ongoing initiative to encourage students to find solutions to barriers to higher education.

Donte Martin, a student who participated in a regional summit through Shippensburg University, said the experience created a family-like atmosphere on his REP4 team.

“We didn’t know each other, and we came together to create something beautiful,” Martin said. “We’re here to make change, to speak up, so we can be heard for generations to come.”

The adult leads who worked with the high school students agree the benefits of the REP4 experience will continue.

“REP4 has been an amazing experience allowing students to find and solve problems in a real-world and innovative way,” said Dominique Brown, from Battle Creek Central High School in Michigan. “As a teacher in special education, it gave me pride in the hard-work and passion my students put into the summit, and it gave me a new confidence in leading students toward a better and more inclusive future.”

Tomee Call from Mountain High in Kaysville, Utah, led a student cohort through the process at a regional summit and said she was moved by how powerful the REP4 experience is.

“Students are working together learning lifelong skills,” said Call. “They are learning to think deeply, analyze, problem solve, collaborate, reach goals, support, listen and communicate in new ways. This is a true teamwork and leadership experience! I have seen students light up with excitement as they tackle real problems and produce legitimate solutions. As an educator, this is invigorating to me, and it is exactly what I want for my students -- an amazing opportunity to come together from all over the nation and work toward solutions that will benefit education, society and our futures.”

For more information, [visit rep4.org](http://rep4.org).