HELPING COMMUTERS ACHIEVE GRADUATION

Pursuing a college degree takes a lot of effort, but the process becomes more difficult when students aim for degrees in STEM fields—science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

If those students are commuters who live away from campus or need to juggle full-time jobs and family obligations in addition to their studies, those challenges just multiply.

Thanks to a grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF), Josué Njock Libii, associate professor of mechanical engineering, is engaged in research to understand how schools can help these students finish STEM degrees more quickly and successfully.

“We hope to gain a new understanding of the challenges that commuter students face and how our institution and others can assist them in their quest for STEM degrees,” said Libii. “The NSF grant allows us to start building this research infrastructure here in northeast Indiana.”

The region needs more college graduates, especially those with STEM degrees. Commuter students are key to meeting this challenge as they often stay in the area after graduation, improving the quality of life and strengthening the local economy.
CONNECTIONG TEENS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Assistant Professor of Counselor Education Kerrie Fineran wants people to connect with each other because she knows what happens when they don’t.

“I see many lost and lonely people,” Fineran says. “That lack of connection can translate into a host of issues for people, including mental health challenges, peer and family relational problems, and negative or even dangerous behaviors.”

Through her clinical work and research on crisis response and suicidal behavior, Fineran helps counselors learn to empathetically assess and intervene with troubled individuals, especially adolescents.

Under Fineran’s leadership, the IPFW Counselor Education Program opened a Functional Family Therapy program. Funded by the Lutheran Foundation, this program is the first of its kind in Fort Wayne and only the third in all of Indiana.

Dubbed The Family Project, the program addresses the growing need to help area youth and their families deal with behavioral or emotional problems. Specially trained student counselors provide adolescents with strength-based, family-focused treatment that addresses their unique needs.

Best of all, The Family Project offers these services at no cost to troubled youth and their families, while also preparing future family therapy practitioners in the region.