

Early  
College  
Designs



JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

## PARTNERS IN INNOVATION

HOW A HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE ARE IMPROVING OUTCOMES  
FOR YOUTH IN SAN DIEGO

By Joy Coates and Michael Webb  
NOVEMBER 2013



## JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

**Jobs for the Future** works with our partners to design and drive the adoption of education and career pathways leading from college readiness to career advancement for those struggling to succeed in today's economy.

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**Early College Designs** enable all students to simultaneously earn a high school diploma and one to two years of transferable college credit, tuition free. Early college schools predominantly help low-income youth, first-generation college goers, English language learners, students of color, and other young people underrepresented in higher education.

These designs represent a bold approach to high school reform, based on the principle that academic rigor, combined with the opportunity to save time and money, is a powerful motivator for students to work hard and meet serious intellectual challenges. Early college schools blend high school and college in a rigorous yet supportive program, compressing the time it takes to complete a high school diploma and the first two years of college.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Early College High School Program at San Diego City College is a partnership of the college, San Diego Unified School District, and several state and national organizations. The partnership has successfully implemented a variety of college-readiness and college-connected strategies, including an early college school, to better prepare students for college work without the need for remedial courses. Students served by the partnership are low income, first generation, and come from populations that are underrepresented in higher education. The partnership design, informed by the national Early College High School Initiative, includes early assessment and attention to individual student needs, academic acceleration, extensive

student supports, student enrollment in college courses for high school and college credit, summer programs and secondary-postsecondary planning, alignment, and professional development. Results show improved performance on the SAT, standardized tests, and college courses. In addition, high school graduates who participated in the program show high college persistence rates. Implications for other secondary-postsecondary collaborations are discussed, including **leadership, constituent buy-in, secondary-postsecondary alignment, planning and collaboration, building the program based on strengths and priorities, key roles, location and facilities, and communication.**



**“PARTNERSHIP IS IMPORTANT AS A VEHICLE FOR SOCIAL EQUITY AND EGALITARIANISM. EARLY COLLEGE HELPS SOCIAL MOBILITY BY TARGETING AT-RISK STUDENTS, STUDENTS OF COLOR, AND FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS.”**

**–DR. TERRY BURGESS, PAST PRESIDENT, SAN DIEGO CITY COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

# INTRODUCTION

Think about a typical urban community college. It's probably large, sprawling, and a hub of activity for students at various stages in their education and careers. Students may be on different paths but they all have the same goal—increased opportunity. Suppose this community college is faced with the dilemma of reconciling dwindling financial resources with both increased local demand and heightened institutional ambitions. And finally, envision that key leaders in the college have set their sights on a large high school complex, located a world away culturally, but only a few hundred yards away geographically.

## **WELCOME TO THE EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM AT SAN DIEGO CITY COLLEGE.**

Years of collaboration in San Diego, California have produced significant results and brought about new opportunities for mobilizing college resources to help low-income, first-generation, African-American, Latino and other high school student groups with low overall success rates in postsecondary education to successfully transition to college. The story of this collaboration is an illustration of how a public institution has continued to show its commitment to equity in an era of economic retrenchment and cutbacks. In addition to the support of leadership, a major aspect of the collaboration is the deep engagement of both high school and college faculty.

This report describes how the partnership has incorporated a variety of strategies based on early college to prepare students for college work without the need for remediation. This has included the implementation of an early college school on the college campus and work with existing high schools to align the high school and college curriculum; early student assessment to identify areas that need to be

strengthened; professional development to incorporate research-validated instructional practices leading to college readiness; and extensive student supports leading to students' academic success. Remarkable progress has been made in the face of budget cuts at the school district and college levels toward the goal of significantly increasing the percentage of high school graduates from participating high schools who possess the literacy and numeracy skills necessary for placement in transferrable college math and English courses without the need for developmental education.

The two participating non-early college schools increased their SAT scores by 9 and 12 percentage points. The two schools also improved their performance on the state graduation assessment. Over a three-year period, the number of students testing at the proficient level on ELA (English language arts) rose by 14 percent and 6 percent. The percentage of students testing at the proficient level in math rose

### **Partners**

- > San Diego City College
- > San Diego City College Foundation
- > San Diego Unified School District
- > San Diego Early/Middle College High School
- > San Diego High School of LEADS
- > San Diego High School of Media, Visual, and Performing Arts
- > Foundation for California Community Colleges
- > Jobs for the Future
- > Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- > Pearson Learning

by 35 percent and 14 percent for the two schools over the same period. The program has also raised the percentage of students who qualify for placement in transferrable college courses without the need for developmental education.

By the third year (2010), the college enrollment of graduates of the two participating non-early college schools exceeded the national average for low-income student college enrollment by 11.4 percent. Over a three-year period (2008-2010), these graduates' persistence from the first to the second year of college also exceeded the national rates for African-American and Latino students who make up the majority of their enrollment by more than 20 percentage points. The early college school had its first graduating class in 2010 and 71 percent of graduates enrolled in college the following year, with 100 percent of those students returning for the second year.

The partnership demonstrates that early college designs work for underrepresented students, a very important lesson in the context of current efforts to

implement Common Core standards. Results have shown the efficacy of targeted and integrated personalized support; academic acceleration; offering experiences to develop a college-going academic identity; and breaking physical, academic, financial, and social boundaries to college. Data included in the report indicate the success of academic and support strategies in preparing students for college. Further, what began as an educated set of hunches based on promising practices has been codified and catalyzed into a model that has very strong proof of concept and is now being adapted for further expansion to additional San Diego high schools.

Data included in the report indicate the success of academic and support strategies in preparing students for college. Further, what began as an educated set of hunches based on promising practices has been codified and catalyzed into a model that has very strong proof of concept and is now being adapted for further expansion to additional San Diego high schools.

**“FOR THE 2009-10 COHORT, 42 PERCENT OF FIRST-YEAR COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS REQUIRED REMEDIATION IN MATH AND 35 PERCENT REQUIRED REMEDIATION IN ENGLISH. THIS TRANSLATES INTO 1,236 OF THE COLLEGE’S 2,944 FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS.”**

**–SAN DIEGO COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT, OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH AND PLANNING**

## A PARTNERSHIP DRIVEN BY MISSION

Dr. Terry Burgess, former president of San Diego City College, has described the partnership as a vehicle to combat the traditional low level of preparation many high school students receive for college-level work. “Partnership is important as a vehicle for social equity and egalitarianism. Early college helps social mobility by targeting at-risk students and students of color, and first-generation students. Early college provides a pathway to higher education for students who work hard.”

There are other practical reasons why the college has invested in the program. While the percent of students graduating from San Diego’s public schools has increased, many students do not graduate from high school with the skills required for college success. First-year students entering San Diego City College mirror state and national trends with respect to college readiness. According to one national study, fewer than one in four community college students who are required to take a developmental education course completed a degree or certificate within eight years of enrollment. Based on projected trends, many of these students will not complete a postsecondary credential. In another national study, nearly 60 percent of students had to take at least one developmental education course during their community college career (Bailey 2009; Attewell et al. 2006).

For the 2009-10 cohort, 42 percent of first-year San Diego Community College students required remediation in math, and 35 percent required remediation in English. This translates into 1,236 of the college’s 2,944 first-year students.

–San Diego Community College District, Office of Institutional Research and Planning

These statistics do not bode well for the future prospects of a significant number of students. Most of the current and projected job expansion is for workers who require some postsecondary education or training. Former President Burgess pointed out that, “The program will pay off on the bottom line. Students will be better employed and will pay more taxes.”

The San Diego Early College Partnership includes local, state, and national partners. The partnership is led by San Diego City College, a comprehensive, two-year, urban, public community college located in downtown San Diego. The partnership was launched in 2007 with the assistance of the Foundation for California Community Colleges and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. This support, including funding, enabled the partners to engage in a year of planning supported by Foundation for California Community Colleges, and several years of implementation. Jobs for the Future, the national coordinating organization for early college, has supported professional development and data collection and analysis.

### WHAT WERE THE BIGGEST INITIAL CHALLENGES?

Early on, the partnership planning group comprised the superintendent, college president, and several senior administrators from both institutions. They faced a number of challenges. School facilities were not ideal for establishing a school on the college campus. They had to educate district staff and college faculty as well as engage staff and faculty in the process of curriculum alignment. The planning group set up the college articulation agreement to guide college course taking.

The planners had to counter fear that the Early/Middle College would siphon off the best students and thereby

**“WE ARE STILL WORKING ON THE CHALLENGE OF HOW TO DEAL WITH SYSTEMS THAT COLLIDE.”**

**–NELLIE MEYER, FORMER DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT, SAN DIEGO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

diminish other schools. Another issue was how to treat college courses within the weighted grading system for AP and honors courses. They decided not to use weights in assigning grades. According to Nellie Meyer, “When you look at the rules you have to think what needs to be changed; what are the rules and are they justifiable? College credit is a powerful vehicle for students’ future. We know that this design works and kids need it, but the pathway has to be explicit.”

Elizabeth Larkin was identified during the planning process as a leader for the new Early/Middle College because of her philosophy of equity and support for all students. She was able to bring on a strong and experienced staff for the new school.

Starting a new, early college school has resulted in additional costs, including facilities on the college campus, college textbooks and student support services provided by the college. Despite funding challenges, the district has been enthusiastic in its support for the partnership.

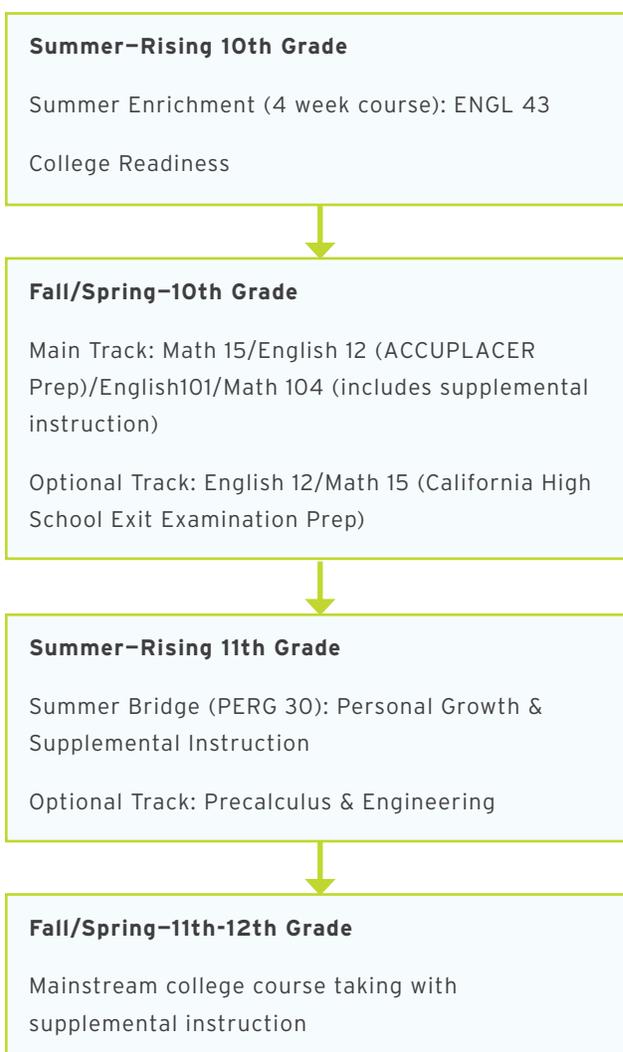
The plan included developing a new school on the college campus and implementing early college design practices in several existing schools. Two neighboring schools, San Diego High School of LEADS (Learn, Explore, Achieve, Develop, Serve) and San Diego High School of MVPA (Media, Visual and Performing Arts), were the first schools to participate in the partnership in 2007. These two schools participated through 2011, when changes in school leadership and financial challenges resulted in their discontinuation. San Diego Early/Middle College opened as a new school on the campus of San Diego City College in 2008, and despite the economic challenges has continued to be supported by the college and school district.

While the other two schools did not become early colleges, over a four-year period their students participated in key early college program components, including summer bridge and summer enrichment, assessment (through the ACCUPLACER), and academic and personal supports to prepare for placement in transferrable college courses. Faculty from the two

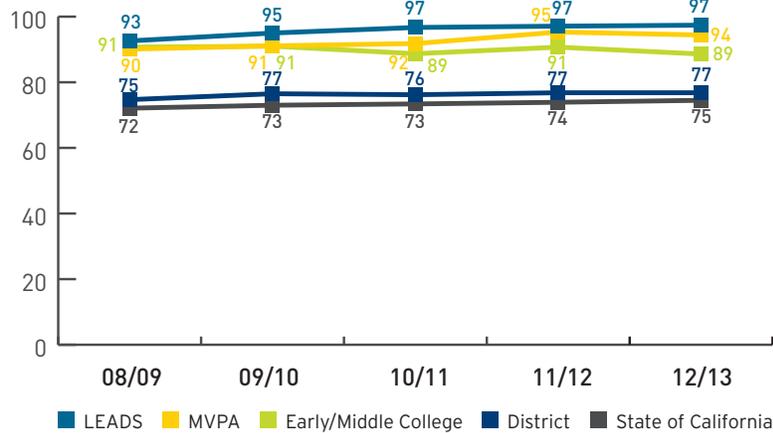
schools also collaborated with college faculty in extensive planning and professional development focusing on student supports, curriculum alignment, and instruction. Results showed marked improvements on a number of measures, including the SAT and standardized tests. Students from the two schools also had the opportunity to take college courses.

The implementation design was based on the Early College High School Initiative. Early college has been recognized as an effective strategy for improving graduation rates, and college preparation and success

### **SAN DIEGO CITY COLLEGE EARLY COLLEGE TRAJECTORY**

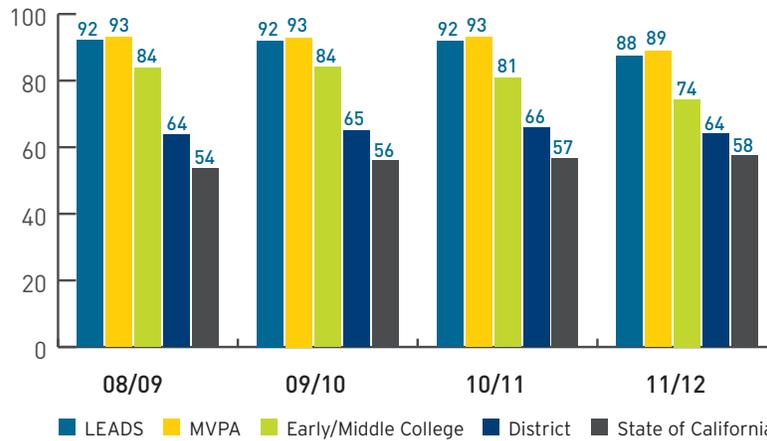


**PERCENT OF MINORITY STUDENTS ENROLLED BY SCHOOL, DISTRICT, AND STATE (FIVE-YEAR COMPARISON)**



Source: California Department of Education

**PERCENT OF LOW-INCOME STUDENTS IN PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS EXCEEDS THE DISTRICT AND STATE (BASED ON STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR FREE OR REDUCED PRICE LUNCH)**



Source: California Department of Education

(AIR 2013; Edmunds; SRI 2010). Characteristics of the design, based on a set of core principles, include: college-school district collaboration; focus on student groups with the lowest overall preparation and postsecondary attainment; aligned secondary-postsecondary curriculum; early student assessment coupled with student academic and personal supports; concurrent enrollment; teaching and instructional practices validated by research and effective practice; and data collection and analysis to assess progress and make design revisions.

Each of the three schools in the partnership serves a student population that is significantly more low-income, Latino, and African American than the San Diego Unified School District as a whole. In fall 2011, San Diego Early/Middle College enrolled 150 students. A total of 460 students were enrolled in ARTS. LEADS enrolled 408 students.

Ms. Kendra Madden, a tenth grade teacher of World Literature and AP/Literature, previously taught in a large, comprehensive high school. "That system wasn't

responsive to student needs. These are the same students I have had in the past. The difference is that I am seeing them in a place where they have access to technology and where they are being served.”

## LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATION

The San Diego Early College Partnership includes four major components: early assessment tied to academic enrichment and support, summer bridge program, concurrent enrollment in college courses, and high school and college faculty professional development focusing on strategies to accelerate students’ academic skills. These components support the trajectory of students to college readiness. Students may begin to take college courses as early as the ninth grade.

College and high school faculty collaborate to plan and conduct summer programs for rising tenth and eleventh grade students. During the summer, rising tenth graders participate in an enrichment program that includes English 43, a course designed to help students become independent learners and develop knowledge of the writing process and gain practice in academically rigorous activities. Students work in small groups to complete concept laboratories and a project that results in a portfolio, which they present at the end of the course. The Concept Laboratory Method is a student-centered method of instruction that allows students to

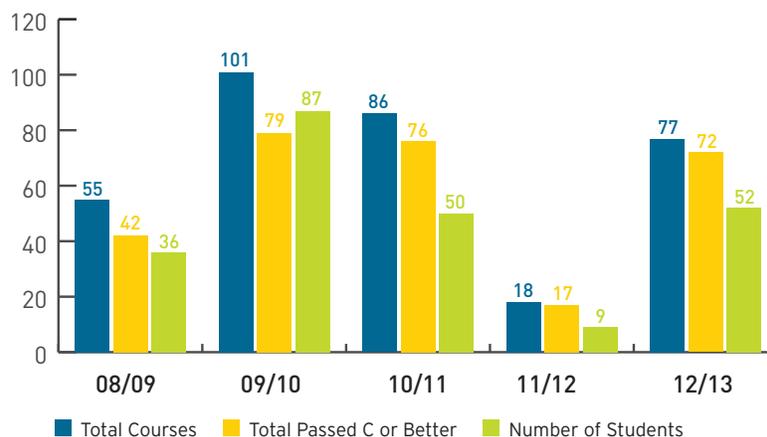
pursue their own guided inquiries and arrive at deeper understandings of key concepts through structured group work/collaboration. A major aspect of the role of the instructor is to facilitate/clarify.

Based on their performance on the ACCUPLACER—a test used by colleges to assess college readiness in reading, writing, and math—tenth graders may enroll in transferrable English and math college courses, or in English 12 or Math 15, both review courses.

In the summer prior to their eleventh grade year, students participate in a summer bridge program. They enroll in PERG 30, a one-unit personal growth course offered by San Diego City College. Students also have the option of taking a college precalculus, trigonometry, or engineering course. The summer bridge program focuses extensively on college readiness in order to prepare students to become successful and independent college students. They learn about the culture of college and how to navigate it. The objectives of the summer bridge program are:

- > to gain knowledge of college choices, learning styles, success strategies, professionalism, career goals, and survival strategies;
- > to clarify personal values and understand the scope of skills and ability, academic strengths and weaknesses, and the responsibilities of college;

**SAN DIEGO EARLY/MIDDLE COLLEGE: TRANSFERRABLE COLLEGE COURSES TAKEN\*, PASSED AND NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED BY YEAR**



\*100 level courses or above, not including physical education courses  
Source: San Diego City College

- > to develop skills in career planning and educational goal setting, writing a professional cover letter and resume; and
- > to prepare for ACCUPLACER testing, completing the test and using results for placement in college courses.

## CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT

The San Diego Community College includes three campuses, including San Diego City College. The community college has an agreement with the San Diego Unified School District that enables students to take college courses tuition free. According to former President Burgess, the first formal agreement between the school district and college for concurrent enrollment dates back to 1995. Concurrent enrollment was an option for the eleventh grade level or above, with parental permission and a guidance counselor’s approval. The school district has enrolled as many as 300 high school students per semester in college classes on the San Diego Community College campus.

Following the start of the early college partnership, San Diego Community College established an early college office on the campus and designated a staff person to serve as a college liaison to help with course registration, work with faculty and administrators and to address logistical or programmatic issues. Today, a small sign on the window of an office (shared with another program) announces “Early College Program.”

Unfortunately, the ramp-up of early college in San Diego came at a time when the state experienced a severe financial crisis. Former San Diego Community College President Dr. Terry Burgess, a champion of the early college high school program, was acutely aware of the challenges facing its continued implementation. “We have had to cut \$51 million from the budget since 2007. We may have to cut \$9.2 million from this year’s [2012] budget,” Burgess said. Because of budget cuts the college could only offer concurrent enrollment to students from a small number of schools in the 2011-2012 school year, including San Diego Early/Middle College. As a result of the budget cuts and changes in leadership, LEADS and MVPA ended their participation in 2011 after four years, though both schools showed significant improvements.

Despite these challenges, President Burgess was encouraged by the increase in applications at San Diego Early/Middle College and enthusiasm for the program shown by parents in the community. He believes that if students complete one year of college in high school they will have momentum to re-enroll for the second year of college.

At San Diego Early/Middle College students receive a college readiness grade that includes performance in core academic areas, maturity, behavior, leadership skills, and discipline in submitting assignments on time. According to one teacher, “It’s not all or nothing. Some students may not be strong in every area. If they can benefit overall we think they should go forward with taking a college class.” However, the college readiness grade means a lot. Students usually need a college readiness grade of A or B. “If they get a college readiness grade of C, it means we need to talk.” The system appears to be working. Since 2008, San Diego Early/Middle College students have passed 85 percent of transferrable college courses they have completed with a grade of C or better, not including physical education courses.

### SAN DIEGO EARLY/MIDDLE COLLEGE: COLLEGE GPA IN ALL COURSES

| SCHOOL YEAR | NUMBER OF STUDENTS | AVERAGE COLLEGE GPA |
|-------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| 2009-2010*  | 70                 | 3.31                |
| 2011-2012** | 62                 | 3.29                |

Sources: \*Early College High School Student Information System, \*\*San Diego City College

Even when they qualify to take college courses, San Diego Early/Middle College students are not guaranteed a place in a college class. “Students have to put their names on a crash list—if there is space they can be enrolled in the course. It is rare for students to get into some courses because of overcrowding. Only certain courses are more of a sure thing, such as Engineering 101. You can sit in class for the first 2 weeks but not be guaranteed that you’ll get in.”

While fiscal cutbacks at the college limited placement of high school students in college classes, partners have not retreated from the goal that, at a minimum, high school students will have completed six college

**“THESE ARE THE SAME STUDENTS I HAVE HAD IN THE PAST. THE DIFFERENCE IS I AM SEEING THEM IN A PLACE WHERE THEY HAVE ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY AND WHERE THEY ARE BEING SERVED.”**

**—KENDRA MADDEN, TENTH-GRADE, WORLD LITERATURE TEACHER**

credits including English and math by the time of graduation, and continue in college without the need for remediation. Improvements in the fiscal climate have also resulted in an increase in opportunities for students to take college classes.

## **FACULTY COLLABORATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Throughout the year, professional development workshops for high school and college faculty focus on curriculum alignment (discipline-specific common course standards) and college-readiness skills (key cognitive strategies). For example, during the 2012-2013 school year, the Early College Curriculum Committee met three times to work on curriculum planning and to create a curriculum map and project proposal outline for the 2013 Summer Enrichment and Bridge Programs. The committee also completed a professional development symposium with Dr. Adeyemi Stenbridge, a consultant from New York University, to refine their understanding of the Concept Laboratory Curriculum. High school and college faculty also meet several times to discuss alignment across high school and the first-year English and math college courses.

How does the faculty and staff use data? At the beginning of the year they look at writing samples against a rubric to see where students' skills and challenges are. Faculty also review the results of MyFoundationsLab assessments and the ACCUPLACER. Faculty have used these data to modify the components and content of the summer programs. For example, they have increased the time devoted during the summer to academic preparation and provided scaffolding to help students develop better test-taking skills.

The San Diego Early/Middle College is highly collaborative and teachers are engaged in every aspect of the school, not just within their individual classrooms. Several of Principal Elizabeth Larkin's hand-selected staff are experts in their content area who chose teaching as their second career. Teachers in the school are motivated by a desire to be a part of something non-traditional that will serve students' academic and developmental needs.

The teachers are focused on developing their students and share Larkin's vision that the belief in the students' potential must constantly be reinforced in concert with the provision of adequate supports to help students meet expectations that are higher than they might have experienced in a comprehensive high school. It is the intention of Larkin and her staff to make high expectations the norm as they coach their students toward adopting a college-going culture.

Collaboration is also important to ensure that issues and challenges that arise are resolved and to sustain buy-in. Chris Baron noted, "It's important that partners are continuously informed about the progress of the program."

## **ACCELERATION OR REMEDIATION**

At the end of a winding ramp in the center of the San Diego City College campus is a converted garage surrounded by an urban oasis of wildflowers, art, and student projects in various stages of completion. This is not an ordinary school and, according to Larkin, that is precisely the point. "We are not a boutique. We do not cherry pick. With strong support and a strong curriculum we can help all our students to succeed . . . so much has to do with expectations." Larkin's passion for her students' success permeates the school and

**“ADULTS ON THE CAMPUS HAVE THE ATTITUDE THAT THEY CAME TO THE COLLEGE LEVEL TO TEACH COLLEGE, NOT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS. WHEN THEY SEE THE LEVEL OF THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS COMPARED TO OUR STUDENTS THEY CHANGE THEIR MIND.”**

**—ELIZABETH LARKIN, PRINCIPAL, SAN DIEGO EARLY/MIDDLE COLLEGE**

**"YOU CAN'T THINK LIKE A TRADITIONAL PRINCIPAL. THIS IS NOT A TRADITIONAL SCHOOL. THE PRINCIPAL CAN'T STAY IN HER ROOM. STUDENTS HAVE TO SEE YOU. THE COLLEGE HAS TO SEE YOU."**

**—ELIZABETH LARKIN, PRINCIPAL, SAN DIEGO EARLY/MIDDLE COLLEGE**

the attitudes of the faculty and students. Prominently displayed is the school's motto: *"San Diego Early/Middle College graduates will be responsible citizens who give back to their communities and affect change in themselves and the world around them; resourceful problem solvers who face intellectual and social challenges with creativity and perseverance; intellectual adventurers who explore a variety of perspectives and approaches to learning; and effective communicators who are informed and articulate."*

According to Larkin, the teachers uniformly incorporate college content and material into their classes. This helps shift the focus from remediation to acceleration and puts students in a better position to enroll in college-level courses that will be transferrable to a two- or four-year degree program.

Student support is an essential aspect of early college. At San Diego Early/Middle College, all ninth graders participate in the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program. AVID is a college-readiness system for elementary through high school that is designed to increase school-wide learning and performance by developing the skills students need to be successful, such as note-taking and organization. Tenth and eleventh graders who need extra support also take AVID. The school has a strong writing program and students write across the curriculum. According to one teacher, "We worked on writing stamina from day one."

Lori Erecca has worked within the San Diego Community College District for 36 years. In that time she has worn numerous hats, from writing grants to support equity initiatives, operating off-campus centers, to her current role as the Dean of Behavioral & Social Sciences and Consumer & Family Studies. She brings a unique perspective to the early college program through her experience in observing the correlation between students' readiness, particularly in transferrable college math and English courses and their persistence.

When asked for her recommendations for increasing engagement and improving student outcomes in math, Erecca stated, "Academic success is often measured

by performance in math, even though most jobs don't require college math. If it is going to be required, we have to have instructors who know how to make sense of it." This theme resonates with the high school and college faculty, and has become the impetus for planning and implementing strategies for curriculum alignment and student support in this academic area.

## ASSESSMENT THAT DRIVES SUPPORT

At the beginning of the fall 2012 semester, early college students who had participated in the 2012 Summer Enrichment and Summer Bridge Programs were enrolled in English 12A and Math 15C. Based on their ACCUPLACER test results, students who tested below transfer-level course placement were enrolled in MyFoundationsLab, an online-based program produced by Pearson Education. Students took a diagnostic test to gauge what specific skill areas in math and English they needed to improve. They then worked on their individualized learning path modules in math and English during the semester.

The partnership provides the supports and preparation to enable high school graduates to enter college without the need for developmental education. A major feature of the partnership is the use of diagnostic assessments, keyed to Common Core, to identify students who need the support of developmental education modules. Early assessment provides feedback to students and teachers, and allows students to plan their eleventh- and twelfth-grade years accordingly, taking more advanced—and potentially college credit bearing courses—in math and English in twelfth grade if they score high enough on the college placement test; or taking courses designed to "fill in the gaps" in the eleventh and twelfth grade or other supplemental coursework to get students up to the college-ready standard. As a result, student performance on the SAT and on California standardized assessments has risen steadily.

High school students from the participating schools are scheduled in MyFoundationsLab throughout the

**“WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE RULES YOU HAVE TO THINK, WHAT NEEDS TO BE CHANGED? WHAT ARE THE RULES AND ARE THEY JUSTIFIABLE?”**

**–NELLIE MEYER, DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT, SAN DIEGO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

school year and during the summer. Students who need to develop their skills participate in courses and programs offered by the college’s skills center, utilizing MyFoundationsLab. Developed by Pearson Education, MyFoundationsLab provides customized and highly personalized content and uses real-time evaluation and diagnostics to identify and address academic weaknesses. MyFoundationsLab was implemented by the college as a way for college students to improve their academic proficiency level. However, the program has become a major vehicle for assessing high school students’ skills and for providing an individually tailored academic support system.

The lab is located within the San Diego Community College English Center, and includes 30 stations. San Diego Community College offers English 12 using the MyFoundationsLab. The course is an example of the collaboration between high school and college faculty. It has been adapted for high school students to align with the Common Core Standards and to reinforce classroom instruction. This flexibility is a strength of the program as it allows the course to be individually tailored to specific student needs identified by the classroom teachers.

English 12 is a primary aspect of the partnership’s strategy to raise students’ proficiency in reading, writing, and critical thinking skills. English 12 is a multiple-term course, and it also helps students achieve higher scores in the required California High School

Exit Exam (CAHSEE) and SAT. Based on the success of English 12, San Diego Community College has added Math 15, a corresponding mathematics course. The goal is to prepare students for Math 104 and English 101, two core requirements for the Associate degree pathway.

MyFoundationsLab forms the core curriculum for Math 15C and English 12A, providing two self-paced courses. Students take the pre-test diagnostic and then pursue the individualized study plan generated for them based on their performance. After completing the designated activities, students take the post-test diagnostic to assess their retention and mastery. The initial diagnostic provides an immediate and clear understanding of students’ individual knowledge and needs.

In addition to assessing math and English skills based on California state standards, students take the ACCUPLACER, a test used to make decisions about placement in college courses. Students who achieve an acceptable score on the ACCUPLACER may take transferrable college courses, while those who fall below the benchmark must take developmental courses to bring up their skill level. The value of the early ACCUPLACER testing as well as assessment through MyFoundationsLab is that the results are used to individualize learning. Students focus on their weaknesses by using computer-based support and tutors provided by the college.

"I LOVE THIS JOB. THERE IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE A SCHOOL THAT BUSTS UP THE TRADITIONAL MODEL."

—ELIZABETH LARKIN, PRINCIPAL, SAN DIEGO EARLY/MIDDLE COLLEGE

## RESULTS

The San Diego Early College Partnership has resulted in benefits for participating schools and students. Students from participating schools showed annual gains on the SAT and on the CAHSEE and narrowed the gap with the district and state on both tests.

The most recent ACCUPLACER results were favorable for the fall 2012 cohort of San Diego Early/Middle College students enrolled in ENGL 12A and Math 15C: Nine of the ten students who tested below transfer-level in math either reached transfer-level or reduced the number of basic skills courses required to reach transfer-level. All five students who tested below transfer-level in reading reached transfer-level. Seven of the eleven students who tested below transfer-level in writing either reached transfer-level or reduced the number of basic skills courses required to reach transfer-level. Overall, during the 2012-13 school year, more than 50 San Diego Early/Middle College students enrolled in college courses including ENGL 12, Math 15, ENGL 48, ENGL 49, ENG 101, and Math 104.

Early results for college persistence of early college graduates compare favorably with national averages, especially considering the high percentage of low-income and minority students. In the third year of the partnership, 2010, approximately 60 percent of the graduates of LEADS and Media Arts enrolled in college the following year compared to about half of low-income students nationally, with 78.5 percent returning for their second year. In 2012, San Diego Early/Middle College graduated its first four-year cohort and 77 percent of these students enrolled in college the following year.

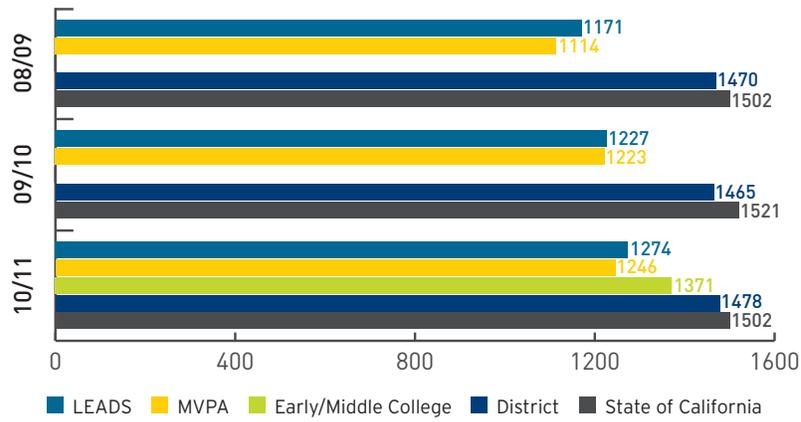
Word is beginning to spread about the work being done by the high school, and the college team is leading the charge. The program has garnered attention not only from other school and community leaders but the local press and education leaders, including the Pearson

Professor Baron describes the benefits of early college for students and for the college:

- > Addresses sustainable ways to successfully integrate students into a college culture and environment.
- > Introduces students to the forms and functions of successful college participation—specifically in the areas of transfer-level English and mathematics coursework, and the awareness of college-level study skills.
- > Aligns with California Common Core Standards from multiple disciplines.
- > Produces, upon high school graduation, a greater number of students without the need for remediation.
- > Appeals to and involves multiple campus units and levels of administration.
- > Addresses coordinated coursework and academic acceleration to prepare students for the ACCUPLACER and appropriate placement in transferrable college courses.
- > Enables students to take college classes while in high school.
- > Provides regular opportunities for college and high school faculty to continue to work together on an ongoing basis to develop curriculum.
- > Allows opportunities for college and high school faculty to co-teach courses.

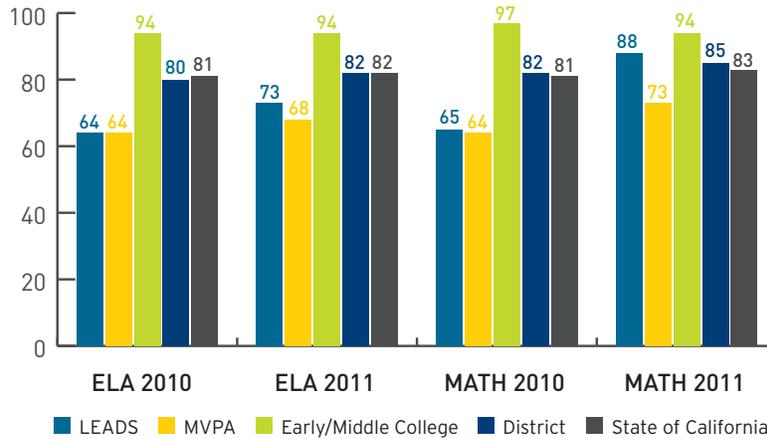
Foundation, who took interest in the program after the San Diego Community College English department was chosen to pilot one of its assessment diagnostics.

### THREE YEAR RISE IN COMBINED SAT SCORES



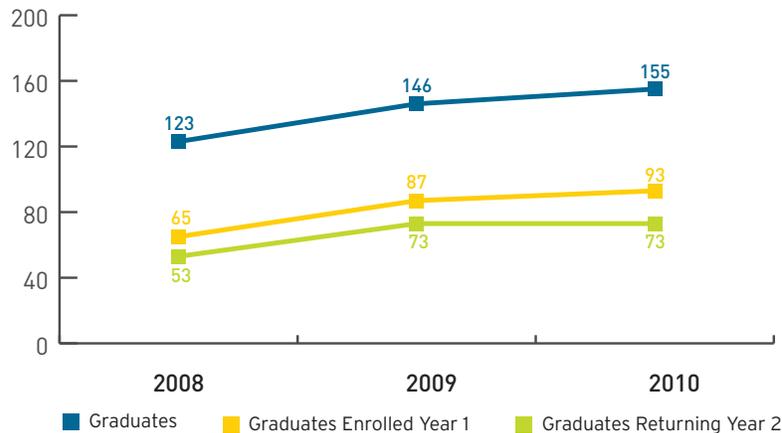
Source: California Department of Education

### STEADY GAINS MADE IN PERCENT AT PROFICIENT LEVEL ON CAHSEE



Source: California Department of Education

### HIGH FIRST TO SECOND YEAR POSTSECONDARY PERSISTENCE RATES FOR LEADS & ARTS



Source: National Student Clearinghouse

## WOULD YOU DO IT AGAIN? STUDENTS SPEAK OUT ABOUT THEIR “SCHOOL OF CHOICE”

Many might be surprised to hear students make the argument for attending a school with few extra-curricular activities, no sports teams, guaranteed homework every night, and the added burden of carrying a college course load on top of their high school requirements. Then again, many haven't had the opportunity to meet the student body of San Diego Early/Middle College. Across two days in June, five different focus groups of students, ranging from grades 9 to 12, filed into the small teacher's lounge behind their classroom and sat expectantly around the conference table, carefully eyeing the simple black tape recorder in the center.

In each group, reluctant quiet gave way to crackling enthusiasm within minutes of being asked “Tell me about your school? Why is it so different from anywhere else?” The students weighed in on everything from the commitment level of their teachers, a principal who has the uncanny ability to be “everywhere,” and the unmatched patience of their guidance counselor—all described as people who not only want them to succeed, but who make them believe they can. One tenth-grade student captured the themes echoed by her peers by stating simply, “In most high schools if you don't get it, that's it. Here if you don't get it people are here to help you.”

## THE FUTURE OF THE PARTNERSHIP: KEEPING MOMENTUM

Unlike many early college partnerships, the San Diego City Community College is the driver of the initiative, including concurrent enrollment, professional development for college and high school faculty, program design and implementation, data collection, fundraising and sustainability planning. This key difference is rooted in the belief that the college and high school together may best address students' academic needs and preparation in order to ensure that they are ready academically to succeed at the college level.

Despite a shortage of space on campus, the Early College program has been able to establish and sustain a school on the campus, as well as an office staffed by Meagan Marshall, a college instructor who helps to coordinate the program. Professor Chris Baron's office is housed in the middle of the student resource center, and appropriately so, as the faculty and staff involved in early college view the program as a resource for students above all else. The office logistics serve as a metaphor for the quiet victory of the program: start wherever you are and use whatever you have to drive the degree of change that can only be accomplished by a shared vision and, as Professor Baron would say, “a spirit of servant leadership.”

Recently, the fiscal climate has improved with a commensurate increase in opportunities for high school students to enroll in college classes. While President Burgess has departed, the efforts of planners to make early college a part of the school's culture have paid off in sustained support. The partnership has been expanded to several additional high schools.

# CONCLUSION: ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

The San Diego partnership demonstrates the benefits of a college and school district collaboration in improving students' life and career opportunities through success in postsecondary education. The integration of early college designs in participating schools illustrates the potential for scaling successful early college strategies, including assessment and extensive academic and personal student support, curriculum alignment, secondary-postsecondary faculty collaboration, and concurrent enrollment. In addition, the San Diego Early/Middle College models a whole school approach that includes these elements while immersing students in a college culture. The partnership also shows the sustainability of the programmatic design, even in the face of financial challenges.

A number of key elements of the San Diego Community College partnership have been intrinsic to its success. These elements provide guidance to other college-school partnerships that intend to establish early college and include:

- > **Commitment from the top.** Senior college and school district leadership is essential to signal the importance of the early college, especially in the context of limited resources.
- > **Finding and enlisting support.** Initially, planners identified staff who supported the goals. These early “champions” were willing to invest the time and energy needed to launch the program. The number of supporters has grown as the program gained visibility. However, support has to be sustained, especially with leadership and staff changes. The process of reviewing the Memorandum of Understanding is an opportune time for engaging key stakeholders and renewing support.
- > **Secondary and postsecondary alignment, planning, and collaboration.** College faculty who teach first-year college students possess a valuable perspective

of the skills that students lack or need to develop further. Working with high school faculty and using strategies such as backwards mapping helps to align curriculum and instruction, and identify how and where to integrate early on the academic and other supports that lead to student success. San Diego Early College Partnership initiatives are strengthened by professional development that builds capacity at both the high school and college levels. Development of a planning committee comprising college and high school staff is also an essential program element.

- > **Building on strengths.** San Diego City College draws upon its experience in providing developmental education for early student assessment to determine needed academic intervention strategies. Because the College utilizes (while adapting) existing student support strategies and resources, the program is cost-effective and sustainable. The engineering program at the college has a specific focus on increasing the number of minority students who pursue engineering as a career and the program has committed to making course slots available to early college students, even during a period of overall college fiscal retrenchment.
- > **Key roles.** The presence of a college liaison is important. This person, who works for the college, is knowledgeable about campus culture and has access to college leadership. The college liaison connects with the high school guidance counselor and registrar's office in order to register students; with the office of student records in order to obtain data about student performance; and with other offices and departments in the college. The partnership also benefits from assigning a central office liaison who understands the program and can anticipate problems that will arise and has access to the superintendent to cut through the red tape. It is also

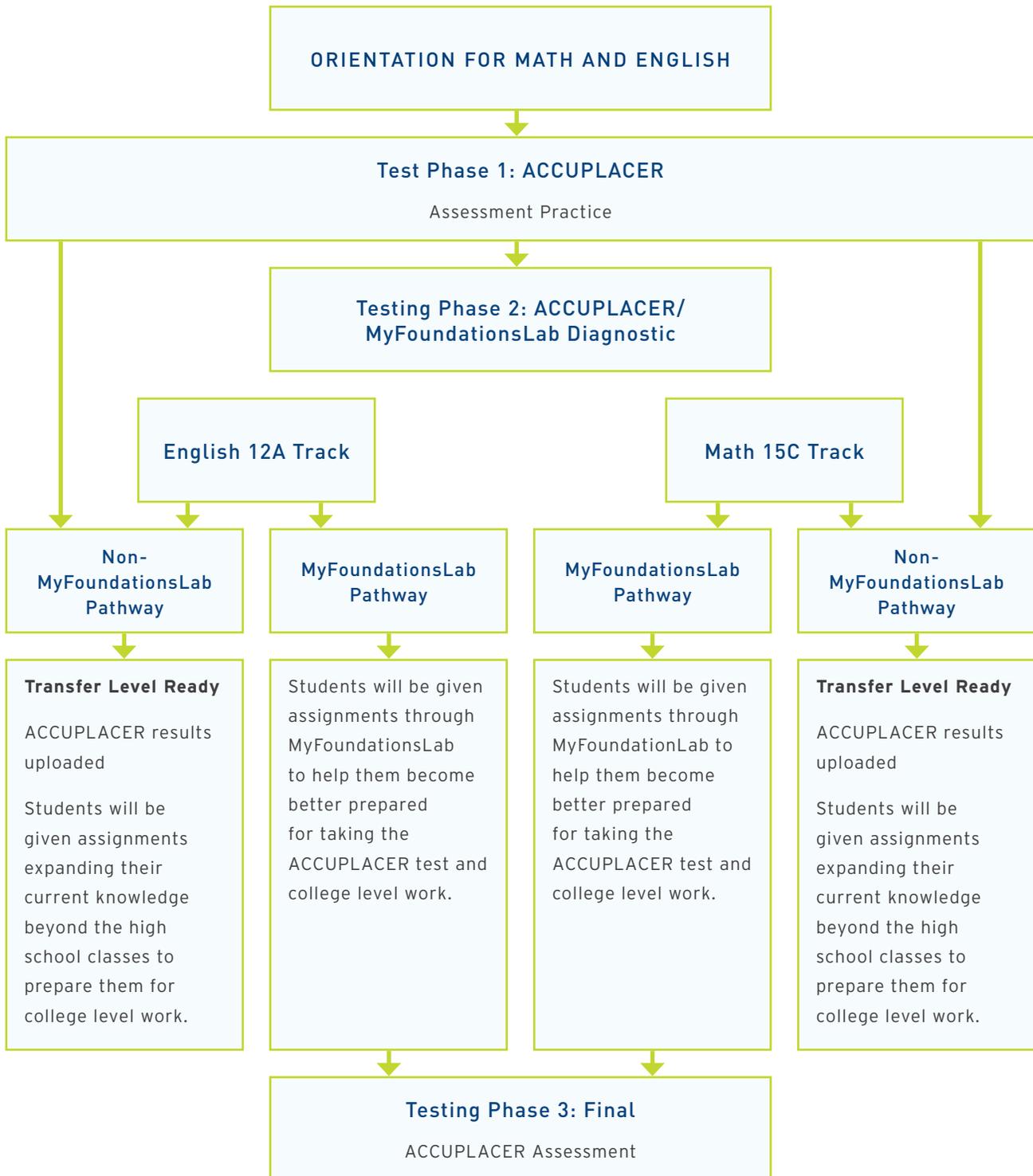
important to recruit strong teachers who are skilled at collaboration and have good content knowledge and teaching practice.

- > **Power of place.** Interviews with San Diego Early/Middle College students corroborate input from other early college schools in emphasizing that students on a college campus have an immediate identification with what it means to be a college student and develop a greater confidence in their own potential for success. If schools are unable to be sited on a college campus they should look for ways to create first-hand experiences, including frequent visitations, and weekend and summer programs on campus. While space is frequently a major issue for high schools on a college campus, planning must be conducted to identify and resolve facilities needs.
- > **Establishing program priorities.** Because the San Diego Early/Middle College is non-selective and serves students with a wide range of proficiency levels, the school focuses on academic preparation

and does not offer the sports and extra-curricular options available in comprehensive high schools. The school provides a choice of clubs and students may participate in some college clubs and organizations.

- > **Communication.** Often, a lack of campus support can be attributed to misconceptions and poor communication about the program. Featuring early college information and updates on the college website and in the college newsletter are important ways to inform the college community about the students sharing their campus. Communicating and networking with other early and middle colleges is a way to share successes and learn from the successes of other schools.
- > **Research and evaluation.** In order to maintain support—as well as identify areas that are working well or that need improvement—the partnership needs to maintain protocols for collecting and analyzing data on progress. Results need to be shared with constituents.

EARLY COLLEGE PATHWAYS COURSES



2012 Summer Bridge Schedule: Rising Eleventh-grade Students

|  | MONDAY, 9-12   | TUESDAY, 9-12  | WEDNESDAY, 9-12   | THURSDAY, 9-12  | FRIDAY, 9-12   |
|--|--|--|---|---|--|
| <b>Week 1:</b><br><b>June 18-June 22</b><br><br>INTRO TO COLLEGE   | PROGRAM INTRODUCTION<br><br>ICE BREAKER<br><br>COURSE OVERVIEW   | <b>JOURNAL #1: Why are you here?</b><br><br>GOAL SETTING<br><br>Introduction to ACCUPLACER   | ACCUPLACER PRACTICE TEST<br><br><b>JOURNAL #2: Academic and professional goals</b>  | COLLEGE 101: Types of College, Degrees, Majors, Cost, Applying<br><br><b>JOURNAL #3: Fears about college?</b>       | <a href="#">MyFoundationsLab</a>   |
| <b>Week 2:</b><br><b>June 25-June 29</b><br><br>PROFESSIONALISM    | LEARNING STYLE<br><br><b>JOURNAL #4: Pick one learning style and relate to academic and professional goals</b><br><br>COLLEGE SUCCESS STRATEGIES<br><br><a href="#">MyFoundationsLab</a> | PROFESSIONALISM<br>> online presence<br>> etiquette<br>> clothing<br>> first impressions<br><br>RESUME WRITING<br><br><a href="#">MyFoundationsLab</a>   | INTERVIEWING<br><br><b>JOURNAL #5: If you went on an interview today, what would be impressions of you?</b><br><br>Interview Questions<br><br>INTERVIEWS & FEEDBACK | MOCK INTERVIEWS<br><br><b>JOURNAL #6: How did you do on your interview?</b><br><br><a href="#">MyFoundationsLab</a> | <a href="#">MyFoundationsLab</a><br><br><b>SCHOLARSHIP ESSAY DRAFT DUE</b> |
| <b>Week 3:</b><br><b>July 2-July 6</b><br><br>SURVIVING IN COLLEGE | STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES<br><br>SCAVENGER HUNT<br><br><b>JOURNAL #7: One student support service you would use.</b><br><br><a href="#">MyFoundationsLab</a>                              | MENTAL HEALTH & COPING SKILLS<br><br><b>JOURNAL #8: Five things that stress you out. How to alleviate stress. One coping skill that works for you.</b><br><br>MINDFULNESS<br><br>MEDITATION<br><br>IN-CLASS ESSAY #1<br><br><a href="#">MyFoundationsLab</a> |   | IN-CLASS ESSAY #2<br><br>GUIDED MEDITATION<br><br><b>JOURNAL #9</b><br><br><a href="#">MyFoundationsLab</a>         | <a href="#">MyFoundationsLab</a><br><br><b>RESUME DUE*</b>                 |
| <b>Week 4:</b><br><b>July 9-11</b>                                 | <b>JOURNAL #10: How course has increased your college readiness?</b><br><br>ACCUPLACER<br><br><b>FINAL ESSAY DUE</b>   | ENRICHMENT<br>DRESS REHEARSAL<br><br>NEXT STEPS<br><br><b>PORTFOLIOS DUE</b>   | <b>SYMPOSIUM</b>  |   |  |

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