



JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

To: Colorado Stakeholder Committee: Increasing the High School and College Success of Underrepresented Youth Through Early College Designs
From: Jobs for the Future (JFF)
Date: March 8, 2012
Re: Notes from February 17, 2012 meeting

During our inaugural meeting held on Friday, February 17, 2012, members of the committee discussed the alignment of early college designs/pathways with state policy and local practices to meet Colorado 's goal of increasing the number of low-income and other underprepared students who attain a postsecondary credential.

JFF has attempted to capture the major themes emerging from our initial meeting in this memorandum, along with a list of questions, proposed future directions and possible next steps identified by the group.

I. Emerging Themes/Topics from the Meeting

What are the Committee's goals over the course of the next six months? What would success look like at the end of this initiative?

The committee indicated its primary goal would be to develop and submit a set of policy recommendations for developing Early College Designs/pathways to Colorado's Concurrent Enrollment Advisory Board, the Commissioner of Higher Education and the Commissioner of Education. These recommendations will be based on lessons learned from early colleges, and other college in the high school intensive pathways to enhance the state's concurrent enrollment policies and to prepare more underrepresented students for concurrent enrollment opportunities that promote their college readiness and success (first generation, low-income, students of color, SPED, and ELL, etc); thereby, closing the state's achievement gaps and promoting higher postsecondary readiness and success outcomes.

What areas/issues of concern does the group wish to tackle and prioritize over the upcoming months?

The group identified the following priority areas for future consideration:

- **Concurrent Enrollment State Funding.** Currently, districts do not receive state funding to subsidize the cost of textbooks or transportation to/from the college. Districts may cover these expenses, but they often become the responsibility of the student and his/her family.

Transportation is a major barrier to expanding concurrent enrollment opportunities in rural and suburban communities.

How can concurrent enrollment funding incentivize the participation of underrepresented students (first generation, low-income, students of color, SPED, and ELL, etc)?

- **Basic Skills Courses.** Developmental education courses, known as “Basic Skills” courses in Colorado, are restricted to ONLY 12th graders, based on their scores on the *Accuplacer*, the college placement exam.

Should access be expanded to high school juniors?

- **Instructor Licensure/Supply.** Many high school teachers neither have a master’s degree in the subject area, nor have they met the minimum requirements to meet adjunct status at the local college. This poses a major barrier to districts interested in having their instructors offer more concurrent enrollment opportunities to students; which is a cost-effective way of scaling up this model. Also, instructor qualifications to teach career and technical education (CTE) courses are different than those required for academic instructors.

What recommendations could be advanced to adapt educator licensure to increase the number of teachers in the state who can teach college courses in high school?

- **Ensure consistency of the program through statewide standardization.** By citizen preference and by law, Colorado is a “local control” state, which has implications for the consistency of financial and academic practices. The Common Core standards and concurrent enrollment provide an opportunity to tighten links between first year college expectations and high school standards and curriculum.

What measures are needed to ensure the quality of the articulation of concurrent enrollment courses across 2- and 4-year institutions, curriculum alignment across high school and college (including basic skills courses)? General Transfer pathways do not include CTE course credits.

What are the current state policies that promote or constrain the scale up of concurrent enrollment in Colorado?

- The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and the Department of Higher Education (DHE) strategic goals for increasing college readiness and success rates across the state align with the goals of the Early College Designs Policy Initiative.
- Colorado’s Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act (CEPA), passed in 2009, streamlines the menu of concurrent enrollment programs. The statute created ASCENT, a 5th-year program that targets underrepresented students. This seminal policy also aims to preserve the quality of concurrent enrollment courses, and created the statewide advisory board responsible for program oversight.
 - State policy does not limit the number of concurrent enrollment courses in which a high school student may enroll. However, districts have discretion to limit the number of dual enrollment courses a student may complete.
 - The ASCENT program is a foundation for expanding concurrent enrollment; it targets a more “at-risk” student population. The prerequisites for student

eligibility for ASCENT of earning at least 12 college credits by the end of the 12th grade, narrows the number of qualifying students.

- Colorado defines early college in statute and 5 early colleges have been designated. The benefit of this designation is that it waives students who withdraw from or fail, a concurrent enrollment course at a college campus, from having to reimburse the full cost of tuition and fees. Schools seeking an early college designation must apply to the Colorado State Board of Education for approval.
- Colorado has recently built capacity to collect data to monitor progress on concurrent enrollment. DHE has filled a data-sharing position to work with CDE to measure college and career readiness in the state's accountability system, as well as, to conduct analysis, using longitudinal data, to track and highlight effective strategies.
- The financing of concurrent enrollment varies depending on the location of course delivery and by type of postsecondary partner (2- vs. 4-year).

II. Next Steps and Future Directions

Colorado has a solid foundation from which to build the use concurrent enrollment to increase the college readiness, access and success of all of its students, particularly those traditionally underrepresented in higher education: first-generation, low-income, English Language Learners, students with special needs, and/or racial/ethnic minority, etc. In addition to the ASCENT program, other existing local programs and pathways build on Colorado's generous concurrent enrollment policy set and were put in place by innovative local leaders. For example, local partnerships between postsecondary institutions and neighboring districts, such as those sponsored by the Community College of Aurora (CCA) have helped to establish concurrent enrollment as a strategy for promoting college going among low-income and underrepresented students in the region. CCA's work serves as a template for other two-year institutions across Colorado. JFF proposes that the Colorado team continue to better understand these existing pathways further in future meetings.

March 16th: We will begin our exploration of pathways with presentations from Colorado's early colleges, which provide an intensive model for what states can do in a broad scale with a goal of learning what state policies are enabling, and what policies are prohibitive? Who are the students? How are they admitted? Who are they serving?

April 20th. What can we learn from other pathways in the state, such as those at the Community College of Aurora? What can we learn from ASCENT?