



JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

To: Colorado Early College Design Stakeholder Committee: Increasing the High School and College Success of Underrepresented Youth Through Early College Designs
From: Jobs for the Future (JFF)
Date: April 2, 2012
Re: Notes from March 16th, 2012 meeting

Colorado Committee's Strategy for The Initiative

During our inaugural state team meeting, the committee decided that the policy recommendations generated by the group should be grounded in the 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.

Over the course of the next few months, the Committee will hear from these programs, which will provide some context for us to think about existing state policies, and the challenges and supports they provide. These policy recommendations will be submitted to Colorado's Concurrent Enrollment Advisory Board, the Commissioner on Higher Education and the Colorado Department of Education.

Observations Based on the Presentations of Early Colleges in Colorado

During our meeting on March 16th, the Committee heard from 6 early college schools in Colorado. These schools included a mix of schools both written into, or excluded, from the state statute: **Southwest Early College; Dolores Huerta Preparatory High School Pueblo; Southern Colorado Early College; Colorado Springs Early College; and Mapleton Early College.**

The models of the early college schools/programs ranged from autonomous early college schools (mostly, state charter schools) and programs within larger schools; their philosophical approaches to the purpose of early colleges, and subsequently, its targeted student population. Additionally, there appears to be a relationship between the design of the program (or school) and the target populations.

Overall observations by the group included:

- A range of philosophical approaches. The models of the early colleges models varied in terms of the philosophical purposes related to students it would serve. Some sought to serve students underrepresented in postsecondary education, while others operated like a magnet program for high achieving students.

- Target student population served in the different models. The mission of the school or the program has implications on the recruitment of students, and the admissions requirements put in place. In some instances, the early college program targets high achieving students in the 11th and 12th grades. In the more traditional early colleges—those that tend to be autonomous schools—they provide college courses for students beginning in the 9th grade.
- Mission and purpose has implications on design. The target student population has implications on the types of student supports embedded into the model. Early colleges enrolling a more at-risk student population have incorporated more wrap around supports in order to ensure the success of its students. These intensive wrap around student support services include, but are not limited to, advisories, college liaisons, family engagement, and enhanced counseling services.
- Benefits of Early College Designation. The early college designation allows flexibility in terms of curriculum options. It allows early colleges to offer dual credit courses beginning in 9th grade, including remedial courses at the 030 (basic) and 060 (intermediate) levels. However, one of the schools mentioned never allowing their students to enroll in the lowest levels of remediation (courses numbered in the 030s levels) at the earlier ages to get that forward.
- Postsecondary Partnerships. The group mentioned that it was hard to gauge the different partnership arrangements in existence between K-12 and higher education institutions. In some cases, the relationship was more explicit than in others. In general these partnerships all seem to rely on individual leaders to foster and get more students college ready through cross cutting professional development across both the postsecondary and the K-12 sectors.

What are the policy strengths and Challenges? How do they relate to the issues/concern raised by the group in meeting #1?

The following table summarizes the strengths and challenges posed by Colorado state policies, as identified by the presentations made by the early colleges.

Policy Strengths	Policy Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Early Colleges are exempt from the restrictions tied to concurrent enrollment. ○ Students are able to take college courses for dual credit as early as ninth grade. ○ There is no cost to students taking college-level courses at two-year institutions. ○ The state pays the cost for students to take one basic skills course per semester in 12th grade. ○ Secondary and postsecondary partners must develop a cooperative agreement or MOU to offer concurrent enrollment opportunities to students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Transportation and Books not covered under concurrent enrollment policy. <i>This is a policy issue that was also mentioned by the policy committee at our February meeting.</i> ○ College Opportunity Fund (COF). In some cases the early colleges are using COF funds to cover the costs of dual enrollment. By the time early college students enter the postsecondary education,

Policy Strengths	Policy Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Statewide reporting of concurrent enrollment participation is done annually and disaggregated by subgroups (e.g., income status and race/ethnicity background). ○ Funding for concurrent enrollment is built into the state’s funding formula so that K-12 partners receive PPOR. ○ The state has an appropriation for ASCENT. 	<p>they have already depleted this funding source.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quality & Articulation Across 2- and 4- Year Systems. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There was some concern about the rigor of courses across 2- and 4- year institutions. This emerged as a theme in these issues.

Questions for Further Exploration

Colorado’s Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act asserts that, “...The expanded mission of concurrent enrollment programs is to serve a wider range of students, particularly those who represent communities with historically low college participations rates” [CRS 22-35-102d]. The six early colleges presenting at the March 16th meeting provided the committee with additional policy barriers to add to the list of preliminary list generated by the committee at the February meeting. These lists were based on the policies early colleges identified as an obstacle to long-term funding sustainability, and/or to scaling-up dual enrollment to more students.

Additional questions for the committee to consider in further crafting policy recommendations:

- What are the necessary design elements and student supports to ensure the success of a broad range of students in college credit courses?
- What types of partnership arrangements can policy incent to ensure/encourage greater collaboration across P-20?
- Many of the early colleges that presented were charter schools; in one case the school was a traditional public school. How does this governance structure affect the ability to implement pathways inclusive of early college programs? How strategically should the scope and sequence of these pathways be done?
- How do we align college readiness across the Accuplacer, the ACT, and the Common Core assessments? How do 100-level college courses compare to 11th and 12th grade standards?

Preview of the Next Meeting

At the April 2012 meeting, the committee will hear from the Community College of Aurora, the ASCENT program, and Back on Track programs about their design and what they have identified as policy enablers, as well as, the policy barriers.