

Perspectives

Community College
Leadership for the
21st Century

MAY 2019

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[W]hen community college and K-12 leaders link up to align academic, navigational, and career supports, students are set on a path to succeed in postsecondary and beyond.

- ESG, AACC, & ACCT

Because of their local focus, long history of partnerships, and tendency to enroll large shares of typically underserved students, community colleges have created particularly effective and innovative partnerships with K-12 schools in their service areas.

- Jessie Brown

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Transforming Communities through Innovative K-12 Programs

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South Texas College (STC) has served as a leader in developing and sustaining strong K-12 partnerships to provide opportunities for all students. Through partnerships with 24 school districts, the College strives to promote a College-Going Culture and accelerate the College Readiness and College Completion rates in the region. Through the promotion of Dual Credit and Continuing Education Programs, the institution has been instrumental in transforming the region and supporting a better quality of life by providing an educated workforce that is prepared for business and industry.

Through collaboration between the College and public schools, a number of initiatives have proven to be successful. STC considers the following best practices as instrumental to the success of our programs.

College-Bound Elementary Initiative. As an institution, we begin engagement with students at the elementary school level through the South Texas College College-Bound Elementary Initiative. Our institution adopts one campus with economic challenges from each partnering school district, thus establishing a college-going culture at the primary stage of education. Through the College-Bound Elementary Initiative, students pledge their commitment to attend college and recognize that as their partner, STC is available to support and encourage them throughout their college-bound journey.

Educational Camp Programs. The development of year-round educational camp programs for elementary, middle, and high school aged students has positively impacted the community. Camp programs are offered focused on various fields including Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) related activities that allow students to grow intellectually and socially. The camp programs are held by various departments including academic, workforce, and continuing education. STC is successful in obtaining grant funds to expand opportunities for students in our region. In 2018, through strong K-12 partnerships, we provided countless value to more than 1,000 students who attended these camp programs.

Dual Credit Programs. STC has utilized the Dual Credit Programs as a key strategy to accelerate college readiness and completion for high school students in a predominately Latino region. This initiative narrows the achievement gap and increases college going rates, which in turn improves the social well-being, economic vitality, and prosperity of

the community. The Board of Trustees at STC continues to demonstrate its commitment to access by waiving tuition for dual credit students. Dual Credit Programs was established in 1997 to increase college readiness and completion, which opened doors to provide eligible high school students the opportunity to obtain college-level hours and/or a credential. STC also understood that dual credit opportunities should be available to students in career and technology courses leading to careers in the applied fields. As a result of the College's efforts and commitment, the dual credit population increased from 8 students in 1999 to 13,000 in 2019. As of last year, the program has served over 106,000 students and saved the students and families in the service area, over \$200 million in tuition.

The development of year-round educational camp programs for elementary, middle, and high school aged students has positively impacted the community.

Prospective Dual Credit students can select from one of four program options: 1) Dual Credit Courses; 2) Career and Technical Education Program; 3) Early College High Schools, or 4) Academy Programs. Each of these programs has led to an increase in graduation completion rates, matriculation of dual credit graduated seniors to higher education, and persistence at our own institution. In particular, the College's success with dual credit led to the creation of the Dual Enrollment Academy Programs in 2005, which allows students to graduate with an associate degree while still in high school at no tuition cost to the students and their families. The purpose of the Academy Programs is to provide opportunities for high school students who demonstrate the readiness to pursue a more rigorous program while still in high school. The program boasts high retention, graduation, and transfer rates. As of May 2018, 1,000 students graduated from the Academy Program with an associate degree in STEM or high demand fields.

The Early College High School (ECHS) program has grown significantly since its inception in 2008 from one ECHS to 29 by Fall of 2018. The ECHS program provides high school students with the opportunity to earn up to 60 hours of college credit and/or an associate degree while earning their high school diploma. By design, ECHS's are small, innovative high schools that allow students an opportunity to earn a high school diploma and two years of college credit. More importantly, the transition from high school to college is eased by blending high school and college curriculum into a cohesive unit. In May 2018, 1,364 students (44%) of Early College High School Seniors earned an associate degree and 591 students received a workforce certificate.

Dropout Recovery Program. In 2007, STC partnered with
(continued on page 4)

EMERGING LEADER PERSPECTIVES

In view of the critical and ongoing emphasis on college completion, recommendations have been released from the AACT and AACC in support of initiatives to improve coordination between the two-year sector and K-12 schools – as well as with the workforce – with the goal of improving graduation rates and labor market outcomes. Today the necessity for community colleges and their K-12 peers to collaborate is more critical than ever before. We posed the following question to emerging and national leaders. Their answers appear below.

Shawndra Daniel, MEd

Educational Diagnostician
Humble Independent School District
Humble, Texas

Today's global economy requires the possession of a college degree or a trade to support economic vitality. Students who graduate high school without career readiness and who immediately enter the job market usually find themselves underemployed or not enjoying their chosen field (Koen, Klehe, & Van Vianen, 2012). When high school graduates enter the job market fully prepared, they have better employment opportunities and do not suffer the same fates as those who are not ready (Koen et al., 2012). When high school graduates enter the job market immediately after graduation, this may have an impact on their personal future, as well as the future of generations (Rippner, 2017).

Numerous institutions of higher learning report that students leaving high school are academically underprepared for the rigor and demands placed on them by higher education (Adams, 2012). Not only are these students ill-prepared academically, they often lack independence and social skills needed to function as self-governing adults (Springer, Wilson, & Dole, 2014). The inability to make daily decisions and manage time appropriately adds extra pressure, increasing the likelihood of attrition.

History of Collaboration. Partnerships with K-12, business, community leaders, and colleges are key to improving student performance and career readiness. Collaboration has been discussed and attempted for over two decades (Rippner, 2017). Several states have initiated curriculum collaboration between high schools and colleges through the use of P-20 councils, implemented in the 1990s. Although yielding positive results, many have not been able to sustain their collaborations, due in part to a lack of funding, disbanding, and changes in political backing (Rippner, 2017).

College Leadership Recommendations. The following suggestions are offered to help college leaders build positive relationships with stakeholders. College leaders should foster collaboration and coordination with K-12, businesses, and lawmakers. Cooperation and coordination throughout the educational process are paramount in ensuring student success. College leaders may utilize a variety of methods to create relationships such as focus groups, committees, round table discussions, and the preparation of lobbyists or representatives for discussions regarding education legislation. Leaders also could emphasize that K-12 course writing should be done in a grade-level collaborative manner, ensuring that curriculum is aligned and students have the skills needed to be successful in future classes.

College leadership is in a position to share trends in the job market with high school educators, ensuring that students are prepared for academic and employment opportunities that are both rigorous and relevant. P-20 longevity and success require that systems are in place to maintain commitments and relationships in spite of political affiliations. College leaders should emphasize that higher education relies on the cooperation of every member of the community to thrive.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

How can community college leaders best partner with K-12 to improve college readiness and help students achieve academic and career success?

Leah Melichar, MS

FerrisNow Outreach Coordinator
Ferris State University
Big Rapids, Michigan

Community colleges serve a pivotal role in K-12 partnerships, which increase college access while helping students achieve their academic and career goals. Because community colleges are in tune with

workforce development needs, they can facilitate communication between K-12 and employers to strengthen awareness and create pipelines from high school to college, and from college to career.

The AACC (2018) offers recommendations to strengthen college and K-12 partnerships, including aligned advising, guided pathways, and mapping postsecondary and career options for students. Community colleges have been long-time supporters of college-in-the-high school programs, including the early middle college (EMC) movement. EMCs provide college credit opportunities for traditionally underserved students through careful curriculum planning and wraparound services that include academic, social, and emotional supports. EMC students may have opportunities to participate in internships or job shadowing experiences to aid in their career exploration and development. EMCs generally serve 400 students or less, which allows individualized assistance. Research has documented the benefits of EMC partnerships for high school students as they transition to college.

Community colleges can assist in expanding the EMC movement from individual schools to K-12 district-wide programs to make the EMC model available for more students. In its April 2019 report, Jobs for the Future calls on educational partners to dramatically expand access to EMCs, moving from a stand-alone school model to a district-wide framework. This could lead to an effective grade 11-14 system.

K-12 and higher education leaders in Texas have already increased the number of students served by the EMC model by bringing it up to scale. In the Hildalgo Independent School District, all 800 students have an opportunity to earn college credit. Students graduated from high school at higher rates and earned more college credits in high school compared to other students in the state. Pharr-San Juan-Alamo School District has also seen the benefits of offering an expanded EMC framework that serves over 30,000 students. Thirty-percent of students earn a college credential at the same time they receive their high school diploma. Additionally, students have the opportunity to participate in work-based learning experiences.

Scaling up EMCs to an entire K-12 district requires a shared, long-term vision between K-12, higher education, workforce, and community partners that is a comprehensive piece of the district's school improvement plans. All of these organizations must work together to design EMC initiatives, align academic and career pathways, and provide a map of each student's pathway to academic and career success.



Shawndra Daniel, MEd, is an Educational Diagnostician servicing students with different abilities. She mentors new Educational Diagnosticians in the district and volunteers as an advocate for families needing assistance with special education services and students' rights. Shawndra earned her MEd from the University of Houston-Victoria and is enrolled in the DCCL program. Upon completion of her EdD, her goal is to become a liaison for special services between K-12 and colleges.



Leah Melichar is Ferris State University's FerrisNow Outreach Coordinator and coordinates dual enrollment, concurrent enrollment, and articulated credit programs in Ferris' Office of Transfer and Secondary School Partnerships. She currently serves as the Communications Committee Chair for the Michigan Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships organization and as the Communications Coordinator for the Ferris Women's Network. She earned her MS from Georgia State University in Atlanta and is enrolled in the FSU DCCL program.

NATIONAL LEADER PERSPECTIVE

In view of the critical and ongoing emphasis on college completion, recommendations have been released from the AACT and AACC in support of initiatives to improve coordination between the two-year sector and K-12 schools – as well as with the workforce – with the goal of improving graduation rates and labor market outcomes. Today the necessity for community colleges and their K-12 peers to collaborate is more critical than ever before. We posed the following question to emerging and national leaders. Their answers appear below.

What We're Hearing From K-12 Students About College Readiness

Gregg Levin, MBA

President and COO
K12 Insight
Herndon, Virginia

Every k-12 school leader has his or her own definition of student success. But ensuring students are properly prepared for college or a career after high school is at the top of everyone's list. Unfortunately, a growing body of research suggests that students leave high school increasingly unprepared for the rigors of post-secondary education or without the vital skills necessary to be successful in the workforce.

A [national survey conducted by the nonprofit YouthTruth](#) found that less than half (45%) of surveyed students felt positively about their college and career readiness. At K12 *Insight*, our research has shown similar misgivings among k-12 students.

Each year, K12 *Insight* conducts surveys around senior exit, college and career readiness, and student engagement. These surveys are often supplemented by focus groups to better understand student perceptions around key topics, including college and career preparedness. This research has consistently identified two key trends:

- 1) Today's middle and high school students want their teachers to be more explicit and intentional in explaining the "why" behind what they are learning and how the information applies in real-life situations.
- 2) Students want more exposure to non-academic life skills like time and stress management, responsible use of social media, overcoming setbacks, filing taxes, writing cover letters and resumes, and pursuing financial aid support.

The reasons behind student concerns around academic relevance and preparation often go beyond the classroom to include environmental, economic, and social-emotional factors that students face in their daily lives. That means solutions for building stronger student preparedness must also go beyond academics.

One of the foundational pillars for both k-12 districts and higher ed institutions is to understand student needs, which requires more open and honest conversations with students and parents. By creating systems to better listen to and address student and family concerns, districts will be in a better position to improve student preparedness.

Beyond school surveys, K12 *Insight's* community engagement and customer experience solution, [Let's Talk!](#) is helping k-12 districts (and higher ed institutions) foster important dialogues with students and parents. Nearly a quarter of our district partners use this solution to promote conversations around college and career readiness. This can range from managing enrollment inquiries for specific campuses that specialize in certain academic or career disciplines, seeking feedback from students on areas of interest for future programming, highlighting local college programming or employment opportunities, or making school resources for career and college placement more visible. In each of these initiatives, the most successful school leaders emphasize a strong customer experience that makes it easy for students and

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parents to engage with the district, respond in a timely and relevant manner, and follow up to confirm the inquiry has been answered to their satisfaction.

Of the hundreds of thousands of dialogues our [Let's Talk!](#) tool has received over the years, one of my favorites is between a student and her school district regarding a blacklisted website the student wanted to access for a music course. The district responded within a few school days by providing network

access to the site and closing the dialogue with (I'm paraphrasing here): "We have heard you and corrected the issue on our end. Please use this site responsibly and to your greatest advantage. And, let us know if we can assist you further in pursuing success in both music and school."

This conversation between a student and her school district is a great example of how schools can give students a place to ask important questions, respond in a timely manner, and encourage them to pursue a passion. The question now for education leaders is: How do we do this at scale? Here are a few recommendations based on our work with k-12 districts and higher education institutions:

- 1) K-12 districts should give students more access to life skills development in high school (the emergence and focus on social-emotional learning is a good example of this).
- 2) K-12 districts and local colleges should create partnerships to provide more opportunities for students to experience campus life, courses, and programming during their high school years.
- 3) Teachers should provide more real-world context to the lessons they are providing. And, districts should provide opportunities to continue the development of students' career-oriented skills through partnerships with local community colleges that leverage college teaching staff and other

programs to give students vital access to real-world challenges and situations. Companies like [Neprix](#) can help with these initiatives.

In an age where we are teaching students to be global, responsible, and collaborative citizens, it is our responsibility to model the way.

Elementary, secondary, and post-secondary educators should improve the way they collaborate and communicate to ensure our students are acquiring the skills they need, understanding why those skills are vital to their success, and providing important opportunities to apply them to further their personal and professional goals.

One of the foundational pillars for both k-12 districts and higher ed institutions is to understand student needs, which requires more open and honest conversations with students and parents.



Gregg Levin joined the K12 *Insight* team in 2017, after more than 8 years with education provider, K12 Inc., where he was General Manager of Fuel Education. Gregg has more than two decades of K-12 ed-tech experience and sits on several boards, including ECS Learning Systems and Illustrative Mathematics. As president and COO, Levin is primarily responsible for scaling K12 *Insight's* growing customer service and community engagement platform for schools. A 20-year veteran of educational technology, Levin has also held executive and leadership positions at such prominent organizations as ChildrenFirst, Inc. (acquired by Bright Horizons), Sylvan, and Knowledge Learning Corporation, where he specialized in creating strategies to hone the mission, grow the client base, and scale the business. Levin earned his MBA at the University of Maryland at College Park.

QUICK TAKES

Highlights from the Field

Aligning for Student Success: How Community Colleges Work With K-12 to Improve College and Career Outcomes

by ESG, AACC, and ACCT

This report, jointly prepared by the Education Strategy Group, AACC, and ACCT, identifies and reviews promising models of collaboration between community college and K-12 leaders that align academic, navigational, and career supports to help set students on a path to succeed in the postsecondary realm and beyond. Practices, high-level strategies, and concrete actions community college presidents and trustees can take to partner with K-12 to dramatically improve student outcomes are examined. Access this work here: <http://bit.ly/2JAUceT>

What Happens to Students Who Take Community College “Dual Enrollment” Courses in High School?

by John Fink, Davis Jenkins, and Takeshi Yanagiura

Students enrolled in community college courses while in high school represent a significant and growing portion of community college students nationally. Data shows that taking college courses in high school has the potential to make students more likely to earn a college credential and to do so more efficiently. This report from the CCRC attempts to shed light on what happens to dual enrollment students after high school. Access this work here: <http://bit.ly/2Q2LbML>



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Transforming Communities through Innovative K-12 Programs *(continued from page 1)*

Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District to develop and initiate a fifth-year senior program designed to provide dual credit opportunities to students who did not meet the credit requirements and/or the State of Texas exit exam requirements for high school graduation. The program compliments the intensive State exam requirements and credit recovery programs at participating high schools. Since its inception, the Recovery Program has expanded to seven other districts and graduated over 6,000 students who otherwise would not have graduated from high school. After students successfully obtain the necessary high school credits and/or master the state exams, students are able to claim their college credit, which may be applied towards a certificate or associate degree in the same field. In addition to the academic curriculum, students also participate in courses geared toward employability with the goal of preparing them for the workforce.

Workforce Programs. Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs are offered through various outlets including the Continuing, Professional & Workforce Education (CPWE) Department and the Institute for Advanced Manufacturing (IAM) Department. The CPWE Department collaborates with various school districts and offers career program pathways for students. These programs are designed with career pathway opportunities in mind and are created for just about any professional goal that students may have for their future. The CWPE Department offers Occupational Skills Awards to high school students as part of the stackable credentials under the Dual Credit Programs Department.

The IAM Department at STC specializes in the latest advanced technology training. With a multitude of different courses, the IAM Department helps employers upgrade the knowledge and skills of their employees. Furthermore, the IAM Department offers a diverse assortment of courses that satisfy employers’ needs for customized training to upgrade the skills of current and new employees.

Youth Apprenticeship Program. STC developed the Youth Apprenticeship Program in partnership with the McAllen Chamber of Commerce and the McAllen Independent School District. This program strives to develop student talent for the workforce within our partnering school districts by providing high school juniors and seniors the opportunity to gain work experience and network for future careers. Apprenticeship occupations include Auto Technician, Heating, Ventilation, HVAC, Hotel Operations, and Culinary Arts.

In addition to our student programs and initiatives, STC established annual professional development opportunities for all partnering school district stakeholders. Our institution strives to deliver training that enhances the knowledge of participants by providing them the information necessary to assist students to succeed. The following is a summary of professional development opportunities provided.

Leadership Summits. School district administrators are essential stakeholders, therefore, STC hosts annual events at the start of each academic year for superintendents, CTE directors, and principals. Content delivered includes critical deadlines, initiatives, and expectations for dual credit schools. Clear expectations and outlining our commitment to school districts has assisted in the development of strong partnerships and success among our students.

Summer Leadership Institute. This institute is designed to provide school district administrators, counselors, and teachers an opportunity to work side by side with student services personnel at the College. It is a three-week experience that provides participants with insight into the degrees, programs, and services offered by the College. To

date, the institute has served over 200 public, private, and charter school counselors, teachers, and administrators.

College Advising Training Program. STC provides school district stakeholders the opportunity to participate in the College Advising Training Program using the National Academic Advising Association’s (NACADA) core values for academic advising. This one-week experience provides participants with a solid foundation of the STC enrollment process, including admissions, advising, counseling, and other crucial support services that promote student success.

Annual College and Career Readiness Summit. In its 14th year, the Summit included over 300 attendees from private and public schools, as well as higher education professionals who engaged in a dialogue on closing the achievement gap in college readiness for high school graduates. Essential stakeholders identify how to bridge student success to ensure that key issues are being addressed in order for students to be well prepared for their future.

Through these various innovative programs and initiatives, STC demonstrates its commitment to all school districts in order to transform our region. STC values the strong support from our school districts to reach the goals of improving graduation rates and labor market outcomes. It is a necessity for higher education institutions to build strong K-12 partnerships to improve college readiness and prepare students for the workforce; here at STC it is something we strive to do every day.

Dr. Shirley A. Reed serves as the founding president of South Texas College, formerly South Texas Community College. Her commitment to the greater good is demonstrated by her choice of fighting structural barriers in higher education and committing to serve low-income, first-generation, students. She has devoted her distinguished 45-year career to facilitating access to quality education for African American, Native American, and Hispanic students. She led the establishment and development of the College that now serves almost 33,000 credit students and over 21,000 continuing education students annually in Deep South Texas. She led the successful creation of a taxing district for the operation of the College which has expanded to 7 campuses, offering over 120 degree and certificate program options. Dr. Reed has five college degrees, including a Doctorate in Higher Education Administration from Illinois State University and an Associate of Arts from St. Petersburg Junior College. “Graduation from a community college opened the door to my own future, and as president of South Texas College, I am committed to opening the doors to higher education for all and with the highest expectations for their success,” said Dr. Reed.



Rebecca De Leon, EdD, serves as Dean for Dual Credit Programs and School District Partnerships and has over eleven years of experience in student and academic affairs in higher education. She earned her doctorate at Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas, and provides leadership for pre-college programs and initiatives including dual credit courses, Early College High Schools, Career and Technology Education, Dual Enrollment Academies, and Recovery Program. Dr. De Leon’s additional duties include seeking grant funds to continue current programs’ support, expand current programs, and start new K-12 college readiness student initiatives that will prepare students for the various rigors of higher education. In addition, she maintains the overall sustainability of programs by collaborating with partnering school district stakeholders, the community, and local organizations to enhance these programs.

