



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT: A STRATEGY TO MEET URBAN EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

A desire to collaborate with area high schools and enhance student learning led a team of urban community college leaders to design and implement a successful concurrent enrollment program in less than one year. A series of meetings involving administrators from high schools (that currently provided 50 or more first-year students to the college annually) and Santa Monica College representatives outlined courses the college could offer. Response was overwhelming and resulted in partnerships with 17 area high schools and an enrollment of 676 students during the program's first semester. So far, the program has served more than 2000 high school students in the Los Angeles area.

The individuals who led this project identified important strategies for initiating a concurrent enrollment program. Although this college is situated in a large metropolitan area, these same concepts can be employed by virtually any community college.

In this case, the program was established and implemented by a college team charged with building a foundation program. This cross-functional team included members of the faculty and representatives from planning and development, student affairs, and academic affairs. Carefully communicating student goals aided in creating a program plan, evaluating outcomes, and garnering campuswide support.

Involving a variety of stakeholders at the college and the high schools from the strategy's inception was a key element. Planning and implementation included college and high school department chairs, faculty, counselors, admissions representatives, and administrators. Each high school provided an on-site liaison to coordinate academic calendars, facility requirements, instructional needs, and organizational procedures. Prior to developing a plan, it was important to address policy and procedural issues that might create barriers, including

difficulties regarding attendance reporting, transcripts, schedules, and other related issues. The college facilitated the admissions and registration by providing an admissions/registration liaison to each high school. These individuals, trained in all aspects of the college admission and registration process, provided the necessary information to instructors regarding class rosters, drop deadlines, final grades, and other related procedures. The college provided support through the assignment of an outreach liaison to each high school in order to facilitate direct communication.

A test program of at least one semester of limited offerings at each high school proved beneficial. Program expansion could then be managed in future semesters, while considering the specific needs of each high school. A formal feedback session for college and high school officials was a viable way to evaluate the program.

The success of this program has been attributed, in part, to the focus on enhancing high school curriculum, enriching students' knowledge, and creating students who are better prepared for college. The concurrent enrollment program is not designed to compete with or supplant high school curriculum. Considering the unique needs of each high school's student population has been essential to creating a collaboration that is well-received and courses that are useful additions to the high school's programs. For example, a high school with a strong life science curriculum and advanced placement courses in that discipline may not need college-level biology classes. In contrast, a high school without a physics professor or with limited art offerings may want courses in these disciplines.

One factor to consider in planning to implement a concurrent enrollment program is developing course packages, in advance, to provide each high school with a realistic view of curricular offerings that can be delivered at off-site locations. Packages should include transportability of the class, availability of faculty in specific disciplines, and geographic constraints of the instructors. Offering the broadest set of options to high school decision-makers will afford choice and opportunity to match needs with available services.



Focusing on Quality and Student

One of the primary goals of the concurrent enrollment program is to provide college-level instruction that is representative of the same quality and academic rigor afforded to students enrolled in classes on the college campus. Every attempt should be made to schedule the high school-based classes in a manner consistent with the college's schedule of classes. This allows students to gain the experience of a college scheduling pattern and prevents overlaps in an instructor's daily schedule. All college-level classes are offered outside of the students' regular high school class day. Students enrolling in concurrent courses are assessed by the same measurement tools used for all entering students at the college. The results of the assessment are used for counseling and placement. College personnel work closely with high school counselors to identify interested students and students who demonstrate potential for success in college-level course work.

One goal of the program has been to minimize expense for the participating high school students; as a result, many disadvantaged urban youth have gained access to college-level courses. The college's commitment to this goal resulted in waivers of all tuition and fees for participating students. Textbooks are the responsibility of the student; however, the college has developed a pool of funds to assist financially needy students with the purchase of books, and the college bookstore has donated earlier editions of books. High school administrators have used discretionary funds, booster club funds, and other traditional fund-raising efforts to purchase books to loan.

Faculty who participate in the concurrent program must meet the same hiring qualifications for any incoming college faculty. Many who elect to teach in the program are already affiliated with the college as full-time or adjunct faculty members.

Measuring the Results

Students evaluate their instructors at the end of each semester, just as they would on the college campus. At the end of the pilot semester, college administrators host a feedback session with high school representatives to discuss program outcomes. This collaboration has led to the improvement of student recruitment strategies and the development of new offerings.

The college academic departments provide evaluations of the participating faculty members in a manner consistent with campus guidelines and the conditions of their employment with the college. Additionally, ongoing contact between campus liaisons, administrators, and faculty provides opportunities for sharing

timely information and improving the program.

A follow-up study at the end of the first semester indicated that concurrent course completion rates, course success rates, and grade point averages were reflective of the college student population at-large.

Reaping the Benefits

Within a one-year period, this urban community college implemented a program that developed meaningful K-12 partnerships, assisted in meeting the educational needs of the community, and established greater communication and articulation between K-12 faculty. Additionally, the program has enhanced high school curricula while decreasing students' time and cost. Faculty members reported they gained a greater sense of K-12 educational issues and developed a deeper understanding of urban issues in general.

Brian G. Chapman, *Enrollment Advisor, Columbus State Community College, Columbus, OH*

For further information contact: Jeffrey Shimizu, Dean of Instruction, Santa Monica College, 1900 Pico Boulevard, Santa Monica, CA 90405-1628.
e-mail: Shimizu_Jefferey@smc.edu