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An Exploratory Study of College Readiness Partnership Programs in Texas

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THE COLLEGE READINESS PARTNERSHIP STUDY

National Center for Postsecondary Research
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Overview

About 40 percent of traditional college students take at least one remedial course to prepare for college-level coursework. According to scholars and policymakers, one cause of this problem is the misalignment of high school graduation standards and college academic expectations. College readiness partnership programs attempt to address this problem by facilitating students' transition to college. These programs, co-sponsored by a college and K-12 organization (usually a high school), are explicitly designed to prepare high school students to enter college ready to undertake college-level work.

The current study examines a number of college readiness partnership programs operating in Texas and identifies their features, targeted students, and intended outcomes. It also examines the partnerships that created these programs. The findings presented here are based on a search and analysis of the relevant research and Texas policy literature, an online scan of college readiness partnership programs in Texas with a web presence, and site visits to high schools, colleges, and community-based organizations in the Houston and Dallas–Fort Worth areas. The authors observed that most college readiness partnership programs could be classified into two types: those that focused on academic subjects and those that focused on college knowledge. The former tended to be intensive, short-term programs that targeted a small group of students and provided a direct experience of college; the latter tended to be light-touch, long-term programs that were open to all students and provided little direct experience of college.

Although few rigorous evaluations of these programs have been conducted, their potential to improve college readiness for students in the "academic middle" is generally supported by the literature and the research presented here. The authors identify a number of implications for college readiness partnership programs and the partnerships themselves. It is clear that college readiness partnerships create opportunities for secondary and postsecondary institutions to leverage each other's services, eliminating redundant services and aligning programming to maximize gains for students. In some cases, college readiness partnership programs also lead to long-lasting relationships between institutions and continued collaboration. College readiness partnership programs may have the best chance of improving outcomes if commonly encountered challenges — such as issues related to student recruitment and program sustainability — are considered early in the planning stages. The authors emphasize the value of choosing interventions that show the greatest promise in a given context and matching students to the interventions that best meet their needs; they also note that building a stronger evidence base would enhance high schools' and colleges' ability to make sound decisions about which potential program models to implement.

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Preface

Many students who graduate from high school and enroll in college take at least one developmental course to prepare for college-level coursework. Not all of these students performed poorly in high school; many enter college feeling confident about their knowledge and abilities and are surprised to find themselves assigned to developmental courses. Indeed, high schools and colleges often have different ideas about what it means for students to be "college ready."

College readiness partnership programs are one way to attempt to bridge the disconnect between the K-12 and postsecondary education systems. In such programs, colleges and K-12 districts (particularly their high schools) work together to try to ensure that students are ready for college-level coursework before they enroll in college. The partnerships take a variety of forms. Some are short and intense and take place in the summer; others include a series of activities that take place throughout the school year. While some focus on academic skills, others offer lessons about college norms and expectations. Yet in all these partnership programs, high schools and colleges share responsibility for delivering programming designed to prepare students for college.

Using information from a literature review, an online scan, and site visits to programs, this report explores the terrain of college readiness partnerships, focusing primarily on those operating in the state of Texas. In doing so, the report expands our understanding of these partnerships and programs, which, while still relatively uncommon, appear to be growing in popularity. One fact that is made clear is that few rigorous evaluations of partnership programs have taken place. Knowing more about what types of programming produce the best student outcomes would better inform the decisions of high schools and colleges as they look to establish new partnership programs or expand the ones they already have.

Despite the scarcity of empirical evidence on college readiness partnerships, there are reasons to believe that they may enhance students' college preparation. There is ample evidence that high school and college standards are misaligned; at the very least college readiness partnerships generate conversations between institutions about the disconnect between high school graduation standards and college academic expectations. If implemented well, partnership programs also have the potential to reduce the need for remediation in college. And beyond their immediate effects, college readiness partnerships can result in long and fruitful relationships between participating institutions that serve as the foundation for increased alignment and collaborative programming that can benefit students.

Thomas Bailey
Director, NCPR

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The Authors

Executive Summary

In his 2009 State of the Union address, President Obama pledged federal government support to ensure that the United States has the world's highest postsecondary graduation rate by 2020 (Obama, 2009). One of the many challenges that must be addressed in order to achieve this objective is the problem of incoming college students' academic deficiencies. Even though many matriculating college students are recent high school graduates, about 40 percent of traditional students take at least one remedial course to prepare for college-level coursework (Attewell, Lavin, Domina, & Levey, 2006). The costs associated with this problem are high, both for taxpayers and students.

Scholars and policymakers contend that a key underlying cause of this problem is a fundamental misalignment between high school graduation standards and college academic expectations (Callan, Finney, Kirst, Usdan, & Venezia, 2006; Venezia, Kirst, & Antonio, 2003). However, the research gives no indication that such a misalignment is inevitable. It is possible that fewer students would need remedial coursework upon entrance to college if postsecondary institutions took a more active role in facilitating students' transitions from high school to college. In fact, improving alignment through close coordination between the secondary and postsecondary levels may improve students' college readiness and their outcomes in college.

The current study aims to understand one set of initiatives intended to improve alignment — herein called *college readiness partnership programs*. College readiness partnership programs are co-sponsored by a college and K-12 organization, usually a high school, and are explicitly designed to prepare high school students to enter college ready to undertake college-level work. We examine a number of college readiness partnership programs that are currently operating in Texas and identify their features, targeted students, and intended outcomes. We also examine the partnerships that created these programs. This study of college readiness partnership programs in Texas has two research goals:

- to identify, describe, and classify existing partnership programs intended to better prepare high school students for college, particularly those at risk of placing into developmental education courses or otherwise underprepared for postsecondary education; and
- to investigate and describe the partnerships between high schools and colleges, specifically their engagement with each other as they work to prepare high school students to take credit-bearing courses upon college entry.

To address these goals, we carried out three activities: (1) a search and analysis of the relevant research and Texas policy literature (the results of which appear in the next section of this chapter), (2) an online scan of college readiness partnership programs in Texas with a web presence, and (3) a series of four trips to multiple high schools, colleges, and community-based organizations in the Houston and Dallas–Fort Worth areas. The research was conducted in Texas due to its policy focus on issues of college access and readiness and because of NCPR's involvement in related research projects in the state.

Key Findings on College Readiness Partnership Programs

A review of the existing research literature reveals that pre-college interventions may help underprepared students to improve their college readiness and reduce the need for remediation by addressing academic and skill deficits (Cunningham, Redmond, & Merisotis, 2003; Fenske, Geranios, Keller, & Moore, 1997; Gándara, 2001; Gullatt & Jan, 2003; Perna, Fenske, & Swail, 2000). However, there have been few rigorous evaluations of program effectiveness for college readiness programs in general, and relatively little is known about how well these programs work. Further, very little literature exists that describes the characteristics or effectiveness of college readiness *partnership* programs in particular.

Using data gathered through an online scan, we identified characteristics of college readiness partnership programs, a subset of college readiness programs. Among the college readiness partnership programs that we identified, federally funded programs dominated the landscape, accounting for 72 percent of the 133 programs found. State programs accounted for 16 percent of the programs, and locally developed and funded programs accounted for 12 percent.

Selected Program Models Studied

Because federally funded programs follow a fairly uniform model and are already well described, we focused on state and local program models in Texas. We identified 37 state and local programs in the online scan, and we observed a range of programs during our site visits, which are broadly represented by the models described here. All programs were offered through a partnership between a high school and a college.

Academic-Focused Programs

The programs we observed that focused primarily on academics were likely to engage with smaller groups of students at risk of placing into developmental education in college. Four program models are highlighted here: summer bridge programs, school year transition programs, senior year transition courses, and early assessment/intervention programs.

Summer bridge programs, generally offered to rising 11th and 12th grade students, aspire to improve students' reading, writing, and math skills. They most often include four to six weeks of intensive, all-day programming and are usually held on college campuses. An example is the University of Texas at Arlington's Transitions program, which includes direct math and reading instruction as well as a researched-based STEMS (science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and social science) curriculum.

School year transition programs offer activities similar to those in summer bridge programs, but the programming occurs during the school year. Houston Community College (HCC), with funds from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), offers the HCC Southeast Transitional Program to high school juniors, which runs on Saturdays throughout the spring semester for approximately 16 weeks. In addition to offering intensive academic skill building, this program includes college knowledge components.

In **senior year transition courses**, longer term academic programming is offered to larger groups of students in a course format. For example, at Nimitz High School in Houston, a college developmental math class is offered as the default course for students in their senior year; students are enrolled in this course unless they opt to take a higher-level math course. This program also incorporates a college knowledge component.

Early assessment/intervention programs offer students the chance to take college placement tests while in high school, providing them with information on their college readiness. This type of program is commonly offered in Texas. For example, in the El Paso school district, students complete a joint application to El Paso Community College (EPCC) and the University of Texas at El Paso, take college placement tests, receive assistance in making up any deficiencies identified through testing, and retake the tests when necessary.

College Knowledge–Focused Programs

The college knowledge–focused programs we observed were generally less intensive, more sustained, and more likely to be offered during the academic year than academic-focused programs. Some specific examples include targeted outreach programs, multi-year college readiness programs, embedded college counseling, and college readiness lessons.

Targeted outreach programs, intended to encourage specific populations to attend college, offer information and counseling to students who are considered at risk of not attending college. For example, Brookhaven College in Dallas has targeted Thomas Jefferson High School over the last three years for intensive outreach efforts. The college selected this high school because it is located in an underserved area with many low-

income, Hispanic students. The college's outreach strategies have included a concerted marketing campaign, college admissions days, opportunities for early assessment, and hands-on financial aid workshops.

Multi-year college readiness programs provide students with sustained support and may offer a variety of services during high school. Project GRAD — a collaboration between a nonprofit organization, the Houston School District, and several colleges and universities — offers both academic and social supports to help students prepare for college. Its primary emphasis is on helping students to view college-going as a realistic option by providing counseling, support, and collegiate-type experiences, such as participation in a range of summer bridge programs.

In **embedded college counseling programs**, colleges provide college counseling within a high school setting. For example, Lone Star College–CyFair places advisors in local high schools. The advisors focus on helping students navigate the college admissions and financial aid processes. They describe the main goal of the program as helping students "realize that they can go to college" and promoting a "college going atmosphere" among high school students.

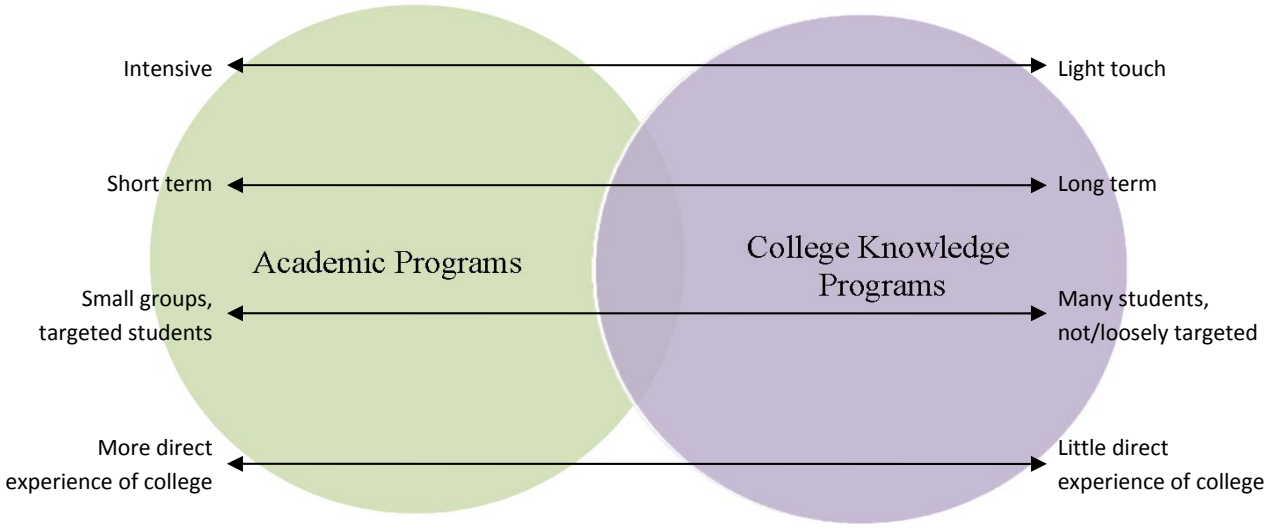
College readiness lessons supply students with information about college and attempt to foster a college-going culture. For instance, the K-16 Bridge program, sponsored by San Jacinto College in Houston, includes six to eight classroom lessons per semester taught by high school teachers during the regular school day. These lessons are supplemented by self-directed assignments that students access online. Students in the K-16 bridge program learn about colleges, academic programs, financial aid, and careers, among other topics.

Program Typology

We observed that college readiness partnership programs could often be classified as *academic-focused* or *college knowledge–focused*. In academic-focused programs, students primarily studied academic subjects (most often reading, writing, and mathematics); in college knowledge–focused programs, students learned about college planning, applying to college, financial aid, and navigating college life. Further, the programs fell on a series of continua of the type described in Figure ES.1. While programs often included a blend of features, there was a tendency for academic-focused programs to include the features found on the left side and for college knowledge–focused programs to include those on the right.

Figure ES.1

College Readiness Partnership Program Typology



Key Findings on College Readiness Partnerships

The most common partnerships we observed were between school districts and postsecondary institutions, followed by those involving multiple partners in a region. We examined how partners engage with one another to assist high school students in entering college prepared to take college-level courses. Our major observations fall into three categories: key characteristics of partnerships, potential benefits, and barriers and challenges.

Key Characteristics

Intensity

The partnerships we observed varied in the intensity of their relationships. The less intense relationships involved *coordination*, or networking and sharing information. The more intense relationships involved *collaboration*, with joint planning and power sharing.

Commitment

Program observations and interviews conducted during our site visits suggest that college readiness partnerships require institutional commitment for strong program

implementation. For example, having dedicated staff who manage programs and have a presence in the high schools appears to be important.

The Role of Champion

Many partnerships had one or more individuals who had a deep interest in their success and were considered by others as their champion(s). It was clear that their energy and vision was driving much of these partnerships' vision and activities.

Funding, Policy, and Partnerships

Among the partnerships we visited, both funding and policy mandates clearly influenced the intensity and focus of partnerships. While those interviewed talked of many reasons to work together, policy changes (e.g., Closing the Gaps by 2015) or funding availability (e.g., College Connections funds from the state) influenced the extent to which collaboration actually occurred.

Potential Benefits

Depending on a range of contextual factors, a number of benefits may be associated with the formation and sustainability of college readiness partnerships, including:

- optimization of efforts to improve student outcomes, i.e., improvements in effectiveness and efficiency;
- additional opportunities for college student recruitment;
- alignment of academic standards and assessment, which reduces the gap between high school graduation requirements and college expectations;
- sharing of best practices across institutions;
- cross-system faculty development; and
- opportunities for additional ongoing, mutually beneficial initiatives and actions.

Barriers and Challenges

While there may be many reasons to develop college readiness partnerships, certain conditions make it difficult to do so, including:

- lack of funding streams that reward collaborative efforts between colleges and high schools;
- lack of financial and other resources for new interventions;
- differences in the cultural norms and priorities of higher education and K-12 systems; and
- complex patterns of student progression that occur when students from a given high school go to multiple colleges and universities, which make it more difficult to customize programs to prepare students for college.

Implications and Reflections

Implications for Future Research

Although few rigorous evaluations of college readiness partnership programs have been conducted, both the literature and our research findings generally support their potential to improve college readiness for students in the "academic middle," who are likely to graduate high school intending to go to college but are at risk of being placed in developmental education courses. Strong, collaborative partnerships between K-12 and postsecondary institutions can be challenging to maintain, given the structure of our educational system and the current state of the economy, but these partnerships appear to offer advantages in creating programs that can help alleviate gaps in students' college readiness. Our work suggests the need for more rigorous effectiveness trials of current and future programs for these students as well as studies of their costs and benefits. Program leaders, college and high school administrators, and policymakers would benefit from more extensive and higher quality information on which of these programs have the greatest impact given different levels of investment.

Implications for College Readiness Partnership Programs

Our research suggests that those seeking to implement college readiness partnership programs should consider the following points:

- Choosing interventions that show the greatest promise in a given context can enhance the chances of success. This selection should reflect current research on effective practice.
- Many programs, especially those that are intensive, can only serve limited numbers of students. Institutions may want to match college-going

students who are academically underprepared with more intensive programs and direct those students who primarily need assistance with college knowledge to less intensive programs.

- Explicitly linking secondary and postsecondary college readiness programs may allow each type of institution to leverage the services of the other, creating an opportunity to maximize the potential gains for students.
- Common challenges are worth considering — and planning for — early in the development of college readiness partnership programs. These include student recruitment and participation and program sustainability.

Implications for College Readiness Partnerships

Our findings indicate that colleges and high schools forming partnerships should consider ways to maximize the benefits derived from them. They may wish to:

- deepen existing partnerships to promote cost efficiencies, long-term program sustainability, and systemic changes, such as the improved alignment of curriculum and assessment practice;
- use partnerships to eliminate redundant services and align remaining services to reduce the resources required to support college readiness programming and create a more cost-effective system; and
- use intermediaries to support and complement the roles of the key partnership institutions.

Closing Thoughts

In sum, earning a postsecondary credential has become essential for securing a good job in today's labor market; indeed, the disparity in earnings between those with and without a college degree continues to grow. Yet currently, the pathway from high school to college does not reliably lead to a college degree. If high schools and colleges partner to improve the creation, enhancement, and alignment of supports for transitioning students, they may be able to help more students attain a degree and help the country to meet its goals for college completion and a stronger economy.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In his 2009 State of the Union address, President Obama pledged federal government support to ensure that the United States has the world's highest postsecondary graduation rate by 2020 (Obama, 2009). One of the many challenges that must be addressed in order to achieve this objective is the problem of incoming college students' academic deficiencies. Even though many matriculating college students are recent high school graduates, about 40 percent of traditional students take at least one remedial course to prepare for college-level coursework (Attewell, Lavin, Domina, & Levey, 2006). The costs associated with this problem are high, both for taxpayers and students. Recent research estimates that $3.6 billion is spent each year in direct education costs for remediation in college (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011). And students who place into remedial classes are less likely to complete a degree or certificate (Bailey, 2009), resulting in significantly reduced wages over time.

Scholars and policymakers contend that a key underlying cause of this problem is a fundamental misalignment between high school graduation standards and college academic expectations (Callan, Finney, Kirst, Usdan, & Venezia, 2006; Venezia, Kirst, & Antonio, 2003). However, the research gives no indication that such a misalignment is inevitable. It is possible that fewer students would need remedial coursework upon entrance to college if postsecondary institutions took a more active role in facilitating students' transitions from high school to college. In fact, improving alignment through close coordination between the secondary and postsecondary levels may improve students' college readiness and their outcomes in college.

The current study aims to understand initiatives intended to improve alignment — herein called *college readiness partnership programs*. We examine a number of college readiness partnership programs that are currently operating in Texas and identify their features, targeted students, and intended outcomes. We also examine the partnerships that created these programs.

The Current Research

For the past five years, the National Center for Postsecondary Research (NCPR)[1] has worked to measure the effectiveness of programs designed to help students make a successful transition to college and master the basic skills needed to advance to a degree. In particular, NCPR evaluates promising practices intended to reduce the need for developmental education and improve outcomes for those students who enroll in remedial coursework.[2] Not surprisingly, many of the programs examined by NCPR have been administered by colleges exclusively and have been targeted at recent high school graduates or first-time college students.

In conducting evaluations of such programs, NCPR researchers have often noticed students struggling to compensate for a lack of skills that could possibly have been gained in high school. Further, we have observed that many programs attempting to address these deficits are run by either colleges or high schools, limiting the extent to which they can effectively address alignment issues. In the current research, we examine programs offered in a coordinated fashion by high schools and colleges that are designed to help students become college ready while still in high school. These *college readiness partnership programs* are defined as programmatic interventions cosponsored by secondary and postsecondary institutions and offered to high school students with the goal of increasing students' college readiness.

College readiness partnership programs have the potential to help academically underprepared, college-bound high school students navigate the college admissions process, strengthen their preparation, and reduce their need for developmental education once enrolled. Further, these cosponsored programs may play a role in promoting inter-institutional discussions and relationships directed at the shared goal of improving college readiness. To explore these hypotheses, we initiated, among other activities, a study of current practices in the state of Texas.

This study has two main research goals. The first goal is to identify, describe, and classify existing college readiness partnership programs in Texas intended to better prepare high school students for college, particularly those students who are at risk of placing into developmental education courses. The second goal is to investigate and describe the

[1] NCPR is funded by a grant (R305A060010) from the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. NCPR is a partnership of the Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University; MDRC; the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia; and faculty at Harvard University.

[2] The terms *developmental education* and *remedial education* are used interchangeably in this report to refer to courses that students take in college to become college ready.

partnerships formed by K-12 school districts (and their high schools) and local colleges as they work to prepare high school students to take credit-bearing courses upon college entry.

To address these goals, we carried out three activities: (1) a search and analysis of the relevant research and Texas policy literature (the results of which appear in the next section of this chapter), (2) an online scan of college readiness partnership programs in Texas with a web presence, and (3) a series of four trips to visit multiple high schools, colleges, and community-based organizations in the Houston and Dallas–Fort Worth areas. The research was conducted in Texas due to its policy focus on issues of college access and readiness and because of NCPR's involvement in related research projects in the state.

The Promise of College Readiness Partnerships and Programs

A Definition of College Readiness

While various definitions of college readiness are found in the literature (Greene & Forster, 2003; Roderick, Nagaoka, & Coca, 2009; Sedlacek, 2005), college readiness has often been defined as the absence of a need for remediation in math and English. In recent years, more nuanced views, such as those of David Conley, have gained credence. Conley's (2010) college readiness framework provides a comprehensive description of the knowledge and skills students need to succeed in college beyond simple academic performance measures. Based on extensive research, Conley identified four interdependent skill areas that comprise college readiness: *key content knowledge* in reading, writing, and other core academic subject areas; *college knowledge*, i.e., the "privileged information" needed to prepare for and apply to college and the contextual awareness skills needed to be successful there; *academic behaviors*, such as self-awareness and self-monitoring; and *key cognitive strategies*, such as intellectual openness and problem solving.

Terenzini, Cabrera, Deil-Amen, and Lambert (2005) also underscore the importance of these skill areas. Their conception of college readiness emphasizes academic skills and knowledge as well as the need for college awareness and parental involvement and encouragement. According to these researchers, the process students undergo to become aware of and ready for college is complex and starts as early as in middle school.

Other researchers (Rosenbaum, 2001; Sedlacek, 2005) have stressed the importance of noncognitive domains. Rosenbaum (2001) found that students' homework completion, interest in school, participation in activities, attendance, leadership, and discipline were all positively related to postsecondary educational attainment. Sedlacek (2005) discussed the significance of such noncognitive factors as adjustment, motivation, long-range goals,

leadership roles, and community involvement as contributing to student success at the postsecondary level.

The current study emphasizes the traditional view of college readiness, which focuses on academic readiness in math and English, but we also included examples of partnerships and programs that used broader definitions of college readiness, in particular those designed to increase "college knowledge."

Students at Risk of Not Being College Ready

While college readiness may be an issue for a range of students, there is reason for particular concern for students in the "academic middle." These students are likely to graduate high school intending to go to college but are at higher risk of being placed into developmental education upon enrollment (Kirst & Venezia, 2001). Many have difficulty obtaining adequate support in selecting the right college, applying for admission and financial aid, and preparing themselves for the transition into college (Kirst & Venezia, 2001). The current research focuses on partnerships and programs that serve students at risk of entering college underprepared.

Effective College Readiness Programs

A review of the existing research literature reveals that pre-college interventions may help students in the academic middle improve their college readiness and reduce the need for remediation by addressing academic and skill deficits (Cunningham, Redmond, & Merisotis, 2003; Fenske, Geranios, Keller, & Moore, 1997; Gándara, 2001; Gullatt & Jan, 2003; Perna, Fenske, & Swail, 2000). However, there have been few rigorous evaluations of program effectiveness, and relatively little is known about how well these programs work. After reviewing evaluations of large numbers of intervention programs to identify those that would permit an assessment of the effectiveness of particular models and features, Gándara (2001) identified only 13 out of 97 program evaluations that met an acceptable level of rigor.[3] In examining these, she found that the single most important influence on positive student outcomes was a close, caring relationship with a knowledgeable adult. Other important features included high quality instruction, longer program length, attention to students' cultural background, and scholarship aid.

[3]Schultz and Mueller (2006) performed a subsequent review to update findings for the programs discussed by Gándara (2001) and to identify any additional programs that had acceptable evidence of effectiveness; they found an additional seven evaluations that met their standard. According to these researchers, high quality evaluation designs include experimental and other designs that allow evaluators to attribute any possible impacts to the program.

There is some evidence in the literature that college readiness programs with positive impacts tend to combine a variety of services. Researchers suggest that effective programs provide academic preparation and scaffolding through rigorous coursework, tutoring, and the creation of personalized learning environments (Cunningham et al., 2003; Gullatt & Jan, 2003; Shultz & Mueller, 2006). In addition, effective programs provide students with opportunities to gain college knowledge, which includes the information needed to prepare for and apply to college and the social and cultural skills needed to be successful once enrolled (Constantine, Seftor, Martin, Silva, & Myers, 2006). Finally, social guidance and support, including mentoring, counseling, advising, and motivational activities, are often offered by strong college access and enrichment programs (Perna, 2000; Shultz & Mueller, 2006). However, the cost of providing multiple services can be high, and the literature on the cost-effectiveness of college readiness programs is almost nonexistent (Perna, 2007).

The Value of Collaboration

The past decade has witnessed a significant increase in both statewide and national secondary–postsecondary partnership efforts, especially around P-16 policy reform and the alignment of academic standards and assessments (Achieve, Inc., 2006; McRobbie, 2004; Pathways to College Network, 2007). While college readiness partnerships have traditionally involved local relationships between K-12 schools and community colleges, they have recently begun to include wider-ranging collaborations for successful student transitions (Bueschel, 2003; McRobbie, 2004). In Texas, for example, a statewide Texas P-16 Council was established in 2003 to ensure that long-term plans and goals established by elementary and secondary education are coordinated with those of higher education.

College readiness partnerships between secondary and postsecondary institutions may result in mutual benefits. Working in coordination, institutions can maximize each other's effectiveness in improving outcomes for students (Gándara, 2001; McCants, 2004; Perna & Swail, 2001; State Higher Education Executive Officers, 2003). Postsecondary partners may benefit from reduced costs for student remediation and additional opportunities for student recruitment (McRobbie, 2004). High schools may increase their effectiveness in preparing students for college success. In addition, these partnerships can enhance alignment of academic standards and assessment, encourage better data-sharing practices, and facilitate cross-system faculty development (Bueschel, 2003; Mazingo, MacNeill, Roberts, & Shackleford, 2004).

The Texas Context

Texas, which enrolls one in 14 first-time undergraduates in the nation, ranks below the national average in postsecondary educational attainment; it is currently ranked 32nd out of 50 states (FSG, 2011). However, Texas has shown a high level of commitment to enrolling a greater number of students from diverse backgrounds in postsecondary education and to increasing those students' level of college readiness. Secondary–postsecondary partnerships have been encouraged as a method of achieving this goal in several ways, described below.

The *Closing the Gaps* Initiative and the Creation of Standards

In 2000, Texas launched the *Closing the Gaps by 2015* initiative with the goal of "closing the higher education gaps within Texas and between Texas and other leading states" (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2010). The plan focused on increasing student participation and success rates, the number of nationally recognized college and university programs, and the level of federal science and engineering research funding in higher education across the state. While Texas has increased its degree completion rates, the costs associated with non-completion remain significant. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) analyzed its financial aid database and found that between 2003 and 2009, 66 percent of the 159,824 students who entered college did not graduate, resulting in a loss of $713.2 million in financial aid and $397.9 million in local and state revenue foregone[4] (American Youth Policy Forum, 2010).

Texas has also worked to increase the college readiness of its students through the creation of state-specific College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) (Texas Gen. Laws House Bill 3, §39.024, 2009). These standards describe what students need to know and be able to do to succeed in either entry-level college courses or the skilled workplace (Rolfhus, Cook, Brite, & Hartman, 2010). The standards were developed by vertical teams of secondary and higher education teachers, faculty, and administrators with expertise in the four foundational areas of the public school curriculum — English language arts, social sciences, mathematics, and science (Texas Education Agency, 2010).[5]

[4]The revenue foregone primarily reflects lower tax receipts from less educated, lower income citizens.

[5]Because Texas created its own standards resulting in the CCRS, the state has not adopted the national Common Core State Standards. The Common Core State Standards Initiative, sponsored by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, has developed a single set of national K-12 curriculum standards aligned to college readiness standards (Council of Chief State School Officers and National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010).

In addition, the Texas legislature has set aside funds specifically for college readiness programs. In 2008, the 79th Legislature provided $327 million during the 2008–09 school year and $336 million during the 2009–10 school year to aid school districts in implementing strategies and activities to help underachieving students from grades 6–12 become college ready (Texas Education Agency & Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2010). Examples of approved activities include sponsoring college tours, covering tuition fees for dual credit and Advanced Placement courses and exams, and implementing other college readiness and awareness activities.

P-16 Coordination

Texas has also taken steps in recent years to augment its P-16 structure to ensure that the long-range plans and goals established by the elementary and secondary education sectors are coordinated with higher education standards. Mandated in 2003, the State P-16 Council includes members from the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the Texas Workforce Commission, and the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services. The Commissioner of Higher Education and the Commissioner of Education serve as co-chairs of the council. In 2005, the Texas Legislature helped to define the role of the State P-16 Council by passing House Bill 2808 Section 61.076, which outlined the following objectives:

- [Align] the goals of the State P-16 Council and educational programs to promote more effective functionality of the public education continuum.
- [Coordinate] plans and programs, including curricula, instructional programs, research, and other functions as appropriate.
- Examine and make recommendations regarding the alignment of secondary and postsecondary education curricula and testing and assessment.
- Advise the board and the State Board of Education on the coordination of postsecondary career and technology activities, career and technology teacher education programs offered … in the colleges and universities of this state, and other relevant matters. (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2011a)

In 2006, the THECB initiated the formation of P-16 regional councils, which support the goals of Closing the Gaps by 2015 by addressing local issues. There are currently 19 regional councils in Texas, and six regional councils were created with grants from the THECB for the 2011 fiscal year.

High School–College Partnerships

Texas has included partnership requirements in several college readiness programs. In 2001, the legislature passed House Bill 400, intended to increase the number of graduating seniors who enroll in college. This legislation targets schools that "for any two consecutive years during the preceding five years have been among the lowest ten percent of high schools in this state in the percentage of students graduating from the high school and enrolling for the following academic year in an institution of higher education" ("House Bill 400," n.d.). These schools, referred to as HB 400 schools, are required to develop partnerships with nearby colleges and universities as a means of increasing their college-going rate. In sum, the state is contributing resources and crafting policy to encourage and sustain collaboration between these two sectors.

Chapter 2

Research Design and Methods

This study seeks to expand knowledge about summer and school-year programs intended to support high school students' access to and readiness for postsecondary education. Focusing primarily on the state of Texas, the two specific goals of this research are:

- To identify, describe, and classify existing college readiness partnership programs intended to better prepare high school students for college, particularly those students who are at risk of placing into developmental education courses or who are otherwise underprepared for postsecondary education.
- To investigate and describe the partnerships between high schools and colleges, specifically their engagement with each other as they work to prepare high school students to take credit-bearing courses upon college entry.

To accomplish these goals, the study team carried out three activities: a literature review, an online scan, and site visits.

Literature Review

Our first step was to find and evaluate relevant literature from scholarly, public policy, and government sources on four topics: (1) college readiness, (2) early intervention models, (3) the role of partnerships in P-16 policy, and (4) Texas state policy. Many of the results of this review are summarized in the previous chapter. We found only a handful of high quality evaluations of existing college readiness programs that included evidence on the programs' effectiveness. Highlights of our review of the literature are integrated throughout this report.

Online Scan

In order to assess the landscape of college readiness partnership programs in the state of Texas, the research team conducted a scan of such programs, grouped by region. These regions included the Dallas–Fort Worth area, the Houston area, South Texas, West Texas, and an "other" category. Programs were identified by searching the websites of colleges and universities in the state, K-12 districts, and the THECB; lists provided by

central P-16 coordinating entities; and lists of colleges and universities participating in federally funded college readiness programs and initiatives.[1] Excluded from analysis were programs that did not involve a partnership, i.e., those in which either high schools or colleges did not play a programmatic role. Also excluded were initiatives that did not serve our target population, (i.e., high school students in need of assistance to become college ready), those of very short duration (e.g., a college fair), and those without a substantive online presence.

Programs that met our criteria were entered into an online database, allowing them to be grouped according to various identifying characteristics. For each program we collected the following information: program name, name of the host institution(s), a program description, the purpose and goals of the program, the type of academic or other skills that the program addressed, the number of students served, program partners and their programmatic responsibilities, program funding, and the evaluations that had been conducted. We included federal programs such as Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP), as well as Texas state programs, such as GO Centers.

Overall, we identified 133 programs in the state of Texas that met our research criteria. Seventy-two percent (n = 96) were locally implemented federal programs (i.e., Talent Search, Upward Bound, and GEAR UP), 16 percent (n = 21) were state programs, and 12 percent (n = 16) were locally developed programs. Table 3.1 in Chapter 3 provides an overview of the programs included.

Site Visits

To obtain more detailed information about college readiness partnerships, teams of researchers travelled to the Dallas–Fort Worth and Houston metropolitan areas, once in the summer of 2010 and again in the fall of 2010. These two locations were selected for three primary reasons. First, these two metropolitan areas are the largest in the state, and they are sufficiently separated geographically to represent different regions. Second, team members had established relationships with Houston school districts and colleges during prior research; these relationships facilitated our ability to locate relevant programming in the area. Third, while many rural programs exist in Texas, the high concentration of programs in urban areas allows for an efficient study.

[1]This scan was limited by the fact that it was conducted online. Not all programs have websites, and those that do may not fully describe their models and partnerships.

The goal of the site visits was to observe a variety of types of college readiness partnership programming at close range and to learn more about the high school–college partnerships that exist in each locale. Research team members visited specific programs as well as school district offices, high schools, colleges, and community-based organizations involved in college readiness partnerships. Interviews were conducted with program administrators, staff, instructors, and participating students. The goal of the interviews was to learn about program objectives, theories of change, program design, and the conditions surrounding implementation. Questions were also asked about the characteristics of the partnerships supporting each type of program initiative. Program staff and others were queried using standard protocols developed to elicit information about each institution and its college readiness program(s). Observations of program activities were conducted when possible to supplement the interviews. These observations were guided by protocols that focused on instructional practices, learning strategies, and classroom interactions.

Data Analysis

Data from all three sources were used to address our two main research goals. In examining these programs and partnerships, their key characteristics, their benefits, and common barriers to full implementation, we used qualitative research methods to identify themes and patterns that cut across data sources and sites. Our findings appear in Chapters 3 and 4.

Chapter 3

The College Readiness Partnership Programs

Using site visit observations and interview data, supplemented by results of the literature review, we gained a better understanding of college readiness partnership programs and their key features as observed in Texas. We found that college readiness partnership programs tend to focus primarily on improving academic knowledge and skills or providing college knowledge,[1] although many programs incorporate both. For descriptive purposes, the college readiness partnership programs we investigated can be placed along several classificatory continua in terms of whether they were intensive or "light touch"; whether they were short-term or long-term; whether they served small, targeted groups or all interested students; and whether they offered a direct experience of college. As discussed later in this chapter, the academic-focused programs and the college knowledge programs are generally found on the opposing ends of these continua.

Implementing these programs involves a number of challenges, including recruitment and retention of students; the limited duration and intensity of programs, which may lead to only modest gains; and issues of program sustainability. While very few rigorous evaluations have been conducted, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that college readiness partnership programs hold promise.

Types of College Readiness Partnership Programs Found in Texas

College readiness partnership programs are relatively uncommon in Texas; they are a small subset of programs designed to assist high school students in becoming college ready. We identified a large number of programs and initiatives in our initial scan, but many were excluded from our analysis because they were not conducted as part of a partnership or because they served students already deemed to be college ready (such as dual enrollment programs[2]). Among the college readiness partnership programs that we identified, federally funded programs dominate the landscape. Table 3.1 provides an overview of the types of college readiness partnership programs identified through our scan.

[1]We use Conley's (2010) definition of college knowledge: the "privileged information" needed to prepare for and apply to college and the contextual awareness skills needed to be successful there.

[2]In order to be eligible to participate in dual enrollment in the state of Texas, a student must meet Texas Success Initiative (TSI) standards to be considered college ready and successfully complete the college's course-specific prerequisites (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2011b).

Texas College Readiness Partnership Programs

Table 3.1

Number of College Readiness Partnership Programs by Type and Region

Program Category	Dallas–Fort Worth	Houston	South Texas	West Texas	Other	Total
Federal programs	29	18	27	20	2	96
Talent Search	5	4	6	5	1	21
Upward Bound	22	10	14	10	0	56
GEAR UP	2	4	7	5	1	19
State programs	7	3	8	2	1	21
GO Centers	6	0	5	0	1	12
College Connection	0	2	2	0	0	4
Summer bridge	1	1	1	2	0	5
Local programs	7	4	2	2	1	16
Total	**43**	**25**	**37**	**24**	**4**	**133**

Out of 133 programs that met the research criteria, 72 percent were federally funded. The majority of the federal programs in the state were either Talent Search or Upward Bound programs. Both of these are part of the federal TRIO programs established in the 1960s. The remaining federal programs identified through the online scan were Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP). The federal programs generally included both academic and college knowledge components.

State programs accounted for 16 percent of the 133 programs, while locally developed and funded programs accounted for 12 percent. Of the local and state initiatives, 65 percent of the programs focused exclusively on college knowledge, while the other 35 percent focused on academic preparation but often incorporated college knowledge as well.[3] Table 3.2 describes the federal and state programs found in the scan. Local programs are described individually in Appendix A.

[3]These two categories are not mutually exclusive. Of the 13 programs with an explicit academic focus, eight also offered college knowledge content, three included college knowledge and critical thinking content, and one included critical thinking content. Only one was classified as solely academic based on the goals of the program as they were represented on the program's webpage.

Texas College Readiness Partnership Programs

Table 3.2

Federal and State Program Models

Program	Explanation
Federal Programs[4]	
Talent Search	Talent Search seeks to increase high school and postsecondary success for disadvantaged youth by helping them with college application process and providing academic, career, and financial counseling.
Upward Bound	The goal of Upward Bound is to increase high school and postsecondary success for low-income high school students from families where neither parent holds a bachelor's degree. The program supports this goal by improving students' academic preparation.
GEAR UP	The goal of Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) is to increase the college access and success of disadvantaged youth. The program allocates grants to states and partnerships among school districts, postsecondary institutions, and community-based organization to serve cohorts of students from middle school through high school.
State Programs[5]	
GO Centers	The intent of GO Centers is to encourage a college-going culture in schools and communities across Texas. Located in educational institutions, public libraries, local workforce centers, and community centers, GO Centers are available to all students. Mobile Centers, which are located in vehicles containing computers, allow the program to visit locations not generally associated with college access (e.g., sporting events and shopping malls). Only GO Centers with an explicit college connection were included in the analysis.
College Connection	The goals of the College Connection Program are to build awareness of the importance of a college education and to increase rates of college participation among high school seniors. The College Connection program encourages partnerships between community colleges and school districts. The community college sends academic counselors into the high schools, where they provide members of the senior class with information and hands-on assistance in filling out college admissions forms and financial aid applications. Parents are encouraged to be involved with the student's decision to advance to postsecondary education.
High School Bridges and Transition Programs	The Higher Education Intensive and Bridging Programs aim to increase college access and success and reduce the need for remediation among high school students in the 11th and 12th grade who are not considered college ready. Participants work during the summer, weekends, or before or after school to improve their skills in English/language arts, mathematics, and/or science.

[4]Descriptions taken from www2.ed.gov.
[5]Descriptions taken from www.thecb.state.tx.us.

Key Characteristics of State and Local Program Models

As the federal programs follow a fairly uniform model and are well described in previous reports (e.g., Constantine et al., 2006; Seftor, Mamun, & Schirm, 2009; Snipes, Holton, Doolittle, & Sztejnberg, 2006), we focus here on state and local program models in Texas. The 37 state and local programs identified in the scan had the following characteristics:

- The majority of programs had no admissions requirements aside from residence in a school or community college district. However, 30 percent (n = 11) did have an entry requirement. Requirements ranged from prior academic attainment to ethnic group membership (e.g., Hispanic or Native American).
- Nineteen percent (n = 7) targeted high school seniors only; 22 percent (n = 8) targeted seniors and juniors; and 49 percent (n = 18) served the entire high school population.[6]
- Nineteen percent (n = 7) were held only during the summer, 68 percent (n = 25) were held only during the academic year, and 14 percent (n = 5) operated year-round.

We had the opportunity to observe a range of programs and initiatives during our site visits, including examples of a number of the program types identified in the scan.[7] A full description of the programs visited is included in Appendix B. Selected programs are described below, organized according to their primary area of focus. All programs were offered through a partnership between a high school and a college.

Academic-Focused Programs

Across the programs visited in the Houston and Dallas–Fort Worth areas, those that focused primarily on academic subjects (most often reading, writing, and mathematics) were likely to engage with smaller groups of students who were at risk of placing into developmental education in college. While their primary goal was to provide academic content, these programs often included instruction on college knowledge as well, and some focused on strengthening academic skills, such as study skills and time management. The academic-focused programs were generally intense and relatively short (e.g., summer

[6]There were four programs (11 percent of the sample) for which we could not determine which grades were served. All four of these were GO Centers.

[7]See Appendix B for information on the programs visited.

bridge programs). They were also more likely than college knowledge programs to offer students a direct experience with college; students in many of these programs spent time on college campuses, in some cases living on campus. Four of the more common academic-focused program models are highlighted here. A more complete list may be found in Appendices A and B.

- **Summer bridge programs:** Summer bridge programs are generally offered to rising 11th and 12th grade students and aspire to improve students' reading, writing, math, and/or test-taking skills. They most often include four to six weeks of intensive, all-day programming and are usually held on college campuses. An example is the University of Texas at Arlington's Transitions program, an intensive, four-week summer program designed to increase the probability that students who are deemed not college ready will enroll in a four-year university. The program includes math and reading instruction as well as a researched-based STEMS (science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and social science) curriculum that culminates in a student-led symposium.

- **School-year transition programs:** These programs offer activities similar to those in summer bridge programs, but the programming occurs during the school year. For example, Houston Community College (HCC), with funds from the THECB, offers the HCC Southeast Transitional Program to high school juniors on Saturdays during the spring semester (approximately 16 weeks). In addition to offering intensive academic skill-building activities, this program also includes college knowledge components, such as college and university campus visits and informational sessions on financial aid and college applications.

- **Transition courses:** Though less prevalent, there are some cases where longer-term academic programming is offered to larger groups of students in a course format. For example, Nimitz High School in Houston assigns students to a college preparatory algebra class by default unless they opt to take a higher-level math course. Lone Star College–North Harris and the Aldine Independent School District developed this course, which closely follows the highest level of developmental math offered at the college. This course counts as the fourth year of high school math, now

required by state law,[8] and incorporates a college knowledge component. It has also been adopted by other high schools in the area.

- **Early assessment/intervention programs:** With leadership and funding from the state, students in Texas are often offered the chance to take college placement tests while in high school, providing them with information on their college readiness. The El Paso school district, in collaboration with local postsecondary institutions, has developed a protocol that is being used to increase students' college readiness. Students complete a joint application to El Paso Community College (EPCC) and the University of Texas at El Paso, take college placement tests, receive assistance in making up any deficiencies identified through testing, and retake the tests when necessary.

College Knowledge–Focused Programs

Compared with academic-focused programs, college knowledge–focused programs were generally less intensive, more sustained, and more likely to be offered during the academic year. They focused primarily on informing students and their parents about college planning, applying to college, financial aid, and navigating college life. These programs tended to be integrated into regular high school programming and were often available to all students in a specific grade level or school population. Compared with academic-focused programs, college knowledge–focused programs were more likely to offer indirect experiences of college by helping students to navigate the admissions process, complete financial aid paperwork, and possibly take a campus tour. The following are more common examples of college knowledge–focused programs; additional information on these and others is available in the appendices.

- **Targeted outreach:** Over the last three years, Brookhaven College in Dallas has undertaken intensive outreach efforts at Thomas Jefferson High School, which is located in an underserved area with many low-income, Hispanic students. Together, the college and high school "decided that every senior was going to apply to Brookhaven College" and launched a three-year initiative involving a concerted marketing

[8]In 2006 the Texas State Board of Education adopted the "4x4" curriculum for the Recommended High School and Distinguished Achievement Programs. Students who entered 9th grade in the 2007–08 school year were the first class required to take four credits of mathematics, science, social studies, and English/language arts (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board & Richard T. Ingram Center for Public Trusteeship and Governance of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, 2008).

campaign, college admissions days, opportunities for early assessment, and hands-on financial aid workshops. Similarly, the Destination College program at Collin College near Dallas offers a series of college preparation sessions and workshops throughout the year to students and parents. Topics include test preparation (Kaplan Review), how to write a college or scholarship essay, how to be a "cyber-smart" student, and how to apply for financial aid.

- **Multi-year college readiness programs:** Project GRAD — a collaboration between a nonprofit organization, the Houston Independent School District, and several colleges and universities — offers both academic and social supports to help students prepare for college. Its primary emphasis is on helping students to view college as a realistic option by providing counseling, support, and collegiate-type experiences, such as a range of summer bridge programs. It offers scholarships of $1,000 per college year to high school graduates who attend two or more summer bridge programs and graduate with a grade point average of 2.5 or better. Project GRAD staff are often placed within participating high schools and offer direct support to counseling staff and students.

- **Embedded college counseling:** A number of colleges provide college counseling within high schools. For example, Lone Star College–CyFair places College Connection advisors in local high schools, including two that we visited, Cypress Springs and Cypress Lakes. The advisors help students to navigate the college admissions and financial aid processes. They describe the main goals of the program as helping students "realize that they can go to college" and promoting a "college going atmosphere" among high school students. The program assists all students, not just those planning to attend Lone Star College.

- **College readiness lessons:** The overarching mission of the K-16 Bridge[9] Program, sponsored by San Jacinto College in Houston, is to foster a college-going culture. The program includes six to eight classroom lessons per semester taught by high school teachers during the regular school day. These lessons are supplemented by self-directed assignments that students access on the My Mentor website. The program works to

[9]The K-16 Bridge Program is distinct from the summer bridge programs mentioned earlier. This model offers short lessons embedded in existing high school courses rather than an intensive summer experience.

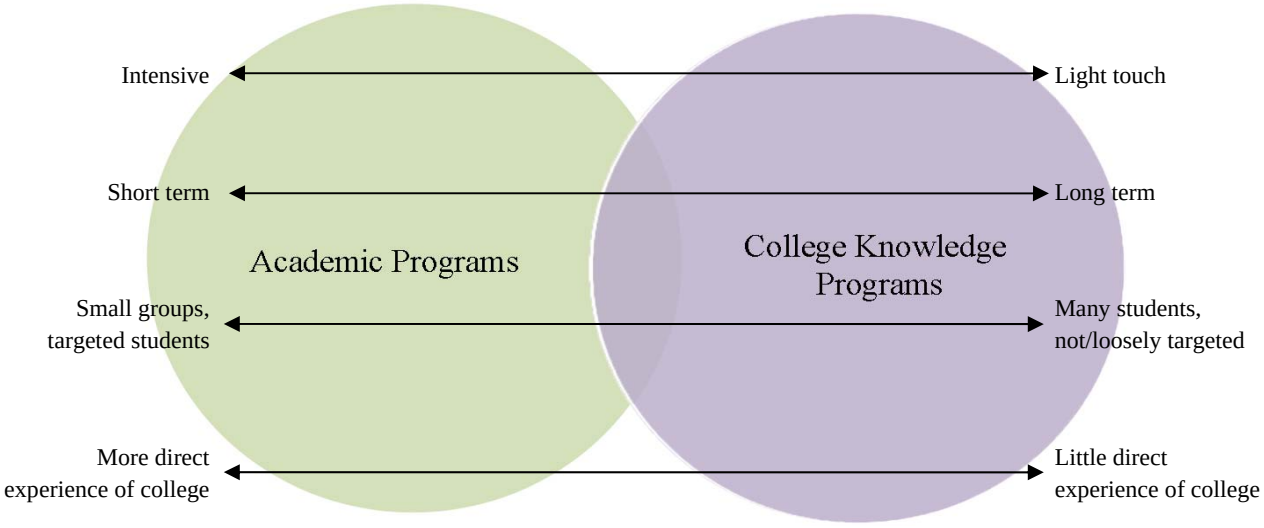
ensure that every high school senior attending a partner school completes a college application, a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form, and any testing needed to be accepted into a college, a technical program, or the military.

In analyzing our data, we found that the programs we studied fell on a series of continua of the type described in Figure 3.1. While programs often included a blend of features, there was a tendency for academic-focused programs to include the features found on the left side and for college knowledge–focused programs to include those on the right.

Texas College Readiness Partnership Programs

Figure 3.1

College Readiness Partnership Program Typology



Benefits of College Readiness Partnership Programs

Although the research literature on college readiness partnership programs contains few examples of rigorous evaluations, there is some evidence that these initiatives may strengthen students' college readiness. The evidence from the more rigorous studies suggest either positive or no difference in outcomes for students. For example, an evaluation of Talent Search programs in Texas, Florida, and Indiana employing a quasi-experimental

design found that Talent Search participants were more likely than comparison students to apply for federal financial aid and to enroll in public postsecondary institutions (Constantine et al., 2006). In addition, an evaluation of Texas' Project GRAD found mixed evidence concerning student outcomes (Snipes, Holton, Doolittle, & Sztejnberg, 2006). The evaluation, which utilized a comparative interrupted time-series analysis to compare student outcomes before and after program implementation, found a positive impact on the proportion of students who completed a core academic curriculum on time at the initiative's flagship high school; however, it found no impact on student outcomes in two other participating Houston high schools. A random assignment study of the impacts of Upward Bound programs on postsecondary outcomes up to nine years after graduation found no detectable effects on postsecondary outcomes, including enrollment and financial aid application or receipt, or on the completion of bachelor's or associate degrees (Seftor, Mamun, & Schirm, 2009).

There are also promising data, collected from program leaders during our site visits, that suggest that some programs in the current study may help to prepare students for college. One developmental bridge course showed gains in student reading scores on the Texas Higher Education Assessment (THEA).[10] In another summer bridge program, data collected using the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI)[11] indicated a growth in college aspirations during the program. In general, school staff and students involved in college readiness partnership programs asserted that they successfully foster a college-going culture in schools. Likewise, students we met with rated the programs highly and appreciated the opportunities to experience college life first-hand and to connect with other like-minded students.

Barriers and Challenges

The most prevalent challenges we heard about for existing college readiness partnership programs were related to student recruitment and retention, especially among the more intensive academic-focused programs. Many students had other activities and obligations that conflicted with program activities, particularly those that took place during

[10]Because this program ran on Saturdays alongside students' high school academic programming, it is hard to disentangle the effects of the program and those of students' high school coursework on students' THEA scores. (THEA is a Texas-specific exam used to assess whether entering freshman-level students have the reading, mathematics, and writing skills needed to perform effectively in undergraduate certificate or degree programs in Texas public colleges or universities.)

[11]The LASSI is an "80-item assessment of students' awareness about and use of learning and study strategies related to skill, will and self-regulation components of strategic learning" ("Overview of LASSI," n.d.).

the summer. Staff members at some of the summer programs reported that students' varying schedules made it hard to find times when a majority could participate. In addition, some students needed to find summer work. To address this, many programs offered small monetary incentives to reduce the need to work among participating students. Some programs also struggled with attendance and retention due to students' lack of transportation, conflicting obligations, or low motivation.

In addition, small college readiness partnership programs were often provided as additions to a high school or college's regular offerings, supported with unstable sources of funding, and staffed by people with multiple commitments. We observed that these programs were available some years but not others, making it difficult to establish predictable designs and employ experienced personnel, which can both be important for high-quality implementation. These problems were mitigated when activities were embedded into regular school schedules, as in the example of the transition course called College Prep Algebra at Nimitz High School referenced earlier in this chapter. In this case, the college readiness partnership program was offered during the regular school day, utilizing existing staff and funding streams.

Chapter 4

The College Readiness Partnerships

Our second research goal was to investigate and describe the level of coordination among K-12 districts, their high schools, and local colleges — specifically how they work together in striving to ensure that high school graduates are ready to take credit-bearing courses upon enrollment in college. Using site visit observations and interview data supplemented by information from the literature review, we examined partnership types, characteristics, benefits, and associated challenges.

Types of College Readiness Partnerships Found in Texas

Partnerships between school districts and postsecondary institutions to jointly implement programs intended to increase students' college readiness were the most common type of partnership that we encountered in our research, although individual high school–college partnerships were also common. In several cases, we found that a third party, usually a community-based organization, facilitated the relationship between secondary and postsecondary partners. Other partnerships were more structural or policy-oriented than programmatic in nature, such as P-16 councils and vertical alignment initiatives whose work focused primarily on data sharing and the alignment of academic standards.

School Districts and Postsecondary Institutions

The partnerships that we encountered were most frequently established between school districts and local postsecondary institutions and were most often initiated by the postsecondary partner. Prior relationships involving outreach activities and dual credit or other programming often facilitated the implementation of further collaborative work. For example, the Houston Community College (HCC) Southeast Transitional Program was primarily funded through HCC's grant from the THECB, with student transportation provided by HCC's high school partners. Program staff worked with high school counselors at partner institutions to identify eligible students. They attributed the college's strong relationship with the high schools to a shared history of dual enrollment programming.

In a few cases, intermediary organizations[1] facilitated the formation of partnerships, particularly where colleges did not have established relationships with local high schools. In

[1] Intermediary organizations operate to link groups in ways that "enable changes in roles and practices for both parties" (Honig, 2004, p. 66).

these situations, a community-based organization with ties to a school district acted as an intermediary and facilitated partnerships between high schools and postsecondary institutions. In Houston, for example, Project GRAD offered college preparatory services in the school and contributed to the strong student participation in Houston Community College's Summer Bridge Academy by recruiting students from these high schools to attend the program. In Dallas, Brookhaven College partnered with Dallas Consuela, a local community-based organization, to recruit participants for a college knowledge workshop for Spanish-speaking parents.

P-16 Councils and Similar Initiatives

Another form of college readiness partnership consists of state and regional initiatives in which multiple postsecondary and high school partners come together to coordinate their college access and readiness activities, with a focus on improving alignment between systems and sharing data. For example, the North Texas Regional P-16 Council in Dallas, funded by the THECB, has a membership of local school districts, community colleges, universities, nonprofit organizations, and businesses. The council is currently sharing data among postsecondary partners for the purpose of building a new social networking site promoting college readiness and a college-going culture. While these types of initiatives create partnership opportunities and play an important role in increasing college readiness in Texas, the rest of this chapter focuses on the partnerships between secondary and postsecondary institutions because they are more directly connected to the college preparation opportunities available to students.

Key Characteristics of Partnerships Between School Districts and Postsecondary Institutions

Intensity

The partnerships we observed varied in the intensity of their relationships. The less intense relationships involved *coordination*, or networking and sharing information. The more intense relationships involved *collaboration*, with joint planning and power sharing (Greenberg, 1992; McCants, 2004). Coordinated partnerships include initiatives designed to provide high school students with access to existing college resources and offerings, such as early assessment and dual credit, while collaborative partnerships are more likely to offer jointly developed programs or activities, such as summer bridge programs and early and middle college high schools (Barnett & Hughes, 2010).

An example of a coordinated partnership is the Destination College program at Collin College in the Dallas area, which provides high school students with college-going information. The program is funded and administered by the college, and program staff coordinate the dissemination of information with participating high schools by placing news regarding upcoming workshops in the schools' online bulletins. At times they also visit high school classrooms and work with school guidance counselors. The Transitions Summer Bridge program, on the other hand, is a collaborative partnership implemented by the University of Texas, Arlington, and the Mansfield Independent School District (MISD). Both partners contribute resources to the program and share in its planning. The university provides program funds, and the district offers student transportation. Additionally, each summer, at least one program faculty member has been an MISD staff member.

Institutional Commitment

Program observations and interviews conducted during our site visits suggest that college readiness partnerships require institutional commitment and human resources for strong program implementation. For example, having dedicated staff who manage programs and have a presence in the high schools appears to be important. At San Jacinto College in Houston, regional coordinators in the college vice president's office act as "champions with power." They contact senior-level management at local high schools and postsecondary institutions, inviting them to join a collaborative taskforce aimed at sharing data across participating institutions and improving alignment among secondary and postsecondary assessments, curricula, and expectations.

The Role of Champion

Many partnerships had one or more individuals who had a deep interest in their success and were considered by others as their champion(s). It was clear that their energy and vision was driving much of the partnership's vision and activities. For example, at Lone Star College–North Harris, the program manager for College Connections has a much larger role than her title might suggest. She has developed relationships and found funding to support a range of programs involving college–high school partnerships (see appendix for examples). At Texas Women's University, a program director was credited with the establishment of a strong partnership with the local high school and the implementation of highly valued college knowledge–focused mentoring program for high school students.

Funding, Policy, and Partnerships

Among the partnerships we visited, both funding and policy mandates clearly influenced the intensity and focus of partnerships. While those interviewed talked of many

reasons to work together, policy changes (e.g., Closing the Gaps by 2015) or funding availability (e.g., College Connections funds from the state) influenced the extent to which collaboration actually occurred. Partnerships in which policy or funding appeared very influential were at risk of not being sustained once the funding or policy mandate lapsed.

Benefits of Partnerships

We did not learn about any evaluations of the efficacy of the college readiness partnerships we visited. This is not surprising, given that few evaluations of this kind have been undertaken anywhere. While our literature review yielded documentation of promising partnerships nationwide, it revealed a lack of rigorous research assessing their value. Nevertheless, those we interviewed in Texas reported a number of benefits they believe have emerged from the development of these partnerships. These benefits are listed below, with specific examples.

Optimization of Efforts to Improve Student Outcomes

College and high school representatives both stressed the potential of partnerships to reach more students more effectively and efficiently. For example, Lone Star College in Houston places college counselors in local high schools, where they help students with college applications and provide outreach services from the college.

Additional Opportunities for College Student Recruitment

Administrators of the Houston Community College (HCC) Southeast Transitional Program value the program's function as a recruitment tool for the college. Program participants receive Houston Community College identification cards and are encouraged to access the college's resources and services. One of the program's objectives is to make high school students feel comfortable on the HCC campus.

Alignment of Academic Standards and Assessment

At San Jacinto College (SJC), the regional coordinators of the Houston Pathways Initiative explained how modifying SJC's version of the COMPASS math test improved their ability to assess students' skills and knowledge. College faculty and high school teachers in vertical alignment teams took the COMPASS exams and found that the difficulty level of the initial questions needed to be lowered to allow students to more accurately demonstrate what they know. In Houston, school district and college faculty worked together to create a course at Nimitz High School explicitly designed to help students place out of developmental math when they enroll at Lone Star College.

Sharing of Best Practices

High school–college collaborations create opportunities for secondary and postsecondary faculty and administration to share information about their practices. The co-chair of the North Texas Regional P-16 Council described the partnership as an umbrella organization that encourages high-quality college readiness efforts across the region. Its meetings are structured to provide a venue for dialogue among partners regarding the college readiness initiatives offered at the participating institutions.

Cross-System Faculty Development

Some partnerships have facilitated increased dialogue between high school and college faculty as well as further opportunities for faculty professional development. Collin College, a community college in the Dallas area with an existing dual credit program, sends faculty to team-teach certain dual credit courses at the high school with a high school teacher. This arrangement not only increases the rigor of the courses but also provides an opportunity for college and high school faculty to better understand the content and expectations at both levels. In another instance, the partnership between Brookhaven College and Thomas Jefferson High School resulted in a staff development day at the college for high school faculty, designed to increase their knowledge of college readiness standards and college offerings and requirements.

Expansion of the Scope of the Partnership

Interviewees reported a number of cases in which a partnership that began during a particular project deepened over time, leading to new, innovative initiatives. For example, at one college, a science instructor created a series of videos of science experiments for high school teachers after learning that many did not have a background in the specific branch of science they taught and did not know how to use the equipment in their schools. In several other cases, college counseling staff were able to facilitate a range of other opportunities for high school students, such as workshops, visits to selected programs at the college, and increased dual enrollment course offerings.

Barriers and Challenges

Creating a collaborative partnership between postsecondary institutions and K-12 school districts and high schools can be challenging, given the need for strong institutional support at both levels and the scarcity of funding for efforts of this kind. The following are some of the specific barriers to creating partnerships.

Lack of Incentives for Community Colleges to Collaborate with High Schools

State policies, funding streams, and accountability measures tend to reinforce the continued separation of K-12 and postsecondary systems. High schools are evaluated based on state test scores and graduation rates. Colleges receive public funding based on enrollments. Colleges may decline to partner with high schools because they have more than enough applicants, and faculty members are rarely rewarded for K-12 work (Bueschel, 2003; McRobbie, 2004).

Lack of Funding for Interventions

Explicit funding is seldom available for collaborative activities, such as P-16 councils. Further, there may be few resources to support specific initiatives developed in partnerships.

Distinct Cultural Norms and Priorities

As a result of their different norms and assumptions, communication difficulties may arise between K-12 and postsecondary systems. Among institutional leaders, administrators, faculty members, and counselors, priorities vary, and misunderstandings are not unusual.

Complex Patterns of Student Progression

While in some situations students from specific high schools tend to matriculate into certain colleges, enrollment patterns are often complex. Thus, articulation agreements and curriculum alignment discussions are not simple. High schools must prepare students who will attend a range of colleges, and colleges must enroll students from multiple high schools.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Implications for Further Research

Results from this study suggest that college readiness partnership programs in Texas use varied designs and approaches to meet the needs of high school students as they work toward becoming ready for college. Although few rigorous evaluations of these programs have been conducted, their potential to improve college readiness for students in the academic middle is generally supported by the literature as well as by our own research findings. Strong, collaborative partnerships between K-12 and postsecondary institutions can be challenging to maintain, given the structure of our educational system and the current state of the economy, but these partnerships appear to offer advantages in creating programs that can help alleviate gaps in students' college readiness.

Our findings about college readiness interventions and strategies in Texas have significant implications, nationally as well as in Texas, for future programming intended to help students make the transition from secondary to postsecondary education. These are discussed below. Yet our work also suggests the need for more rigorous effectiveness trials of current and future programs for these students as well as studies of their costs and benefits. Program leaders, college and high school administrators, and policymakers would benefit from more extensive and higher quality information on which of these programs have the greatest impact given different levels of investment.

Obtaining evidence of this kind requires careful planning and scientific rigor. Too often, programs are evaluated after they have been in place for some time, which makes it challenging, if not impossible, to determine their effectiveness. Ideally, a rigorous evaluation design would be planned alongside program implementation. When new programming is being launched, or when existing programming is being enhanced or modified, program planners may want to consider the interaction between the identification of eligible and interested students, the number of program slots available, and the processes by which students are selected. This kind of planning can create opportunities for rigorous evaluations[1] that are widely useful.

[1]Two examples of rigorous evaluation designs are experimental *random assignment* designs (under conditions when there are fewer program slots than students eligible and interested in participating, the fairest way to determine who can participate is by lottery — that is, via a randomized process that creates equivalent groups) and *regression discontinuity* designs (when students are ranked by application scores,

Implications for College Readiness Partnership Programs

Selecting Interventions That Show Promise

Some of the studies referenced in the first chapter of this report suggest that certain program elements such as mentoring by adults or peers, and assisting students with the college application process may be more likely to result in positive outcomes (Gándara, 2001). In addition, program descriptions based on our site visits, included in Appendix A, outline approaches to college readiness partnerships that have been field-tested in Texas high schools and colleges. Choosing interventions that show the greatest promise in a given context can enhance the chances of success.

Matching Students and Interventions

College readiness programs are relatively scarce. Further, many programs, especially those that are more intensive, can only serve limited numbers of students. Institutions may want to match college-going students who are academically underprepared with more intensive programs and direct those students who primarily need assistance with college knowledge to less intensive programs. The early assessment of students' college readiness, a practice that we observed in a number of school districts, is a useful strategy for identifying students' needs and facilitating better matches between students and programmatic supports.

Sequencing Interventions

As we looked at programs offered by high schools and colleges, we often saw promising programs that were not explicitly linked with one another. For example, in several cases, a college-sponsored summer program for high school students was not aligned with activities planned for students during the following school year. Linking secondary and postsecondary college readiness programs may allow each type of institution to leverage the services of the other, creating an opportunity to maximize the potential gains for students.

Planning for Expected Challenges

During our site visits we learned about common challenges faced during program implementation. Institutions struggled particularly with student recruitment, retention, and program sustainability. These challenges are worth considering — and planning for — early on in the development of college readiness partnership programs.

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financial need, or other criteria, it creates a circumstance under which students close to but on either side of the cut point that determines acceptance into the program are highly comparable).

Student Recruitment and Participation

Barriers to student participation range from competing priorities (e.g., after-school or summer jobs; athletic team practices) to costs (e.g., fees for participation) to logistics (e.g., transportation to summer bridge programs). Institutions offering these programs may increase their success at recruiting and retaining participants by addressing logistical challenges to participation. For example, at multiple programs we visited, the high school and college partners found ways to split responsibilities for funding and facilitating logistics, such as transportation and meals for students. Student participation may also be encouraged with financial incentives (e.g., stipends or jobs) or nonfinancial incentives (e.g., college credit or the opportunity to place out of developmental education). An alternative is to make program participation mandatory.

Sustainability

In some cases, college readiness programs are available in some years and not in others, or they may only last for a few years. In the ongoing effort to build effective college readiness programs, funding challenges will need to be addressed. Time-limited funds, such as grants, are often best used to support start-up costs for specific programs or program components. Often these start-up costs are higher than the steady-state costs that follow, and short-term grant funding can help to establish a program. However, in order to create sustainable programs, institutions must identify ongoing resources.

Implications for College Readiness Partnerships

Deepening Partnerships for Greater Influence

College readiness programs depend upon the relationships between K-12 school districts — particularly at the secondary level — and local colleges. High schools and colleges observed in our site visits demonstrated that they could execute short-term, discrete programs. In some cases, their relationships led to more substantive initiatives. We would suggest that increasingly substantive partnerships should be fostered because they may promote cost efficiencies, long-term program sustainability, and systemic changes, such as the improved alignment of curriculum and assessment practices.

Testing the Potential Cost Savings Produced by Partnerships

Traditionally, K-12 systems and higher education are separate entities that may offer similar services in the same community. Eliminating redundant services and aligning remaining services may reduce the resources required to support college readiness

programming and create a more cost-effective system. If new and better-aligned college readiness programming does, in fact, result in better postsecondary outcomes for students, it would be valuable to know the costs of achieving these impacts. Cost-effectiveness studies can provide information about the relationship between positive student outcomes and their associated costs, and they may reveal whether these programs produce longer-term payoffs.

Considering the Use of Intermediaries

In some of the programs we researched, the creation or coordination of programming across secondary and postsecondary institutions was facilitated by the involvement of a third party. Because they are not bound by K-12 or higher education designations, external partners can contribute to efforts to improve college preparation for students across multiple years. And because high schools and colleges have limited budgets, external partners may be a source of added capacity and expertise. They may also provide objectivity on issues concerning the planning and coordination of high school–college programs, helping to bridge cultural differences across institutions. In short, intermediaries may offer new or different solutions to challenges and may be able to provide valuable resources.

Closing Thoughts

Earning a postsecondary credential has become essential for securing a good job in today's labor market; indeed, the disparity in earnings between those with and without a college degree continues to grow. Yet currently, the pathway from high school to college does not reliably lead to a college degree. Out of 100 students who enter high school in ninth grade, only 67 will graduate from high school on time, only 38 will enter college directly after high school, and only 26 will still be enrolled in college after one year (Ewell, Jones, & Kelly, 2003). Even fewer will eventually earn a postsecondary credential. If high schools and colleges partner to improve the creation, enhancement, and alignment of supports for transitioning students, they may be able to help more students attain a degree.

There is a shortage of evidence on the kinds of college readiness partnerships and programs that influence student outcomes. Careful evaluations of these programs and partnerships would enhance our understanding of which programs are most effective in helping students to enter college and complete a degree. Building stronger evidence of effectiveness via more rigorous evaluations would allow colleges and schools to move from making decisions about implementing *promising* college readiness programs or initiatives to making decisions about implementing *proven* programs and initiatives.

Appendix A

Site Visit Program Descriptions

This appendix includes a short description of each of the college-connected programs in the Houston and Dallas–Fort Worth metropolitan areas visited by the study team in the summer and fall of 2010. The information for these descriptions was obtained through interviews and observations during these visits and reflects the programs as they were implemented at that time. Programs may have changed or been discontinued since the visits.

Dallas–Fort Worth Area

College Foundations Program

Operated by: Fort Worth Independent School District (ISD)

Date of visit: November 1, 2010

Location: University of North Texas Health Center in 2010 (location changes each year)

Program type: College knowledge–focused workshops

Participants: Fifty students are served each year. The program is open to all students in grades 10–12 enrolled at the Fort Worth ISD.

Length/duration: Six weeks, two sessions per week

Funding: The program is funded by a grant from AT&T. Students are also eligible for two major scholarships (to Texas Christian University and Texas Wesleyan University) by virtue of being in the program.

Goals and components: The program aims to increase student engagement and to foster a college-going culture by giving students information about college — on topics such as college culture and lifestyle, study strategies, and why a college degree is beneficial — and resources to help students apply to college and obtain financial aid. Each session focuses on a different college-related topic, and the sessions often include guest speakers. Students and their parents are invited to attend a workshop on financial aid, and students also have access to college advising services to assist them in searching for and applying for scholarships.

College Readiness Initiative

Operated by: University of Texas–Dallas

Date of visit: November 1, 2010

Partner institutions: Dallas Independent School District (ISD) high schools

Location: University of Texas–Dallas

Program type: College knowledge–focused and academic-focused residential summer program

Participants: The program targets ninth-grade students from Dallas ISD high schools who are interested in attending college. There are no other admissions criteria.

Length/duration: Two weeks

Funding: Funding is made up of university resources and private donations.

Goals and components: The program, which focuses on college knowledge and SAT preparation, works to teach students how to think critically about their academic experience and how to utilize campus resources. Students spend two weeks living on campus and attending workshops on topics such as self-advocacy, focus, and motivation. Some examples of workshop themes include "how to speak in groups" and "how to create a general academic philosophy/take control of your academic experience." Students also attend SAT test preparation sessions.

Destination College

Operated by: Collin College

Date of visit: November 1, 2010

Location: Six Collin College campuses

Partner institutions: Several local high schools assist with recruitment (there are 14 independent school districts in the area).

Program type: College knowledge–focused workshops

Participants: All students from Collin County and their parents are welcome to attend sessions.

Length/duration: Approximately 20 sessions are offered throughout the school year.

Funding: The program is funded through college resources.

Goals and components: The program offers an array of information around college-going to students and parents. Approximately 20 workshops are offered each year for students and their parents. Workshops, which take place on evenings and weekends, cover topics such as college entrance exam preparation, college and scholarship essay writing, financial aid application support, and college-life skills. Destination College also offers a yearly updated parent resource guide, which includes information on college applications, FAFSA, scholarships, and special programs.

Southern Service Sector Initiative

Operated by: Brookhaven College, Dallas Community College District

Date of visit: November 3, 2010

Partner institutions: Thomas Jefferson High School (TJHS), Dallas Independent School District

Location: TJHS

Program type: College knowledge–focused school-year programming

Participants: All students at TJHS are welcome to participate.

Length/duration: Key outreach services are offered during the school year.

Funding: Brookhaven College funds these services.

Goals and components: TJHS has been designated by the state as a high school with a particularly low college enrollment rate. Brookhaven College sponsors an array of outreach services targeted at TJHS students in an effort to encourage students to apply to college and to inform students about program options and financial aid. Program services include a college admissions day, during which college representatives present information to students and help students apply to college; a financial aid workshop, which includes hands-on assistance completing the FAFSA; and a campus visit and orientation. Brookhaven College schedules and administers early college placement testing on the high school campus. Finally, the college participates

in the high school's redesign committee, connecting high school and college faculty. In this effort, Brookhaven College hosted a staff development day for the high school faculty to inform them about the college's programs and services. As a result, follow-up sessions involving high school and college faculty have occurred, and collaborative activities, such as discipline workshops and an expansion of dual credit offerings at the TJHS campus, have been planned.

Transitions Summer Bridge Program

Operated by: University of Texas–Arlington (UTA)

Dates of visit: June 28–29, 2010

Partner institution: Mansfield Independent School District

Location: University of Texas–Arlington

Program type: Academic-focused summer bridge program

Participants: Students from Mansfield Summit High School and Mansfield Timberview High School who will be entering 11th or 12th grade in the following fall are eligible participate if their scores on the English and/or mathematics portions of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) are between 2100 and 2200 (2100 is the minimum passing score, and 2200 is considered college ready). Up to 50 students can participate; 43 students participated in the summer of 2010.

Length/duration: Four weeks, five days per week, nine hours per day (1 week is residential)

Funding: The program is funded by a grant from the THECB.

Goals and components: The goal of the program is to increase the probability that underprepared students will enroll and be prepared to succeed in a four-year university. The program focuses on English/writing instruction, as well as science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and social science (STEMS) education, culminating in a STEMS research symposium where students present their research findings. The program also includes seminars on college skills, such as time management and note taking, and a career planning component with guest speakers from various professions and opportunities for students to tour local businesses. Students have access to all

campus resources (including the library and the fitness center) throughout the program. During the last week of the program, students live on campus in UTA dorms.

Texas Woman's University Collegiate G-Force

Operated by: Texas Woman's University (TWU)

Date of visit: November 2, 2010

Partner institutions: 16 high schools in the Dallas area

Location: Participating high schools

Program type: College knowledge–focused mentorship program with designated support center and staff

Participants: Fifty percent of the participating high schools have a college-going rate of 25 percent or less. Generally, the high school counselors target students (often seniors) for the services, but students also have opportunities to request the services. During the 2009–10 school year, approximately 7,000 high school students were served.

Length/duration: Services are offered once or twice weekly at each participating high school throughout the school year.

Funding: The G-Force program is funded by Texas Woman's University, and G-Force mentors are paid through a grant from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB).

Goals and components: The program works to increase college awareness and improve the college-going culture within participating high schools. Each of the high schools has an established GO Center located at an area such as a computer lab, library, or college center. TWU college students staff the centers at each high school once or twice a week and provide one-on-one mentoring for high school students planning for and applying to college.

Houston Area

Bridge to College

Operated by: Lone Star College–CyFair[1]

Date of visit: June 23, 2010

Partner institution: Cypress Lakes High School

Location: Cypress Lakes High School

Program type: Academic-focused early assessment/intervention program

Participants: Approximately 15–20 Cypress Lakes High School sophomores whose COMPASS test scores indicate they are not yet college ready (and therefore not able to take dual enrollment courses) have enrolled in the program each year.

Length/duration: The program consists of one all-day opening event and weekly study sessions throughout the spring semester.

Funding: Program-related materials are supplied by the Lone Star College Foundation. College faculty members volunteer to teach some sessions, and other sessions are facilitated by a high school counselor.

Goals and components: The Bridge to College program is aimed at increasing the number of high school students who are eligible to participate in dual enrollment courses. During the fall of their sophomore year, students interested in taking dual enrollment courses take the COMPASS test. Those whose English or math scores indicate they are not prepared to take dual enrollment courses are recruited for this program. After an all-day introductory event, students attend weekly after-school study sessions throughout the spring semester to strengthen their content knowledge and study skills. The math program, for instance, includes 15–20 minutes of study-skills training each week followed by self-remediation using computer software (MyMathLab). At the end of the academic year, students retake the COMPASS test. Students who test into college-level courses are then eligible to take dual-credit courses during their junior year.

[1]Lone Star College–North Harris offers a similar program to some high schools in its feeder pattern.

College Connection Advisors Program

Operated by: Lone Star College System[2]

Dates of visit: June 23–24, 2010; November 17, 2010

Partner institutions: Local K-12 school districts and high schools

Location: Participating high schools

Program type: College knowledge–embedded college counseling program

Participants: Participation is open to all students attending Lone Star feeder high schools.

Length/duration: Throughout the school year, advisors spend one day per week at each high school they serve.

Funding: The program is funded by the Lone Star College System with support from the National College Access Network's Preparing to Dream grant.

Goals and components: The goal of the program is to assist students in navigating the college admissions and financial aid application process. Each College Connection advisor is assigned to two to three high schools in the area and spends one day per week at each high school and one day per week at the college campus. Advisors offer individual counseling, present group workshops, and assist students with researching college and career options.

College Prep Algebra

Operated by: Nimitz High School, Spring High School, and MacArthur High School in Aldine Independent School District (ISD)

Date of visit: November 16, 2010

Partner institution: Lone Star College–North Harris (LSCNH)

Location: Participating high schools

Program type: Academic-focused embedded transition course

[2]The College Connection advisors program exists throughout the entire Lone Star system, but for this report, we focus on the information gathered from site visits at the North Harris and CyFair campuses.

Participants: High school seniors who do not place into higher-level mathematics courses (such as pre-calculus or statistics) are placed into this course by their guidance counselors. During the fall of 2010, 376 students were enrolled in this course at Nimitz High School.

Length/duration: Full academic year

Funding: Aldine ISD provides funding for the course, and LSCNH offers support for the course as a public service.

Goals and components: The College Prep Algebra curriculum was developed through a partnership between LSCNH and participating high schools and combines the developmental mathematics curriculum and some elements of the college algebra curriculum used at Lone Star College. Taught by high school teachers at the high school, the course uses college texts and materials .The course was created as a result of the large number of students were placing into developmental mathematics at LSCNH; its main objective is to help more students place directly into college-level mathematics courses on entry into college. Beyond the academic component, the course also includes presentations on applying to college, completing the FAFSA, preparing for careers, and gaining college-readiness skills. Students take the ACCUPLACER at mid-semester to make sure they are on track to become college ready. The COMPASS is administered to all students at the end of the year for college placement purposes.

HCC Southeast Transitional Program

Operated by: Houston Community College (HCC) Southeast College

Date of visit: November 15, 2010

Location: Southeast College campus

Partner institutions: HCC Southeast works with four high schools to recruit students: Sanchez Charter School, Eastwood Academy, Austin High School, and Raoul Yzaguirre School for Success.

Program type: Academic-focused school-year transition program

Participants: High school juniors whose TAKS scores are between 2100 and 2200 (2100 is the minimum passing score, and 2200 is considered college ready). The program serves approximately 50 students per year.

Length/duration: The program runs for 16–17 weeks, one day per week, 5.5 hours per day. (Classes are held on Saturday during the spring semester.)

Funding: The program is funded by a grant from the THECB. The program is free to students, who receive a stipend of $250 for successful completion with at least 80 percent attendance.

Goals and components: HCC Southeast Transitional Program is a developmental bridge program offered to high school juniors who are likely to need remedial coursework upon entering college. The goals of the program are to improve students' skills in reading, writing, and test-taking. The program also focuses on study skills, motivation, time management, and other deficits in college readiness identified through the LASSI assessment. Students take the THEA and LASSI at the beginning and end of the program. During the last five weeks of the program, parents are invited to attend the Parent Academy, which offers information on topics such as financial aid, FAFSA, applications to colleges, and picking majors and careers.

Houston Pathways Initiative (HPI)

Operated by: San Jacinto College (SJC)

Date of visit: November 17, 2010

Partner institutions: Deer Park Independent School District (ISD), Galena Park ISD, Pasadena ISD, University of Houston–Clear Lake, and the THECB

Program type: High school, community college, and university partnership

Participants: The program bridges high school, community college, and university faculty. Students are not directly involved.

Length/duration: Participants convene on a monthly basis.

Funding: The program is funded by a Houston Endowment grant.

Goals and components: Founded in 2009, HPI works to facilitate improved secondary-to-postsecondary alignment of curricula and assessments in order to increase the number of students who enter college ready to take credit-bearing courses and to reduce the need for student remediation. This is done through faculty vertical-alignment teams, which are comprised of faculty members from participating high schools, San Jacinto College, and the University of Houston–Clear Lake. The teams meet and use student data

processed by the THECB to identify curriculum and assessment discrepancies and misalignments between the institutions and to develop policies and plans to alleviate these issues.

K-16 Bridge Program

Operated by: San Jacinto College (SJC)

Date of visit: November 17, 2010

Partner institutions: Lewis Center for Educational Research; Galena Park, Deer Park, Channelview, La Porte, Pasadena, and Sheldon Independent School Districts

Location: Participating high schools

Program type: College readiness lessons

Participants: The program is open to all students at participating schools; approximately 100 students participated during the 2009–10 school year. Over 1,100 students are currently enrolled.

Length/duration: The program includes short lessons and assignments throughout the school year. The program is envisioned to run from kindergarten through senior year of high school but was first piloted during the 2009–10 school year for students in grades 9–12.

Funding: San Jacinto College District funds the program. The partner K-12 school districts provide the bulk of the human resources; lessons are taught during the school day by K-12 teachers.

Goals and components: The overarching mission of the K-16 Bridge program is to foster a college-going culture beginning in kindergarten and continuing through high school. Specifically, the program works to ensure that every high school senior attending a partner school will have completed a college application, a FAFSA, and any required testing needed to be accepted into a college, a technical program, or the military before graduating high school. The program includes six to eight classroom lessons per semester to be taught by elementary and high school teachers during the regular school day. These lessons are supplemented by self-learning assignments that students access on the My Mentor website. Students can store their work to

their personal online portfolios, which they can refer to as they formulate college plans over their elementary and high school years.

Minority Male Initiative (MMI) Summer Bridge Academy[3]

Operated by: Houston Community College (HCC) Southwest College

Date of visit: June 22, 2010

Location: West Loop Campus

Partner institutions: Students are recruited by Project GRAD from the following Houston ISD high schools: Sam Houston Math, Science, & Technology Center; Yates High School; Wheatley High School; Reagan High School; and Jefferson Davis High School.

Program type: Academic-focused summer bridge program

Participants: Minority male students are targeted, but the program is open to all students at the five Project GRAD high schools. Participants are students about to enter 11th or 12th grade who have passed at least one section of the TAKS. In the summer of 2010, 94 students participated in the program.

Length/duration: The program runs for six weeks, five days per week (96 hours of academic course work and 32 hours of a student success course).

Funding: The program is funded with operational funds from the college budget. HCC receives funding from the state for the credit-bearing classes. Project GRAD recruits students and pays for transportation, and participation is incentivized through the Project GRAD scholarship (for which participation in summer bridge programming is a requirement). Students are awarded a $150 stipend if they successfully complete the program and miss fewer than three days.

Goals and components: Program goals include developing college readiness among high school students, providing enriching summer activities, and offering students a chance to experience a college campus and college courses. Students participating in the program take either a three-credit course in digital gaming and simulation or a three-credit course in digital

[3]The Summer Bridge Academy includes programming for students in elementary, middle, and high schools. For the purposes of this report, we focus on the programming offered to high school students.

communications. Students also take the two-credit HCC LEAD (student success) course, which is a requirement for all college freshmen and informs students about the programming offered by the college, financial aid options, and college services. This course also helps to build students' study and time management skills and supports them in career planning.

Project GRAD Houston

Operated by: Project GRAD Houston

Dates of visit: June 22, 2010; November 15–16, 2010

Partner institutions: Houston Independent School District;[4] Jefferson Davis High School; Sam Houston Math, Science, and Technology Center; Wheatley High School; John Reagan High School; and Yates High School. Elementary and middle schools in the feeder patterns for these high schools also partner with Project GRAD.

Location: Participating high schools, with summer programs at participating colleges

Program type: Multi-year college readiness program

Participants: All students attending Project GRAD high schools during their freshman year are eligible for the Project GRAD programming and scholarship.

Length/duration: Programming is offered throughout high school, with intensive academic programs offered each summer. Each college institute takes place on a university campus and varies from two to six weeks in length.

Funding: Funding is provided by the Houston Independent School District (HISD) and through private donations and federal grants.

Goals and components: The mission of Project GRAD is to ensure a quality public education for students in economically disadvantaged communities so that high school and college graduation rates increase. The main goals of the

[4]Project GRAD also partners with colleges and universities, including Rice University, University of Houston–Downtown, University of St. Thomas, University of Texas Health Science Center, University of Houston, Texas Southern, and Houston Community College, to offer students summer bridge programming during high school and to offer PG at the U once they begin college.

program are that at least 80 percent of entering ninth-grade students graduate from high school, at least 50 percent of those graduates attend college with a Project GRAD scholarship, and at least 60 percent of those enrollees graduate from college. Project GRAD works directly with and within each high school to customize programming services for students. The program's high school components include college knowledge workshops and events, academic support and assistance in college planning, college awareness workshops for parents, a mentoring program, and the opportunity to participate in an academic summer program. Students are eligible for a $4,000 scholarship ($1,000 per year of college) if they complete two summer programs and maintain at least a 2.5 GPA. Students can choose to study environmental science, advanced mathematics, biology, financial literacy, liberal arts (literature, debate, web design), business, STEM and energy explorations, or digital gaming and communication. Project GRAD also runs "PG at the U" at several local universities and colleges, where students have the opportunity to meet with a Success Manager who can help connect students to the support services and resources the institution offers.

Rising Scholars Summer Bridge

Operated by: Houston Community College (HCC) Southwest College

Dates of visit: June 23, 2010; November 15, 2010

Location: West Loop and Stafford campuses

Partner institutions: Students are recruited from four high schools: Lee High School (Houston Independent School District [HISD]), Westbury High School (HISD), Southwest High School (HISD charter school), and Thurgood Marshall High School (Fort Bend Independent School District).

Program type: Academic-focused summer bridge program

Participants: Rising juniors and seniors who scored below a 2200 (the college-ready cutoff) on the TAKS test in reading, writing, or math. The program can serve up to 50 students. Twenty-seven students participated in the program in 2010.

Length/duration: The program runs for four weeks, five days per week, four hours per day.

Funding: The program is funded by a grant from the THECB. The program is free to students, who receive a stipend of $75 per week ($300 total) for consistently participating.

Goals and components: The Rising Scholars Summer Bridge program is focused on helping high school students gain the skills needed to test out of college developmental education courses. The program includes reading, English, and math coursework(students receive 13–16 hours of instruction in each subject). It also includes a course called Student Success that consists of both career exploration and instruction in study skills. Students are also given opportunities to speak one-on-one with college counselors. Students take the THEA and LASSI at the beginning and end of the program.

Appendix B

Scan Summary of Local College Readiness Partnership Programs

Texas College Readiness Partnership Programs

Appendix Table B.1

Summary of College Readiness Partnerships in Texas Found Via Online Scan

Program	Sponsoring Institution	Summary	Timing		Region	Cohort Served				Admissions Requirement	
			Summer	Academic Year		F	So	Jr	Sr	Academic	Non-Academic
College Access	Tarrant County College	College Access is designed to provide pre-college information, testing, advising, financial aid, and admissions services for high school seniors at participating high schools. The program promotes a college-going culture and aims to increase the percentage of high school seniors who enter college after graduation. The program consists of four components: (1) senior presentation kick-off, (2) testing, (3) pre-advisement, and (4) financial aid. Upon completion of all four components, participating high school graduating seniors receive a certificate of acceptance to Tarrant County College.		x	Dallas–Fort Worth				x		
College Foundations Program (fall 2010 site visit)	Fort Worth Independent School District	This initiative prepares Fort Worth ISD students in grades 10–12 for college admissions. Program staff, college volunteers, and university representatives guide students through the admissions process and discuss their college experience. This initiative includes interactive PowerPoint presentations; real-life college scenarios; and guidance on how to look for scholarships, write an essay, and complete a college application.		x	Dallas–Fort Worth		x	x	x		
College Readiness Initiative (fall 2010 site visit, telephone interview)	University of Texas at Dallas	This is a two-week summer program that also includes two one-day activities during the academic year for cohorts of students, with the aim of getting them ready for college. Program administrators define *college ready* as being able to take college-level work as a freshman in college, navigate systems (i.e., housing, financial aid), and use critical thinking in terms of academic content and self-awareness.	x	x	Dallas–Fort Worth		x				

Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

Program	Sponsoring Institution	Summary	Timing		Region	Cohort Served				Admissions Requirement	
			Summer	Academic Year		F	So	Jr	Sr	Academic	Non-Academic
College Roundup (telephone interview)	Eastfield College	Eastfield College hosts sessions for 12th graders at three HB 400 schools in the Dallas Independent School District. The sessions primarily cover college knowledge, but they also offer early ACCUPLACER testing. Student recruitment varies by high school. Students at one school must apply through the counselor's office, while students at another are invited to attend if they have passing TAKS scores but are still below the college-ready level.		x	Dallas–Fort Worth				x	x	
The Dallas Hispanic Youth Symposium	Southern Methodist University	The Hispanic Youth Symposium is an intensive three-night, four-day program for about 200 qualifying students (GPA of 2.5 or above). It is sponsored by the Hispanic College Fund and held in several states; one of its locations is Southern Methodist University. The symposium aims to allow participants to develop a network of peers and mentors, learn about resources and tools for college, and develop a long-term career vision. Participants also engage in art, speech, talent, and essay competitions. Participants are recruited with the assistance of teachers and administrators in high schools within the Dallas Independent School District.	x	x	Dallas–Fort Worth		x	x		x	x
Destination College (fall 2010 site visit)	Collin College	Destination College consists of a series of college knowledge workshops for students and parents. Its signature event is a parent workshop that includes a banquet meal and covers basic information about helping students get into college.		x	Dallas–Fort Worth			x	x		
Mock College Day	Tarrant County College	Tarrant County College partners with local high schools to provide graduating seniors with a real college experience. Mock College Day can include campus tours and information about enrollment (admissions, financial aid, testing, and advising), learning resources, student life and organizations, and courses and programs.		x	Dallas–Fort Worth				x		

Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

Program	Sponsoring Institution	Summary	Timing		Region	Cohort Served				Admissions Requirement	
			Summer	Academic Year		F	So	Jr	Sr	Academic	Non-Academic
Super Saturdays	Fort Worth Independent School District	Super Saturdays and College Financial Aid Help Sessions assist students with completing college applications, scholarship applications, and essays. Financial aid information sessions are offered in English and Spanish during the fall semester, and bilingual FAFSA help sessions are offered during the spring semester. Events are a collaborative effort with Tarrant County College and other district educational partners.		x	Dallas–Fort Worth	x	x	x	x		
Bridge to College/Dual Enrollment (summer 2010 site visit, telephone interview)	Lone Star Community College	This program, initially called McCabe Bridge, was offered for the first time in 2008–09. Twenty sophomores from Cypress Lakes High School initially enrolled. At an all-day event at the beginning of the program, instructors from Lone Star College–CyFair gave an introduction and overview of the program. Subsequently, students attended weekly study sessions in math and/or English throughout the rest of the school year. For students enrolled in math, sessions consisted of 15–20 minutes of learning study skills — how to take notes, how to identify your learning style, etc. — followed by self-remediation on the computer using MyMathLab. Six to seven students finished the program, and one tested into dual credit courses at the end.		x	Houston	x	x	x	x	x	
K-16 Bridge (fall 2010 site visit)	San Jacinto College	The main goal of the K-16 Bridge program is to help create a college-going culture in its partner high schools in the San Jacinto College (SJC) District. The program provides teachers with brief, ready-made lessons on college knowledge and career orientation, to be delivered during core curriculum courses, such as English or social studies. These lessons are supplemented by students' self-learning via the My Mentor website. Each student is given a My Mentor account to complete assignments connected with the lessons. Assignments can be saved to students' e-portfolios, which include their work throughout K-12 and allow them to formulate a college plan over the years. SJC launched its K-16 Bridge program in 2009 with a pilot in grades 9–12. The implementation plan is to expand the program into lower grades, beginning with K-3.		x	Houston	x	x	x	x		

Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

Program	Sponsoring Institution	Summary	Timing		Region	Cohort Served				Admissions Requirement	
			Summer	Academic Year		F	So	Jr	Sr	Academic	Non-Academic
Rising Scholars Summer Bridge Program (summer 2010 site visit)	Houston Community College	The Rising Scholars Summer Bridge Program is focused on helping high school students gain the skills needed to test out of developmental education courses in college. The program runs for four weeks in early summer and includes coursework in reading, English, and math. It also includes a course called Student Success that provides guidance in career exploration and study skills.	x		Houston			x	x	x	
Phoenix Program	Alamo Colleges–St. Philip's College	The Phoenix Program is specifically designed to give students the academic and technical skills required for the 21st century workforce. During their senior year of high school, program students create and build hands-on projects with real-world applications, explore career opportunities, and participate in job shadowing. Students can learn to be technicians or entrepreneurs in a real-world environment that stimulates work site situations that require problem-solving and creative thinking. Students must have an interest in exploring a technical career area.		x	South TX			x	x		
Texas College Advising Corps	University of Texas at Austin	The program places recent graduates of partner institutions in underserved high schools and community colleges, where they serve as college advisors. The purpose of the program is to increase the number of low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students entering and completing higher education. Advisors provide guidance and encouragement to students navigating the college admissions process. They work one-on-one with students and help them to complete applications for admissions and financial aid and to take the final steps needed to complete enrollment.		x	South TX			x	x		

Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

Program	Sponsoring Institution	Summary	Timing		Region	Cohort Served				Admissions Requirement	
			Summer	Academic Year		F	So	Jr	Sr	Academic	Non-Academic
Achieving the Dream Early Assessment Program	El Paso Community College	In collaboration with the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) and 12 local independent school districts in the El Paso area, El Paso Community College (EPCC) developed and brought to scale an improved process for helping high school students prepare for entry into college. Typically during their junior and senior years, El Paso area high school students now participate in what is known as the "college readiness protocol." Before they graduate from high school, virtually all students (1) complete a joint admissions application to EPCC and UTEP, (2) learn about and prepare for the ACCUPLACER test, (3) take the ACCUPLACER test, (4) review scores with counselors, and (5) refresh skills and take the test again if needed. Some students also enroll in a summer bridge program to strengthen their basic skills, if necessary.	x	x	West TX			x	x		
Native American Summer Bridge Institute	Texas Tech University	This is an intensive five-day program for rising high school seniors that includes college preparation workshops, introductions to academic courses, student life activities, and social activities.	x		West TX				x		x
Aggie Summer Institutes (telephone interview)	Texas A&M University	This is a free college preparation workshop for students in grades 7–12 held during the summer in multiple locations across the state, in Texas A&M University's Prospective Student Center regions. Students learn how to develop budgets and manage their money, how and why to choose the right courses, how to build a resume and complete a college application, how to choose the right career, etc. The primary purpose of this program is to get students interested in college and encourage them to attend Texas A&M University.	x		Statewide	x	x	x	x	x	x

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