Collaboration Between Schools & Colleges, a.k.a., School-College Partnerships

Reform agents argue that there are inter-segmental gaps in the American educational pipeline, which need to be bridged before the system can function in a seamless fashion. Postsecondary institutions, in particular, have tended to function independent of, rather than interdependently with other segments of the educational system. Higher education has been criticized for operating as an “isolated island” and for sitting “alone atop the educational pyramid,” while condescendingly shifting blame to the K-12 sector for its failure to academically prepare students for college-level work (The Pew Higher Education Roundtable, 1993, p. 9A). According to Derek Bok, Harvard president emeritus, “Very few institutions have given much encouragement to faculty interested in improving the schools. What we have done instead is simply to relegate all of the work on schools to the faculty of education, then to stuff the faculty of education down at the bottom of the campus hierarchy and ignore it. I think it would be easier to argue that we are part of the problem than it would be to argue that we are part of the solution” (1992, p. 19).

In 1983, the American Council on Education and the Education Commission of the States issued an influential national report titled, One Third of a Nation, which issued seven major challenges to our educational system, one of which was for its leaders to cooperate across all levels of education—from elementary through graduate school. During the 1990s, the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) made school/college collaboration a key focus point of its national reform agenda (American Association for Higher Education, 1993). These national reform efforts fueled a proliferation of school-college partnerships that emerged during the 1990s. These partnerships focused primarily on the following collaborative initiatives: (a) early identification and intervention programs in which K-12 students are brought to college campuses for educational enrichment and academic skill building, (b) professional development opportunities for college faculty and academic support professionals to engage in K-12 service and scholarship, and (c) school-college course articulation and curriculum development (Wilbur & Lambert, 1995).

Greater collaboration between schools (elementary and secondary) and colleges has, as one of its many possible byproducts, the potential for improving the access and success of underrepresented students through (a) earlier educational intervention, (b) better academic preparation, and (c) more targeted student recruitment.

Specific school-college collaborative practices designed to implement these goals and other objectives relating to the school-to-college transition are included in this section.

• Academic Alliances: faculty from colleges and high schools who teach in the same academic discipline collaborate to identify critical subject-matter knowledge, core concepts, and pedagogical strategies that promote student learning in their particular
subject area. (For example, high school-and college faculty collaborate to develop subject-specific capstone courses for high school seniors).

- *High School Outreach Programs*: colleges collaborate with high schools to facilitate high school students' *college access, transition, and retention*. These programs are often aimed at underrepresented students; if they are targeted for younger students (e.g., students in junior high or elementary school), they are typically referred to as “*Early Identification Programs*.”

Types of High School-Outreach & Early-Identification Practices/Programs:

- College administers *Math and English placement tests* to high school students during the *sophomore or junior year*, enabling teachers to work on students’ skill development before they graduate.

- “Summer High School Juniors Program”: college offers summer programming for high school *juniors* to prepare them for their senior year, their upcoming college-application process, and their eventual freshman-year experience in college.

- High school students *tutored by college students* in subject matter relating to their academic major—for purposes of promoting high school students' *(a) level of academic achievement, (b) preparation for college and (c) interest in attending college.*

- College provides a *teaching-learning “hotline”* for use by local high school students and high school instructors (e.g., math education hotline).

- An outstanding *high school teacher* on sabbatical leave serves as the “master learner” in a *federated learning community* model.

  This procedure is identical to the FLC previously described in section 1.6; the only difference being that a high school instructor, rather than a college faculty member, attends the federated courses and serves as the master learner. The high school teacher is granted a complete tuition waiver by the college—which also helps the high school pay for the instructor’s replacement.

  One major objective of this practice is to provide high school teachers with a professional development opportunity that may serve to enhance their ability to prepare high school students for the academic expectations and responsibilities they will encounter in college.

- College provides *feedback to high schools* on their graduates’ collegiate performance—e.g., their first-year academic achievement (GPA) and retention rate.

- *University faculty* teach advanced college-credit courses to *high school seniors* for the purpose of stimulating their interest in and attendance at college. (Note: High school students may take these course on the college campus, where they may also be allowed
free access to the university’s educational and recreational facilities, thereby further promoting their identification with and involvement in the college community.)

• *College students* teach one or two *lessons in a public high school*, using material from courses they are currently taking at the university. High school instructors may request topics from a menu sent to them by the college, and the college instructor awards credit to the student (e.g., extra credit; exemption from an exam or paper).

• Local high school students, faculty, and staff are invited to *college programs and special events free of charge*.

• “College Scouts Plan”: *college alumni* register at the state's public libraries, and high school students are matched with these alumni to form *mentor-protegee* pairs.

• Joint high school and college “*outstanding teacher” award ceremonies*—designed to recognize outstanding secondary and postsecondary teachers, promote school-college relations, and stimulate high school students’ interest in attending college (and, perhaps, pursuing a future teaching career).

• Selected *high school counselors* work with *college freshmen*, with the participating college and high school sharing the cost of these counselors’ salaries. After spending two full terms on the college campus, the counselors return to their local school districts better equipped to assist high school seniors’ transition to college and well-positioned to train other counselors.

• *Summer Bridge Program*: High school faculty collaborate with college faculty to teach in a summer program for students who are transitioning from their last (spring) semester in high school to their first (fall) semester in college, thus serving to “bridge” students’ transition from high school to higher education. These programs typically target academically "at-risk" students (e.g., low-income, first-generation, underrepresented students) and include an orientation to higher education plus a residential experience, whereby participants take courses together and reside on campus in the same college residence.

• Qualified high school students are allowed to take college courses for which they receive *advanced college-placement credit*.

• College faculty or academic support professionals meet with teachers and counselors from feeder high schools, where they *review the academic performance of the school’s graduates during their freshman year at the college*.

• *College of education faculty* collaborate with *high school and elementary school teachers* to identify the knowledge, professional skills, and personal qualities associated with *effective K-12 instruction* so as to improve teacher education and preparation.
• High school and college collaborate to offer an *academic tract for academically advanced high-school students*, enabling them to *complete both high school and college in 6 years*—through a curriculum jointly developed and taught by high school and college faculty.

• “2+2” or “2+1” *arrangements*: technical studies programs begun in high school are completed at a 2-year college, either as part of a certificate program or associate degree (A.A./A.S.) program.
References


Collaboration Between 2-Year and 4-Year Colleges

Collaboration between different 2- and 4-year colleges may also serve as a vehicle for realizing a variety of other institutional goals, which include: (a) expanding the curriculum—e.g., via cross-registration agreements, (b) reducing institutional costs—e.g., pooling resources to share the travel costs and services of a guest speaker or consultant, (c) promoting campus diversity—e.g., via student or faculty exchanges, and (d) facilitating institutional assessment and self-improvement—e.g., benchmarking.

Alexander Astin (1991) argues that inter-institutional collaboration could be expanded further to develop “cooperative systems” of performance-based assessment and funding in which, “Monetary incentives are based on the aggregate performance of an entire system. Under such a cooperative model, institutions would have maximum incentive to facilitate each other’s performance, since the success of any one brings in resources that are shared by all the others” (p. 228). For example, two- and four-year institutions in a state system could collaborate and be rewarded for collaborative initiatives that result in increased transfer rates.

Collaboration between 2- and 4-year colleges to promote transfer is a particularly compelling form of inter-institutional collaboration today for several reasons. (1) The total number of potential two- to four-year college transfer students in American higher education is sizable and growing. More than 50% of all first-year college students attend two-year institutions (California Community Colleges, 1994; Parnell, 1986), and student enrollment at 2-year institutions is increasing at a faster rate than it is at 4-year colleges and universities (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1993). Simply stated, more 2-year college students will have the potential for making the transition to 4-year institutions than at any other time in our nation's history (Giles-Gee, 1994).

(2) Workplace projections indicate that the majority of all new jobs in this country during the 21st century will require some type of baccalaureate preparation (Arciniega, 1990; Johnson & Packard, 1987). Students who transfer from two- to four-year institutions to complete a baccalaureate degree have been found to achieve comparable economic benefits as students who start and finish at four-year colleges; for example, it has been found that they earn comparable salaries and report similar levels of job satisfaction (Pascarella, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

(3) There is a significant gap between the number of students who enter 2-year colleges with the intention of transferring to 4-year institutions and the number who actually do. Students who begin higher education at 2-year colleges with the intention of achieving a baccalaureate degree will receive, on average, 15% fewer B.A. degrees than those who enter higher education at 4-year institutions, even when controlling for students' socioeconomic background, academic ability, high school achievement, and educational aspirations at college entry (Astin, 1975, 1977, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Nationally, since the 1970s, the number of students transferring from 2-year to 4-year colleges has decreased relative to the total community-college enrollment (California Community Colleges, 1994), despite the fact that 57% of community college students earn at least 60 semester hours of college credit and 75% earn four or more semester hours of credit during their 2-year college experience (Palmer, Ludwig, & Stapleton,
Only about one-half of all students who attend community colleges with aspirations to attain a baccalaureate degree will actually make the transition to 4-year institutions—with or without an associate degree (American Council on Education, 1991; Pincus & Archer, 1989; Watkins, 1990). During the 1980s, 75% of full-time first-year students in public community colleges indicated a desire to obtain a bachelor’s degree—however, the actual transfer rate ranged from 15 to 25 percent; overall, no more than 20-25 percent of community college students who aspired to earn a bachelor’s degree ever did so (Pincus & Archer, 1989). This disturbing discrepancy has been referred to as the “baccalaureate gap” (American Council on Education, 1991).

(4) Attention to closing this gap between 2- and 4-year institutions has important implications for promoting underrepresented students’ access to, and achievement of the baccalaureate degree. Disproportionately large numbers of underrepresented college students attend community colleges. For instance, the majority of first-generation college students enter higher education at 2-year institutions (Rendon, 1995; Richardson & Skinner, 1992), and they are overrepresented at these institutions (Striplin, 1999). In fact, more first-generation minority students are enrolled at community colleges than at all of our nation’s 4-year colleges and universities combined (California Community Colleges, 1994). This represents a sizable pool of under-represented students who could potentially transfer to 4-year colleges and eventually reap the well-documented benefits associated with the completion of a baccalaureate degree (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

Unfortunately, however, the 2- to 4-year college transfer rate for minority students remains significantly lower than majority students (Barrera & Angel, 1991; Rendon & Garza, 1996), despite the fact that minority students have equally high aspirations for the baccalaureate degree (Center for the Study of Community Colleges, 1985; London, 1996). Even at urban community colleges, at least half of the enrolled minority students entertain aspirations for the baccalaureate degree (Richardson & Bender, 1987). Rendon and Garza note: “While community colleges have sought to find their niche in postsecondary education by concentrating on career-based education to prepare students to enter the job market, many educators are concerned that higher expectations should be set for students of color, particularly since minorities occupy few privileged positions in society in which undergraduate degree are necessary” (1996, p. 290).

Greater inter-segmental collaboration between 2-year and 4-year colleges is needed to facilitate the “vertical” transfer of minority students to baccalaureate degree-granting institutions. Listed below is a series of 2- and 4-year college collaborative practices that have promise for promoting successful transfer among community college students in general, and underrepresented students in particular.

**Strategies for Collaboration Between 2-year & 4-year Colleges**

- **Course articulation agreements**, a.k.a., transfer articulation agreements (TAGS) between 2- and 4-year colleges to facilitate a “seamless” transfer transition. (These agreements can be in paper on line, the latter being posted on the internet for easy access and retrieval.)
• **Guaranteed Transfer** (a.k.a., “2 + 2 Agreements”) between 2- and 4-year colleges which ensure acceptance of community-college transfer students and their transfer credits at the collaborating 4-year college or university.

• **Inverted Degree** Models: certain vocational/technical programs at the 2-year college are followed by a special general education sequence offered by the 4-year college that culminates with a baccalaureate degree.

• **Inter-Institutional Transfer Councils/Offices/Committees** designed to facilitate transfer by conducting regularly scheduled meetings between 2- and 4-year college representatives in specific program areas or academic disciplines.

• **Partnerships Grant** Programs: 2- and 4-year colleges jointly write grants that provide fiscal support for collaborative efforts between the two institutions (e.g., Ford Foundation grants sponsored by the American Council on Education).

• Two-year institutions host a *college fair* at which 4-year college admission representatives staff information tables and answer transfer-related questions for potential transfer students.

• Two-year college publishes *transfer newsletter* and 4-year institutions are invited to submit announcements and spotlights.

• Four-year college permits neighboring 2-year college students to *access to its facilities* (e.g., library, computer services, athletic events).

• *Four-year colleges offer courses* to nearby *community college students* (either on their home campus or at the university campus) so that potential transfer students can obtain *advanced transfer credit*.

• **Cross-registration** program in which 2- and 4-year colleges collaborate to allow students at each institution to enroll in courses offered at the other college.

• Two-year college partners with university to offer *bachelor’s, master’s or Ph.D. degree programs at the 2-year college campus* so that students are able to pursue advanced degrees without having to travel to a different campus.

  These programs are designed for two major purposes: (a) to accommodate students who live at great distance from university campuses, and (b) to provide efficient and cost-effective education for students preparing to enter career fields that have drastic shortages of professional personnel (e.g., teaching, nursing, technology).

• *College visits* by 2-year college students to 4-year institutions—which provide them with a *campus tour* and opportunities to meet with transfer orientation professions and departmental advisors.

• *Advisors* of 2-year college students and 4-year college *admission officers* collaborate
to identify and recruit potential transfer students (e.g., underrepresented students).

- Two-year college provides 4-year colleges with a directory of transfer-ready minority students.
- Four-year college earmarks transfer-student grants/scholarships specifically for students transferring from neighboring 2-year colleges.

- Transfer-student orientation programs sponsored by 4-year colleges for potential or just-admitted transfer students.

- Mentoring relationships between 4-year college faculty and 2-year college students that are designed to assist transfer students’ eventual transition to the 4-year institution.

- Major-specific workshops provided by 4-year college faculty for 2-year college students interested in pursuing popular and competitive fields of study (e.g., business, engineering, pre-med).

- Two-year and four-year college faculty combine to teach courses in a "summer bridge" program for transfer students transitioning from the 2-year to 4-year institution (e.g., a college success course).
References


