Improving Preparation and K-16 Linkages for Broad Access Postsecondary Education

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Context of K-16 Disjuncture

- Most ambitious generation ever – Over 80% want college degree
- Percent of bachelors degrees barely increases in recent years
- Media pays attention to selective postsecondary, but problems in non-selective
- Broad access students think minimum high school preparation requirements equal college ready
Context of K-16 Disjuncture continued

- 80% of students and 85% of institutions are open enrollment, or accept all qualified applicants. 45% of undergrads in community college, no SAT/ACT
- Non-selective remediation is very high
- Completion rates over 80% in selective, but much lower in non-selective – low-income and minorities suffer the most
- Fractured K-12 and postsecondary systems send vague and inadequate signals to secondary schools, students, and parents about academic preparation
The Evolution of the Disjuncture between K-12 and Postsecondary Education

- Historic separation of policy and practice between higher education and K-12
- Student standards are established in separate orbits
- K-16 faculty rarely work together
- No institutionalized entity at the state or regional level to make policy or integrate K-16 practice
The Evolution of the Disjuncture between K-12 and Postsecondary Education continued

- No organized group lobbies for K-16 linkages
- Little data and no accountability system regarding K-16 performance
- Nobody loses a job for poor K-16 linkage or performance
- Programmatic responses, such as Outreach programs, are small scale and rarely evaluated
## Bridge Research Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>California</th>
<th>Illinois</th>
<th>Texas</th>
<th>Oregon</th>
<th>Georgia</th>
<th>Maryland</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Selective Four-Year University</strong></td>
<td>The University of California, Davis</td>
<td>The University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign</td>
<td>The University of Texas, Austin</td>
<td>The University of Oregon</td>
<td>The University of Georgia</td>
<td>The University of Maryland at College Park</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Less Selective Four-Year University</strong></td>
<td>California State University, Sacramento</td>
<td>Eastern Illinois University, Illinois State University</td>
<td>Southwest Texas State University</td>
<td>Portland State University</td>
<td>University of West Georgia</td>
<td>Towson State University</td>
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<td><strong>Community Colleges</strong></td>
<td>Los Rios Community College District</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Portland C.C. Mt. Hood C.C.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Catonsville C.C. Rockville C.C.</td>
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<td><strong>K-12 Schools</strong></td>
<td>6 high schools in 3 districts (4 in the greater Sacramento area and 2 in an outlying district)</td>
<td>5 rural and 2 urban central Illinois high schools, 626 students, 619 parents (in 2000)</td>
<td>A high school and middle school near UT; a high school and 2 junior highs in a rural college town near SWT</td>
<td>4 high schools total in three districts in the greater Portland area</td>
<td>2 high schools near the University of West Georgia</td>
<td>6 high schools near Montgomery County</td>
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Messages Students Receive

- It’s better to take easier classes in high school and get better grades.
- My senior year in high school does not matter.
- I don’t have to worry about my grades or the classes I take until sophomore year of hs.
- I can’t start thinking about financial aid until I know which college I’m going to.
- I can take whatever classes I want to when I’m in college.
Messages Students Receive

- Few students in California knew all admission requirements for the highly competitive institution near them.
- Few students knew all admission requirements for the less competitive institution near them.
- Sixteen percent knew college placement policies.
What do we know about college success?

- The more credits college students earn in their first year, the more likely they are to complete. Earning 20 credits is an important milestone.
- Passing certain gatekeeping courses (college math and first-year writing) is related to success.
- Combining basic skills with Student Life Skills appears to increase likelihood of success.
- Non-delayed entry, continuous enrollment, and full-time enrollment are all related to success.
- Course withdrawal/repeats have negative effects.
- Comprehensive, well-supported, support services have positive effects on student success.

Sources: see, for example, research by Adelman, Bailey, Calcagno, Hoachlander, Terenzini, Shulock, and Jenkins.
Findings

Systemic Reform Essential: K-12 Cannot Do It Alone

- Multiple and confusing assessments; 41% of seniors have “A” average in 2004; 28% in 1984
- Disconnected curricula, senior year slump
- Lack of connected, longitudinal, data
- 78% of high school seniors spend 3 hours or less per week on reading assignments
Findings continued

- Only 33% of four-year college freshmen spend 6 hours or more doing homework per week in their high school senior year.
- There is a lack of college counseling for broad access students.
- Teachers’ college knowledge is incomplete, but they play a major advisory role.
“The one thing – it’s the good thing about community college, I would say – is that a student can come here with absolutely no forethought, you know?”

– college advisor

“This is the thing. I’ve always done well in grammar, and I’ve always done well in English. I got As throughout high school, and I was placed in the lowest English [in the community college].”

– community college student
Major Action Areas for Reform

- Provide all students, their parents, and educators with accurate, high quality, information about, and access to, courses that will help prepare students for college-level standards

- Shift media, policy, and research attention to include broad access colleges and universities (that approximately 80% of college students attend)

- Expand the focus of local, state, and federal programs from access to college to include access to success in college
Four Key Policy Areas

- Alignment of courses and assessments – (English literature is not technical reading.)
- Finance – Link need-based student aid with student preparation, fund K-16 collaboration
- K-16 Data Systems – Diagnose problems, track students, and assess attainment
- Accountability and Incentives for K-16 results, college persistence, and completion
Policy Implications

- Track signals to high school students regarding college expectations and requirements
- Track more carefully the signals students receive concerning placement
- Include college transition in postsecondary finance, accountability, and regional governance
Policy Implications continued

- Postsecondary should review K-12 standards and assessments for placement usage
- Collect more data on specific populations as they move through colleges (50% of graduates attend more than one)
- More emphasis on vocational and technical education pathways
Policy Implications continued

- Link junior/senior year of high school to initial college curriculum
- Expand dual enrollment to include more prospective community college students
- Create a continuous policy-making apparatus for K-16
Optimistic Versus Pessimistic Future

- Momentum growing, Incremental progress, Media Attention, Common Core, Community College Interventions
- Negatives-public pressure lacking, historical roots, few incentives, no Powerful interest group coalition
- Strategies lacking to reach Latinos in community colleges, or males [females are 59% of 4 year graduates]