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

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

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

Selected Quotes continued

"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]