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CREATING STRATEGIES FOR EDUCATIONAL AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Early College Designs: Expanding a Strategy for Achieving College for All

Missouri Department of Higher Education Committee on Transfer and Articulation Annual Conference

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Today's Objectives:

- Share latest research on early college high schools.
- Identify enabling policies that states can adopt to sustain and expand investments in early college designs.
- Highlight best practices that states are implementing to improve the transfer of college credits earned at two-year colleges to four-year institutions.

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•This conversation is an opportunity to learn more about new and forthcoming developments, research and policies related to how states are using innovation and college credit in high school models as part of a statewide college-readiness strategy for low-income and underserved students.

• How states are ensuring that credits earned in college courses taken for dual credit transfer to all public higher education institutions across the state.

Why Early College Designs?

- **For Students**: Free college courses with support motivates students to accelerate: completed college coursework is a strong signal of college readiness; already college students by high school graduation
- **For Schools, Districts, and Postsecondary Institutions:** Alignment of high school college- and career-ready standards with college courses; students enter college without need for remediation
- **For States:** Return on the investment in lower cost to degree completion, more college graduates

Our Aim: Move from small early college schools to district early college designs. All students supported to achieve at least 12 college credits by the end of high school (including college math and composition).

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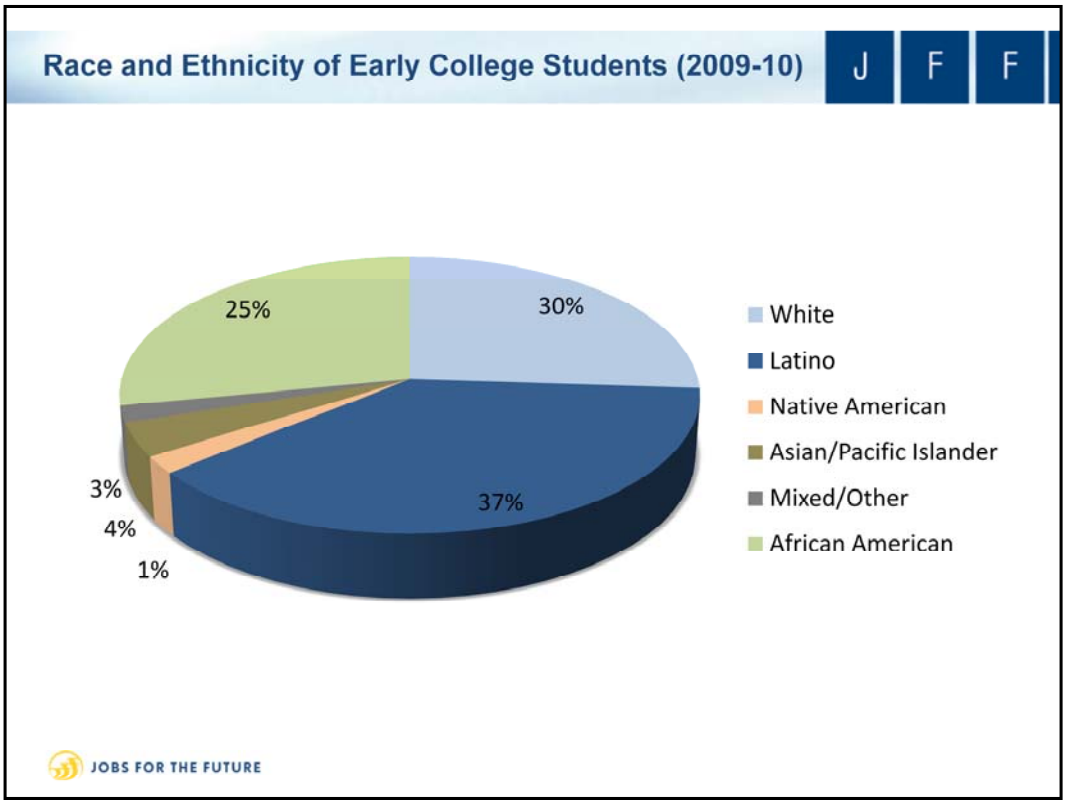
• Early college designs adapt dual enrollment as a school-wide strategy; unlike traditional dual enrollment programs, their primary focus is the underprepared student, rather than the high achiever. The goal is to support low-income high school students who, without significant assistance, may lack the skills and knowledge to enter and persist through college. After years of extra academic support, early college students start taking postsecondary courses in high school, resulting in dual credit—*all tuition free.*

•Small schools in which secondary and postsecondary partners take joint responsibility for the success of all students and delivery of a curriculum that blends 9-14 work.

•Designed so that all students have the opportunity to earn an Associate's degree or up to two years of transferable college credit – tuition free – along with a high school diploma.

•Districts operate most early ECHS, but there are some state-authorized charter schools that operate independently from local districts.
•Schools can start in grades 6,7, or 9.
•Most are separate schools, but some are small learning communities or academies within another school.
•Postsecondary partners provide college courses as substitutes for some high



•**POPULATION SERVED:**
•**70** percent of early college students are students of color.
•**59** percent are eligible for free or reduced lunch – a conservative estimate of the number of students from low-income families.
•**Nearly a third** of early college schools receive Title 1 funding, based on the high percentage of low-income students served.

Early College High Schools at a Glance

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The Impetus for Early College Expansion Efforts

SCALE	RESEARCH
• First early colleges opened in 2002 • Today more than 200 schools serving 50,000 students in 24 states in the ECHSI • Additional states building early college designs (i.e., NY, MA)	• Gold-standard experimental and quasi-experimental research confirms proof of concept • SIS longitudinal data shows multiple positive student outcomes (i.e., college courses completed, college years completed, college matriculation)

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Other talking points: Original design: small autonomous school, serving low income students underrepresented in higher education, goal 1-2 years of college credit with a postsecondary partner.

Always intended to test the power of college credit in high school as a strategy for low-income student success, and, if proof points emerged, make it easier for districts to provide access for all.

ECHSI Results

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Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Research Findings

- Early college students are enrolling and progressing in key college preparatory classes at a **higher rate** compared to control group students.
- The ECHS design is **closing the achievement gap** for students of color.
- Early college students **outperform their peers** in comparison schools.

SIS Findings

- On average, early college graduates earn more than **20 college credits**.
- **39 percent** of graduates at early college schools open for four or more years earned more than one year of transferable college credits while in early college.
- **25 percent** of graduates at early college schools open for four or more years earned two years of college credit or an Associate's degree.
- **86 percent** of early college graduates in 2009 went on to some form of postsecondary education in the fall of that year.

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--Early results are showing that the schools serve a great number of low-income student students in comparable proportion to their home districts

--And that students are earning a substantial amount of college credit upon graduation – with a notable number completing an AA.

Summary of Guiding Principles:

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1. Serve a wide range of students, particularly those who are historically underrepresented in higher education.
2. All of the state's public high schools provide equal access to dual enrollment opportunities.
3. College credit substitutes for high school credit, allowing students to accelerate in the specific subjects in which they demonstrate readiness.
4. Secondary and postsecondary sectors share responsibility for the success of dual enrollees.
5. Funding mechanisms are based on the principle of no cost to students and no financial harm to secondary and postsecondary partners.
6. The state has an early college goal; measures, monitors, and reports on the program's impact.
7. Early college designs are prime college- and career-readiness levers in the statewide college-readiness strategy.

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•Finally, I wanted to provide you with a compendium of what JFF considers to be guiding principles and best practices in support of this work.
•Reprisal of a few of the things mentioned already:

1. **Equity considerations** for students;
2. **Substitution** of college courses for HS work and dual credit;
3. **Dual credit**
4. **Funding…"hold harmless"**

Recommendations for States to Improve Credit Transfer Earned at Two-Year Colleges to Four-year Institutions

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- ✓ Mandate that the state community college, college, and university systems establish formal articulation agreements within and across the systems.
- ✓ Make information about transfer requirements widely available to schools and students, including via the Internet.
- ✓ In accepting early college and dual credit students for transfer, public institutions must accept dual credit courses as equivalent to courses designated transferable under postsecondary articulation agreements.

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•Few states have a systemic means (e.g., common numbering system) for determining the equivalency of courses across their various higher education systems. In addition, many academic departments retain "gatekeeper status" with regard to conferring credit in the academic major.
•The uncertainties of transferring credit among institutions make it difficult for early college high schools to plan for students to take the appropriate prerequisite courses and to avoid having ECHS graduates backtrack or retake similar courses.
•The problem is compounded for ECHS because the courses in question for transfer in to upper-division college work may be credits earned within a high school building as opposed to a college campus. Four-year colleges, in particular, may be confused about how, for the purposes of admission or transfer, to treat students who have courses on their transcripts for both high school and college credit.

•JFF's Recommendations for states…

State Examples

- **Florida:**
  - In Florida's comprehensive articulation system, state universities must accept A.A. graduates of state community colleges as juniors, space permitting.
  - All public postsecondary institutions have a common course numbering system.
  - Florida also has a consistent equivalency system for AP and other college-level courses taken in high school, and its department of education manages an online, one-stop guidance system allowing students to compare their college transcripts to degree requirements.

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State Examples Cont…

- **Texas:**

➢ Texas and the Coordinating Board have developed a comprehensive infrastructure for the transfer of lower-division academic courses among all public colleges and universities in the state.

➢ All community colleges throughout the state use the Texas Common Course Numbering System for numbering their courses, and each public university must identify lower-division courses that are equivalent to TCCCNS-numbered courses according to Texas stature and Coordinating Board Rules.

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State Examples Cont…

- **Ohio:**

➢ Through the Ohio Transfer Module (OTM), all general education courses transfer across Ohio public institutions. OTM is either a subset or a complete set of a college's or university's general education curriculum in A.A., A.S., and baccalaureate degree programs.

➢ Approved transfer module courses, when taken individually, are also guaranteed to transfer on a course-by- course basis.

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