

Undergraduate Recruitment and Transition Team
Early College
Subcommittee Report
February 2014

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Introduction

One response to the push for more Americans to attain a post-secondary degree has been the creation and development of early college or dual enrollment programs. As more and more students begin to make the transition from early college to four-year higher education institutions, colleges and universities must make an effort to understand, and address the special needs of this student population.

The Early College sub-committee participated in a site visit to Caldwell Early College High School (CECHS) and explored data on early college students enrolled at Appalachian State University. We also reviewed early college focus group data collected by the Academic Advising and Orientation Office.

Findings

- Freshman ECHS applicants and enrollees have increased dramatically over the past several years
 - Fall 2009: 49 Applicants, 29 Admitted, 8 Enrolled
 - Fall 2013: 307 Applicants, 218 Admitted, 77 Enrolled
 - In the past two years, the enrollment yield was somewhat higher for ECHS admits
 - Fall 2012: ECHS yield 44.5%, non ECHS yield 39.0%
 - Fall 2013: ECHS yield 35.3%, non ECHS yield 32.0%
- In Fall 2013, there were 77 new freshmen who completed high school at an ECHS
 - They came from 35 different ECHS across NC.
 - Only one school system had more than one ECHS students come to ASU: Guilford (4 different ECHS).
 - Top 10 ECHS with students attending ASU
 - Burke Middle College (n=7)
 - Caldwell Early College High (n=5)
 - Rowan Early College High (n=5)
 - Davie County Early College (n=4)
 - Early College of Forsyth County (n=4)
 - Johnston County Early College Academy (n=4)
 - Challenger Early College High (n=3) (Catawba County)
 - The JP Knapp ECH School (n=3) (Currituck County)
 - Rutherford Early College High (n=3)
 - Stokes Early College High (n=3)
- The average number of transfer hours that ECHS students brought in Fall 2013 was 62.5 (this is similar to other ECHS cohorts), compared to all other freshmen who brought 13.5 hours (does not include AP or IB credit).
- Of the 77 ECHS students, 58 (75%) enrolled with the Gen Ed met. Only 2 other freshmen (not ECHS) enrolled with the Gen Ed met.
- 44 of the ECHS students (57%) enrolled with a completed Associates degree. Only 1 other freshman (not ECHS) enrolled with a completed Associates degree.
- Average SAT scores have been lower than other freshmen for most years except 2012. In fall 2013 the average ECHS SAT score was 1105, compared to 1130 among all other freshmen.
- Average ACT scores were the same at 24.2 in 2013.
- The 2013 Early College HS students were only slightly older than all other freshmen: Average age of 18.2, compared to 18.0.
- The racial/ethnic diversity for ECHS was higher than the rest of the freshman class. There were 16% minority students among ECHS, compared to 14.5% for non-ECHS freshmen.
- Based on MAP-Works results, ECHS students generally come into ASU with the same self-assessment levels, compared with other freshmen. There were differences for some items, though. Responses among ECHS students were significantly less positive for the following MAP-Works factors in 2012: Self-assessment of Self Discipline, Peer Connections, Academic Integration, and Social Integration. ECHS students rated themselves significantly higher in their communication skills.

- ECHS students tend to attempt and earn less credit hours in their first year. Among the past 4 cohorts:
 - ECHS attempted hours 13.9, all other Freshmen 15.0
 - ECHS earned hours were 12.8, all other Freshmen 14.1
- At the end of the first year, ECHS students attempted and earned less hours, so they didn't seem to adjust up after the first term.
 - ECHS attempted 28.0, all other Freshmen 30.1
 - ECHS earned 26.1, all other Freshmen 28.6
- Intended majors of ECHS students did not cluster in any particular area. They have majors in many (26) departments across the university. Larger numbers were in Biology (n=11), Communication (n=7), and Psychology (n=5).
- Graduation rates of the early ECHS cohorts do not indicate that most ECHS students graduate in two years.
 - Fall 2010 Cohort: 19% graduated in two years (by end of summer 2012)
 - Fall 2010 Cohort: 50% graduated in three years (by end of summer 2013)
 - Fall 2011 Cohort: 13% graduated in two years (by end of summer 2013)

Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Create a liaison position for Early College students at Appalachian State University.

Rationale: Because early college programs are not uniform and higher education institution curriculums and admission's policies vary, it is challenging for students and administrators from both sectors, to be familiar and stay current with each program's nuances. One response to improve this situation would be for Appalachian to appoint a liaison, who specializes in North Carolina early colleges. This liaison would be responsible for educating and communicating to faculty and staff within the university about early college students. They would also be responsible for providing information regarding university policy, procedures, and academics, to NC early colleges, to assist students who are interested in applying to Appalachian.

Suggestions for Implementation: Based on responses from focus group participants, an early college liaison, who specializes in North Carolina early college programs, would be best suited in Appalachian's Admissions office.

Recommendation #2: Modify the Admission's application to denote Early College High School student.

Rationale: Based on responses from CECHS staff, and survey and focus group participants, an area where the Appalachian State University failed to relate to early college students was during the application process. CECHS advisors explained that many applications do not apply to an early college student's academic profile. One CECHS advisor pointed out that NC State has an option for students to enter current coursework under a "13th year coursework option" on their application. By adding this 13th year option to the application, students felt that they were being recognized immediately rather than having to cram an additional year of coursework into their "12th year."

Suggestions for Implementation: Appalachian's Admissions Office needs to determine modifications that can be made to the current freshman application to denote early college student characteristics (specifically allowing students to identify as early college students and indicate additional years for their college level coursework). If a student indicates ECHS student type, provide option to select main campus or Distance Education (similar to the option currently provided for transfer applicants).

Recommendation #3: Include transcripts as application checklist item.

Rationale: Approximately 60% of early college students surveyed indicated that they experienced difficulty registering for classes. Many of these students were unaware that they needed to send current transcripts in order to update their academic records at Appalachian. College transcripts and updates of "coursework in progress" are currently not required enrollment steps for freshmen at Appalachian. However, requiring these steps for early college students would help to alleviate difficulties associated with prerequisites needed to register for higher level courses and lessen confusion when assisting students with curriculum choices.

Suggestions for Implementation: It is important that students are aware that they should have their tentative transcripts in the university system at the time of registration. Students who indicate "early college" on their

applications to Appalachian should have a required enrollment step to indicate coursework in progress and to send a transcript from their early college program prior to class registration.

Recommendation #4: Early College students should be assigned to specific orientation groups and should have specific orientation programming.

Rationale: When asked about orientation during the early college focus group discussion, all seven students pointed out that the orientation session they attended at Appalachian State University followed the same premise. They felt they were treated as traditional college freshman and they had to re-tell their early college history multiple times to multiple people, which caused them a great deal of frustration. The majority of focus group students disclosed that they would have preferred to have been assigned to an orientation group with other early college students. They elaborated by saying that being surrounded by similar students with similar backgrounds would have reduced their stress levels.

Suggestions for Implementation: Appalachian's first year Student Orientation Program is currently working to create an early college group for every summer 2014 freshman Orientation session. The program piloted this option in January with a small group of early college spring admitted students.

Recommendation #5: Early College students should have a targeted communication plan.

Rationale: (See rationale #1). Because early college programs are not uniform and higher education institution curriculums and admission's policies vary, it is critical that we communicate Appalachian's nuances to prospective early college students as well as students in various stages of the enrollment process. In particular, early college students need to be aware of when we need updated transcripts and coursework in progress.

Suggestions for Implementation: While an early college liaison could facilitate communication to these students, a separate communication plan needs to be created through a joint effort by the Office of Transfer Articulation, Admissions Office, and the Office of Academic Advising and Orientation and Distance Education. Early College students will need to be made aware of distance education options.

Recommendation #6: Develop early college talking-points and training for student leaders and Ambassadors.

Rationale: CECHS administrators explained that part of their curriculum involved intense major and institutional programming research. On campus visits and at Open Houses, their students often feel as if they are treated as traditional college freshman. Campus administrators, faculty and student leaders are not aware of the early college population and the differences between these students and traditional freshmen.

Suggestions for Implementation: Appalachian's first year Student Orientation Program and Appalachian's Student Ambassador Program need to train their student leaders to better understand and work with this population.

Recommendation #7: Create an early college RLC.

Rationale: When asked about their first year experience during the early college focus group discussion, several students indicated feeling more mature than their peers. One student explained that she already knew how to read a syllabus and plan for her semester accordingly. She felt that her roommate was trying to navigate situations that she had already been through. Appalachian has an already established Residential Learning Community program for students with shared interests, majors and special populations. An Early College RLC would be a great opportunity for early college students to support each other in a living learning environment.

Suggestions for Implementation: Appalachian matriculated approximately 90 early college students in the fall of 2013; we anticipate enrolling more of these students each year. University Housing could plan for an Early College RLC in the fall of 2015 and begin recruiting students to fill this community as early as January 2015.

Recommendation #8: Develop an intra-campus communication plan regarding the early college population.

Rationale: (See rationale #1). Because early college programs are not uniform and they are continuing to grow across the state of North Carolina, it is critical that we communicate information about these programs effectively on our campus.

Suggestions for Implementation: An early college liaison could facilitate this dialog; however, several offices need be involved in an initial intra-campus communication plan including the Office of Transfer Articulation,

Admissions Office, the Registrar's Office, University Housing, the Division of Student Development, and the Office of Academic Advising and Orientation and Distance Education. An early college intra-communication plan could be a 2014 project for Appalachian's URTT (Undergraduate Recruitment and Transition Team) because so many of these units serve on the current team.