

UPDATED: 2016-17 Evaluation of the College Access Program

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At-a-Glance

The College Access Program (CAP) was created to meet the needs of the Dallas Independent School District (ISD) for increased student college applications, scholarship applications, participation and performance on college entrance exams, and parental involvement in the college admissions and financial aid process.

For the 2016-17 school year, Academic Success Program (ASP), Education is Freedom (EIF), and Southern Methodist University (SMU) were selected as CAP vendors to provide college access services to high schools receiving Title I funds in the Dallas ISD. The program was supported by \$2,300,000 of Title I funds, and guidelines associated with Title I funding required that CAP vendors could supplement, but not replace, counselor job responsibilities to assist in reaching program goals. Each CAP vendor assigned a CAP advisor to provide individual and small group assistance to students and parents that supplemented the work of the counseling staff. This assistance included advisement on the following:

- Using Naviance (an online college and career readiness tool)
- Completing college applications
- Completing financial aid applications
- Registering and preparing for the SAT, ACT, and Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA)
- Completing college and scholarship application essays
- Attending college fairs

Purpose and Methodology

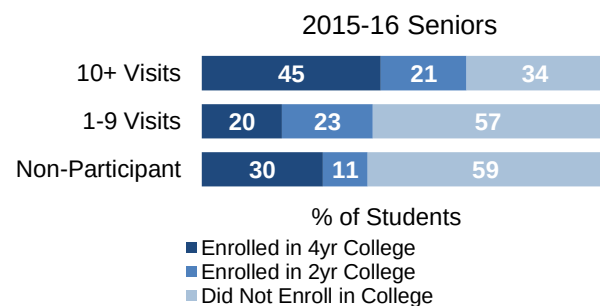
The purpose of this evaluation was to review the effectiveness of the program based on outlined program goals and objectives. CAP vendors provided a data file to the evaluator on July 27, 2016, that included the number of visits by each student, the reasons for each visit, and the type of workshops that the vendors led during the school year. This data file was merged with the district demographic data from June 1, 2016 and the 2017 National Student Clearinghouse college enrollment data file from April 11, 2017. In addition, the evaluator downloaded ApplyTexas and FAFSA data for each campus on August 8, 2017, and retrieved district SAT and ACT data files on July 24, 2017. Lastly, CAP program staff members provided data regarding

Naviance StrengthsExplorer® on July 8, 2017 and Summer Melt Texting program on August 1, 2017.

CAP Participation and College Enrollment

Although the relation was relatively weak, an analysis of 2017 National Student Clearinghouse data for 2015-16 Dallas ISD graduates indicated that seniors who participated in CAP were significantly more likely to enroll in college within one year of graduating high school than those who did not participate ($p < .01$). Specifically, CAP participants were statistically more likely to enroll in two-year colleges than non-participants ($p < .01$), but this relation was relatively weak. However, as indicated by Figure 1, CAP participants who visited a CAP vendor at least 10 times were statistically more likely than those who visited less frequently to enroll in a four-year college than a two-year college or not enroll in any college ($p < .01$). This relation yielded a medium effect size ($V = .18$).¹ These results were similar for 2014-15 seniors (Douglas & Barton, 2016).

Figure 1: 2015-16 Two- and Four-Year College Enrollment Based on the Number of Student Visits to CAP Vendors



Source: CAP participation data files from July 27, 2016; District demographic data files from June 1, 2016; National Student Clearinghouse data files from April 11, 2017.

Note: $n = 1,562$ CAP participants in 2015-16 with 10+ visits; $n = 4,968$ CAP participants in 2015-16 with 1-9 visits; $n = 856$ non-participants in 2015-16.

The 2017 National Student Clearinghouse data file also included college enrollment data for 43 percent ($n = 3,466$) of 2014-15 Dallas ISD seniors. For these students, 96 percent of 2014-15 CAP participants and non-participants remained enrolled in college in 2016-17. These results were similar for 2013-14 seniors (Douglas & Barton, 2016).

¹ .05 = small effect size, .15 = medium effect size, .25 = large effect size when the number of degrees of freedom is four.

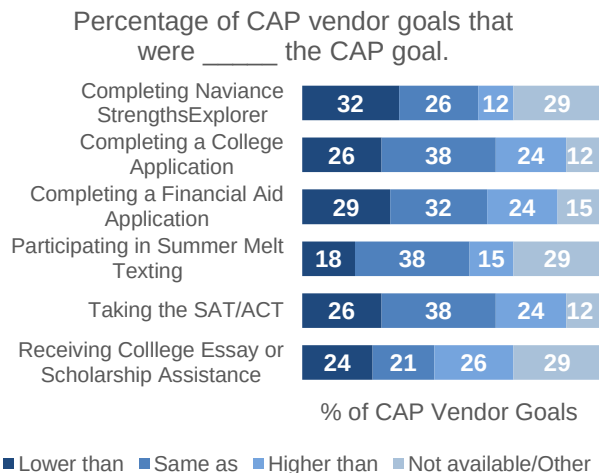
CAP Participation Data

In 2016-17, ASP served 5,410 students at 17 Dallas ISD campuses, EIF served 6,955 students at 14 campuses, and SMU served 1,780 students at three campuses. Thirty-seven percent of all students and 90 percent of seniors were served by a CAP vendor. On average, the students receiving CAP services were served between four and five times by one of the CAP vendors, but most commonly, students visited a CAP vendor one or two times. ASP and EIF most often provided information to students about applying to college, and SMU most often helped students apply to four-year colleges. Furthermore, 35 percent of workshops held by ASP and EIF focused on college and financial aid applications, and 37 percent of workshops held by SMU focused on college fairs and visits.

Campus Goal Form

To review the working relationship between CAP advisors and counselors in their efforts to meet program goals, the evaluator reviewed all 34 Campus Goal Forms for the 2016-17 school year.² As indicated by Figure 2, the Campus Goal Forms allowed CAP vendors and counselors to either differentiate or share equal responsibility for each program goal.

Figure 2: Percentages of CAP Vendor Goals That Were Lower Than, Same as, or Higher Than Each of the CAP Goals



Source: 2016-17 Campus Goal Forms from each campus.

Note: $n = 34$ Campus Goal Forms. The "Not Available/Other" category included goals that were missing or were not based on a percentage of students; while every campus had the same CAP goals, each campus was allowed to adjust the CAP vendor's level of responsibility for achieving each of these goals; not all percentages sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

Meeting Program Goals

CAP vendors worked collaboratively with Dallas ISD counselors in order to meet the following goals:

- 98 percent of seniors completing Naviance StrengthsExplorer Assessment.
- 95 percent of seniors completing at least one college application.
- 50 percent of seniors opting to participate in the Summer Melt texting program.
- 60 percent of senior class completing a financial aid application: Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA), or scholarship.
- 95 percent of seniors registering and taking the SAT or ACT.
- 60 percent of the senior class receiving college and scholarship essay assistance.
- 50 percent of seniors attending at least one college fair.
- CAP vendors attending at least six Postsecondary Counselor Training meetings.

CAP vendors successfully helped counselors to meet or almost meet the CAP goals regarding college applications, financial assistance, the SAT and ACT exams, and Postsecondary Counselor Training meetings. Ninety-nine percent of 2016-17 seniors completed at least one college application through ApplyTexas, 62 percent of seniors completed a FAFSA application, and 93 percent of seniors took the SAT or ACT. CAP staff members also reported that all CAP vendors attended at least six Postsecondary Counselor Training meetings. However, CAP vendors and counselors lagged behind on the CAP goals related to the Naviance StrengthsExplorer, Summer Melt texting program, and college and scholarship essay assistance. Forty-nine percent of 2016-17 seniors completed the Naviance StrengthsExplorer, 34 percent of seniors enrolled in the Summer Melt texting program, and 39 percent and 46 percent of seniors received assistance with college and scholarship essays, respectively. The evaluator was unable to determine if 50 percent of seniors attended at least one college fair because the CAP vendors were not required to track the attendance of individual students

Recommendations

- **CAP advisors and counselors should be encouraged to set vendor goals for all CAP goals.** Almost 30 percent of all Campus Goal

² The Campus Goal Forms outlined each CAP goal and allowed CAP vendors and counselors to determine their level of responsibility for achieving each program goal. While every campus had the same CAP goals, each campus was allowed to decide whether the CAP vendor's goals would be lower than, same as, or higher than each of the program goals.

Forms were missing at least one CAP vendor goal. Because CAP advisors can only supplement the work of counselors, CAP advisors and counselors should be encouraged to set CAP vendor goals to ensure clear expectations regarding their level of responsibility for achieving each of the program goals.

- **College Access and Counseling Services program staff members should identify how the percentage of seniors completing the Naviance StrengthsExplorer can be increased.** Only three and two campuses achieved the CAP goal for Naviance StrengthsExplorer in 2015-16 and 2016-17, respectively. Because 2015-16 was the first year CAP vendors and counselors used Naviance, they might not be familiar with all of the tools available on Naviance. Additional professional development or training might be necessary to help CAP advisors and counselors learn how to use Naviance. Furthermore, program staff members should contact CAP advisors and counselors to discuss why the Naviance StrengthsExplorer is not being used on their campus and whether any procedures for administering the test can be improved.
- **College Access and Counseling Services program staff members should continue to encourage seniors to enroll in the Summer Melt Texting program.** While over a third of 2016-17 seniors were enrolled in the Summer Melt Texting program, only 12 campuses had at least 50 percent of seniors enrolled in the program. Program staff members should help students understand the benefits of enrolling in the program in order to increase the percentage of students who enroll in college after graduating from high school. Furthermore, because 2016-17 was the first year that data were available to evaluate the Summer Melt texting program, CAP staff members should continue to provide data for this goal.
- **College Access, Counseling Services, and CAP vendor staff members should review current procedures regarding college and scholarship essay assistance to increase the percentage of students served.** While over two-thirds of schools served by ASP met the CAP goal for college or scholarship essay assistance, only two schools served by EIF and none of the schools served by SMU met this goal. Because the data were self-reported by CAP vendors, it was not possible to determine whether ASP simply documented more work on college or scholarship essay assistance than other CAP vendors or if EIF and SMU provided limited college or scholarship essay assistance to seniors in 2016-17. Thus, program staff members should determine why CAP vendors

are reporting different levels of assistance with college and scholarship essays.

- **CAP staff members should continue to reevaluate the current program goals to ensure that the necessary data are available for each goal.** In 2015-16, data were not available to determine whether 50 percent of seniors participated in the Summer Melt texting program or 50 percent of seniors attended at least one college fair. While 2016-17 was the first year that data for the Summer Melt texting program were available, CAP vendors were not required to track the attendance of individual students at the college fairs. As a result, the evaluator was not able to determine whether 50 percent of seniors attended at least one college fair during the 2016-17 school year.

References

Douglas, N., & Barton, M. (2016). Evaluation of the College Access Program: Final report. Dallas, TX: Dallas Independent School District.

The full 2016-17 report can be found at www.dallasisd.org/Page/888. For more information, please contact Program Evaluation at evaluation@dallasisd.org.

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