

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The College Access Program (CAP) was created in 2010 by Dallas Independent School District (ISD) to increase student college applications, scholarship applications, participation in college entrance exams, and parental involvement in the college admissions and financial aid processes. The program has been managed by a college access coordinator within the Dallas ISD Postsecondary Partnerships and Programs department. The three CAP vendors selected for the 2019-20 school year were Academic Success Program (ASP), Education is Freedom (EIF), and Southern Methodist University (SMU). In 2019-20, the CAP program served 36 high school campuses. CAP vendors provided supplemental assistance to students and parents. This assistance included: 1) completing college applications; 2) completing financial aid applications; 3) registering and preparing for the SAT, ACT, and TSIA tests; 4) completing college and scholarship application essays; 5) completing Dallas County Promise Pledges; and 6) attending college fairs. The total amount of funding for 2019-20 CAP was \$2,350,000, which was a slight increase from \$2,325,000 in 2017-18 and 2018-19 when funded through Title I.

On March 13, 2020, in alignment with federal recommendations, the Governor of Texas issued a disaster proclamation certifying that the novel coronavirus COVID-19 posed an imminent threat of disaster for all counties in the state of Texas. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Dallas ISD transitioned students to at-home learning on March 23 following spring break (March 16 – 20) until the end of the school year. In order to support students during this difficult time, the CAP program continued to provide services to students remotely.

PURPOSE AND METHOD

The purpose of this evaluation was to examine the effectiveness of the CAP program based on the outlined program goals. This evaluation examined: 1) characteristics of students who participated in the CAP program, 2) the extent to which CAP vendors met outlined program goals, 3) the extent to which the CAP participation changed from 2017-18 to 2019-20, 4) the relationship between CAP participation and college enrollment for 2016-17 through 2018-19 seniors, and 5) the way the program provided services to students and parents during at-home learning.

Data on sources of program funding and budget, number of CAP students, number of CAP schools served, Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA), linked Khan Academy accounts with College Board, and CAP staff meeting with counselors were obtained from program staff.

College application information was obtained from program staff and ApplyTexas website. Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) was obtained from Department of Education website. Dallas County Promise Pledge information was obtained from a website shared between Dallas ISD and the Dallas County Community College District. CAP student characteristics and SAT/ACT/TSIA results were obtained from district data files. 2018-19 senior college enrollment information was obtained from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) data file. Additional information was obtained from an evaluator-designed vendor survey and a manager questionnaire. Frequency and crosstab analyses were computed. Open-ended responses were analyzed qualitatively for common themes.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS/OUTCOMES

What were the characteristics of the students served in 2019-20?

During the 2019-20 school year, 13,290 students in grades nine to 12 utilized the CAP vendor services. A total 468 students were missing in the district demographic file dated 05/29/20, leaving 12,822 students in the file for analyses (Table 1).

Table 1: 2019-20 CAP Student Characteristics

Level	CAP Enrollment		District HS Enrollment	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Grade				
Grade 9	526	4.1	12,205	30.7
Grade 10	1,918	15.0	10,297	25.9
Grade 11	2,701	21.1	8,552	21.5
Grade 12	7,677	59.9	8,765	22.0
Gender				
Female	6,832	53.3	19,959	50.1
Male	5,990	46.7	19,860	49.9
Ethnicity				
Asian	159	1.2	376	0.9
African American	2,873	22.4	8,196	20.6
Hispanic	9,065	70.7	28,644	71.9
White	501	3.9	1,846	4.6
Other	224	1.7	757	1.9
Student Groups				
Eco.Dis.	9,850	76.8	31,927	80.2
At Risk	8,943	69.7	29,651	74.5

Source: CAP data provided by vendors 7/15/20. District demographic file 05/29/20.

Note: N=12,822 excluding 468 students who were not found in the district demo file dated 05/29/20. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Since the CAP program focused on supporting senior students, most participants were enrolled in grade 12 (59.9%). The majority were Hispanic (70.7%) followed by African American (22.4%). There was a slightly higher percentage of CAP female students than for all high school female students districtwide (53.3% vs. 50.1%) and a slightly lower percentage of at-risk CAP versus all district high school students (69.7% vs. 74.5%). Additionally, there was a lower percentage of economically disadvantaged CAP students than the district overall (76.8% vs. 80.2%).

To what extent did CAP vendors meet 2019-20 program goals?

College Application

Overall, 92 percent of 2019-20 seniors completed at least one college application, below the 95 percent goal. College application rates by campus ranged between 75 and 100 percent. Six of the 11 campuses served by ASP (55%), 14 of the 23 campuses (except CityLab which had no seniors) served by EIF (61%), and the one campus served by SMU (100%) met the CAP goal. Ninety-five percent of seniors in 2018-19 and 94 percent in 2017-18 completed at least one college application. Seniors self-reported data indicated 26,142 college applications were submitted during the 2019-20 school year, and 9,933 (38%) were accepted.

Financial Assistance

Overall, 2019-20 seniors met the program goal of 70 percent completing a FAFSA or TASFA application. The completion rate increased from 68 percent in 2017-18 to 69 percent in 2018-19 (Lorenz, 2018 & Lorenz, 2019) to 70 percent in 2019-20. It is worth mentioning that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, CAP students had difficulty retrieving documents to complete FAFSA applications because the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) office was closed for a period of time preventing students from retrieving tax returns and other documents. Some students might not have had adequate time to submit required documents and complete the entire FAFSA process. When reviewed by campus, the completion percentage ranged between 52 percent and 100 percent. Obama Leadership Academy had the highest percentage of financial aid applications (100%), followed by Townview Business (98%), Townview SEM (97%), and Townview TAG (96%).¹

Overall, 10 percent of all seniors assisted by a CAP vendor self-reported that they were offered at least one scholarship or institutional grant.²

Linked Khan Academy Accounts

The program goal of 50 percent of participants linking their College Board account with their Khan Academy account was not met in 2019-20. Overall, 25 percent of grade 10 and grade 11 students who had a PSAT score linked their College Board account to Khan Academy. Eight of the 24 campuses served by EIF (33.3%) met the CAP goal of 50

percent, and none of the campuses served either by ASP or SMU met the outlined program goal. 2019-20 was the second year the CAP program had a goal for linking College Board and Khan Academy accounts. In 2018-19, the percentage of linked College Board accounts to Khan Academy was 30 percent, higher than in 2019-20 (25%).

SAT/ACT/TSIA

The program goal of 95 percent of 2019-20 seniors taking SAT, ACT or TSIA was not met. Overall, 93 percent of 2019-20 seniors took either the SAT, ACT or TSIA. The percentage of seniors taking one of the above-mentioned assessments remained largely stable over the past three years, with 92 percent in 2017-18 (Lorenz, 2018) and 93 percent in 2018-19 (Lorenz, 2019). SMU had the highest percentage of seniors who took a test (100%), followed by ASP (94%) and EIF (93%). Seven of the 11 campuses served by ASP (64%) and 11 of the 23 campuses (except for CityLab) served by EIF (48%) met the CAP goal.

CAP Staff Meeting with Counselors

The program goal of CAP staff meeting with counselors at least three times was met. The CAP staff visited 30 campuses from October 2019 through January 2020. Meetings covered a range of topics, such as college placement exam updates, college readiness goals, graduation requirements, financial aid information, and dual credit updates. The 2019-20 school year was the first year to report CAP staff meetings with campus counselors.

Dallas County Promise Pledges

The CAP goal was that 95 percent of seniors would complete a Dallas County Promise Pledge. Overall, 99 percent of CAP students completed their Dallas County Promise Pledges. Twenty-nine out of 31 (94%) participating campuses met the program goal. 2019-20 was the first year to report Dallas County's Promise Pledge completion.

To what extent did CAP participation change from 2017-18 to 2019-20?

The number of students served by CAP increased from 12,878 in 2017-18 to 14,428 in 2018-19 and decreased to 13,290 in 2019-20 (Table 2).

Table 2: 2017-18 through 2019-20 Students Served by CAP Vendor

	2017-18		2018-19		2019-20	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
ASP	4,382	34	4,007	28	2,418	18
EIF	7,649	59	9,243	64	10,080	76
SMU	847	7	1,178	8	792	6
Total	12,878	100	14,428	100	13,290	100

Source: 2017-18 and 2018-19 CAP information taken from Lorenz (2018 & 2019). 2019-20 CAP participation data from 07/15/20.

Note: N=13,290 including 468 students not found in the district demographic file dated 05/29/20.

¹ School of Business and Management (Business), School of Science and Engineering (SEM), School for the Talented and Gifted (TAG).

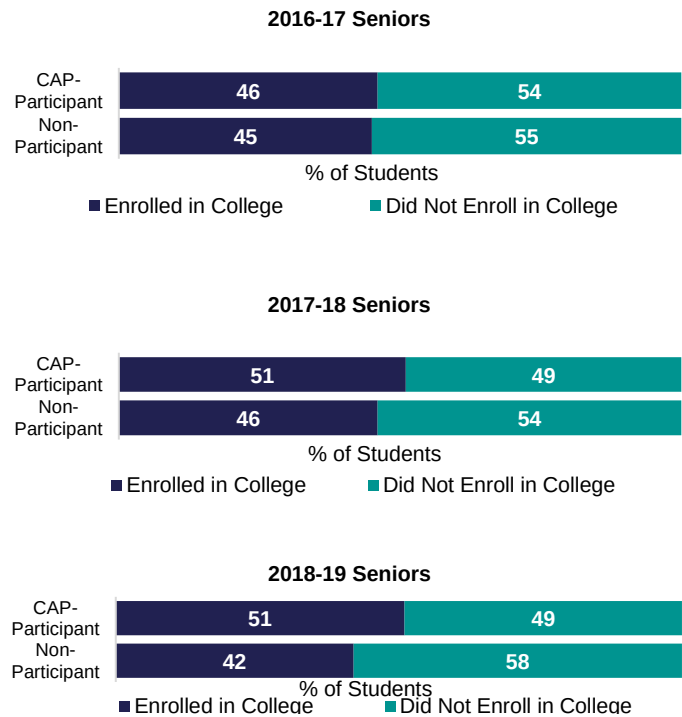
² Since this is a self-reported data, results should be viewed with caution.

On average, students receiving CAP services were served 4.7 times by CAP vendors in 2019-20. Students visited CAP vendors most commonly once (34%), followed by five to nine times (20%). In past years, Lorenz (2018 & 2019) reported that most students visited CAP vendors once (2017-18, 31%) and five to nine times (2017-18, 20%), and in 2018-19, most students visited CAP vendors once (37%) or twice (17%) or five to nine times (17%).

What was the relationship between CAP participation and college enrollment for 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19 seniors?

The number of Dallas ISD seniors who participated in the CAP program increased from 2016-17 (7,048 seniors) to 2017-18 (7,475 seniors) and decreased slightly in 2018-19 (7,298 seniors). However, the percentage of seniors who participated in the program remained stable (88% to 89%) over the same timeframe. The 2019-20 NSC data file included college enrollment information for 93 percent (n=8,241) of 2018-19 Dallas ISD graduates, 51 percent of CAP participants and 42 percent of non-CAP participants enrolled in college in within one year of graduation (Figure 1).

Figure 1: 2016-17 through 2018-19 Percentages of Students Enrolled in College within One Year of Graduating High School



Source: CAP participation data file 07/15/19, district demographic data file 05/28/19, and National Student Clearinghouse data file 08/27/20. Prior year information was taken from Lorenz (2018 & 2019).
Note: N =6,873 CAP participants in 2016-17. N=734 non-participants in 2016-17. N =7,285 CAP participants in 2017-18. N=730 non-participants in 2017-18. N= 7,298 CAP participants in 2018-19. N =867 non-participants in 2018-19.

College enrollment increased from 2016-17 to 2018-19 by five percentage points (46% to 51%) for CAP participants

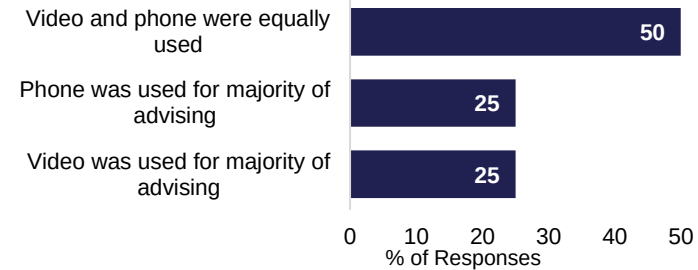
and decreased by three percentage points (45% to 42%) for non-participants. The 2018-19 seniors who participated in CAP were more likely to enroll in two-year colleges than non-participants, while 2018-19 seniors who did not participate in CAP were more likely to enroll in four-year colleges than CAP participants. More CAP participants than non-participants did *not* enroll in college in 2017-18 (49% vs. 54%) and 2018-19 (49% vs. 58%). This may indicate a need to recruit more non-CAP participants into the program.

In 2018-19, seniors who visited a CAP vendor 10 and more times were more likely to enroll in a four-year college than those who visited less frequently or non-CAP participants. Also, those with 10 or more visits were more likely to enroll in a two-year college than non-CAP participants. These results were similar for 2016-17 and 2017-18 seniors (Lorenz 2018 & Lorenz 2019).

How did CAP change the ways in which it provided service to students during at-home learning?

A CAP vendor survey and a CAP manager questionnaire were developed to solicit feedback about the program staff experience during at-home learning. The majority of vendors (58.3%) reported they provided service to students five days per week. Half of the survey respondents (50%) reported services were provided via video and phone conferencing equally (Figure 2).

Figure 2: 2019-20 Percentage of Video and Telephone Conferencing During At-Home Learning



Source: 2019-20 CAP vendor survey file, 07/08//20.
Note: N=24.

Vendors were asked to rank the most challenging issues when serving students remotely. Fourteen respondents (58.3%) ranked assisting with financial processes (FAFSA/TASFA) as the most challenging, followed by assisting with linking Khan Academy with College Board accounts (n=6 or 25.0%) and helping students complete the Dallas County Promise Pledge (n=3, 12.5%). The majority of respondents (79%) indicated virtual advising was less effective compared to in-person advising, and 62.5 percent of respondents stated they served fewer students during the pandemic compared to pre at-home learning.

The percentage of students that linked their Khan Academy accounts with their College Board accounts was relatively low in 2018-19 (30%) and in 2019-20 (25%), so vendors were asked what could be done to increase student

engagement with Khan Academy linked accounts in the coming years. Vendors (total responses=20) listed several critical elements to increase students' engagement including receiving adequate support from campus staff ($n=13$, or 65%), raising student interest ($n=5$, or 25%), and making it a priority for vendors ($n=2$, or 10%).

When asked which areas for improvement they would target in 2020-21, vendors (total responses=20) identified the following areas: assisting with financial aid applications ($n=18$, or 90%), assisting students with linking Khan Academy and College Board accounts ($n=15$, or 75%), assisting with college applications ($n=14$, or 70%), assisting with scholarship applications ($n=12$, or 60%), and assisting with registering and preparing for SAT/ACT/TSIA tests ($n=11$, or 55%).

Vendors (total respondents=23) listed several challenges. These included reaching out and communicating with CAP students ($n=27$), accessing student information ($n=7$), engaging with students ($n=4$), assisting students with college paperwork ($n=3$), and having internet connection issues using Zoom and other platforms ($n=2$).

The CAP manager encountered some challenges during this difficult time, including assisting students with FAFSA/TASFA applications. For example, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, students had difficulty retrieving IRS tax transcripts and other tax documents since the IRS was closed at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, some students' financial aid applications were delayed, and some students were concerned that their college application and other admissions information would not be processed in a timely manner.

During the 2020-21 school year, the CAP manager plans to do the following: 1) hold virtual meetings with CAP supervisors on a monthly basis; 2) have one-on-one meetings with advisors at each campus to ensure they get the support they need; 3) make changes to how scholarships are reported; 4) have a meeting with the Special Revenue Funds Management department to complete requirements for virtual reporting; and 5) keep verifying vendor monthly reports, including services and workshops provided, student signatures, and so forth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Identify ways to help students link their Khan Academy and College Board accounts, especially among students in grades 10 and 11. In 2019-20, 25 percent linked their Khan Academy accounts with College Board, which was much lower than the 50 percent program goal. Likewise, eight out of 36 campuses (22%) met the program goal. Program staff should work closely with CAP vendors to make sure vendors prioritize helping students link their accounts and to note the benefits available when the accounts are linked.

Identify ways to increase senior college application completion rates. In 2019-20, 40 percent of the campuses with seniors (14 out of 35 campuses) did not meet the application completion rate CAP goal of 95 percent. Program staff should coordinate with CAP vendors to determine possible reasons for the high incompleteness and target steps to ensure students receive adequate support and encouragement to complete the process.

Update FLS and ADL files on an ongoing basis. A data discrepancy existed between the district demographic file and what vendors reported for the number of seniors on each campus when excluding FLS and ADL students. CAP staff members should ensure the FLS and ADL information is updated throughout the school year to improve data accuracy.

Find ways to recruit more students in the CAP program. More CAP participants than non-participants did *not* enroll in college in 2017-18 (49% vs. 54%) and 2018-19 (49% vs. 58%). This likely means there is a need to recruit more students, especially seniors, into the CAP program.

REFERENCES

- Lorenz, A. (2018). 2017-18 Evaluation of the College Access Program. Dallas. TX. Dallas Independent School District.
- Lorenz, A. (2019). 2018-19 Evaluation of the College Access Program. Dallas. TX. Dallas Independent School District.

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