

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 four CAP vendors selected for the 2020-21 school year were Academic Success Program (ASP), Education is Freedom (EIF), Southern Methodist University (SMU), and The Princeton Review (TPR). In 2020-21, 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. CAP received \$2,350,000 through Title IV funds in 2020-21 and 2019-20. This was an increase from 2,325,000 in 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 2020-21 school year. To help district students and families access the internet during at-home learning, the Dallas ISD launched "Operation Connectivity" in May 2020, which provided 23,000 hotspots to families by October 2020. In 2020-21, Dallas ISD delayed the start of the 2020-21 school year until September 8, 2020 and implemented at-home learning districtwide for the first four weeks. The district also modified the school calendar from a six-week schedule to a nine-week schedule. On October 22, 2020, the district announced that campuses would provide in-person and virtual learning throughout the rest of the school year, and parents could choose whether their children participated in in-person or virtual instruction. In-person and virtual instruction included both synchronous and asynchronous learning activities. The district also continued to implement the Center for Disease Control (CDC) as well as state and local COVID safety protocols.

During the 2020-21 school year, the CAP program continued to provide services to students in-person or virtually. CAP vendors provided services to those students

who opted for virtual learning through one-on-one virtual meetings, virtual workshops, and virtual student advisement meetings. However, CAP vendors had difficulty reaching the CAP students, holding workshops, and conducting classroom visits due to the pandemic.

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 2018-19 to 2020-21, and 4) the relationship between CAP participation and college enrollment for 2017-18 through 2019-20 seniors.

Data on sources of program funding and budget, number of CAP students, number of CAP schools served, Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA), and CAP staff meetings with counselors were obtained from program staff. College application information was obtained from program staff and the 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. 2019-20 senior college enrollment information was obtained from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) data file. Frequency and crosstab analyses were computed.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS/OUTCOMES

What were the characteristics of the students served in 2020-21?

During the 2020-21 school year, 10,659 students in grades nine through 12 utilized the CAP vendor services. However, 638 students were missing in the district demographic file dated 06/14/21, leaving 10,021 students in the file for analyses. Since the CAP program focused on supporting senior students, most participants were enrolled in grade 12 (65.8%; 54% in 2018-19 and 60% in 2019-20). The majority of students were Hispanic (71.7%) followed by African American (21.3%). There was a slightly higher percentage of CAP female students than districtwide high

school female students (53.4% vs. 50.6%) and a slightly lower percentage of CAP at risk students than districtwide high school students (53.3% vs. 62.9%). The percentage of economically disadvantaged CAP students was about the same as the district overall (81.3% vs. 81.4%, respectively) (Table 1).

Table 1: 2020-21 CAP Student Characteristics

	CAP Enrollment		District HS Enrollment	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Grade				
Grade 9	335	3.3	11,103	28.2
Grade 10	1,182	11.8	10,662	27.1
Grade 11	1,909	19.0	9,014	22.9
Grade 12	6,595	65.8	8,534	21.7
Gender				
Male	4,670	46.6	19,405	49.4
Female	5,351	53.4	19,908	50.6
Ethnicity				
Asian	131	1.3	395	1.0
African American	2,136	21.3	7,894	20.1
Hispanic	7,185	71.7	28,378	72.2
White	365	3.6	1,783	4.5
Other	204	2.0	863	2.2
Student Groups				
Eco.Dis.	8,145	81.3	32,012	81.4
At Risk	5,338	53.3	24,729	62.9

Source: CAP data provided by program manager 07/20/21. District demographic data file 06/14/21.

Note: *N*=10,021 excludes 638 students who were not found in the district demo file dated 06/14/21. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

The percentages of Hispanic (71% each in 2018-19 and 2019-20) and African American (23% in 2018-19 and 22% in 2019-20) as well as female (53% each in 2018-19 and 2019-20) CAP students remained relatively unchanged during the last three years. The percentage of economically disadvantaged students decreased from 78 percent in 2018-19 to 77 percent in 2019-20, and increased to 81.3 percent in 2020-21, while percentage of at-risk students increased from 50 percent in 2018-19 to 70 percent in 2019-20 and decreased to 53.3 percent in 2020-21.

To what extent did CAP vendors meet 2020-21 program goals?

College Application

The program goal of 97 percent of participants submitting a college application was not met. Overall, 84 percent of 2020-21 seniors completed at least one college application (95% in 2018-19 and 92% in 2019-20). College application rates by campus ranged between 52 percent and 100 percent. Three of the seven (43%) campuses served by ASP, five of the 26 (19%) campuses served by EIF, none

of the campus served either by SMU or TPR met this CAP goal.

Seniors' self-reported data indicated 51,251 college applications were submitted during the 2020-21 school year. Of those, 19,500 applications (38%) were accepted by colleges or universities. ASP reported the highest percentage of acceptances (44%), followed by SMU (35%), TPR (30%), and EIF (26%).

Financial Assistance

Overall, 2020-21 seniors did not meet the program goal of 69 percent completing a FAFSA. It is worth mentioning that during the previous years, the CAP reports included the combined completion rate of FAFSA and TASFA. During the 2020-21 school year, the FAFSA completion rate has become the district goal; thus, the FAFSA completion rate was reported separately from TASFA in this report. The FAFSA completion percentage ranged between 36 percent and 98 percent. Four of the seven (57%) campuses served by ASP, 10 of the 26 (38%) campuses served by EIF, one of the two (50%) campuses served by SMU, and the one (100%) campus served by TPR met the CAP goal of 69 percent of seniors completing an application.

The overall combined completion rate of FAFSA and TASFA increased from 69 percent in 2018-19 to 70 percent in 2019-20 (Lorenz, 2019, Zhang, 2020) and decreased to 67 percent in 2020-21. By campus, in 2020-21, Rangel had the highest percentage of seniors completing FAFSA and TASFA application (100%), followed by Garza (94%), Townview: SEM (91%) and Smith New Tech (91%).

The percentage of all seniors assisted by a CAP vendor who self-reported that they were offered at least one scholarship decreased from 19 percent in 2018-19 to 10 percent in 2019-20 and to eight percent in 2020-21. When reviewed by campus, in 2020-21, Townview: TAG reported the highest percent of seniors with a scholarship (61%), followed by Townview: Pub Svc. (56%), Townview: SEM (46%) and Townview: Health (42%).¹

SAT/ACT/TSIA

The program goal of 95 percent of 2020-21 seniors taking the SAT, ACT or TSIA was not met. Overall, 90 percent of 2020-21 seniors took either the SAT, ACT or TSIA. Four of the seven (57%) campuses served by ASP, nine of the 26 (35%) campuses served by EIF, one of the two (50%) campuses served by SMU, and the one (100%) campus served by TPR met this CAP goal. The percentage of seniors taking one of the above-mentioned assessments remained largely stable over the past three years, with 93 percent each in 2018-19 (Lorenz, 2019) and 2019-20 (Zhang, 2020).

¹ Since this is self-reported data, results should be viewed with caution.

Dallas County Promise Pledges

The CAP goal was that 98 percent of seniors should complete the Dallas County's Promise Pledge. Overall, 89 percent of CAP students completed the Dallas County Promise Pledge. Nine of 31 (29%) participating campuses met the program goal. In 2019-20 school year, 99 percent of CAP students completed their Dallas County Promise Pledges, and 29 of 31 (94%) participating campuses met the program goal of 95 percent. 2020-21 was the second year to report Dallas County's Promise Pledge completion.

CAP Staff Meetings with Counselors

The program goal of CAP staff meeting with counselors at least three times was met. The CAP staff visited 30 campuses from September 2020 through June 2021. Meetings covered a range of topics, such as college placement exam updates, college readiness goals, graduation requirements, financial aid information, and college registration with Dallas County Community College District (DCCCD). The 2020-21 school year was the second year to report CAP staff meetings with campus counselors.

To what extent did CAP participation change from 2017-18 to 2020-21 school years?

The total number of students served by CAP vendors decreased from 14,428 in 2018-19 to 10,659 in 2020-21 (Table 2).

Table 2: 2018-19 through 2020-21 Students Served by CAP Vendor

	2018-19		2019-20		2020-21	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
ASP	4,007	28	2,418	18	872	8
EIF	9,243	64	10,080	76	9,153	86
SMU	1,178	8	792	6	559	5
TPR*					75	1
Total	14,428	100	13,290	100	10,659	100

Source: 2018-19 and 2019-20 CAP information taken from Lorenz (2019) and Zhang (2020). 2020-21 CAP participation data on 07/20/21.

Note: N=10,659 includes 638 students not found in the district demographic file dated 06/14/21. *2020-21 was the first year TPR provided service to Dallas ISD students.

On average, students receiving CAP services were served 3.8 times by CAP vendors in 2020-21. The average number of times students were served by vendor ranged from 2.9 (TPR) to 4.3 (SMU). It is worth pointing out that the average for each of the previous years was 4.7, which is a decrease of almost a whole point. During the 2020-21 school year, students visited CAP vendors most commonly once (36%), followed by five to nine times (19%). In past years, Lorenz (2019) and Zhang (2020) reported that most students

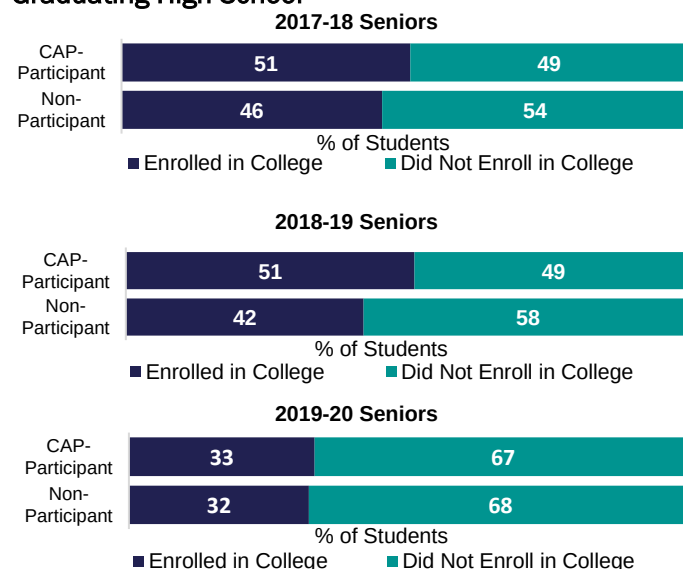
visited CAP vendors once (2018-19, 37%) and twice or five to nine times (2018-19, 17%) and students visited CAP vendors most commonly once (2019-20, 34%), followed by five to nine times (2019-20, 20%).

What was the relationship between CAP participation and college enrollment for 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20 seniors?

The number of Dallas ISD seniors who participated in CAP program has decreased slightly from 7,475 in 2017-18 to 7,081 in 2019-20. While the number of participants varied slightly from year to year, the percentage of seniors who participated in the program has remained stable (88%, 89%, and 88%) over the same timeframe.

The 2020-21 National Student Clearinghouse data file contained college enrollment information for 98 percent (N=8,127) of the 2019-20 Dallas ISD graduates, 33 percent of the CAP participants, and 32 percent of the non-participants who enrolled in college within one year of graduation². College enrollment remained stable from 2017-18 to 2018-19 (51%, respectively) and decreased by 18 percentage points for CAP participants and by 14 percentage points for non-participants (Figure 1).

Figure 1: 2017-18 through 2019-20 Percentages of Students Enrolled in College within One Year of Graduating High School



Source: CAP participation data file 07/15/20, district demographic data file 05/29/20, and National Student Clearinghouse data file 06/15/21. Prior year information was taken from Lorenz (2019) and Zhang (2020).

Note: 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. N = 7,081 CAP participants in 2019-20. N = 960 non-participants in 2019-20.

² A 2013-14 report on postsecondary outcomes indicated that Dallas ISD graduates sometimes delayed enrollment in college by one or two years. If the National Student Clearinghouse data for this report were analyzed in future years, enrollment numbers between CAP participants and non-

participants might be different. This report can be found at <http://www.dallasisd.org/cms/lib/TX01001475/Centricity/Domain/98/Evaluation/14-15/AtaGlance/EA15-107-04-At-a-Glance-Postsecondary.pdf>.

The 2019-20 seniors who participated in CAP were as likely to enroll in four-year (25% vs. 26%) and two-year colleges (8% vs. 6%) as non-participants. Percentage of CAP participants enrolled in 4-year colleges has remained mostly unchanged from 2017-18 to 2019-20. However, the percentage of non-participants enrolled in 4-year colleges has decreased each year.

In 2019-20, seniors who visited CAP vendors 10 or more times were more likely to enroll in a four-year college than those who visited less frequently or non-CAP participants. There was a slightly higher percentage of CAP participants with 10 or more visits enrolled in two-year colleges than non-CAP participants (8% vs. 6%). The 2019-20 CAP seniors with one to nine visits had a slightly higher percentage with two-year college enrollment than non-CAP participants (9% vs. 6%), while there were higher percentages of two-year college enrollment for CAP students than non-CAP participants in 2017-18 (25% vs. 11%) and 2018-19 (27% vs. 15%).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue to identify ways to overcome impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on college application rates.

Overall, 84 percent of 2020-21 seniors completed at least one college application, below the program goal of 95 percent. The college application rate decreased from 95 percent in 2019 to 92 percent in 2020 and to 84 percent in 2021. The CAP program continued to provide services to students virtually and/or in-person during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, CAP vendors had difficulty reaching CAP students, accessing student information, and assisting students with college application paperwork. As a result, some students' college applications and other admissions information were not processed in a timely manner. Program staff should coordinate with CAP vendors to find ways to overcome the decline in these percentages.

Continue to identify ways to overcome the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on FAFSA application completion rates.

In 2020-21, increasing the percentage of seniors who completed a FAFSA application became a district goal. However, 63 percent of 2020-21 seniors completed a FAFSA application (70% in 2019-20), which was below the program goal of 69 percent for 2020-21. It should be noted that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, FAFSA applications were challenging for CAP vendors to

coordinate with students. Students needed to complete all the required paperwork before submitting applications to institutions for verification during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, students had difficulty retrieving IRS tax transcripts, certificates, and other documents. As a result, some students' financial aid applications were not processed in a timely manner and were delayed. It should be noted that 2020-21 was the first year that FAFSA was reported separately from TASFA, and program staff had to work closely with CAP vendors to ensure seniors were aware of all resources available.

Continue to identify ways to increase SAT/ACT/TSIA participation rates to overcome declines due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2020-21, 90 percent of seniors took one of the college entrance exams; 58 percent of campuses (21 out of 36 campuses) did not meet the participation rate goal of 95 percent. The overall percentage of seniors taking one of the college entrance tests decreased from 93 percent each in 2019-20 and 2018-19 to 90 percent in 2020-21. In the 2020-21 school year, CAP vendors continued to provide services through one-on-one virtual meetings, virtual workshops, and virtual student advisement meetings for students who opted for virtual learning. However, CAP vendors had difficulty engaging with the CAP students, holding workshops, and conducting campus visits during the pandemic. Program staff should coordinate with CAP vendors to ensure students take advantage of district resources, provide adequate support as possible, assist seniors with registration, and help prepare students for the test.

REFERENCES

- Lorenz, A. (2019). 2018-19 Evaluation of the College Access Program. Dallas. TX. Dallas Independent School District.
- Zhang, J. (2020). 2019-20 Evaluation of the College Access Program. Dallas. TX. Dallas Independent School District.

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