

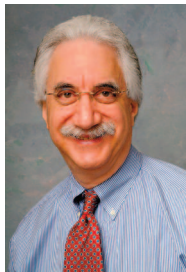


## Early College High School Initiative

**PERSPECTIVES FROM THE PROVOST**  
February 29, 2008

# Early College students surprise with their poise and achievements

*By Stan Silverman, Dean, Summit College, Akron, Ohio*



The question I get all the time about our Early College High School students is this: "How are they fitting in?"

At first, I also wondered how well ninth-graders would fit in to a college environment.

I should not have. We are six months into the program, and they are fitting in quite well. The four Early College classrooms are a few steps from the door of my office. I never hear them as they come and go throughout the day. I'm constantly struck by how mature many of them look; about half are nearly indistinguishable from our traditional students. Their conduct has been superior.

Early College High School, based in Summit College, is designed for historically underserved high school students in Akron who have demonstrated the ability to succeed in college. The idea is to get them on campus early so that UA becomes as familiar to them as their neighborhood, thus making the eventual transition to college very easy. As they

earn their high school degree, they are also picking up college credits. Most will graduate high school with up to 72 college credits or possibly an associate's degree.

We welcomed our first 100 students this year, and all of them seem to sense that they are participating in something special. This is shown through their attendance records and their academic performance.

Early College attendance is tops in the Akron Public Schools. This is impressive considering that no transportation services are provided. Parents must arrange to get their son or daughter to and from the school. On Presidents Day, the Akron Public Schools were closed, but we were open. You might think that attendance would suffer; after all, who wants to go to school on a day when your neighborhood friends have the day off? But attendance that day was excellent. The Early College students wanted to be here.

Academically, 80 percent of them are performing above expectations. Each early college student has a defined, individual degree pathway that includes earning five to nine credits in the first year of Early College. That means they are sitting in at least one college-level course with traditional UA students. The courses range from computer applications to public speaking to physical education.

Parents are enthusiastically on board, too. Parent attendance at Early College events is north of 70 percent, a

### **For More Information**

For more information about the Early College High School Initiative and its partner organizations, please visit [www.earlycolleges.org](http://www.earlycolleges.org)



number that is much higher than at traditional urban high schools.

Next year, the students we have now will move to the sophomore level, and we'll welcome 100 new freshmen. We'll expand from four to eight classrooms. By the 2010–11 academic year, we will be at capacity, with 400 students, 100 at each grade level.

We have begun reviewing applications for next year. This year, we received 200 applications for 100 seats. For next year, we have 350 applications for the 100 seats. Clearly, word is out about the excellence of this program

We have benefitted tremendously from two grants, \$400,000 from the KnowledgeWorks Foundation and \$100,000 from the G.A.R. Foundation. KnowledgeWorks, supported significantly by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, has a number of Early College programs at other universities. I have noticed that KnowledgeWorks personnel visit us frequently, often to provide a tour to an educator or a foundation supporter. On those visits, I'm struck by how many times the KnowledgeWorks rep describes our program as exemplary.

I am proud of that, and proud of how our University is working with Akron Public Schools to give promising, underserved students a real opportunity for a better life.

*This article is reprinted from the University of Akron, "Perspectives from the Provost," [www.uakron.edu/edigest/index.php?id=1385](http://www.uakron.edu/edigest/index.php?id=1385).*

### Early College High School Initiative

Early college high school is a bold approach, based on the principle that academic rigor, combined with the opportunity to save time and money, is a powerful motivator for students to work hard and meet serious intellectual challenges. Early college high schools blend high school and college in a rigorous yet supportive program, compressing the time it takes to complete a high school diploma and the first two years of college.

Since 2002, the partner organizations of the Early College High School Initiative have started or redesigned almost 160 schools in 24 states [200+ schools as of spring 2009]. The schools are designed so that low-income youth, first-generation college goers, English language learners, students of color, and other young people underrepresented in higher education can simultaneously earn a high school diploma and an Associate's degree or up to two years of credit toward a Bachelor's degree—tuition free.



**KnowledgeWorks Foundation**, Ohio's largest public education philanthropy, is developing a network of ten early college high schools in the state. KnowledgeWorks is transforming Ohio's public schools, where only 7 in 10 students graduate every year, from a one-size-fits-all education system into schools where respect for the individual is paramount, and every child is considered "college material." For more information about the KnowledgeWorks Foundation's Early College Initiative, please visit [www.kwfdn.org/high\\_schools/early\\_college](http://www.kwfdn.org/high_schools/early_college)



**Jobs for the Future** seeks to accelerate the educational and economic advancement of youth and adults struggling in today's economy. JFF partners with leaders in education, business, government, and communities around the nation to: strengthen opportunities for youth to succeed in postsecondary learning and high-skill careers; increase opportunities for low-income individuals to move into family-supporting careers; and meet the group economic demand for knowledgeable and skilled workers. JFF is the lead coordinator, manager, and policy advocate for the Early College High School Initiative. [www.jff.org](http://www.jff.org)