

The College-Community Connections Program: Implementation and Influence of Unique Pre-College Experiences for New York City Youth

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Overview

In support of its mission “to provide leadership for liberal education, marshalling the intellectual and financial resources necessary to ensure that today’s students have access to challenging, wide-ranging, and enriching college educations,” the Teagle Foundation funded partnerships between liberal arts colleges and universities and community organizations that provide college preparation programs to students from disadvantaged backgrounds in New York City. In the first two years of the College-Community Connections (CCC) program, ten partnerships were formed that provided authentic college experiences to more than 500 secondary students, introducing them to the academic and social expectations of college life and offering them opportunities to develop and practice skills and gain knowledge essential to liberal education.

The Teagle Foundation hopes to guide young people on an educational path that will prepare them for the demands of life after high school. The foundation understands the dilemma that young people face in today’s global economy – a college education is increasingly essential, yet tuition is less and less affordable. Economically disadvantaged students and students of color face even more serious challenges. Many are burdened by inadequate academic preparation, lack of access to college, career, and financial aid information and advising; scarcity of college graduate role models; and low academic and career expectations.¹ And many times, the socio-cultural environment in which these students are raised does not provide the *cultural capital* – academic attention, language, behavioral traits, and expectations – or *social capital* – relationships and benefits – that lead to school success and college enrollment. As a result, low-income students and students of color achieve lower college-going rates than their higher-income or White peers.²

What Is Liberal Education?

It is “a philosophy of education that empowers individuals with broad knowledge and transferable skills, and a strong sense of values, ethics, and civic engagement.” – Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U)

“The value of an education in a liberal arts college is not the learning of many facts, but the training of the mind to think something that cannot be learned from textbooks.” – Albert Einstein

“In an economy that is dependent on innovation and global savvy, liberal education outcomes have become the keys to economic vitality and individual opportunity.” – National Leadership Council for Liberal Education & America’s Promise

Interesting Facts

- 95% of employers surveyed think it is important for colleges and universities to provide a broad liberal education. – AAC&U
- In 2004, the proportions of African-American and Hispanic youth who enrolled in college immediately after graduating from high school were lower than those of White students (by 6.2 and 7.0 percentage points, respectively). – National Center for Education Statistics, 2006
- Today, Americans on average change jobs ten times between the ages of 18 and 40. –AAC&U

¹ The Education Resource Institute (TERI) (2002). A Guide to Establishing Community-Based College Access Centers.

² Cabrera, A., Prabhu, R., Deil-Amen, R., Terenzini, P.T. Lee, C., & Franklin, R.E. Fr. (2003, November). Increasing the College Preparedness of At-Risk Students, Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of the Study of Higher Education, Portland, OR.

And still, achieving a college degree is not enough to succeed in today's changing economy. Present-day workers face a global community and volatile labor market, and therefore need to acquire skills and knowledge to adapt in a changing world. A liberal education, one that provides a broad exposure to multiple disciplines, skills, and ideas and encourages the pursuit of lifelong learning, has become increasingly important as we are challenged to adapt to new technologies, research, and international relationships. The CCC initiative offers a valuable opportunity for low-income students of color to experience liberal education and accrue cultural and intellectual capital so that they may aspire to and succeed in college.

An evaluation of the CCC initiative was conducted from 2006 to 2008 by Metis Associates, a consulting firm specializing in education and human services evaluation. The results yielded outcome findings about the impact and influence of the initiative and highlighted a number of effective features of partnerships that achieved positive effects, which are described in this paper. Data to support the results were collected from interviews, focus groups, surveys of program participants and stakeholders, observations of program activities, and reviews of syllabi and other program materials, including examples of student work from the program.

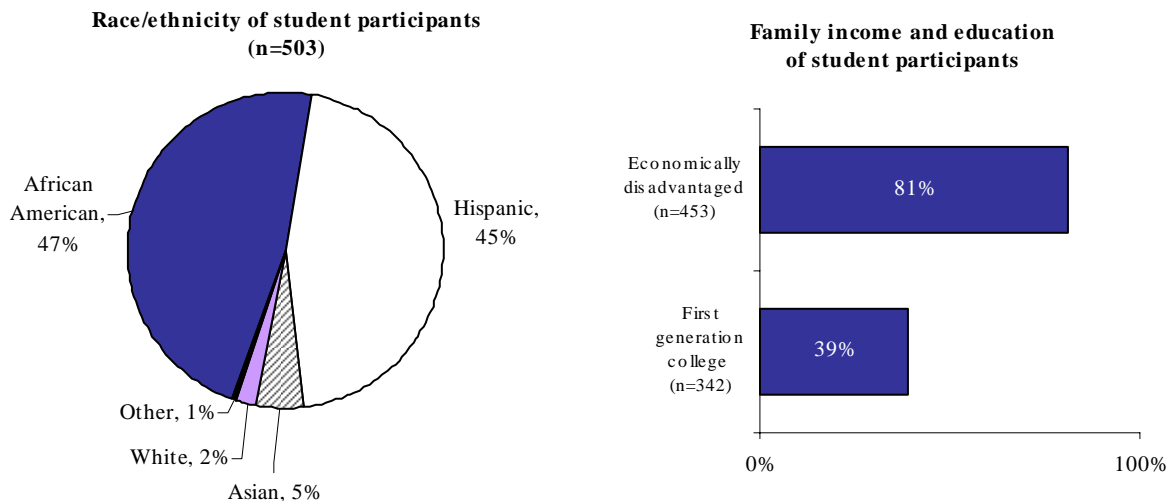
Partnerships and Programs

- ❖ **Adelphi University and Groundwork, Inc.** developed *Reading and Writing the City*, a 10-day writing camp, with a 3-day on-campus residency, four follow-up classroom sessions at the community organization, and trips to cultural institutions. The camp introduced high school students to the process of writing a personal essay through reading and writing poetry and personal memoirs.
- ❖ **Barnard College and the Harlem Educational Activities Fund (HEAF)** partnered for the *HEAF@Barnard Pre-College Program*, a semester-long seminar-style course based on *Reacting to the Past*, an award-winning first-year Barnard history course. Students met in 12 weekly class sessions to participate in the Threshold of Democracy in Athens 403 B.C., a “game” for which students were assigned roles and victory objectives to study the fate of democracy in post-civil war Athens. Students participated in group work, classroom debates, and writing workshops led by undergraduate student preceptors and writing tutors.
- ❖ **Columbia University** developed the *Equity in American Higher Education Seminar* for undergraduate students. In a semester-long course, students examined the roles that colleges and universities play in American society and the issues related to differential access to higher education based on students’ family backgrounds and other characteristics. To complement the class readings and discussions, students were required to spend at least four hours each week as volunteers at the Double Discovery Center (DDC), a campus-based program that provides academic tutoring to middle and high school students.
- ❖ **Drew University and Union Settlement Association** offered a *Summer College Experience* for middle and high school students. During the 5-day residency program, students participated in lectures, minicourses, and interactive learning experiences representing 11 academic disciplines. Students also attended informational sessions by Drew Admissions and other administrative departments. Twelve Drew students, who served as mentors, provided weekly tutoring sessions to Union students throughout the spring semester to develop relationships with the students and the organization.
- ❖ **Eugene Lang College of the New School and East Side House Settlement (ESHS)** partnered to implement the *College Explorers Program*, an experiential college exploration curriculum developed by Lang’s Institute for Urban Education (IUE), at Mott Haven Village Prep High School (MHV Prep). The curriculum was integrated into the high school’s ninth- and tenth-grade College Preparation and Leadership Program to introduce students to college through hands-on activities and mentoring from Lang undergraduate students. Eleventh- and 12th-grade students from MHV Prep were invited to enroll in IUE’s College Immersion program, which offers credit-bearing college-level courses for high school students.
- ❖ **Fordham University and Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)** developed *The History Makers Program*, a six-week on-campus summer program with an optional 3-day residency at Fordham. Students conducted primary and secondary research to examine the history of the Bronx. Through extensive reading, classroom lectures and discussions, trips and walking tours of cultural areas and institutions, and workshops on writing and public speaking, students gathered information and data for a final research project.
- ❖ **New York University (NYU) and Leadership Enterprise for a Diverse America (LEDA)** teamed to implement the *Beyond the Window Public Policy and Leadership Program*, a 5-week on-campus summer program to introduce young people of color to the policy-making process and provide them skills and experiences to become more informed citizens. Students conducted policy research using qualitative and quantitative methods that they presented in a policy paper and presentation to an audience of city leaders, advocates, and university faculty.
- ❖ **Pace University and Boys Club of New York** offered *Opportunitas in Action – Film, Writing, and Discovery of Self* during two 10-session courses on the study of film. Students participated in film screenings, faculty-led seminars, and writing workshops to learn the history and artistic and social significance of film. In writing workshops with fellows from Pace’s Writing Center, students learned to generate and communicate their ideas into college-level essays.
- ❖ **Sarah Lawrence College (SLC) and Prep for Prep’s** *Writing for Life – Authenticity and Argument* is a 3-week on-campus writing workshop in which students participated in writing instruction, theater workshops, and one-on-one writing conferences to gain skills, confidence, and passion for writing that translate into strong personal and expository essays.
- ❖ **Vassar College and Sponsors for Educational Opportunity (SEO)** held a 5-day *Summer Residency Program* that included a seminar-style minicourse on the civil rights movement, a writing lab, and college informational sessions and activities.

Program Outcomes

1) The College-Community Connections programs provided opportunities for secondary students to experience college life and helped them gain a stronger understanding of the academic and social expectations of college students.

Ten unique partnerships emerged through the CCC initiative, each with its own distinctive content area, program activities, and pedagogical methods. In total, approximately 500 middle and high school students participated in a diversity of programs that offered on-campus residencies, intensive summer courses, and/or school-year enrichment workshops or lessons. Yet while the programs varied significantly, there was a common thread across the partnerships to introduce a cohort of largely minority and low-income students to the academic and social realities of a liberal arts college by offering a college-level academic class or workshop. To help secondary students build valuable social capital toward gaining admission to and succeeding in college, some programs supplemented the academic experience with informational sessions about college admissions and resources and some offered panel discussions with college students of color.

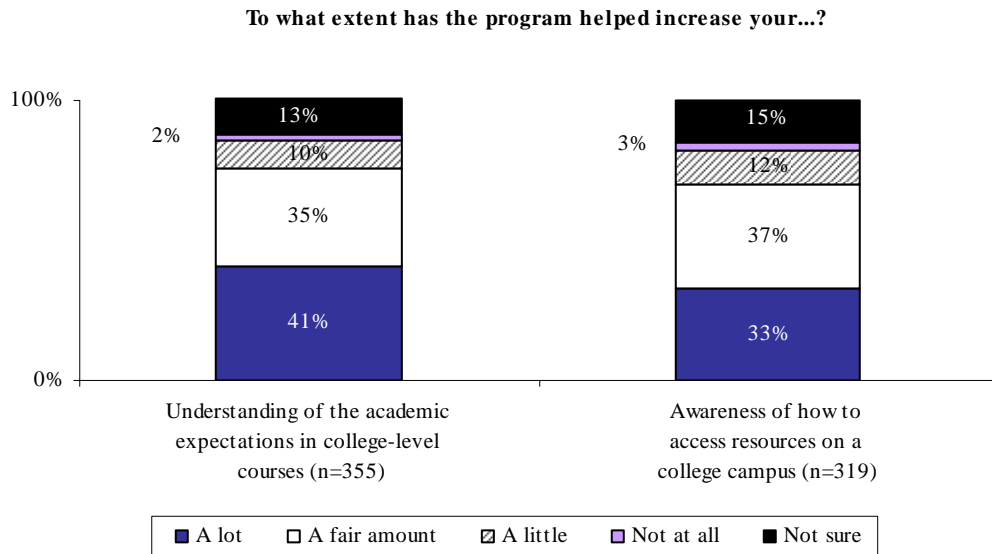


The programs succeeded in raising students' awareness and understanding of college life and expectations. All stakeholder groups agreed that the students learned by doing – that by participating in a college-level course and interacting with college faculty and students, the secondary students experienced, albeit briefly, what it might be like to attend a liberal arts college.

The data from a survey administered to secondary students across the partnerships supported this finding: more than three-quarters of the participants (76%) reported gaining a better understanding of the academic expectations in college-level courses and almost as many (70%) learned more about how to access resources on a college campus. Former participants who were currently attending college concurred. Many reported that the program was important in helping

“We were in the college environment and we felt more like on a higher level than being [at the CBO]...It was better for us to understand what college would actually be like.” – Student participant

them prepare for the transition to college (73%) and showing them what college life would be like (69%).



EFFECTIVE FEATURES:

Partnerships were most effective in providing authentic college experiences when:

- *Academic and social experiences were offered on the college campus.*
- *Curriculum and/or coursework were academically rigorous.*
- *Pedagogical methods were similar to those practiced in liberal arts courses (such as seminar-style classes, interdisciplinary instruction, and experiential learning experiences).*

2) Participating youth were exposed to new ideas, experiences, and academic disciplines and learned about the different opportunities and perspectives offered in a liberal education.

Each CCC program was designed with a unique content area and set of activities to provide a holistic and new experience for the secondary students. The diversity of content areas included writing, history, education, public policy, film, interdisciplinary studies, and college preparation. The range of instructional methods comprised lectures, independent and group work, one-on-one tutorials, skill development workshops, and experiential or field experiences. Seven of the programs were developed from existing curricula or courses offered by the partnering college or university.

A common outcome across the programs was that each provided students with a new experience and helped open their eyes to different ideas, subjects, and ways of thinking about the world in which they live. Across the partnerships, two-thirds of participants (66%) reported that their

experience in the program was different than their other school experiences. When asked how the program impacted them, more than eight in ten participants said it helped increase their *interest in learning about new ideas or issues* (85%) and their *ability to view ideas or concepts from different perspectives* (81%).

As described by a community organization staff, “It [the program] interested the students and allowed them to explore a new environment and discuss intellectual questions in the context of artistic objects.” A student participant felt similarly when he declared, “I learned something different every day I was here – I made sure I learned something.”

Program content areas

- ❖ Adelphi/Groundwork – Creative Writing
- ❖ Barnard/HEAF – History (Democracy in Ancient Greece)
- ❖ Columbia/DDC – American Studies/Education
- ❖ Drew/Union – Interdisciplinary
- ❖ Eugene Lang/ESHS – College Preparation
- ❖ Fordham/CAB – History (History of the Bronx)
- ❖ NYU/LEDA – Public Policy and Leadership
- ❖ Pace/Boys Club – Film Studies
- ❖ SLC/Prep for Prep – Writing (Creative and Expository)
- ❖ Vassar/SEO – History (Civil Rights Movement) / Writing

EFFECTIVE FEATURES:

Secondary students were most engaged and excited by the academic experiences offered by the CCC program when:

- *Course content was relevant and applicable to their experiences and interests.*
- *The schedule of activities/classes was intensive – preferably held on consecutive days and/or weeks to provide consistency for the students.*

3) By experiencing authentic college-level instruction, students learned and applied skills that are essential to helping them prepare for the academic demands of college.

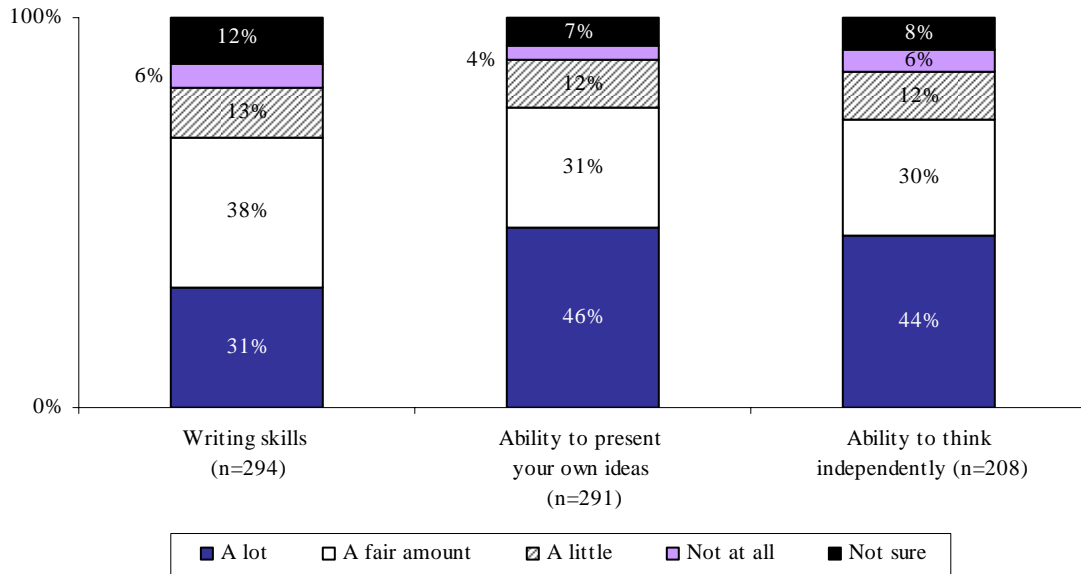
The academic experiences offered by the CCC programs challenged secondary students to take an active role in their own education. Students were asked to read texts critically, synthesize and conduct research, and raise questions about content within the class and in the world around them. Through the experiences, students developed and expressed their own ideas rather than relying on textbooks for information. In two programs, students conducted independent research to gather information. In four programs, students read primary sources from which they were encouraged to draw their own conclusions. And in most programs, students were challenged to express their own ideas through writing – whether personal or creative essays or expository essays.

“It [the program] helps you gain more independence in doing what you have to do. Because when we go to [high] school, we get help, but here [in the program], we have to do research ourselves and see for ourselves. They [professors] give us help, but it’s not the same as when you get it in school. So you have to be more independent and you have to rely on yourself.” – Student participant

And through these experiences, students gained and applied skills to help prepare them for the type of academic work required in liberal education

courses. For example, in responding to surveys, most students reported that the programs had helped increase their skills in *writing* (82%), *presenting their own ideas* (89%) and *thinking independently* (86%). These data were supported by remarks from students themselves. As one student declared, “You have to learn to have people just speak to you and be able to extract what is important.”

To what extent has the program helped increase your...?



EFFECTIVE FEATURES:

Programs were effective in helping prepare secondary students for the academic demands of college when:

- *Students had opportunities to develop and apply higher order skills, such as critical thinking and reading, public speaking, inquiry and analysis, independent thinking, and research skills.*
- *Course content provided opportunities for integrative learning – in which students processed and analyzed information from multiple sources, not just a textbook or teacher lecture.*
- *Class activities included group work, research, and written and oral presentations.*
- *Students were responsible for completing a culminating project.*

Student essay from Vassar/SEO program

By Ezazul Haque

Race is something that we all have. It gives us our identity in the marathon. As we grow up, we tend to have different thoughts and opinions on these different races. Having these thoughts and ideas affects the way we tend to act toward other races. Experiences like this are revealed through Richard in "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow," written by Richard Wright and through my own life experiences.

In "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow," a very small and young African American boy named Richard is portrayed throughout the whole story as kind of a student who is taking a class on how to live under Jim Crow laws. Richard makes some mistakes and pays a price when he does. He learns a very painful lesson in the very beginning of the story. He is a young boy who lives in the black part of the town. One day he got into a fight with a group of white boys. Richard was throwing cinders at them. But all of a sudden, they threw a glass bottle at him. Richard was seriously hurt. He fell to the ground and cried for help but his friends ran away from him because of the fear of getting hit by a glass bottle. Luckily someone helped him up and took him to the nearest hospital where he got three stitches. When Richard came home he waited anxiously for his mother to come home to reassure him. To embrace him. When his mom came home he told her all about his experiences earlier in that day. His mom was outraged. "How come yuh didn't hide?" she asked instead of asking are you okay. She gave him a horrible beating that he would remember for the rest of his life. His mom told him to not fight anyone let alone white people. He was never to talk back to white people, he was never to disrespect white people, and he was always supposed to be inferior to white people. Richard was very shocked about the fact that he was not equal to white people.

Similarly to Richard I had experienced situations that enabled me to learn about race. When I lived in Bangladesh I used to think everyone was equal. I never questioned the meaning of race because we all were Bengali. We all were from the same country. I used to believe that we all were equal in every single way possible. But when I came to America I was amazed to see all of these people from so many different races, and who had so many different views and perspectives on the world. I would still act the same way I did in Bangladesh. I was race blind. I treated everyone equally. But unlike Richard I did not learn about race the hard way. But what I did observe was that there were other people that discriminated people of different races. One day in the park my friends and me were playing at the park. We were on the swings when a white man came with his son and said to my friend "Get off the swing n_gger, my son wants it." My friend just ran out of the swing. I ran after him. When I caught up I saw that my friend was crying. I asked him what was the matter and he didn't talk to me. I felt really sad. I later understood the meaning of the word "n_gger" and felt really bad for my friend. I also wondered why in a time period like this racism was still an issue a person had to deal with. I believed that all the lives that were sacrificed, all the misery that was dealt with, all the discrimination that was lived with and all the hatred that brought so much pain to so many hearts were done to prevent racism from happening for the later generations. And I believe that we cannot just think it was all a waste because of a microscopic percentage of the population that still discriminates. I believe that in life humans come across obstacles and challenges. Humans cannot just give up on their way, they have to look back at all the people that did so much to help them get to where they stand. And they just have to have the positive mind to overcome anything that comes in their path.

Thanks to the Civil Rights Movement I have the right to live, eat, be next to, stand up with, walk with, look at, share with, *talk with everyone*. And it gave us a chance to be friends with everyone and anyone despite their race. And I think that is one of the best achievements of mankind in all of history. And it is an achievement that everyone can be proud of, everyone can relate to and everyone can't live without.

Student poetry from SLC/Prep for Prep program

In the Center of Milton, Mass

by Anthony Calderon

Where the sprinklers are used on the daily
And where the grass is greenest,
Is Milton, Mass, where
You leave the student center
For the first break of the day
And take a deep breath of the pure green healthy
Grass
You can lay out a towel
And watch the New England clouds
And hear the yells "DOTA!" and "some wrasslin'!"
Coming from the frat-like Forbes house
And go to the pond
And taste the dirty, infested water
And push the big branch to find the path
And avoid the poison ivy
And listen to the silence of nature
In the night
And take the ten minute walk to Hathaway
& Goodwin,
Where the people are happy
And where I belong

Untitled

by Chanel O'Brien

start out the driveway
towards that old house they call a landmark
but really brings down the value of
the neighbor hood.
turn right and drive until u see that
bank with the unhappy people constantly
walking out.
get on that train.
take it until the announcers says your at the airport.
walk into the terminal with the pretty glass ceiling
and ask for a ticket
to that country that makes us call fries
freedom fries and not their actual name.
leave their airport and get into a taxi.
ask that driver to take you
to that giant metal tower.
go up that elevator,
take a deep breath,
and enjoy the view.

Untitled

by Jessica Watters

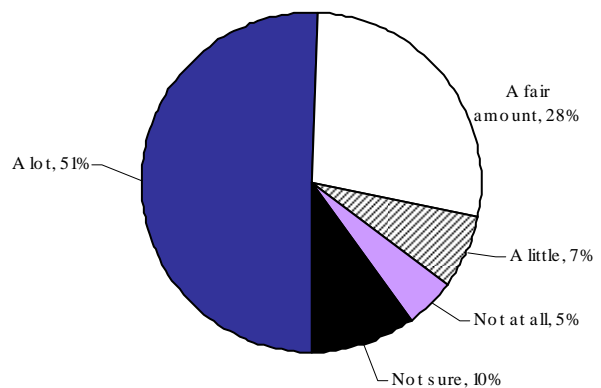
When I was a young girl
I'd spend countless nights
in my bed, imagining what it looked
like when they met.
I imagined they met somewhere romantic;
like Virginia – Virginia is for lovers, you know.
Or maybe at the Statue of Liberty,
she with her bouffant and ivory dress to match her skin,
gleaming in the summer sun.
Him, with jerry curls, and slacks pressed to within and
inch of life,
black and proud, tryin a little too hard to be cool, to be
American.

4) The experiences intensified students' interest in attending college and motivated them to work harder in high school to gain admission in the college of their choice.

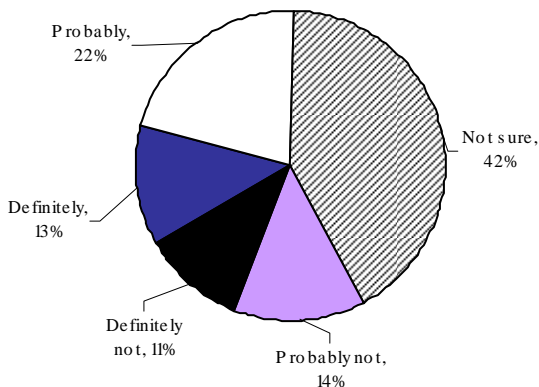
The CCC programs generally attracted students who were academically motivated and college bound. They primarily helped to intensify students' aspirations to attend college and showed them the academic skills and achievement they will need to gain admission to a college of their choice. For some students, however, the programs offered them a new way of looking at college. They learned that college can be more than preparation for a career, that it can be an experience that expands their minds and understanding of the world as well as their job opportunities. And because of this experience, some students gained a better understanding of the benefits of a liberal education and were influenced to consider applying to liberal arts colleges or universities.

Data from the student survey showed that when the participants were asked about their college aspirations, 87% said they probably or definitely planned to attend college before they participated in the CCC program – the proportion grew to 91% after the program. When asked about their plans to attend a liberal arts college, the increase was larger. Just over a third (35%) said they probably or definitely planned to attend a liberal arts college before the program and more than half (54%) said they felt this way after participating in the program. Students also reported that the program helped them increase their interest in performing well in school – a requirement for gaining admission to college.

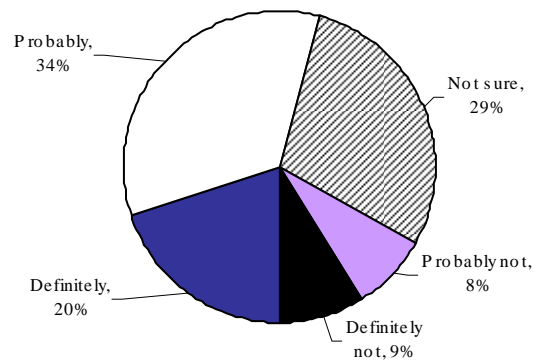
To what extent has the program helped increase your interest in performing well in school? (n=351)



How likely were you to attend a liberal arts college BEFORE participating in the program? (n=327)



How likely are you to attend a liberal arts college AFTER participating in the program? (n=327)



EFFECTIVE FEATURES:

Programs effectively impacted students' ideas about choosing a college when they provided:

- *Sessions that offered valuable and relevant information on colleges admissions, financial aid, and other resources.*
- *Opportunities for secondary students to interact with college students in an academic and social environment, and especially when the college students came from demographic or geographic backgrounds that are similar to those of the secondary students.*
- *Opportunities for students to interact with young professors of color who served as academic role models.*

Colleges attended by CCC graduates

(representing the Adelphi/Groundwork, Fordham/CAB, NYU/LEDA, Pace/Boys Club, SLC/Prep for Prep, and Vassar/SEO programs)

- | | |
|--|---|
| ❖ <i>Barnard College</i> | ❖ <i>Occidental College</i> |
| ❖ <i>Binghamton University</i> | ❖ <i>Pomona College</i> |
| ❖ <i>Brooklyn College</i> | ❖ <i>Reed College</i> |
| ❖ <i>Bryn Mawr College</i> | ❖ <i>Rice University</i> |
| ❖ <i>Columbia College</i> | ❖ <i>Savannah College of Art and Design</i> |
| ❖ <i>City University of New York</i> | ❖ <i>Skidmore College</i> |
| ❖ <i>Cornell University</i> | ❖ <i>Smith College</i> |
| ❖ <i>Dartmouth College</i> | ❖ <i>St. John's University</i> |
| ❖ <i>Georgetown University</i> | ❖ <i>Stony Brook University</i> |
| ❖ <i>Hamilton College</i> | ❖ <i>State University of New York</i> |
| ❖ <i>Haverford College</i> | ❖ <i>Susquehanna University</i> |
| ❖ <i>Indiana Institute of Technology</i> | ❖ <i>Swarthmore College</i> |
| ❖ <i>Lafayette College</i> | ❖ <i>Syracuse University</i> |
| ❖ <i>Lehman College</i> | ❖ <i>Temple University</i> |
| ❖ <i>Long Island University</i> | ❖ <i>University of Chicago</i> |
| ❖ <i>Macalaster College</i> | ❖ <i>University of Michigan</i> |
| ❖ <i>Manhattanville College</i> | ❖ <i>University of Pennsylvania</i> |
| ❖ <i>Middlebury College</i> | ❖ <i>Vanderbilt University</i> |
| ❖ <i>Mount Saint Mary College</i> | ❖ <i>Vassar College</i> |
| ❖ <i>Muhlenberg College</i> | ❖ <i>Wellesley College</i> |
| ❖ <i>New York University</i> | ❖ <i>Williams College</i> |
| ❖ <i>Oberlin College</i> | ❖ <i>Yale University</i> |

5) The programs benefited both the higher education and community organization partners.

The CCC programs benefited all stakeholders, including community organization staff, college faculty and students, and the partnering institutions. Staff of the community organizations profited from learning new pedagogical methods and instructional content to help improve their teaching and advising strategies. Their existing college preparation programs that have been

focused on providing academic enrichment and assistance with college applications and admissions were enhanced by offering students these authentic college experiences.

The colleges benefited, too. Faculty and students, both undergraduate and graduate, gained experience working with high school students from disadvantaged backgrounds – experience that some faculty hoped could expand their institution’s community outreach programs. Additionally, some college students were inspired in thinking about their own educational or career paths. Through the hands-on teaching experiences, the college students gained a better understanding of the challenges and rewards of working with high school students and confidence in their own teaching ability. These outcomes are especially important because the enthusiasm and commitment of the college faculty and students are fundamental to sustaining the programs and developing additional community outreach efforts.

EFFECTIVE FEATURES:

The partnering organizations were successful in implementing effective programs and benefited most from those programs when:

- *The partners engaged in frequent and effective communication about the programs.*
- *Planning started early and continued throughout the program.*
- *Academic resources of the institution of higher education were well-aligned with the needs and interests of the community organization’s members.*
- *Community organizations shared information with their university partner about students’ backgrounds, interest, and ability levels as part of the planning process.*

Conclusion

The Teagle Foundation’s College-Community Connections program has enhanced the lives of more than 500 secondary students in New York City by introducing them to the academic and social realities of a liberal education. The ten partnerships the foundation supported each provided opportunities for students to experience college life through residency programs, on-campus courses, and enrichment workshops. Through these experiences, students were exposed to new ideas and academic disciplines and learned firsthand about the academic and social demands of college. As a result, many students gained information to make more informed decisions about how to prepare for, apply to and succeed in college. Furthermore, the impact spread to the organizations that were involved. The community organizations and colleges and universities increased their knowledge about how to provide meaningful college exposure experiences to disadvantaged students to help prepare them for making decisions about higher education.