

# Building Intersegmental Partnerships

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California's education system is highly fragmented. K-12 schools, community colleges, and the two university systems (CSU and UC) operate under entirely separate governance structures, and rely on distinct sources of funding. As a result these different "segments" of the education system generally operate independently of one another, developing policies and practices to serve their own students with little or no effort to consult with other segments. In fact, however, addressing many of the educational issues that face our state successfully will require action by more than one segment. Intersegmental partnerships can provide the institutional framework for the multiple segments in California's education system to work together to tackle these large problems. In this brief PACE provides insight into how local partnerships between and among segments can work to strengthen alignment in standards and expectations between K-12 and post-secondary education, and accelerate students' progress through the system.



California's new accountability and continuous improvement framework relies on district and school leaders using multiple measures of school performance to identify where change is needed, and to monitor carefully the development, testing, and evaluation of improvement strategies over time. This process of continuous improvement requires that local leaders have access to research-based evidence and strategies that they can implement in their schools and opportunities to learn from one another about what works, under which conditions, and for which students. PACE's series of Continuous Improvement Briefs aims to support education leaders at all levels in learning how to improve the performance of their schools and students.

# I. Introduction

Many high school graduates arrive at college campuses unprepared for college-level work. In California, 23 percent of first-time freshmen in the California State University (CSU) system in 2016 needed remediation in English, and 28 percent needed remediation in math. In the California Community Colleges (CCC), almost half of the first-time freshmen took a remedial English course in their first six years, and a third took remedial math. Remedial education is expensive, and the evidence that it improves student persistence and degree completion is mixed at best (Kurlaender & Howell, 2012).

Degree completion rates in California’s broad access public colleges and universities are low. Only 57 percent of first-time students in a CSU earn a degree within six years, and only 47 percent of students in the CCC system earn an associate degree or transfer to a four-year institution within six years.

Table 1. California Education Segments

|                          | K-12      | CCC       | CSU     | UC      |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|---------|---------|
| # Students               | 6,226,737 | 2,355,829 | 398,152 | 192,727 |
| # Campuses/Districts     | 1025      | 113       | 23      | 9       |
| % Need Remediation - ELA | 44        | 47        | 23      | N/A     |
| % Need Remediation -Math | 71        | 34        | 28      | N/A     |
| Graduation Rate          | 81        | 47        | 57      | 85      |

Table 1 shows enrollment, college readiness and graduation rates for the four segments of California’s education system. Almost half of California high school 11th graders scored failed to meet the English standards in 2017, and over 70 percent did not meet the math standard.

Strategies to increase college readiness and completion rates can be targeted at different points in a student’s academic trajectory. On the one hand, curriculum and instruction in K-12 schools can be better aligned with the academic rigor and expectations of post-secondary institutions, which would improve the preparation of students before they enter college. On the other hand, the higher education segments can communicate their expectations for entering students more clearly to K-12 educators and students, and also improve their assessment and placement systems for college remediation to more accurately measure the performance and capabilities of entering students.

Each of California’s education segments (K-12, University of California [UC], CSU, and CCC) serves a distinct population of students, and each relies on its

own resources to pursue specific goals. Moreover, the four segments are governed quite differently. K-12 school districts and CCCs are accountable to local boards, while CSU and UC are state systems. As a result the segments ordinarily act independently from one another, addressing their own challenges without consulting the other segments.

It is clear, however, that many challenges including high rates of post-secondary remediation and low rates of degree completion cannot be addressed successfully if the segments act in isolation from one another. Intersegmental collaborations— also called school-college partnerships, K-16 education, or regional partnerships— can provide the institutional framework for the segments to work together to tackle these large problems.

In this report, PACE provides insight into how intersegmental partnerships can work to strengthen alignment in standards and expectations between K-12

and post-secondary education. Our report is based on a panel on “Promising Practices in Intersegmental Collaboration” that was convened as part of PACE’s January 2017 Research and Policy Conference.

We begin with a detailed description of a successful

intersegmental collaboration between CSU Sacramento, Sierra Community College, and Placer Unified District. We then describe three key areas in which multiple segments can work together to improve student outcomes in California. Finally, we offer five guiding principles that increase the chances that intersegmental partnerships will be successful.

## II. Case Study: CSU Sacramento/Sierra College/Placer County Office of Education/Placer Unified

### Background

CSU Sacramento has been working to reduce remediation rates for many years. It first started working with researchers at UC Davis on California’s Early Assessment Program (EAP), which gives high school juniors an early signal of their readiness for college-level English and mathematics while they are still in high school. Despite these efforts, however, large numbers of students entering CSU Sacramento continued to be placed into multiple semesters of remediation which significantly slowed their academic progress.

Dr. Joy Salvetti (Director of CSU Sacramento's Center for College and Career Readiness) met Mandy Davies (Vice President of Student Services at nearby Sierra Community College) at a conference convened to bring CCCs on board with the EAP. The goal of the conference was to address the high need for remediation in both CSU and CCCs, the low rate of degree attainment (especially among first-generation students), and the surprising number of students who returned to CCC after two to three semesters at CSU. They realized that their campuses face many of the same problems.

Ms. Davies invited Dr. Salvetti to a meeting of K-12 superintendents to present and share EAP results. The response to her presentation was initially contentious. The superintendents had their own concerns and challenges, and did not welcome what they perceived as CSU telling them what they were doing wrong. After continued conversations, however, representatives from the three segments agreed on a concrete and shared goal of improving remediation rates for students moving from K-12 to post-secondary institutions.

### *Intervention/Agreement*

In 2009, CSU Sacramento, Sierra College, and Placer Unified School District (PUSD) identified 12th grade as an opportunity for intervention in math, and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). At the time, the CSU system was sponsoring a 12th grade intervention in English Language Arts, but not in math.

In 2012, faculty from CSU Sacramento, Sierra College, six PUSD high schools and the Placer County Office of Education convened to create the EAP Senior Year Math Course (ESM). Sierra College obtained a \$20,000 grant to support the curriculum development, but the partnership was otherwise funded with the segments' own resources. The ESM course is aligned to California's K-12 mathematics standards, focuses on expanding numerical fluency and literacy, and qualifies as an "Area G" elective in the A-G requirements for admission to UC and CSU.

The collaboration also provided the basis for closer alignment among the three partners. Specifically, CSU Sacramento agreed that students who pass the ESM course and score at least a Level 3 out of 4 ("Standard Met") are to be exempt from further assessment. At Sierra College, any student who passes the course is exempt from assessment and can enroll in college/transfer level math courses.

Another key feature of the partnership is professional development. Starting in summer 2016, high school teachers have attended a five-day summer teacher institute, hosted by the Placer and Sacramento County

Offices of Education. Teachers in their first year teaching the ESM course are provided support through visits by CSU Sacramento or Sierra College faculty. They participate in a Professional Learning Collaborative throughout the year, and receive peer-to-peer support both in-person and online.

CSU Sacramento, Sierra College and Placer Unified all assigned lead faculty members to participate in quarterly curriculum planning meetings and co-train and participate in teacher training activities. In addition, each segment had individual responsibilities. (See Figure 1.) CSU Sacramento has taken a lead role in project management, and both they and Sierra College provide follow-up data to participating school districts. The Placer County Office of Education and PUSD are responsible for the recruitment of teachers, and for ensuring their participation in training and professional development.

The partnership has received two grants from the California Department of Finance (DOF) to further develop the 12th grade ESM course and to attempt to expand its use more widely in the Capitol region. Implementation of the ESM course has expanded to include teachers in Sacramento City Unified, Western Placer Unified, Rocklin Unified, and Roseville Joint Unified. The University of California has also approved the course as an Area "C" course of the A-G courses required for admission. More than 60 courses are planned for 2017-18 academic year, and teachers from an additional twelve high school districts are being recruited to begin offering the ESM course in Fall 2017. If these efforts are successful the ESM course will be offered in 35 percent of the high school districts in the CSU Sacramento Service Area. As a condition of the grants provided by DOF the partnership is required to evaluate the course, professional learning program, and partnership infrastructure for potential implementation statewide.

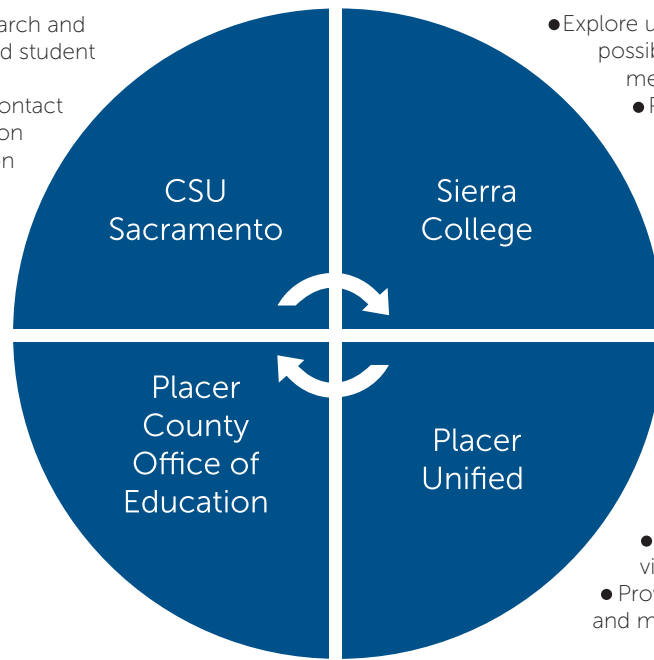
### *Lessons Learned*

Since its implementation began, hundreds of students have passed through the ESM course, and there is some preliminary evidence that it is helping to improve student outcomes. At Sierra College, for example, the retention rate for students who took the ESM course increased from 85 percent in Spring 2015 to 91 percent in Fall 2015, while the rate increased only one percent for students who did not take the course..

The original partnership helped to break down barriers between segments, which has resulted in sustained and open communication among faculty in different institutions. Many of the participants report that it has changed how they approach their work. Instead of

- Hire project manager, research and technology coordinator and student outreach coordinator
- Serve as primary point of contact for institutions outside region
- Host the ESM curriculum on CSU Sacramento's Blackboard platform
- Provide follow-up data on students matriculating to CSU Sacramento

- Coordinate with CSU Sacramento to identify and recruit new teachers
- Ensure teachers complete certification training and professional development



- Explore using the ESM course as possible component of multiple measures for placement
- Provide follow-up data on students

- Require all teachers to complete ESM training and professional development
- Facilitate new teacher visitation of ESM courses
- Provide additional coaching and mentoring for new students

Figure 1. Partnership Roles and Responsibilities

blaming other segments for the challenges they face at their own institutions, they have shifted their focus to identifying additional ways to strengthen alignment across segments.

### III. Content Areas for Intersegmental Collaborations

#### *Increasing College Readiness*

Intersegmental partnerships can play an important role in increasing the number of California students who leave high school ready for college-level work, as the collaboration between CSU-Sacramento, Sierra College and PUSD illustrates. Key activities may include the joint design and implementation of new courses like the ESM, collaboration in the development and delivery of professional development, and better alignment and articulation of assessment and placement policies across segments.

#### *Workforce Preparation*

In June 2016, the California state budget included a \$200 million appropriation for California's community colleges to expand their career technical education programs. CCCs can qualify for noncompetitive grants from the Chancellor's office if they form or join regional partnerships that bring together K-12 school districts and CSU campuses with businesses, Chambers of Commerce, labor unions, and/or nonprofit organizations. The availability of these funds presents an important opportunity for multiple

institutions to build intersegmental collaborations to support students and strengthen communities.

#### *Four-Year Transfer and Degree Completion*

A third area for intersegmental collaboration is increasing bachelors degree attainment. The transfer pathway from the community colleges to four-year universities is an important path for California college students. Many students begin their post-secondary education at a CCC, with the intention of transferring to a CSU or UC, and in fact 51 percent of CSU graduates and 29 percent of UC graduates initially enrolled at a CCC. Transfer rates from the CCC nevertheless remain low, especially among Hispanic, African-American and low-income students. Even among students who successfully transfer to a four-year institution, many have accumulated more units than are required for transfer, while others are required to re-take courses when they enroll at the four-year institution.

One example of an intersegmental collaboration addressing college transfer and degree completion is the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) program, which was established by the Legislature in 2010. The ADT called for the design of two-year associate degree programs that require no more than 60 credits, with all CCC credits fully transferable to the CSU. CCC students who complete the ADT are guaranteed admission as junior-level students to a CSU campus in their major field, though not necessarily to the campus of their choice.

The CCC and CSU systems have worked together to develop model transfer curricula that identify community college courses that correspond to specific CSU majors. These model curricula have been approved by each segment's Academic Senate. At each local CCC campus, faculty approve the classes required for the major and an interdisciplinary curriculum committee vets the proposed degree. The local governing board then votes to approve the degree at a public hearing and, if their judgment is favorable submits the degree for system approval by the CCC Chancellor's Office. The ADT program is thus developed at the campus level with guidance and final approval from state-level officials.

The number of ADT degrees offered at local CCCs continues to expand. Each CCC that offers a major for which there is a system-developed transfer model curriculum is expected to eventually offer an ADT in that major. As of spring 2016, approximately 69,000 ADT degrees had been awarded to CCC students.

## IV. Guiding Principles for Intersegmental Collaborations

### *Focus on common and concrete goals*

The first step towards a successful intersegmental collaboration is to identify and focus on specific shared goals. Increasing the number of students who are fully prepared for success in the labor market, for example, is a critical goal for both K-12 and post-secondary educators, and one that no single segment can successfully address on its own. An intersegmental partnership can provide the necessary forum for decisions about the actions that each segment can take—and that multiple segments can take together—to ensure progress toward the goal.

### *Leverage existing networks*

Successful intersegmental partnerships can learn from and build upon existing networks, including networks in the broader community. Such networks may bring together internal constituency groups (e.g. teachers) or external partners including the business community. In the development of strategies to prepare students for productive adult employment, for example, collaboration with industry partners can increase the effectiveness and impact of partnerships among educational segments.

### *Share and use data*

Unlike other states, California does not have a comprehensive education data system that follows students over the course of their educational careers. Instead, each segment maintains its own data system, which tracks students only within their own segment, and they often restrict access to student-level data in their

systems. In the continued absence of a state-wide education data system one key opportunity to strengthen collaboration is for the segments to link data from their separate data systems in order to track students from one segment to another.

### *Build local leadership capacity*

Local leadership is critical to the success of intersegmental partnerships. In an increasingly decentralized policy environment, local and regional leaders need to commit to working with their counterparts from other segments. This kind of communication and cooperation will not happen on its own. It depends upon strong leadership at the local level to build trust and identify shared goals. Successful partnerships also require local leaders from all segments to commit the funds and time necessary to achieve shared goals.

### *Develop state policy and guidance*

Most intersegmental partnerships will be local or regional, but there is still a great need for state leadership to encourage promising practices and incentivize intersegmental collaborations across the state. The construction of a comprehensive education data system to track students within and across segments would make it far easier to evaluate the effectiveness of intersegmental partnerships, which would in turn support the wider dissemination of promising practices. In addition, the state can provide financial incentives to support local innovation, as the DOF has done in the area of 12th grade mathematics. State leaders in the UC, CSU, CCC, and K-12 education systems can work together and with local leaders in their segments to encourage further cooperation and to build on local successes.

## V. Conclusion

The multiple segments of California's fragmented education system enjoy great institutional autonomy. They serve distinct missions, operate under independent governance structures, and rely on different revenue sources. Under most circumstances they operate independently of one another, with few incentives to work together.

Nevertheless, many educational issues pose challenges for both K-12 and post-secondary institutions, which can more readily be addressed if the segments work together. As we have argued in this brief, local and regional partnerships that engage institutions from all levels of the education system can tackle issues of shared concern in ways that serve the interests of all segments and—more importantly—the interests of California's young people.

## PACE Continuous Improvement Publications

PACE. *2020 Vision: Rethinking Budget Priorities Under the LCFF*. 2014

Elizabeth Friedmann. *Building Intersegmental Partnerships*. 2017

Jorge Aguilar, Michelle Nayfack, Susan Bush-Mecenas. *Exploring Improvement Science in Education: Promoting College Access in Fresno Unified School District*. 2017

Jorge Ruiz de Velasco, Daisy Gonzales. *Accountability for Alternative Schools in California*. 2017

## Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE)

Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) is an independent, non-partisan research center based at Stanford University, the University of Southern California, and the University of California – Davis. PACE seeks to define and sustain a long-term strategy for comprehensive policy reform and continuous improvement in performance at all levels of California's education system, from early childhood to postsecondary education and training. PACE bridges the gap between research and policy, working with scholars from California's leading universities and with state and local policymakers to increase the impact of academic research on educational policy in California.

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- Publishes policy briefs, research reports, and working papers that address key policy issues in California's education system
- Convenes seminars and briefings that make current research accessible to policy audiences throughout California
- Provides expert testimony on educational issues to legislative committees and other policy audiences
- Works with local school districts and professional associations on projects aimed at supporting policy innovation, data use, and rigorous evaluation



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