

The Southwest Arkansas College Preparatory Academy was created to strengthen college preparedness through the use of the ACT’s Explore, PLAN, and ACT test data. The EXPLORE test identifies students who express an interest in college but whose test scores indicate remedial courses may be required at the college level. The Academy serves as an intervention to eliminate the students’ need for remediation. Each student’s progress is monitored annually to create a seamless transition between middle and high school and high school to college.

**Project Goals and Activities**

Increase each student’s ACT score for unconditional college admission, with no remediation needed.

* Increase the number of students who complete the requirements for associate and/or bachelor’s degrees.
* Increase the number of students who demonstrate workplace readiness skills for Southwest-A ERZ communities.
* Remediate students in the shortest amount of time (a priority recommended by the 2008 Arkansas Task Force on Higher Education Remediation, Retention and Graduation Rates).
* Use existing test data in innovative ways to benefit students’ future success.
* Capture academically challenged students at a time when fundamental educational strategies can be reinforced without the stigma of “remediation.”

Following the release of the *Access to Success Report*, representatives from HSU and OBU; K-12 schools; financial and business leadership; Dawson ESC; and parents of K-12 students met to discuss the report and its impact on Clark County. The concept of developing an early intervention program based on collaboration between university and K-12 faculty was presented to the group, and the SWACP Academy was born. The following strategies were adopted:

* Target 8th grade students who indicated a desire to go to college, but their scores on the ACT EXPLORE indicated that they were likely to need remediation in one or more of the core subjects.
* Offer four years of intensive, on-going academic preparation in mathematics, English, reading, science, and study skills on a college campus, led by a team of 7-12 teachers and college faculty.
* Require commitment from parents and students to participate one Saturday each month during the school year and in a two-week academic camp each summer.

**The Pilot Program**

The Pilot Academy began on April 18, 2009 with a cohort of 40 students representing the Arkadelphia School District. Twenty-two students completed the four-year program from the original charter group (40 students) and graduated during the 2011-2012 school year. Final ACT composite scores ranged from 13 to 32. Students took the ACT, Residual, Universal, and National ACTs during their junior and senior years. These scores were compared to the 8th grade EXPLORE scores. Only three students were at benchmark on the EXPLORE exam in 8th grade. By the time they completed the Academy, 15 students met the Arkansas requirement to enter a four-year college with composite scores on the ACT ranging from 19 to 32. Four students progressed from single digit scores on the EXPLORE test to composite scores ranging from 13 to 21 on the ACT. Of those students, one increased his English score from 9 to 19; another went from 12 to 21. One student with learning disabilities increased his math score from 6 to 18. After working closely with one of the Academy faculty members, a reading specialist at Henderson State University, two students achieved significant results, with scores rising from 11 to 20 and 8 to 29 in reading.

At the time, the Arkansas ACT requirement to enroll in a two-year college was 15. All but three students with learning disabilities met this requirement. One student whose overall composite was 13, doubled his English score from 6 to 12. The Arkansas ACT requirement to enroll in a four-year college was 19. All but seven students met this requirement by the time they completed the Academy.

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|  |  **2012 Average ACT Scores for Charter Group** |  |
| **English****Natl AR PREP** | **Math****Natl AR PREP** | **Reading****Natl AR PREP** | **Science****Natl AR PREP** | **Composite****Natl AR PREP** |
| **20.5** | **20.0** | **20.6** | **21.1** | **20.0** | **20.4** | **21.3** | **20.6** | **22.3** | **20.9** | **20.1** | **21.5** | **21.1** | **20.3** | **20.5** |

Data continued to support the impact of early intervention on decreasing the number of students and the number of content areas requiring remediation. Currently, The HSU/OBU Academy site includes Arkadelphia, Centerpoint, Gurdon, and Harmony Grove/Camden/Sparkman school districts serving Clark, Pike, and Dallas Counties. In 2011-2012, a satellite program under the direction of HSU/OBU began at the University of Arkansas Community College at Hope (UACCH) added seven school districts. Now, the UACCH site serves eleven school districts representing seven counties. In 2012-2013, National Park Community College at Hot Springs (NPCC) became a partner serving three additional school districts. The NPCC site now serves four Garland County school districts. In 2013-2014, the College of the Ouachitas (COTO) became the third two-year college to join the partnership. The COTO site currently serves three Hot Spring County school districts. Over 500 students are currently participating in the SWACP Academy. The Academy has the potential to serve approximately 768 students in southwest Arkansas.

**Evidence of Success**

As the data on the following page indicate, completers of the Academy met or exceeded state and national averages on the ACT in nearly every category. Academy organizers point to several factors contributing to success: personalization of the learning experience; use of a variety of student-centered, culturally responsive instructional strategies; and use of various learning styles, multiple intelligences and brain research. Teacher teams are committed to see that students use inquiry-based learning as well as higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills.

**Outcomes**

The charter class will graduate college in the fall 2016. Data on eight semester graduates will be compiled. Academy graduates continue to receive university scholarships. They attribute their smooth transition from the Academy to college to financial-aid workshops, career exploration, and knowledge of other admissions requirements. Academy graduates report less fear of college because of their rapport with university faculty.

**Barriers to Continued Success**

Initially funded by private foundations and Clark County public schools, the Academy was later able to continue and expand through State College and Career Readiness Planning Program grant funding. However, state funds have not remained steady. Grant funding for the 2015-2016 will not allow the Academy to be fully accessible for all interested students. See chart below:

 **Amount Requested Amount Received**

**2011-2012** $216,650.00 $205,817.50 95%

**2012-2013** $303,040.00 $287,888.00 95%

**2013-2014** $450,190.00 $324,136.80 72%

**2014-2015** $613,190.00 $490,552.00 80%

**2015-2016** $696,280.00 $259,200.00 37%

**ACT Data**

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|  |  **2013 Average ACT Scores** |  |
| **English****Natl AR PREP** | **Math****Natl AR PREP** | **Reading****Natl AR PREP** | **Science****Natl AR PREP** | **Composite****Natl AR PREP** |
| **20.2** | **19.9** | **20.5** | **20.9** | **19.9** | **20.0** | **21.1** | **20.5** | **21.7** | **20.7** | **20.1** | **21.4** | **20.9** | **20.2** | **20.6** |

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|  |  **2014 Average ACT Score(Minus students with Disabilities)** |  |
| **English****Natl AR PREP** | **Math****Natl AR PREP** | **Reading****Natl AR PREP** | **Science****Natl AR PREP** | **Composite****Natl AR PREP** |
| **20.3** | **20.1** | **20.3** | **20.9** | **19.9** | **21.1** | **21.3** | **20.8** | **21.3** | **20.8** | **20.3** | **22.0** | **21.0** | **20.4** | **20.9** |

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|  |  **2014 Average ACT Scores [ including 7 students with disabilities]** |  |
| **English****Natl AR PREP** | **Math****Natl AR PREP** | **Reading****Natl AR PREP** | **Science****Natl AR PREP** | **Composite****Natl AR PREP** |
| **20.3** | **20.1** | **18.3** | **20.9** | **19.9** | **19.9** | **21.3** | **20.8** | **20.2** | **20.8** | **20.3** | **21.1** | **21.0** | **20.4** | **19.5** |

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|  |  **2015 Average ACT Scores** |  |
| **English****Natl AR PREP** | **Math****Natl AR PREP** | **Reading****Natl AR PREP** | **Science****Natl AR PREP** | **Composite****Natl AR PREP** |
| **20.4** | **20.0** | **21.5** | **20.8** | **20.0** | **21.1** | **21.4** | **20.9** | **22.6** | **20.9** | **20.3** | **21.8** | **21.0** | **20.4** | **21.4** |

The Academy is transitioning to ACT Aspire. ACT and Pre-ACT data will continue to be used make program decisions.