

College Readiness Meeting Summary

Friday, September 25, 2015

1. What does college ready mean?

- Two dimensional – academic readiness and self-motivation
- AP and concurrent classes help students become college ready
- Essay writing skills
- Time management skills
- Communication skills – ability to ask for help when filling out the college application or financial aid application
- Bridge program – program for students who are academically accomplished but lack the communication skills to know who to ask and what questions to ask
- Persistence - skills to solve own problems and seek the resources and support needed to be successful
- Grit – ability to stick through hard situations
- Social skills – some students may be academically ready, but lack the social skills needed for college
- Emotional readiness – some students may have anxiety or other emotional issues
- ACT scores may not always reflect college readiness
- Expectations – different levels of readiness depending on student’s expectations - find out student’s expectations and help them seek the right path for what they really want to do
- Talk to employers about what is needed and expected
- Need for soft skills – lack of communication skills, difficulty showing up to classes, etc.
- Financial aid and managing finances – students need help navigating financial aid and student loan applications

2. Should there be different college readiness standards for two-year and four-year institutions? Should there be different standards for certificate programs and degree programs?

- Students should be able to transfer from community colleges to four year institutions seamlessly
- Same soft skills – same soft skills are needed for certificate programs as well as degree programs

- Professional programs can fast track students into careers where employers are looking for soft skills
- Nonacademic readiness is same regardless of the degree
- Technical math skills program versus college algebra

3. How should we determine if a traditional student is college ready?

- The ACT is a frustrating measure and could be a false representation - some students do not test well. Other data points should be considered and the need for a better system of student evaluation. Research tells us the GPA is a better indicator of success than the ACT, but there could be some grade inflation. There is discussion going on nationwide regarding ACT and placement testing.
- Look for other perspectives to determine college readiness and acknowledge that students learn differently and tests may not be true measure. Possible other ways to determine college readiness could be incorporating an essay into the admissions process.
- Research shows college prep programs and bridge programs correlate enormously with college readiness.
- Work more closely with high schools in the area and possibly have high schools make student portfolios that transfer to college showing student's academic activity as well as leadership involvement and past behaviors, etc.

3 (a). How should we determine if a non-traditional student is college ready?

- It is more difficult because these students have been out of school for years
- Math can be a burden for non-traditional students
- Work experience should also be considered
- Application process could include writing a resume to demonstrate their skills and abilities as well as job positions
- Student Assessments – grit, compass, etc.
- Interview student – find out why they are wanting to go back to school
- Work ethic – tests do not measure work ethic of non-traditional students
- Non-traditional students do not have the “how to take tests” training that traditional students have
- Broad age range of non-traditional students and one size does not fit all and non-traditional students should not be lumped all together
- College seminar program – a class that teaches how to acclimate to the college culture for the non-traditional and traditional students. This program is a way to begin communicating with the students about their goals, how long it will take to graduate, what is going to get them to that point and that job, what jobs are available and the

starting salary for that job, and how to budget for college. College is not high school and not the work environment they are used to.

- Project based learning or “peer learning” – when working in teams those with a low work ethic learn from those with a high work ethic. The traditional students have technical skills and the non-traditional students have leadership skills and they learn from each other.

4. If we were writing college ready standard – would it all be based on standardized test scores, none on standardized test scores or some on standardized test scores?

- Research shows high school GPA is as good or better an indicator than ACT
- GPAs - could be some grade inflation
- “Some” standardized because diagnostic testing can help determine skill levels and help get the student college ready much faster
- “Yes, maybe” – used diagnostically, it is a strong data point when used along with other data points

5. How can school districts and higher education institutions work together to close the college readiness gap?

- Mentor students – do not wait for students to come to the instructors – go to them
- Take a leadership role and partner with high schools to work with that middle of the road student
- Offer ACT prep class and “ACE” Arkansas College Experience - a freshman orientation class
- Partner with school districts to provide professional development for their faculty and staff, not just with superintendents, high school principals and counselors but with the core principal teachers.
- Share the message with high school teachers about importance of getting their students emotionally prepared for college
- Professional development – bring together high school and university faculties for regularly scheduled meetings to articulate what it means to be college ready
- Professional development - National Writing Project - a 6 week writing program for concurrent teachers
- Career coaches teach college strategy class at high school and can help solidify the relationship with the school districts
- Trio programs – what can be learned from them
- Summer bridge academy on campus taught by college students (grant funded) – Charles W. Donaldson Scholarship Academy
- Outreach – college students tutor high school students
- Make learning fun – find creative and innovative ways to make learning fun

6. Should every high school student be college ready? Should that be one of our goals?

- Do not label and separate students – technical students or college ready students
- Message should be college and career
- Do not use the words “college ready” – offer more college classes to high school students, including various technical classes, but call it an educational sampling or smorgasbord of ways to improve your life by providing the skills needed to help the student in the future and to peak their interest in a certain area - technical or some other kind of degree.
- Collaborate with ADE
- High school students should be life ready instead of college ready
- High school students should be college and career ready
- Career coaches teach classes and inform students of what is expected academically if they wish to pursue a certain field and let them know options on way to a career path
- Students should pursue their dream and not someone else’s and choose their own career path
- Early age career orientation classes – let students know what is available to them
- Team colleges at Pulaski Technical College – a 3 week on campus experience which gives 12 year olds the opportunity to come and see what college is really like and to talk with college students
- “The Experience” – beginning 8th and up – invite them to spend half a day on campus – eat on campus, tour campus, go into the classrooms that interest them.