



Data & Dialogue

A Newsletter of the Woodrow Wilson Early College Network

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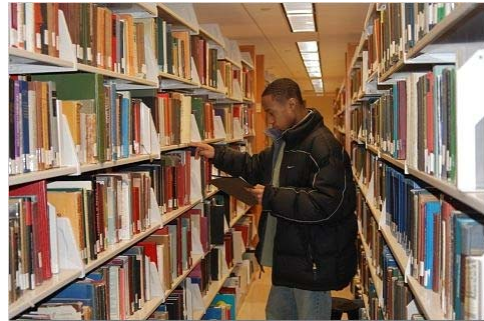
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Woodrow Wilson Early Colleges prepare students for college success. But what does it take to succeed in the first year of college after high school? This issue of *Data & Dialogue* offers information and resources to help students -- especially first-generation college students -- navigate that transition to college.

• **DIALOGUE** **Surviving the Transition to College**

This fall, more than 230 graduates from five WW Early Colleges have begun their first year at [127 colleges and universities](#) across the country. They are starting off with solid academic preparation and a handful of college credits - in some cases, 30 semester credits or more.



Marilyn Elkins, professor of English at California State University, Los Angeles, attended a summer graduation party for the 36 graduates from Wallis Annenberg High School. "If you had been at that party," she says, "and seen their self-confidence and the pride they have in what they accomplished - the fact that they were able to do a college course or two while they were still in high school, and succeed, probably will change the shape of their lives. Many of them probably would not have gone to college. It makes a huge difference."

WW Early College graduates can be confident in their ability to "do" college because of the first-hand college experience that Early College offers. Even with their Early College preparation, however, these first-year students will be going through academic, social, and personal transitions.

The more connected students are to their institution, both academically and socially, the more likely they are to succeed and complete a degree. This is especially true for students who are the first in their families to go to college and for students from low-income families. But first-generation college students and low-income students are less likely to engage in the in-class and out-

The next issue of *Data & Dialogue* is scheduled for December 2007.

To share news and highlights with the network, please contact [Kristen Vogt](#).

Past issues of *Data & Dialogue* are available [online](#).

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Woodrow Wilson Early College Network

A list of partnerships in the Woodrow
Wilson Early College Network is available
[online](#).

of-class activities known to bolster students' success.

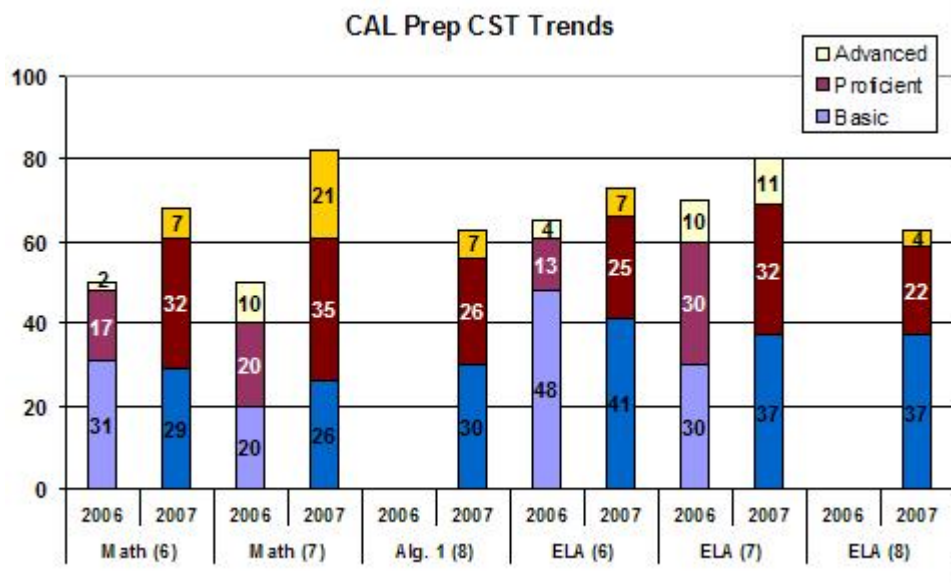
So what should Early College graduates do once they get to college? Here are some tips to share with students.

1. **Take advantage of first-year programs.** At some schools, these activities are mandatory; at others, students must seek out these opportunities. Go to Orientation. Enroll in a First Year Seminar or Freshman Success Course. Sign up for a Living-Learning Program or a Learning Community. Join a Freshman Interest Group. Find out about other programs available to incoming students.
2. **Get connected to special programs for different student populations.** Many colleges have programs and student centers for low-income students and for students of color at predominantly White institutions that offer mentoring, academic support, peer networks, and referrals to other campus supports.
3. **Spend time on campus outside of class.** Even students who commute to campus should find ways to physically be on campus: join a student organization (or two), study in the library, go to a guest lecture or a special event, and meet with classmates on a project.
4. **Actively seek out academic help.** Meet with an academic advisor to plan coursework, explore major and career options, and ask academic questions. Visit support services offices on campus and ask what services they offer to students and how to sign up. Ask for help with registering for classes, finding classrooms, and buying books (how to locate a text for a specific course, which texts are required/which are recommended, what a coursepack is, etc.)
5. **Talk to professors.** Catch them before or after class to clarify notes. Visit each professor in the first few weeks of the semester during office hours; topics for discussion can be upcoming or past assignments, ideas from class readings, and feedback on an exam or a paper.
6. **Talk to other students.** An informal network of peers is a great support system. Ask to borrow notes, suggest starting a study group, invite someone to coffee or lunch. You never know when (or with whom) a friendship will develop.
7. **Explore academic major and career options.** Even if you always wanted to be a veterinarian, or make a lot of money in business, college opens new opportunities. Changing majors does not mean failure. It means finding the best fit and growing into your own.
8. **Get a daily planner.** There are no reminders in college - students are expected to know which assignments are due when. Add dates listed on each course's syllabus when exams or big assignments are due. Add important campus dates (final exams, last day to withdraw from a course, registration for next semester courses, etc.). Add dates of

important personal or family events. With a semester mapped out, it is easier to notice when conflicts or busy times will come up and easier to figure out how to get everything done. Open the planner every day to make updates and check that everything is taken care of on time.

9. **Make a plan to manage unmet financial need.** Costs of books, transportation, supplies, and student fees all add up on top of tuition as well as room & board; sometimes official financial aid packages don't cover what students truly need. Students should consider different options and make financial decisions that support their success. This varies by student, but options include working on-campus, working fewer than 15 hours a week, and taking out a student loan with a realistic debt burden and supportive repayment policies.
10. **Check on the transfer of Early College credits.** Consult with an academic advisor. Visit the registrar's office. Meet with department chairs. Bring copies of course syllabi to advocate for transferability. Make sure that the credits are listed on your transcript.
11. **Don't get discouraged if the first semester doesn't turn out as academically successful as planned.** Many students struggle in the first semester of college because of the difficult transitions combined with their lack of strong personal connections. Stick with it, because you are building the tools and the connections needed to be successful, and it will get better.

- **DATA**
State Assessments in Context



CAL Prep demonstrated substantial overall improvement in math and English/language arts performance on the California Standards Tests in 2006-07 when compared to 2005-06. The school's partner, UC Berkeley, created two press releases about the state test results. The press releases provide a context for better understanding what the improvement means for the school, describing not only the collaboration with UC Berkeley and student demographics, but also trends like a growth in the number of students who are English language learners and a

high teacher retention rate. [[Read the press releases](#)]

- **PROMISING PRACTICES**
The Senior Experience @ Hunter College

Seniors at Manhattan Hunter Science High School get a jump start on their transition to college. The senior experience merges the last year of high school with the first year of college, all taking place on Hunter College's campus. As a former student describes it, "The best part of attending Hunter College during your senior year of high school is the experience of being in a college atmosphere - it prepares you for a transition that you will have to make, but eases you into the process at the same time - because you've already experienced it. It doesn't get any better than that for high school students in the city." Read more in the [Senior Experience practice brief](#).

This practice maps to the principle of scaffolding the college experience as outlined in the [Woodrow Wilson Promising Practices Framework](#).

- **NEWS and NOTES**



Photo by Peg Skorpinski.

- [West Sacramento Early College Prep](#), the newest school in the WW Early College network, opened to students on August 22. UC Davis, the Washington Unified School District, and Sacramento City College together founded this charter school located in West Sacramento. [[press release](#) and [newspaper article](#)]
- The [groundbreaking ceremony](#) for the new home on the University of Hartford campus for the University High School of Science and Engineering was held Friday, August 31. Local and state government and education representatives joined in the celebration.
- University High School of Science and Engineering was rated first of all Hartford School District schools on the Overall School Index rating instituted by the district's new superintendent. The school was designated by the district as

a "Shining Star School."

- With funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation is undergoing a business planning process with the Bridgespan Group. The process, expected to be completed by December 15, will help the WW Early College initiative identify its intended impact, assess future opportunities, and develop an organizational and financial plan.
- The most recent meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, held in New York City on October 10-11, featured a tour of Manhattan Hunter Science High School as well as presentations by principal Susan Kreisman, Hunter College president Jennifer Raab, and three students.
- November 19 is the target "roll-out date" for the Early College High School Initiative's Integrated Survey. Schools will have until December 17 to complete the survey. Contact [Kristen Vogt](#) for more info.

- **RESOURCES**

- **College Success Resources**

- The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Education has two reports on student success for low-income and first-generation college students:
 - [*Straight From the Source: What Works for First-Generation College Students*](#)
 - [*Demography Is Not Destiny: Increasing the Graduation Rates of Low-Income College Students at Large Public Universities*](#)
- [Read brief insights](#) on the transitions students experience in their first year of college, based on "Your First College Year," a national longitudinal survey study by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA and the Policy Center on the First Year of College.
- What to look for in a college? [*The Pocket Guide to Choosing a College: Are you asking the right questions on a college campus visit*](#) (by NSSE, the National Survey of Student Engagement) helps students focus their college search on factors that are known to improve student learning, development, and success in college. A few examples: "Are faculty members accessible and supportive?" "Do students work together on projects - inside and outside of the classroom?" "What types of honors courses, learning communities, and other distinctive programs are offered?"
- [The College Center](#) from the Center for Student Opportunity offers information in a national database on colleges that actively support first-generation and underserved student populations. Students can submit questions to expert college counselors and submit their academic information to prospective colleges in the CSO network.

