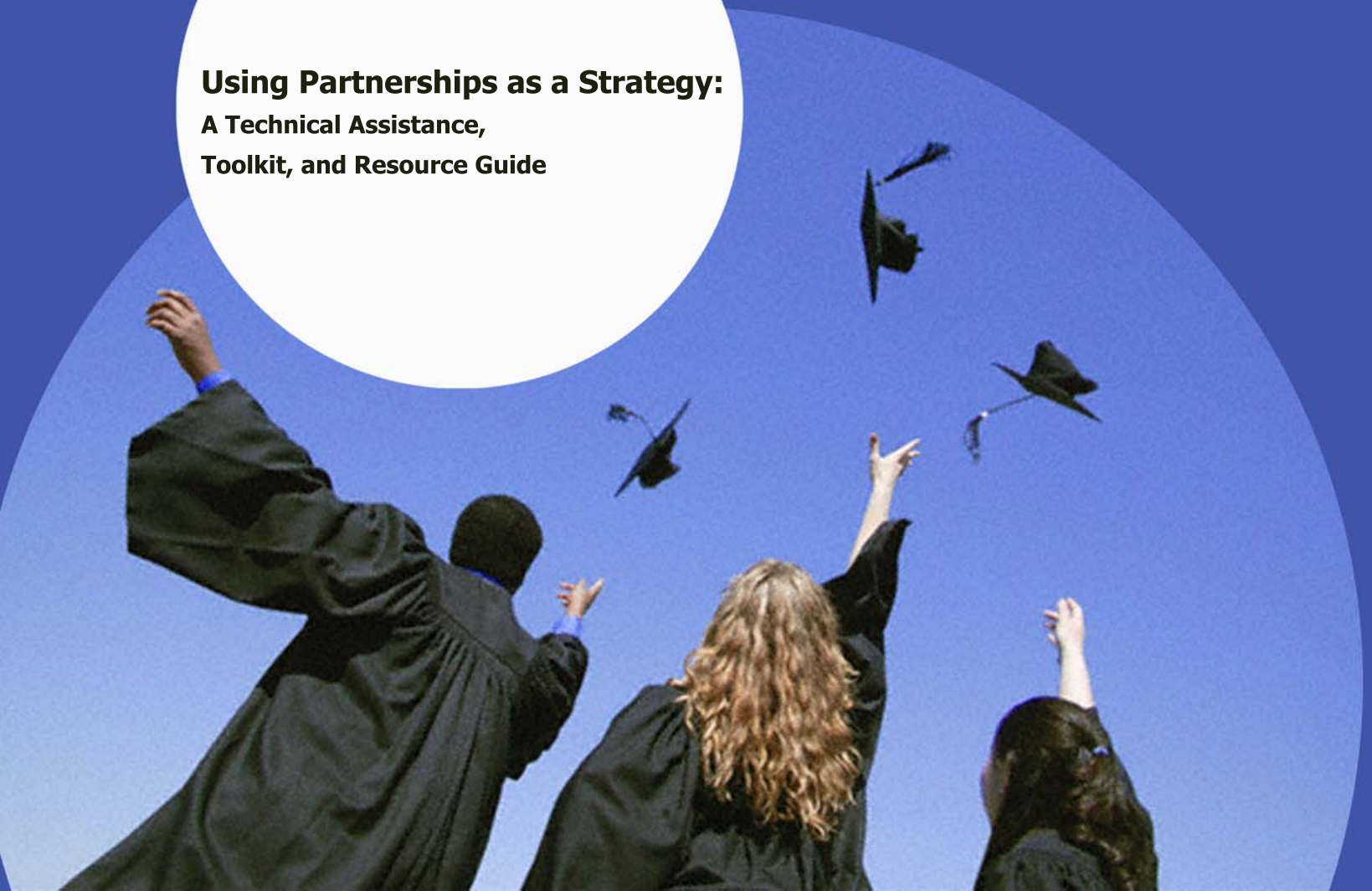
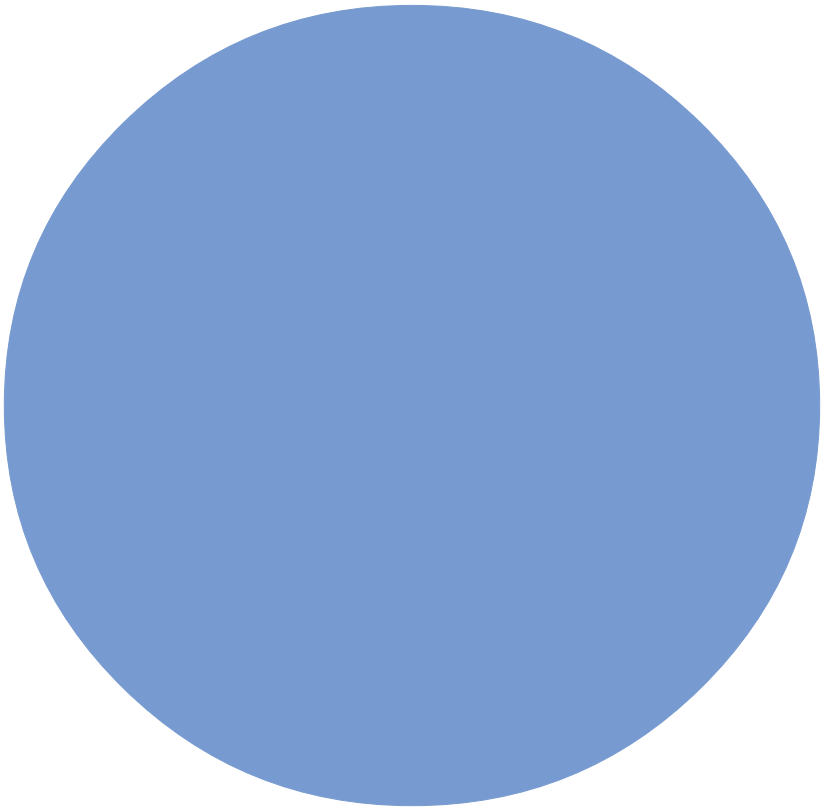
Partnerships for College Access and Success

Using Partnerships as a Strategy:

A Technical Assistance,
Toolkit, and Resource Guide





Partnerships for College Access and Success

A Technical Assistance, Toolkit, and Resource Guide

2008

Developed by the Academy for Educational Development
in collaboration with college access/success partnerships:

Burlington VT: Linking Learning to Life
Chattanooga, TN: Public Education Foundation
Chicago, IL: Little Village Development Corporation
Milwaukee, WI: Compass Guide
New York City: Youth Development Institute
San Antonio, TX: San Antonio Education Partnership
Seattle, WA: Airport University

Supported by the Lumina Foundation for Education

Preamble

Partnerships for College Access and Success, represented by eight organizations across the country, have come together through the Academy for Educational Development to develop partnerships across sectors with the mission to increase access and success for young people who have traditionally have had limited access to enter college.

We, grantees of Partnerships for College Access and Success (PCAS), have come together in the spirit of collaboration, to learn about promising practices in applying partnerships for college access and success.

For the past four years, we have come together from Wisconsin, Vermont, Illinois, Washington, Tennessee, Texas, and New York as a community of learners to bolster our own organization's capacity through each other's work.

After four years of implementing our respective projects, we decided to combine the products of our efforts and share it with other institutions and organizations who are in its early stages toward building partnerships or who wish to learn from the lessons we learned in partnership work for college access and success.

We have come together to provide practitioners with this toolkit in an attempt to create a better and more cohesive system of college access and success to improve the opportunities for all young people to go to college.

We hope that those who partake of this document can learn from our milestones and accomplishments, from each of our journeys to build pathways of success for students least likely to attend and complete college.

Introduction

Partnerships for College Access and Success: A Technical Assistance Guide, Toolkit and Resource Guide reflects lessons learned from four years of planning, implementation and evaluation work through the Partnerships for College Access and Success (PCAS) initiative. It is the result of the collaboration between AED, the eight partnerships funded under this initiative, the Lumina Foundation for Education which provided the funding, and the OMG Center for Collaborative Learning, who was the external evaluator and provided both formative and summative feedback to all of the participants. Collectively we have learned much about the context, practices and policies related to linking postsecondary access activities to success, defined as retention and attainment of a degree or technical certificate. Three learnings have been key to the effectiveness of our work:

- the need to have a theory of change that addresses the particular features and history of local context with clearly defined short-term, intermediate and long-term outcomes;
- a data collection/analysis process for tracking student progress, assessing challenges, and using the data for program improvement and for advocacy within the larger community;
- the need for a strong lead organization to facilitate and manage the partnership and the implementation of the work of improving both access and success for the targeted underrepresented students in the community.

Partnerships for College Access and Success provides a roadmap for how to develop a community-wide initiative that is inclusive of community groups and organizations and engages them in the effort to connect high school reform with improving students' outcomes in postsecondary education and in connecting working adults and disconnected youth to postsecondary education and providing support for their success. Since December 2003, the Academy for Educational Development (AED) has administered and provided technical assis-

tance to the eight grantees funded by Lumina Foundation for Education. The PCAS grantees received planning grants for this work in June 2004, and received implementation grants for 2005 and 2006. Seven of the original eight were funded with implementation grants for 2007. Located in Burlington, Vermont (Linking Learning to Life), Chicago (Little Village Community Development Corporation), Chattanooga (Public Education Foundation/College Access Center), Milwaukee (Compass Guide/University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee), New York (Youth Development Institute), San Antonio (San Antonio Education Partnership), and Seattle (Port Jobs), these sites have all made substantial contributions to the development of *Partnerships for College Access and Success*. The external evaluator, OMG Center for Collaborative Learning, worked with the grantees to develop a theory of change for their programs and with AED to develop an initiativewide theory of change. Their work with the grantees and AED is also included in the toolkit.

In conceptualizing, writing, and producing *Partnerships for College Access and Success*, the editors asked two questions:

What tools developed through the PCAS initiative are the most relevant to developing a communitywide initiative to increase postsecondary access and success for underrepresented students?

If all parties involved in the PCAS initiative were to begin their work from scratch, what information would be the most useful in creating systemic change in this field and in the policies affecting this field?

As simple as these questions are, the process for developing the PCAS initiative and for the PCAS grantees to develop or expand their partnerships to address college access (e.g., high school reform, college preparation, financial aid awareness, college acceptance and enrollment) *and* college success (e.g., first-semester and first-year retention—including remediation—two- to four-year college transfers, financial aid, and degree attainment) proved to be very complex.

We designed this toolkit and guide for use by a variety of professionals with a vested interest in K-16 education reform; partnership development; applied data collection and research; postsecondary access, preparation, retention and attainment; and youth or workforce development. Simply put, *Partnerships for College Access and Success's* contributors—evaluators interested in applied research and real-time data collection, practitioners drawn from fields related to postsecondary access and success, and technical assistance providers with different and complementary skill-sets—represent the kinds of professionals we would expect to read and use this document.

We believe that all three kinds of professionals find this toolkit and guide useful. Included are specific tools that address important issues around collecting confidential student data from school districts, colleges, and universities and using the same data with school and university administrators to tackle programmatic and systemic issues. There are also additional tools that readers can use in their work to develop or expand a partnership or address challenges within a partnership or to address challenges or dilemmas in implementing their work or in thinking about strategies for sustaining the ongoing efforts of a lead organization or partnership. Of course, we have also designed *Partnerships for College Access and Success* to be used as a technical assistance guide, with sections describing the PCAS initiative's conceptualization and theory-of-change model, as well as a resource guide, including a bibliographic reference section with references to organizational websites and the latest initiatives in the field.

These tools should help any researcher, practitioner or organization interested in breaking down barriers to postsecondary access, retention and attainment for underrepresented students. Yet it is important to note that an intense level of external technical assistance and collaborative strategic planning is necessary to make these tools come alive and to incorporate them as effective components of any new community partnership or initiative.

We examined the major components of the national initiative, the research in the field, as well as the dozens of tools and documents that the PCAS grantees developed to address their community and educational contexts. The tools that we selected through a collaborative process with the grantees reflected the following nine aspects of the four-year PCAS initiative. They are:

- A process for defining what a viable community partnership would look like in various contexts for improving college access and success for underrepresented students
- Selecting a group of lead organizations that could facilitate partnerships in their communities to address a particular population and link college access and success efforts
- A planning period for developing a theory of change with an external evaluator (with implementation activities linked with intermediate and long-term indicators for success and out comes)
- An implementation period in which each grantee applied its theory of change to its implementation activities
- The work of measuring progress over time through data collection and analysis process
- The provision of technical assistance by AED to help each PCAS grantee develop its partnerships, address challenges, support strategic planning, and sustain their work
- The conducting by external evaluators of telephone interviews and site visits with the PCAS grantees to track progress of the initiative as a whole and the progress of each grantee using its theory-of-change indicators
- Convening PCAS Learning Institutes and other meetings, in which each grantee could discuss and get feedback on its milestones and the challenges of implementing its work through a partnership approach
- The development of tools and plans for sustaining the work of each community partnership beyond the scope of the PCAS initiative

The contents of *Partnerships for College Access and Success* are the result of the initiativewide activities above. There are five sections to *Partnerships for College Access and Success*:

I Conception of PCAS and Its Significance to the Field
II Theory of Change and Its Significance
III Data Collection Capacity, Methods and Use
IV Strategies for Developing and Sustaining the Work
V References and Resources.

Each section contains a short introduction to the main ideas behind each component of PCAS; an introduction to the tools themselves; and suggestions on how a practitioner might use or adapt these tools to start their own community-wide initiative. The "References and Resources" section at the end of *Partnerships for College Access and Success* is a selected list of references, websites and other information that informed the initiative and would help a practitioner locate best practices and research in the field of college access and success, as well as the leading organizations in the field.

Partnerships for College Access and Success, in the end, is a collaborative effort between AED, its PCAS grantees and OMG Center for Collaborative Learning, the external evaluators for the initiative. Although the tools included in this document proved helpful to the grantees involved in this initiative in achieving specific goals or in addressing particular challenges, the editors recognize that different contexts may require unique tools. That said, the content of *Partnerships for College Access and Success* represents the cutting-edge ideas of a unique initiative that successfully engaged community groups and civic organizations, school districts, postsecondary institutions and businesses in creating partnerships that represent community interests (as opposed to those of a school district or a university or community college). The initiative was especially successful in using a theory of change and data on student access and success to drive and guide the work. *Partnerships for College Access and Success* also represents lessons learned from working strategically with all of the different PCAS grantees within their local contexts to affect systemic change related to postsecondary access and success for underrepresented students.

Acknowledgments

About Lumina Foundation for Education

Lumina Foundation for Education (www.luminafoundation.org) is an Indianapolis-based, private foundation dedicated to expanding access and success in education beyond high school. Lumina Foundation seeks to identify and promote practices leading to improvement in the rates of entry and success in education beyond high school, particularly for students of low income or other underrepresented backgrounds. Lumina Foundation carries out its mission through funding, research, communicating ideas through reports, conferences and other means, and making grants to educational institutions and other nonprofits for innovative programs. It also devotes limited resources to contributing appropriately in support of selected community and other charitable organizations.

About the AED Team and AED

Alexandra Weinbaum, PhD, Vice-President and Co-Director of the AED Center for School and Community Services in New York City, has extensive experience in developing, supervising, and conducting evaluation, technical assistance, and research projects geared to educational reform, school-community collaborations, youth employment and literacy, and school self-assessment. She also serves as the Director of Partnerships for College Access and Success.

Donald Earl Collins, PhD, is the Deputy Director of PCAS and a Senior Program Officer with the AED Center for School and Community Services. He brings a combination of academic and nonprofit experiences to the project, having served as Assistant Director of the New Voices Fellowship Program at AED, a program for emerging leaders in the social justice field and as the Director of Curriculum at Presidential Classroom, a nonprofit civic education organization. Dr. Collins is an adjunct associate professor with the School of Undergraduate Studies at the University of Maryland University College.

Elaine Johnson is Director of the National Training Institute for Community Youth Work and a Vice President at AED in Washington, DC. She has served as the Deputy Director of the AED Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, Director of Local Initiatives at the Children's Defense Fund, and as a Region Director for Camp Fire Boys and Girls, Inc. Ms. Johnson has substantial experience in technical assistance, training, and managing national youth development initiatives.

Mark S. Johnson-Lewis, a Program Officer with the AED National Institute for Work and Learning, has over 15 years experience in conducting research and technical assistance to improve the participation of underrepresented groups in education and medicine

Camille Rodríguez is a consultant who specializes in K-12 and postsecondary issues for students of color, and immigrant and ELL students. She worked at the City University of New York and is currently Director of New School Development for the Internationals Network for Public Schools. As the Director of New School Development, Ms. Rodríguez is responsible for managing the school start-up process for the growing network in New York and California.

The Academy for Educational Development (AED) is an independent, nonprofit organization committed to addressing human development needs in the United States and throughout the world. As one of the world's foremost human and social development organizations, AED works in five major program areas: U.S. Education and Workforce Development; Global Learning; Global Health, Population and Nutrition; Leadership and Institutional Development; and Social Change. At the heart of all our programs is an emphasis on building skills and knowledge to improve people's lives.

The **AED Center for School and Community Services** is part of AED's U.S. Education and Workforce Development Group. The Center uses multidisciplinary approaches to address critical issues in educa-

tion, health, and youth development. To achieve its goals, the center provides technical assistance to strengthen schools, school districts, and community-based organizations. It conducts evaluations of school and community programs while striving to provide the skills and impetus for practitioners to undertake ongoing assessment and improvement. The Center also manages large-scale initiatives to strengthen practitioner networks and accelerate systems change and uses the knowledge gained from this work to advocate for effective policies and practices and disseminate information through publications, presentations, and on the World Wide Web.

In 2005, the Educational Equity Center at AED (EEC) was formed. EEC's mission is to provide equality of opportunity on a national scale in schools and afterschool settings, starting in early childhood. EEC is an outgrowth of Educational Equity Concepts, a national nonprofit organization with a 22-year history of addressing educational excellence for all children regardless of gender, race/ethnicity, disability, or level of family income. EEC's goal is to ensure that equity is a key focus within national reform efforts, eliminating inequities that often limit student potential.

AED is headquartered in Washington, DC, and has offices in 167 countries and cities around the world and throughout the United States. The Center for School and Community Services is in AED's office in New York City. For more information about the Center's work, go to the Center's website at www.aed.org/scs.

About the Grantees

Chattanooga-Hamilton County Public Education Foundation (PEF; Chattanooga, TN) provides expertise, leadership, and financial support to Hamilton County Public Schools.

COMPASS Guide (Milwaukee, WI) a member of the National College Access Network, is a citywide, Internet-based program that seeks to provide Milwaukee-area teachers, parents, and youth—particularly low-income youth and youth of color—with comprehensive information about higher education opportunities.

Linking Learning to Life (LLL; Burlington, VT) works with schools, businesses, colleges, and other community organizations to provide an array of programs—such as coursework, mentoring, job shadowing—to help students gain access to college and learn and apply workforce skills.

Little Village Community Development Corporation (LVCDC; Chicago, IL) is a grassroots community organization committed to ensuring balanced development and a sustainable future for all members of the community. LVCDC will use its grant to ensure a college-going culture in its Little Village High School initiative, which consists of four small high schools that opened in 2005.

Port JOBS (Seattle, WA) is a nonprofit organization working to increase access to living-wage jobs for all residents of the Greater Seattle area, especially the wide array of career opportunities within the port-related economy, including through Airport University, which will provide certificate and two-year college degree programs for airport workers, most of whom are immigrant adult learners.

San Antonio Education Partnership (SAEP; San Antonio, TX) has provided incentives, motivation, and financial support for students to remain in high school through graduation and continue their studies in college since 1988.

Youth Development Institute (YDI; New York, NY) of the Tides Center works to affect youth policies, programs and practices at all levels of government to reflect a positive model of youth development. YDI intends to improve support for "disconnected" youth—those youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither in school nor employed—by building the capacity of New York City youth development organizations to include college access and success services for this population in their programs.

About OMG Center for Collaborative Learning

Since its establishment in 1988 as a Philadelphia-based, independent, nonprofit research and consulting organization, OMG Center for Collaborative Learning has worked across the country for clients in the philanthropic, nonprofit, and government sectors in philanthropic evaluation, strategy research, and development, as well as in capacity building.

Individually, we thank the following persons for their collaborative efforts in developing *The Partnerships for College Access and Success Toolkit*: Gilberto Ramón and Eyra Perez (San Antonio Education Partnership), Dan Challener and Debra Vaughan (Chattanooga Public Education Foundation), Stacy Lightfoot (College Access Center), Rich Tulikangas and Dhyana Bradley (Linking Learning to Life), Susan Crane and Heather Worthley (Port Jobs), Peter Kleinbard and Vivian Vasquez (Youth Development Institute), Vicki Turner and Maria Torres (Compass Guide), Marco De Santiago (Little Village Community Development Corporation), and Marcela Gutierrez-Mayka and Meg Long (OMG Center for Collaborative Learning).

We also thank the OMG Center for Collaborative Learning, the external evaluators for PCAS, for its work in evaluating the PCAS grantees, its design of the theory-of-change process for this initiative, and for granting AED permission to use its materials in this document.

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I. History of The PCAS Initiative

I.1. History of the PCAS Initiative

The PCAS initiative began as collaboration between the Lumina Foundation for Education and the Academy for Educational Development (AED) in 2003 to develop a grant-making program in selected communities focused on the improvement of college access and success for under-represented students. The initiative that was eventually funded involved AED as the facilitator of the grant-making process and provider of technical assistance to eight grantees who developed partnerships with critical stakeholders to accomplish the work. Additional funds were awarded to the OMG Center for Collaborative Learning to evaluate the initiative, which included a grant selection phase and planning period(2004) , and two years of implementation (2005-06); an additional third year of implementation was awarded by 2007 .

Grantee Selection

A team of six AED staff members gathered in early February 2004 to develop the process for identifying potential partnerships. Out of this meeting came the following criteria for the PCAS initiative and for conducting outreach to potential grantees:

1. A partnership must be led by a nonprofit organization that has a history of working effectively with other community groups and institutions, as well as an understanding of the potential target population for the grant.
2. The lead organizations would have experience from previous partnership work or as an organization dedicated to college access with high school reform, workforce development, adult education, or youth development and engagement.
3. The lead organizations that would be the conveners of the partnerships in various communities would be diverse in terms of location, demographics of the target population, and levels of expertise and experience with doing this work—that is, their expertise might lie in an area related to college access and success but they did not have to be experts in this area.
4. The lead organizations selected for this initiative would work to connect local college access efforts with college success, not just through programming, but also through the collection of data on postsecondary success for underrepresented students and advocacy regarding the needs of this population.

From mid-February to the end of April 2004, the AED team contacted and conducted telephone interviews with more than 40 organizations in more than 20 states in search of the right mix of potential grantees to invite to submit a proposal. We developed an RFP that included the above criteria for the lead organization and areas that they would need to address. This was an invitation-only RFP process to 15 organizations to submit their proposals for a planning grant, with the hope that they would then move forward with an implementation grant after six months.

The AED team selected eight grantees from among the 15 submissions. They are located in Burlington, Vermont (Linking Learning to Life), Chicago (Little Village Community Development Corporation), Chattanooga (Public Education Foundation/College Access Center), Milwaukee (Compass Guide/University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee), New York (Youth Development Institute), Sacramento (Linking Education and Economic Development), San Antonio (San Antonio Education Partnership) and Seattle (Port Jobs).

Diversity of the Grantees

The AED team intentionally selected a diverse group of grantees with different approaches to their work and with different levels of experience in college access and success. We wanted to learn about the differences that the lead organization would make in leading the proposed activities. For instance, of the eight grantees, only three (Chattanooga, Sacramento and San Antonio) possessed districtwide connections with K-12 institutions and Public Education Funds. The New York grantee was a citywide youth development intermediary

organization that worked with community-based organizations and the school system on infusing research-based principles and practices of youth development into their work. The grantee in Burlington developed and facilitated a highly successful statewide dual-enrollment program that had linkages to several postsecondary institutions. In Chicago the grantee is a local community development organization that had organized the community to stage a successful hunger strike to force Chicago Public Schools to build and staff four small high schools in their neighborhood. The Milwaukee grantee was a college access center housed within a university, and the Seattle site was a workforce development organization focused on improving job opportunities at the Seattle-Tacoma Airport through job training.

Planning the Partnerships and Building a Community of Learning

Although AED provided guidelines and technical assistance around the kinds of partners each grantee should include in its work, the reality was that each grantee needed to consider its local context in its partnership development and expansion process. For example, the City of San Antonio is a partner and funder of the San Antonio grantee, but this is not the case for the other grantees. A key partner for the Burlington grantee is the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, but no other grantee possesses a partner of this type. In New York and Seattle, because of their target populations (older youth and adult learners), formal and direct partnerships with their respective school districts were not important but linkages with community colleges were critical.

One of the challenges around the diversity of the sites was how to create a learning community out of group of grantees with such diverse areas of expertise and focus. AED was not certain that such a diverse group of organizations could learn from one another or develop the expertise in the areas of competence that they lacked. But in fact, during the course of the project, as each grantee became more familiar with the details of the others' programs, they were able to share learning and help one another in the areas in which they had extensive expertise. A list serv, periodic teleconferences, directors' meetings, and an annual learning institute facilitated this learning. These strategies are detailed in the section below on Technical Assistance.

Evaluation

Much of the effective implementation by PCAS sites would not have occurred without AED's emphasis on data collection and evaluation as a major component of the PCAS initiative. That process began with Lumina Foundation's selection of the OMG Center for Collaborative Learning, the external evaluators for PCAS. OMG provided expertise in the collaborative development of a theory of change evaluation process for the initiative and for each grantee, beginning with the inaugural Learning Institute for the eight grantees in July 2004. As part of the theory of change process, OMG evaluation and feedback, and AED's technical assistance, the eight grantees were each required to collect, analyze and use data to inform their programmatic and systemic change work with their partners. Developing this capacity in tandem with developing and expanding their partnerships has given each grantee a boost in their implementation efforts over the past three years.

Technical Assistance

Technical assistance experts, called TA liaisons, were the main contact between AED and the individual partnerships. Their primary responsibility was to assist the partnerships to achieve their goals within the context of the larger PCAS mission to improve access and success for traditionally underserved populations through the activities and services described below.

Schedule of Activities

***Time allocated each month to TA activities (not including visits)*:** Each month the TA liaison spent up to one day assisting each grantee assigned to him/her. Another half-day was spent in team meetings, planning and adjusting AED's work based on what was learned from the partnerships, our evaluators and the Lumina Foundation. The one day could be spent in conference calls, responding to e-mail requests for information or feedback, or in helping to identify needed resources.

***Site visits*:** Each TA liaison visited the grantees in their portfolio twice a year for two days at a time. During the visits, liaisons met with the project staff and with the partners. They also observed project-related meetings or activities. Each site visit began with a review of what had been accomplished since the last visit and with expectations for the current visit. It concluded with reflections on what would be accomplished and next steps resulting from the liaison's observations and discussions with partners. TA liaisons summarized the visit activities and decisions in a brief memo, which was sent to the site following the visit.

***Learning Institutes*:** An institute was held once each year; the content was based on feedback from OMG, the assessments of the TA liaison, and needs expressed by the partnerships. The format included inquiry into critical aspects of programs, showcasing and discussion of effective practices, sharing across sites, and future planning. Agendas were developed by the TA liaisons in consultation with the partnerships.

Teleconferences: At least three two-hour teleconferences were held with project directors to address questions and concerns and to highlight issues that are central to all of the partnerships' implementation plans.

***Directors' Meetings*:** There were one or two directors' meetings each year that focused on one or two topics and usually included two staff from each site, the TA liaisons, and one or two experts on the topics under discussion.

Roles of the TA Liaisons

***Collaborators in problem-solving*:** TA liaisons were not the experts in each partnership's context. Partnership members were the experts. TA liaisons could, however, learn a great deal about the partnership's context and then assist the partnership in identifying its strengths and areas to work on; they could also help solve problems, such as strengthening the partnership by helping to clarify working agreements; clarifying program objectives; assessing progress in reaching benchmarks; and supporting staff in their work by helping to identify additional resources that support program goals.

Keeping the focus on the core elements of PCAS: It was the job of the TA liaison to see that these core elements were central to the work of each partnership. This could involve a review of how resources were being allocated to achieve program goals, as well as of plans for sustainability of the work.

***Providing resources or helping the partnership identify resources*:** The TA liaison recommended places where partnerships could go to observe or learn about exemplary practices; print resources, tools, or other products that could be useful; and funding sources.

Connecting the local work to national work in college access and success: Through resources and examples from other grantees and national projects, the TA liaison connected local PCAS efforts to national policies, practices and research.

***Building morale and ensuring that the project success within the constraints and opportunities of the context*:** The TA liaison acted as a "critical friend" by providing feedback when she or he saw things not working well or not going in the right direction This required building relationships with the partnership's core staff and with representatives from the partner organizations and being an advocate of the program.

Developing Communication and a Community of Practice among Partnerships: The TA liaisons helped develop avenues of communication through use of the listserv, encouraging visits among partnerships, and through the annual institutes. With the consent of individual partnerships, they also helped make the resources developed within individual partnerships available to other sites when appropriate and relevant.

Ensuring confidentiality at all times: The TA liaison shared issues relating to each site that the partnership staff agreed to share with other members of the AED team. These issues were summarized in memos sent to each site following a visit, which the staff and partners then reviewed. Anything written about the site for the public was reviewed by the partnership and required the site's agreement before being published.

Core PCAS Elements that are the Focus on TA

In each of the four core elements below, are criteria of effectiveness that guide technical assistance.

Partnership development

- Having the right partners at the table to move the work
- Developing memoranda of agreement about the areas of work that each partner will address
- Good internal and external communication
- Holding partners accountable for the work
- Regular and well-run meetings
- Ability to resolve conflicts
- Ability to let partners exit who are not contributing

Grantee capacity to carry out the work

- High level of expertise in some aspects of the access and success work and ability to bring in other expertise through the partnership
- High visibility/credibility in the community from previous, related work
- Ability to reach the targeted youth and understand their context, needs and strengths
- Devoting high level staff to the oversight of this work
- Ability to leverage resources from all partners to maximize resources going to this project

Data collection and use

- Ability to develop a data collection system through partnership agreements and development of a technical infrastructure for the work.
- Ongoing analysis of data to inform the work of the partnership
- Publicizing of data for purposes of advocacy as well as to demonstrate successes brought about by the partnership

Linking state-of-the-art college access and success programs

- Ascertaining the core and essential components in college access and success programming
- Using nationally proven models
- Linking access with success programming through referrals
- Using data to assess the effectiveness of programs

Examples of Issues that TA liaisons have Helped Grantees to Address

Level of responsibility of agency executive director in oversight of the work

- Meeting with key partners and the executive director to explain the roles and responsibilities expected
- Sharing of other examples and tools used to organize the work from other grantees
- Follow-up letter with list of agreements

Staff expertise and maturity for the work

- Discussion with agency executive director about the expected levels of staff expertise
- Follow-up correspondence with commitment to make suggested changes
- Greater involvement of supervising staff in the day-to-day supervision of the work
- Clarification of the focus of the work
- Discussion with the key players about how to combine a focus

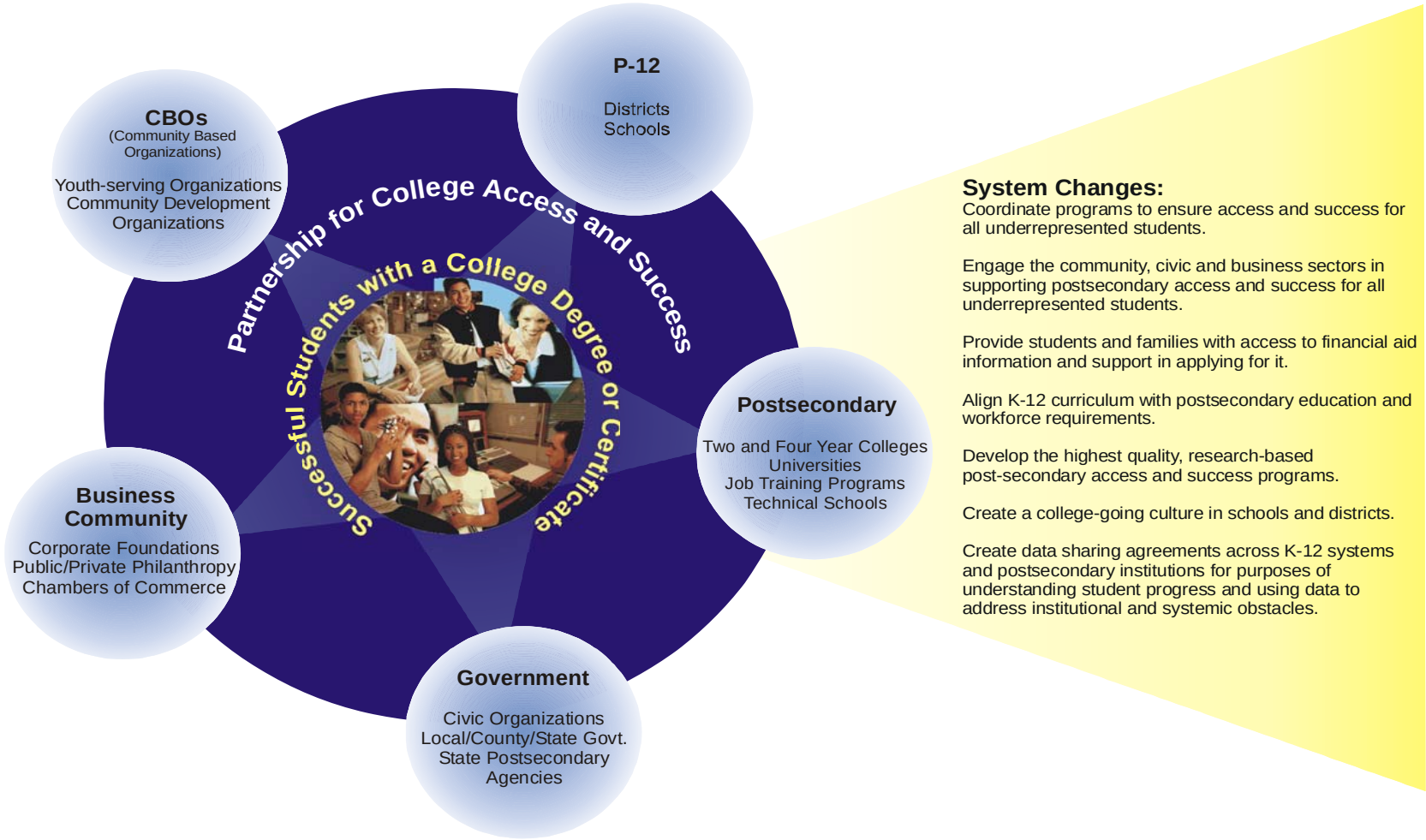
on policy issues—a major interest—with direct services to a specific target population and monitoring of their progress

Inclusion of critical community members in the partnership

- Discussion about how to create a partnership that was more reflective of demographics of the community
- Follow-up to see how the awareness of this issue would be addressed

Bringing high level postsecondary partners to the table as active participants in the partnership

- Discussion of who was needed (for example representatives from administration in the academic side of the university) and how to enlist their participation



I.2. Visual Representation of the PCAS Model

The model above represents the interconnectedness between the various sectors in each community in which PCAS is operational. The idea here is that systemic change in K-16 education—particularly in the high school to college transition—cannot occur unless different systems work together to solve a host of complex issues around college preparation and retention and financial aid and resources, as well as in creating a college-going culture within a particular community.

I.3. PCAS Partnership Capacity Framework

Below is a partnership capacity chart created by OMG Center for Collaborative Learning that provides a description of the various stages of partnership development. This should be a useful tool for you to begin a discussion with your partners working in the college access and success field about where you are in partnership development, as well as where you would like to be in the short- and long-term. Note that even in cases where a partnership might find itself in the "fully developed" side of the rubric, a change in mission or goals could easily shift where the partnership falls in terms of development. Partnership development, then, is both nonlinear and an evolutionary process, depending on context and constant tending.

Indicators of Partnership Strength	1- Very weak	3- Average	5- Very strong	Score
1. Purpose				
Vision	• There is no shared vision among partners.	• A core group of members has developed a vision for the partnership. • Others in the partnership are vague about, or have a different vision.	• Partners articulate a similar vision, with clearly agreed upon mission.	
Goals and objectives	• No goals or objectives have been defined for the partnership.	• Goals are defined, but are unclear to partners or unrealistic. • Objectives and strategies are just being developed.	• Short- and long-term goals, objectives and strategies are clear to all partners and seem realistic. • Goals and objectives are revised with new data.	
Member motivation	• Partners do not see individual or organizational benefits from their involvement in the partnership. • Perceived costs of membership offset the advantages.	• Incentives for organizations to become and stay involved are made clear. • Membership gains are clear for some. • Some see support for organizational agenda.	• Most partners articulate they will benefit from participating in the collaboration. • Most members can articulate how the advantages of membership will offset costs.	

2. Membership characteristics				
Appropriate variety of members	• The membership does not involve key stakeholders. • No effort has been made to identify additional partnership members. • Alternatively: The partnership is too large to manage - no strategic thought has been put into the development of the partnership.	• The partnership includes representatives from each segment of the community who will be affected by its activities including students, parents, colleges, school district reps, and financial aid organizations	• Partnership continues to have appropriate and required mix of participants through membership changes and turnover.	
Mutual respect, trust, understanding	• Partners lack relationships and trust for one another. • No dedicated time to learning about one another, and individual needs and agendas. • Perceived sense of competition among members.	• Time set aside to develop trust and relationships, understand individual agendas and cultural norms - particularly with new partners. • Some conflicts exist. • Connections exist mostly among a select sub-group of members.	• Evidence of appreciation and respect for different stakeholder roles and organizational differences. • Group is able to handle difficult discussion and resolve conflicts respectfully and consensually. • Strong working relationships exist among many members.	
Legitimacy of partnership in the community	• The partnership is not considered a local expert in post-secondary access and success.	• The partnership's expert leadership is acknowledged by a narrow segment of the community. • The partnership's work and agenda remain unknown to many community stakeholders.	• The partnership is perceived by the community as the authority for college access and success • Member agencies are well regarded	

3. Process/Structure				
Partnership decision-making	• Partnership members have no decision-making or direction setting power. • No committees are formed. • Poor meeting attendance	• Most partners have some level of participation with limited decision-making power and direction setting. • Committees exist, but are inconsistently productive or effective. • Fairly consistent meeting attendance	• Effective committees exist with strong leadership, well organized and well run regular meetings • Decision making power and direction setting is shared by all active members. • Consistent meeting attendance	
Development of clear roles	• There is no agreement about differentiated roles and responsibilities	• Members have discussed the roles and responsibilities. • Some conflict/lack of clarity exists about members' responsibilities. • Roles are being developed based on members' interests and strengths.	• All partners clearly understand their roles and responsibilities, • They understand how to carry out these responsibilities. • MOUs and accountability mechanisms are in place.	
4. Communication				
Effective communication	• Members do not interact regularly. • There is little time for formal discussion at meetings. • Ideas are not shared informally outside of the group.	• A regular meeting and subcommittee schedule is established and organizations have established stable representation at meetings. • Not all partners are equally engaged in discussions and information sharing.	• Partners formally interact regularly and often, update one another, discuss issues openly and convey all necessary information to one another and to people outside the group. • Formal and informal mechanisms exist	

5. Staff and Resources				
Leadership	• Leader has a negative image both within the partnership and the community at large. • The convening organization does not possess knowledge about college access and success, process skills, interpersonal skills, nor a sense of fairness and accountability. • The meeting convener is not skilled at balancing process and task activities.	• The convening leader has identified own skills needing additional development and a plan to improve. • Most partnership members view the convener as an organized, fair individual.	• Leadership for the partnership has authoritative knowledge about college access and success • Leadership has process, meeting facilitation and interpersonal skills and carries out the role with fairness. • Leader is skilled as a convener. • Leader is granted legitimacy by the partners	
Adequate human and financial resources	• The partnership lacks diverse, sustainable finances to maintain the partnership. • Partnership members are burdened and overstretched with the work that is required of them. • There is no plan for resource development.	• The partnership has basic staffing and basic funding to sustain its current operations. • A resource plan has not been developed.	• The partnership has a diverse, adequate, consistent financial base • Partnership has the staff to support its operations. • Has effective resource development plan in place and is already working.	
Source: Adapted from Mattessich and Monsey 1992, Mattessich et. All. 2001, Winer and Ray 2003				

I.4. PCAS Grantee One-Page Profiles

Below are one-page descriptions of the seven current PCAS grantees, each emphasizing its history and accomplishments in its work on college access and success.

Partnership Summary– Linking Learning To Life, Burlington, VT

Linking Learning to Life leads a dynamic partnership whose core purpose is to improve access to college and successful college completion for Vermont youth who face significant barriers to pursuing postsecondary education. The partnership strengthens and expands on the successful College Connections model developed over the past decade. College Connections is a college access program that provides college advising, academic support and dual enrollment for high school students taking courses at six Burlington area colleges and universities. The partnership is working to expand the program to include a college success component that will assure ongoing contact and support for participating students.

Linking Learning to Life is a nonprofit organization that develops and manages a comprehensive array of programs and services to prepare K-12 youth to pursue a lifetime of success. As the lead college access and success organization, it convenes and coordinates the partnership. Linking Learning to Life also has primary responsibility for funding, sustaining and expanding the College Connections model. The Vermont Student Assistance Corporation is an essential funder and vital student-information hub through its statewide financial aid database. The Burlington School District and Burlington High School provided the student access and system support that helped develop the core program model for other school districts to replicate. Community College of Vermont and the University of Vermont provide institutional access, dedicated student advising and a commitment to create college success models. All partners collaboratively design, problem solve, evaluate and improve our college access and success initiative.

A partnership's value is measured by results. Over the past three years, our partnership results include the following:

- The Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC) greatly enhanced its commitment to the partnership in 2006 by integrating College Connections into its statewide GEAR UP (federal college access program) strategic plan. The commitment includes six years of substantive funding and expansion support for College Connections.
- Initially, the University of Vermont limited high school student access to courses offered through the Continuing Education Division. The university broadened its engagement with College Connections by bringing together representatives from the President's Office, the Admissions Department, the College of Arts & Sciences, Student Support Services and Continuing Education to design a comprehensive approach to student support.
- In order to create a college success model, a critical first step was to establish a way to share student data among the institutions. Data-sharing agreements were established in less than six months that enable Linking Learning to Life to track Burlington students and graduates with the Burlington School District, the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, Community College of Vermont, and the University of Vermont.

Effective partnerships are learning communities that address and overcome the inevitable challenges in collaboration work across multiple institutions. Recent examples from our partnership include:

- Many high school students, particularly those with barriers such as limited English language skills, learning disabilities or low aspirations, failed in their initial attempts to complete a credited college course. Community College of Vermont worked with Linking Learning to Life to design and pilot a course, Introduction to College Studies, to help students

understand college expectations, develop study skills and build self-confidence. The course has taken off as a valuable transition step, with 286 students enrolling statewide last year.

- At Burlington High School, we learned that it is sometimes difficult to engage those students who could most benefit from College Connections. Students initially received elective high school credit for successfully completing a college course. Linking Learning to Life worked with the guidance staff to change their policy to award content-area credit (e.g. high school math credit for taking a college calculus class) as an additional incentive for students to meet their high school graduation requirements. This approach has now been adopted by other participating high schools.
- The College Connections partnership strove to reach high-risk students and dropouts through area alternative education programs, such as Youth Build, the Lund Family Center (for pregnant & parenting teens) and Spectrum Youth & Family Services Downtown Education Program. Our initial successful course completion rates for these youth were very low (about 15 percent compared with over 80 percent for all participating youth). Linking Learning to Life and Community College of Vermont have increased staff support and training for these sites and the successful course completion rate for alternative program youth increased. Through follow-up with some of these youth, we also learned that the program has had a powerful impact for some students even if they did not complete a course.

In Burlington, the Partnerships for College Access and Success framework is helping us mobilize a broad range of constituents to make systemic change to improve educational outcomes for some of our most vulnerable young people. Utilizing the power of partnership greatly increases the impact that any of our organizations could have independently.

Chicago PCAS Partnership Summary

As the Little Village Community Development Corporation (LVCDC) team convened in 2004, we began to share the stories of our own journeys to and through college. We were looking for that common thread that connected us to each other and the students who could become a focus of our work. We also wanted to identify the barriers that could possibly derail our students' path towards postsecondary success. We soon realized that the great majority of our PCAS team members were first-generation college students. Many of us also grew up in communities similar to those in which our students currently live. We recognized that many families in our communities have limited access to college because of economic, social and familial pressures.

Based on this reality, our PCAS team felt that it would be necessary to connect families to the resources in the neighborhood that can strengthen and stabilize family life. In order to help sustain this work, we invited additional community partners from Little Village and North Lawndale to work with us to expand the scope of PCAS. We invited a number of partners from both communities—Family Focus, North Lawndale Employment Network, Lawndale Community Church, IAMABLE Family Development Center, and Lawndale Christian Health Center were organizations from North Lawndale that participated. Universidad Popular, Instituto del Progreso Latino, and the Jorge Prieto Family Health Clinic were the participating organizations from the Little Village community. We planned to work with families, students and stakeholders from both communities in creating an atmosphere in which students were willing and able to gain access to college and succeed while there.

Founded in 1990, LVCDC is a grassroots community organization committed to ensuring balanced development and a sustainable future for all community members. LVCDC worked with parents and other community activists in applying pressure on Chicago Public Schools to build a new high school in Little Village, which included a 19-day parent hunger strike in May and June 2001. The state-of-the-art, multiplex high school (which is broken up into four small high schools) opened in fall 2005 and currently houses 1,200 students (grades 9-11, with its first set of senior classes set for fall 2008).

LVCDC has used its PCAS grant to develop a college-going culture in its Little Village High School initiative. It does so by engaging community mentors, ensuring financial assistance, involving families, and providing multiple opportunities for low-income students in the Little Village and Lawndale communities to gain the skills they need to succeed in college. From community bus tours to information workshops and college visits to summer leadership institutes, LVCDC has worked with its partners to begin instilling optimism about and preparation for the realities of obtaining a college education.

Chattanooga - Public Education Foundation Core Study

Public Education Foundation (PEF) provides expertise, leadership, and financial support to Hamilton County Department of Education (HCDE). PEF has used its PCAS grant to enhance its high school reform initiative with programming for at-risk youth throughout the Chattanooga-Hamilton County area. It has done this by forming school committees teachers, counselors, parents and students and by expanding the role of counselors in all high schools to support students in college access.

PEF has worked closely with the College Access Center (CAC) to encourage college attendance and help high school students navigate the college enrollment process, as well as working with area colleges in retaining HCDE students at their institutions.

- PEF is the lead local agency for the Partnership for College Access and Success (PCAS) initiative in Chattanooga. Our PCAS has many partners, including HCDE, CAC, the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, Chattanooga State Technical Community College, the Community Foundation, and the Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce.
- With funding from Lumina Foundation and administered by AED, PCAS has developed a pilot program in three Hamilton County high schools—one rural (Sale Creek Middle/High), one suburban (Red Bank High), and one urban (Howard School for Academics and Technology).
- As part of this initiative, motivational speakers have been brought to the three pilot schools to inspire students with their stories.
- A special summer intern program matches high school students with college students hired to give them first-hand insight into the college experience and how to get there.
- High school students have been taken on tours of college campuses.
- Counselors in all high schools have been invited to special training focused on college access.
- All these programs and partners have joined forces to help fund college advisors in 12 high schools. These coordinators provide information and encouragement to help students overcome obstacles to enrolling in college.

The results so far are promising:

- 70 percent of Hamilton County public school graduates enroll in college.
- From 2005 to 2006, the number of Hamilton County graduates enrolling in college increased from 1,324 to 1,499—a 13 percent increase.
- Since 2004, Hamilton County graduates have attended 273 colleges in 38 states, the District of Columbia, Canada, and the Caribbean.
- Some of these colleges are ranked among the top 20 in the nation by US News and World Report, including Cornell, Rice, Emory, Brown and Vanderbilt Universities, among others.

COMPASS Guide - Milwaukee, WI

COMPASS Guide is a community-based program that provides online and in-person assistance in post-secondary planning, including Wisconsin's *only* online searchable database of local scholarships. The true strength of the Partnership for College Access and Success (PCAS) lies in the partners who share ideas, engage in programs and mobilize the community around college access and success issues. COMPASS Guide is able to maximize resources by leveraging assets far beyond our own capacity.

In the first four years, the partnership has **focused on social and systemic change to increase college awareness, preparation and transition** at two high schools in the city of Milwaukee: Pulaski and Washington Campus. The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee is a core partner that has invested in new student retention and success strategies through its "Access to Success" initiative. Data-driven decision-making and the implementation of best practices in order to increase the rate of students who attend and succeed in college represent the core principles of the partnership.

Samples of impact in our first year with PCAS:

- Successfully negotiated a cross-institutional data exchange between the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and the Milwaukee Public School System to follow up with students in the summer after high school graduation.
- Leveraged resources from two partners, the Milwaukee Area Technical College and the UW System Multicultural Center for Educational Excellence, in conjunction with COMPASS Guide, to offer an overnight tour of college campuses, focusing on high school students in the 2.0 – 3.0 GPA range—students not typically selected for college tours. Student feedback was very positive.
- Trained teachers on the value of infusing career and college messages into the curriculum and worked with staff to incorporate college-focused activities for the general student population (not just in college-prep classes). Examples include career exploration, scholarship essay assignments, and guest speakers from local colleges.
- Hosted a "Financial Aid Blitz," with staff from four area colleges to provide personalized financial aid application assistance over a three-day period.
- Coordinated with Voces de la Frontera to perform a play about an immigrant student's struggle and dream to go to college. Presentation and follow-up assignments occurred through a bilingual class for predominantly Spanish-speaking students.
- UWM launched "Access to Success," a strategic directive to increase student retention and success. Students from Pulaski and Washington will benefit from new practices to help them succeed.
- UWM created comprehensive reports to track what happened to Pulaski and Washington alumni who enrolled at UWM this past year and analyzed student information based on gender, race, ACT scores, remedial placement and more. This allowed the university to look at a targeted sample of students as they moved through the University's first-year interventions.
- Created a Latino Student Services Committee at Pulaski High School with representatives from the school, universities and pre-college programs to dialogue about collaboration, meeting t he needs of Latino students and advising the school principal on overcoming barriers to college for Latino students.
- The Center for Urban Initiatives and Research hosted a public conference on May 24th, "College Access and Success: Our Community's Future" to reinforce best practices and introduce access and success concepts to the broader community. One hundred and fifty people attended from various groups, such as the United Way, the Urban League, the Mental Health Coalition, the State Legislature, local foundations and community agencies. The Mayor of Milwaukee, Tom Barrett, proclaimed May 24th College Access and Success Day, and the local paper wrote an article about diversity in colleges.

While the partnership has begun to influence social and systemic change within schools and colleges, the immediate beneficiaries are the students who have participated in partnership activities. These are students who might have fallen through the cracks but were put on the pathway to college through our network of programs and people.

Youth Development Institute - New York City Partnership for College Access and Success

Meghan is helpful and cares, we can get emotional support to fight obstacles because we wouldn't have known where to start.

Keep pushing us, do things to keep us focused in school, it helps that you guys are interested in helping us.

The New York City Partnership for College Access and Success, sponsored by the Youth Development Institute (YDI), a program of the Tides Center, is managing a pilot project to increase opportunities for college access and success for disconnected youth between the ages of 16 to 24, who have dropped out of school or are near to dropping out. The above quotes are from two students who are part of our first cohort entering college in August 2005 and were in their first semester at the time.

The goals of the project are to:

- Increase access and retention in postsecondary education for youth, 16 to 24 years of age, who have returned to school or a community program for a high school diploma or GED, and seek to go to college.
- Implement strong practices based on research in a Local Net work (LN) consisting of a community based organization, school or GED program and a college that utilizes the strengths of each partner to provide coherent supports to students.
- Utilize the partnership to further identify and disseminate promising practices to the LN, the participating organizations and others.
- Identify and address policy gaps in the citywide infrastructure for creating supports and resources for disconnected youth in New York City.
- Obtain additional funding to facilitate the continuing work of the NYC Partnership.

The project has two components: 1) Promising Practices Partnership (PPP) comprising community-based organizations, school partners, the City University of New York's (CUNY) central office and YDI; and 2) a Local Network, comprising two or more community-based organizations, school/GED programs and a CUNY college.

San Antonio Education Partnership Partnership Summary

The San Antonio Education Partnership is the formal 501 (c) 3 organizational entity created in 1988 for the partner groups coming together to provide college opportunities to at-risk high school students. Partnership founders, relying on their experience with other citywide efforts, felt a partnership uniting students, schools, colleges and universities, and businesses, civic and government leaders would create efficiencies, maximize resources, and enhance sustainability. The Partnership has undergone some organizational changes in its life, but the mission to help at risk students remains at the heart of the collaboration.

Since its inception the Partnership has served as the focal point in disseminating over $9 million in scholarships to low income students. This has helped increase college attendance among its eligible students in target high schools from 374 in 1989 to 2,322 in 2005. The Partnership has also helped organize a support system for students, which includes on direct financial support from the City of San Antonio and participating school districts, direct in-kind support from colleges and universities, and volunteer help from the business community and community organizations. Equally important has been the Partnership's role in linking education to economic development, which has contributed to the city's increased investment over the past decade (from $195,000 in 1996 to $1.5 million in 2006).

A great deal of learning has occurred through the PCAS work. One lesson learned relates to the need not always for more resources, but for a better alignment and coordination of existing resources. The Partnership has been extremely impressed with the high level of activity and dedication to college access and success, but equally disappointed with the lack of connectivity in program implementation and long-term goals. Consequently, the Partnership has assumed a greater responsibility in linking partners and their resources. A second lesson has been a reinforcement of the value of personal relationships and their role in establishing an operational base for systemic changes. Progress in reaching two-year college students has been facilitated by existing relationships at various academic leadership levels. Third, with respect to partner relationships, a situation arising during the PCAS implementation highlighted the continued need for partnership management and vigilance, especially as it relates to self-interests. One partner's desire to pursue its self-interest at the expense of the overall partnership produced cracks in relationships, which required the Partnership's time and energy to avoid a negative impact on student work.

The unifying factor in this last challenge was the understanding that the Partnership exists to benefit students and their families. And while a healing period has been necessary, work continues on behalf of students, partly due to the numerous stories of determination and dreams shared by participants.

Port Jobs/Airport University, Seattle

"I had not thought much about the future. Always seemed like I was just working for today. But I somehow thought in the back of my mind that I would become a nurse. I will have to improve my English to do this. I am not so sure about the rest but because of Airport University I plan to find out more about what types of college programs may be available."

– Airport University student

The Lumina Foundation funding filled a tremendous need, underscoring the vast possibilities and potential of taking college to the workplace.

The Reality

Many airport employees work in low- wage jobs characterized by erratic, changing work schedules and limited opportunities for advancement.

- Blocked by a lack of time and information, few low-wage workers envision college as a next step in their life plan.
- When asked about the future, many employees share dreams of a different job. Lacking a roadmap and resources, these dreams are often put on hold.
- Often responsible for supporting extended families, many employees cannot afford to quit their jobs to go to school and must balance the demands of school, work and family.

What Changed

- Merging the worlds of work and college, bringing the classroom to the workplace, Airport University used Lumina Foundation funds to change the landscape of the airport for workers and employers.
- Employers began to see the Airport University classes as pathways to a more skilled labor force. Incumbent workers began to seize rare opportunities to learn
- Some workers—the first to go to college in their family—began to champion the benefits of a college education to their friends and family.
- The Airport University scholarship funds and partnerships with local community colleges – made it possible for many workers to pursue a college education.

The Road Ahead for Workers

- Faced with the need to work and study many low-wage persons in the airport economy need to access career guidance and resources that can accommodate a long term career plan.
- For many, college access pathways need to be clearly defined and coupled with educational advising and career coaching.
- Many workers would benefit from the creation of policies and funding streams designed to support the special needs of low wage workers.

"I can only take one class at a time. I need to work while I go to school. That is my reality – and definitely an uphill challenge. I can't qualify for tuition loans."

– Airport University student

What's Next?

With the Lumina Foundation funding about to end, we need to continue our efforts to leverage and draw support to the Airport University program and to advocate for policies that make it easier for low-wage workers at the airport and elsewhere to pursue a college education. We plan to use what we have learned to demonstrate the benefits of providing workplace college courses to policymakers, to workers, to employers, to families and to our society. A full evaluation of our program is available.