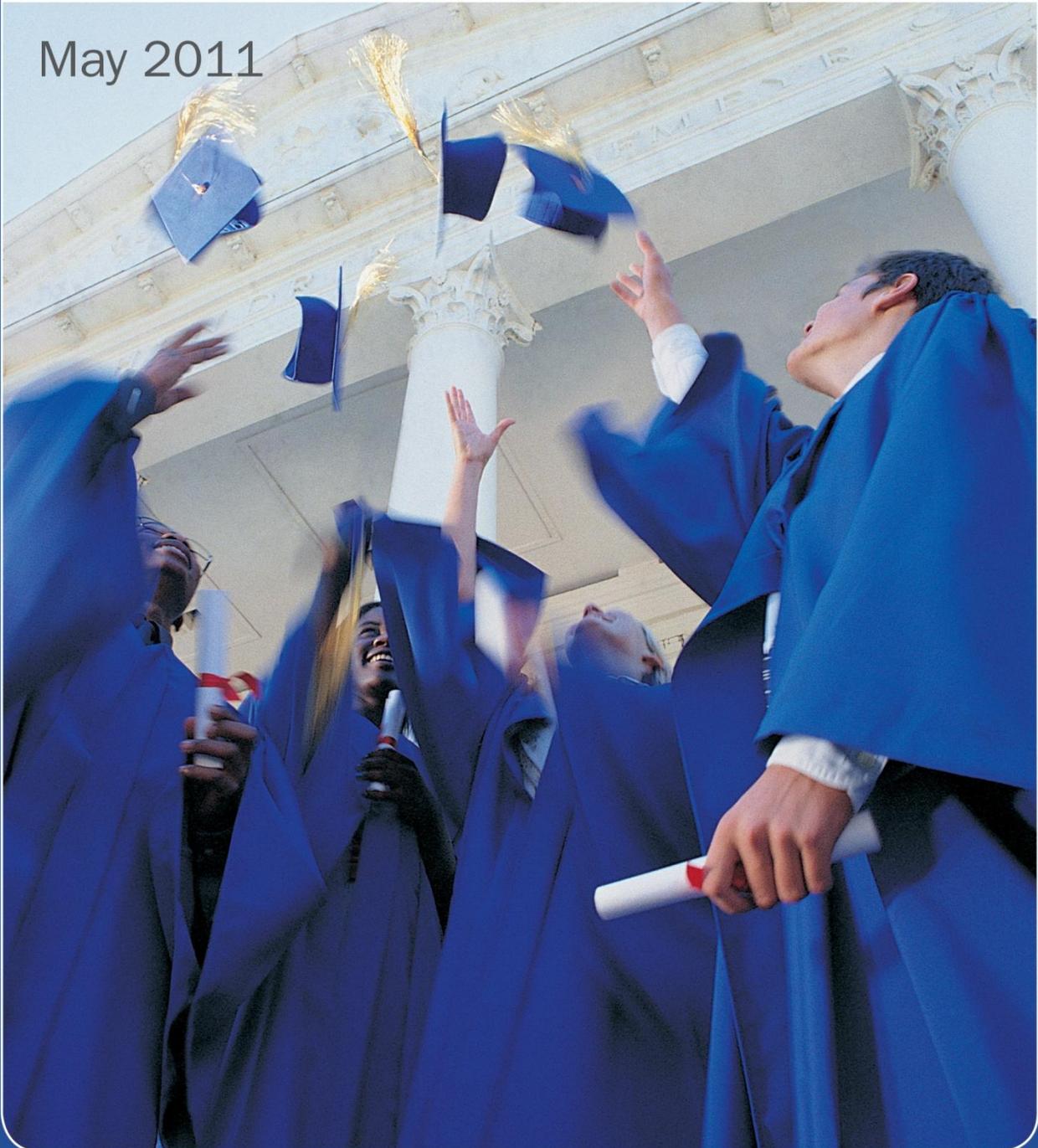


A Strategic Plan to Improve College Access for the St. Louis Region

May 2011



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Executive Summary

Over the past five years, the St. Louis philanthropic, business, education, and nonprofit communities have become increasingly interested in college access and degree completion. As the region's economy becomes more focused on high-tech industries, there is a need for a more highly skilled and educated workforce. In Missouri, it is projected that 59 percent of all jobs in the state will require a postsecondary degree by 2018 (Matthews, 2010). In other words, a high school diploma is no longer sufficient to successfully compete in today's economy. Higher college completion rates support the economy in many ways and increase the financial and social benefits of the community and region (St. Louis Regional College Access Pipeline Project, 2009).

St. Louis is struggling in this area. In 2007, the baccalaureate completion rate in the St. Louis metropolitan area was 28.1 percent. In addition, among the 35 largest metropolitan areas in the United States in 2007, the St. Louis metropolitan area ranked 12th in the share of population with a high school diploma, 24th in baccalaureate completion share, and 31st in the share of African Americans with baccalaureate degrees (St. Louis Regional College Access Pipeline Project, 2009). Being in the bottom third does little to position St. Louis for future vitality.

The St. Louis Regional College Access Pipeline Project (CAP) was created in 2008 as a consortium of Missouri-based community members committed to improving college access for students in the St. Louis region. The group gathered to establish a common understanding of what students need to successfully pursue higher education and develop a coordinated strategy for maximizing the results for as many low-income students as possible. Its mission is to increase the proportion of adults in the St. Louis region who earn postsecondary degrees to 50 percent by 2020.

Developing a Strategy for the Region

In late 2009, CAP presented the College Access Pipeline Report, which was St. Louis' first-ever report on how St. Louis is faring on preparing low-income students for college completion. Based on the findings from the report, CAP is focused on six core goals to advance the St. Louis region closer to its mission.

1. Advocate for verifiable (third-party) disaggregated outcome data on students served.
2. Expand and coordinate college access/persistence service delivery.
3. Promote a college-going culture in high schools and youth organizations.
4. Remove obstacles to accessing financial support.
5. Involve higher education institutions in improving academic preparation.
6. Broaden community focus to make college enrollment *and* persistence to completion priorities.

As a convener, CAP has adopted three core activities to guide its work across these goals:

1. Build a common, research-based understanding of needs and opportunities for increasing college enrollment and retention in the St. Louis area.

2. Advocate for resources and policies that support the pursuit of postsecondary education by low-income students.
3. Convene funders, educators, and college access providers to implement specific strategies and collaboration.

Taking Action

Understanding the importance of engaging the community to solve the regionwide issue of college access and completion, CAP has embarked on several activities that focus on improving college access and completion regionwide and draw on the expertise of stakeholders throughout the community. These activities include the following:

- **Professional development for college access service providers.** Since November 2010, CAP has been convening approximately 30 youth development and college access practitioners to network, share best practices, and learn together. Each Lunch and Learn has featured a guest speaker on relevant topics (e.g., the right college match) and provided practitioners with tools and resources.
- **Communications plan.** CAP is developing a website that will provide access to data and resources tailored to students, parents, educators, service providers, and other stakeholders.
- **Policy advocacy.** CAP's advocacy committee determined that the state policy of most immediate relevance to CAP supports CAP's fourth goal of removing financial obstacles. CAP's advocacy initiatives focus on the Access Missouri need-based student financial aid program.
- **St. Louis scholarship clearinghouse.** CAP has created an online scholarship database that lists privately funded scholarships and the criteria associated with each scholarship. This is the first time such information has existed in one place for student and parent access. The next phase is to expand the database to also include scholarship administration and student matching and tracking.

A Deeper Level of Community Engagement

Recognizing the power of engaging the community at a deeper level, CAP facilitated a communitywide process that began in November 2010 to develop a coordinated plan focused on improving college access and completion for the St. Louis region. Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation (TG) Public Benefit Competitive Grant Program funds were used toward this community planning process, which focused on a subset of CAP's six core goals. Although all six goals are integral for student success, CAP chose to focus its intensive community engagement efforts on the three goals that depend heavily on public will and stakeholder involvement. These goals are as follows:

- Expand and coordinate college access/persistence service delivery.
- Promote a college-going culture in high schools and youth organizations.

- Broaden community focus to make college enrollment *and* persistence to completion priorities.

Through this community strategic planning process, CAP convened nearly 70 funders, higher education administrators, representatives from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Missouri Department of Higher Education (MDHE), educators, business leaders, and college access providers over a six-month period. These 70 people were divided among three workgroups that were each charged with establishing a regionwide strategic plan for their focus area. Workgroup members were identified based on their expertise related to the workgroup goal, a commitment to participate in the process, and a willingness to champion the CAP mission.

Through a series of workgroup sessions, the experts from the community developed a set of recommendations and strategies that were focused on research, actionable, and measurable. In addition, the workgroups were charged with identifying existing opportunities in the region that could be leveraged to help implement the strategies developed for the plan rather than creating new work or duplicating existing efforts.

As a part of the community planning process, CAP also invited feedback from nearly 200 parents and students in an online survey designed to solicit their input on the strategies included in the strategic plan. Several of the questions on the survey asked both parents and students about issues related to implementation of the strategies. Their responses helped identify barriers to implementation and provided suggestions for where to provide services and how to inform students about helpful opportunities.

A Strategic Plan for the Region

As a result of the community planning process and CAP's advocacy and scholarship database efforts, 11 strategies were identified for the region's strategic plan. The strategies that emerged underscore the importance of high schools, youth development organizations, service providers, higher education institutions, and funders working together to achieve CAP's goal of increasing the proportion of adults in the CAP area who earn postsecondary degrees to 50 percent by 2020.

The implementation of the 11 strategies in the regional plan will be phased to ensure fidelity with the stated goals and garner the resources to be successful. The resources needed for implementing most of the strategies will be found by aligning or leveraging existing resources. CAP's multisector network will lay the foundation for this alignment and leveraging. Although the strategies have been phased, it is important to note that the order of implementation may change if funding opportunities become available to fund strategies in an earlier timeframe.

The following 5 strategies will be implemented first because they provide the foundational elements needed to ensure the success of the other strategies. Each strategy can be fully implemented in a short time frame and will result in stronger relationships throughout the region, which will ease the implementation of the other strategies.

1. Establish common definitions and outcome measures to be used by providers and funders across the region.
2. Engage a higher education coalition that focuses on sharing best practices and cross-institution collaboration to ensure that low-income students succeed in college.
3. Develop a regionwide searchable database that provides information on service providers, high schools, and the linkages between both.
4. Establish a centralized portal where students and families can obtain current information about scholarship opportunities, apply online for several grant opportunities, and access financial aid planning resources.
5. Advocate for need-based financial aid at the state and federal levels.

Building on the foundation of the outcomes resulting from these efforts, CAP will focus its efforts on the next 3 strategies, which are primarily focused on service delivery and professional development.

1. Develop formal systems to ensure students participate in activities at every stage of the college-going continuum (college exposure, preparation, and access).
2. Provide professional development focused on the elements of a college-going culture and train teachers, other school staff, and other youth development providers.
3. Expand professional development opportunities for service providers. Focus on peer exchanges, the sharing of best practices, and collaboration.

The remaining 3 strategies are part of CAP’s long-term efforts. Although efforts are currently underway across the region to achieve these strategic outcomes, the strategies will take significant levels of collaboration and time to be completed and well implemented over the years. These strategies are as follows:

1. Engage, inform, and support parents on the steps required to navigate from high school to college.
2. Develop an interagency longitudinal data system that tracks student outcomes, beginning in high school and continuing through college completion.
3. Develop university-sponsored and -led programs that support entering students beginning in high school and continuing through postsecondary completion.

Moving Forward

The collective effort needed for implementation has begun. CAP’s multisector engagement has laid a foundation to successfully execute this work. Throughout the coming months, CAP is focusing its efforts on identifying funding sources, placing primary focus on leveraging and aligning existing resources, which will be supported by securing additional funds. CAP’s steering committee is forming a sustainability committee to package the components of this strategic plan into manageable pieces that can be implemented and funded in the short, intermediate, and long terms.

In addition, the sustainability committee will propose an infrastructure for CAP that enables it to continue playing a leadership role in promoting strategies, convening stakeholders, and

monitoring and measuring progress. Current conversations with one local foundation may lead to sustained project management funding. Through its work with both the National League of Cities and the national Strive Together office, CAP will build on lessons learned from the field to define the most effective structure for continuing progress and momentum.

CAP is continually seeking individuals and organizations willing to commit to implementing this plan as it works toward increasing the proportion of adults in the CAP area who earn higher education degrees to 50 percent by 2020.

Background

Over the past five years, the St. Louis philanthropic, business, education, and nonprofit communities have become increasingly interested in college access and degree completion. As the region's economy becomes more focused on high-tech industries, there is a need for a more highly skilled and educated workforce. In Missouri, it is projected that 59 percent of all jobs in the state will require a postsecondary degree by 2018 (Matthews, 2010). In other words, a high school diploma is no longer sufficient to successfully compete successfully in today's economy. Higher college completion rates support the economy in many ways and increase the financial and social benefits of the community and region (St. Louis Regional College Access Pipeline Project, 2009).

If the St. Louis metropolitan area is to successfully compete for jobs, attract new employers, or expand existing companies, improved access to and attainment of education beyond high school is essential. Earning a college degree benefits the individual, the community, and the region. The median earnings for a Missouri full-time worker with a bachelor's degree were 156 percent higher than those with just a high school diploma and 230 percent higher than those who did not graduate from high school (St. Louis Regional College Access Pipeline Project, 2009). Clustering what have come to be labeled "knowledge workers" has a synergistic impact that benefits more than the degree holders themselves. A 1 percent increase in a region's BA degree share leads to between a 1.6 and 1.9 percent rise in the wages of those with a high school education or less (St. Louis Regional College Access Pipeline Project, 2009). Baccalaureate degree attainment translates to other economic gains, including lower health costs, fewer demands on social services, and greater civic engagement (St. Louis Regional College Access Pipeline Project, 2009).

CAP was formed in 2008 by convening a group of stakeholders from St. Louis' largest college access providers, as well as corporate and foundation funders. The group gathered in response to concerns about the fragmented efforts of a growing number of effective programs to help low-income students pursue college degrees in the St. Louis region.

CAP has developed into a sustained regional effort of college access providers, educators, and business leaders to better help area high school students pursue and complete a postsecondary degree. CAP is volunteer based and directed by a steering committee that represents a diverse group of organizations, including college access programs, nonprofit organizations, higher education, state education agencies, local education agencies, and the business community. A list of the steering committee members is in Appendix A, and a list of the funders is in Appendix B.

The College Access Landscape

In July 2009, CAP completed the College Access Pipeline Report, which was St. Louis' first-ever report on how St. Louis is faring on preparing low-income students for college completion. The report was coauthored by Dr. Terry Jones and Cynthia Palazzolo and includes background information on the benefits of attaining a postsecondary degree, identifies supports available locally and nationally, outlines barriers to attainment, and includes data on educational outcomes of low-income students between 15 and 20 years old. The report focuses on the seven largest

Missouri counties in the St. Louis metropolitan area (St. Louis City, St. Louis County, St. Charles County, Jefferson County, Franklin County, Warren County, and Lincoln County). These seven counties are referred to as the CAP area and contain about three-fourths of the population of the St. Louis region. For a full listing of St. Louis Metropolitan area counties, please see Appendix C.

Several key statistics provide context for the college access landscape in the CAP area. Nationally, 27.9 percent of Americans 25 years old and older possessed a baccalaureate degree in 2009. For Missouri, the baccalaureate completion rate was 25.2 percent in 2009. Missouri's baccalaureate completion rate has lagged behind the national average by about three percentage points since 1990 (U.S. Census, 2009).

The 2009 baccalaureate completion rate in the St. Louis metropolitan area, which includes the CAP area, was 29.4 percent (U.S. Census, 2009) compared to 28.1 percent in 2007 (St. Louis Regional College Access Pipeline Project, 2009). In addition, among the 35 largest metropolitan areas in the United States in 2007, the St. Louis metropolitan area ranked 12th in the share of population with high school diploma, 24th in baccalaureate completion share, and 31st in African Americans with baccalaureate degrees (St. Louis Regional College Access Pipeline Project, 2009).

Individual Barriers to College Completion

The College Access Pipeline Report identified several barriers to college access that ultimately impact college completion rates in the CAP area. The barriers were both individual and systemic. Individual barriers include poverty level, parental degree attainment, minority status, student-teacher ratios, access to quality teaching, and daily attendance in high school. If basic educational needs are not being met, students struggle to meet their postsecondary aspirations. Table 1 presents key statistics from tables in Jones and Palazzolo (2009) related to these barriers for the CAP area.

Table 1. Individual Barriers to Degree Attainment

Barrier	Key Statistics
Poverty level	In 2008, 32.3 percent of CAP area public high school students qualified for free or reduced-price lunch (Table 76).
Parental degree attainment	In 2006, 50 percent of the parents of CAP area Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) applicants reported having no college education (Table 53).
Minority status	In 2007, 14.8 percent of the 25-and-older African American population had a baccalaureate degree versus 30.3 percent of the white population in the St. Louis metropolitan area (Table 12).
Student-teacher ratios	In 2008, the ratio of public high school students to regular classroom teachers was 21:1 in the CAP area compared to 18:1 in Missouri (Table 81).
Access to quality teaching	In 2008, 95.1 percent of teachers in the CAP area were considered highly qualified as compared to 97 percent in Missouri ¹ (Table 91).
Daily attendance	The average daily attendance rate for the CAP area increased during the period from 2006 to 2008; at 92.3 percent, it is slightly above the Missouri average daily attendance rate (Table 136).

Systemic Barriers to College Completion

Systemic barriers to college access include the following:

- **College as a goal.** Students must aspire to attend college and pursue a postsecondary degree. Making college a goal should start early and be consistently messaged to students at home, in school, and outside school. In 2007, 85.8 percent of U.S. high school completers enrolled in a two-year or four-year institution had parents with a bachelor’s degree or more, compared with 50.9 percent for those whose parents who had a high school degree or less (Jones and Palazzolo, 2009, Table 8).
- **Academic preparation.** Academic preparation is tied directly to success. The better prepared a student is, the more likely he or she will succeed. In 2008, the percentage of CAP area public high school students testing at or above proficient or advanced for the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) Mathematics and Science was about 3 percent lower than the state level results (Jones and Palazzolo, 2009, Tables 126, and 131). In 2008, the percentage of CAP area public high school students testing at or above proficient or advanced for MAP Communication Arts was about 1 percent lower than the state level results (Jones and Palazzolo, 2009, Tables 121).
- **College-going climate.** According to the Consortium on Chicago School Research, “The single most consistent predictor of whether students took steps toward college enrollment was whether their teachers reported that their high school had a strong college climate”

¹ The Missouri DESE considers a highly qualified teacher as a teacher who possesses at least a bachelor’s degree, demonstrates content expertise by passing a state-approved test or completing an academic major or coursework equivalent to a major, and holds full certification for his or her current teaching assignment.

(Roderick, Nagaoka, Coca, & Moeller, 2008). A college-going culture sets the expectation that college is expected and provides supports to help students make their aspirations a reality.

- **Navigating the process.** The college application and enrollment process is complex, especially for first-generation college applicants. Despite high aspirations, many students are unable to make the transition to college. One reason for this could be the complex process students and families must navigate to successfully enroll and persist (St. Louis Regional College Access Pipeline Project, 2009).
- **Affordability.** For many families, especially low-income families, financing postsecondary studies is a challenge and a struggle. Supports are needed to ensure that families can manage all the costs and implications related to pursuing postsecondary studies (St. Louis Regional College Access Pipeline Project, 2009).
- **Persistence to graduation.** In 2007, the St. Louis metropolitan area ranked 31st out of 35 metropolitan areas in terms of degree completion among African Americans 25 years old and older and 28th in terms of degree completion among whites in the same age group (Jones and Palazzolo, 2009). The St. Louis metropolitan area must keep pace with the demands required by a thriving metropolitan area. Students must graduate from high school, enroll in a postsecondary institution, persist, and then become a valuable member of the workforce.

Promising Regional Efforts

On a positive note, over the past few years, CAP has witnessed and participated in an expanding number of efforts designed to boost college degree attainment in the St. Louis region. Whenever possible, CAP will leverage this momentum as it moves forward with promoting its priorities. Numerous stakeholder groups, including service providers, higher education institutions, and nonprofit organizations are involved and collaborating regionally to improve college access and degree completion.

In 2009, more than 35 nonprofit organizations and higher education institutions had one or more programs in which helping students in the CAP area attend a postsecondary institution and persist is one of the goals (Jones and Palazzolo, 2009). Since the research and interviews were done in 2009, most of these programs have expanded, and additional programs have opened. The carefully planned expansion of services to the highest need areas is taking place. For instance, the Missouri College Advising Corps will soon expand to five high schools in the St. Louis area and is choosing those schools based on data and feedback from CAP research and participants. The likelihood of meaningful traction is far greater as a result. In addition, several of the MDHE College Access Challenge Grant recipients are located in the region. To promote services coordination and delivery to those in greatest need, MDHE is linking its College Access Challenge Grant grantees and ensuring that each grantee has a strong sense of other resource providers in the area and how they might collaborate.

There is also a growing collaboration among college access/success providers in the St. Louis region. This is evidenced by new memorandums of understanding for service between certain providers, a collaborative planning approach within school buildings among providers in the

same high schools, and new partnerships between traditional youth providers and college access providers who have the specific technical expertise to aid students at critical moments in their college pathway. The growth in networking—due in part to CAP activities—that now laces the St. Louis community more tightly together cannot be underestimated.

In addition, several civic entities are focusing on education as a means of ensuring that a skilled workforce exists in the region. Civic entities such as Civic Progress, the St. Louis Regional Chamber & Growth Association (RCGA), and the St. Louis Regional Business Council are focusing on improving the number and diversity of individuals with college degrees. They understand that having a skilled workforce in the St. Louis metropolitan area is critical to future vitality. All three entities have voiced an interest and participated in planning sessions to ensure that their efforts are aligned with CAP’s interests. In fact, RCGA and CAP are exploring how to promote a shared “public will” campaign to raise awareness of the importance of college degree completion.

Institutes of higher education are also making workforce training a priority. Five St. Louis regional community college systems are working with their local Workforce Investment Boards and the RCGA through the Graduate! St. Louis Consortium. Led by the St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment (SLATE) and RCGA, the consortium received a \$4.4 million Department of Labor grant to provide training and degrees to adults who pursue some high-growth industries in St. Louis (health care, information technology, and emerging “green” industries). The grant, which supports scholarships, curriculum development, remedial class activity, and instructors, is expected to help 2,200 adults over three years. The target population for this work is incumbent workers, dislocated workers, and the unemployed.

CAP, as a project of the mayor of the City of St. Louis, was selected by the National League of Cities to be in its Postsecondary Access Network, an effort funded by the Lumina Foundation. As a result, CAP is participating in training and peer exchange with other regions across the United States.

Promising State Efforts

There are also several Missouri state-level initiatives focused on college access. The state is uniquely situated to create systemic improvements that will undergird the coordination of service delivery at the local level, academic preparation and school district accountability for outcomes, and the creation of a college-going culture in secondary schools.

MDHE has assumed a leadership role in building a statewide dialogue on college access and completion, expanding its reach beyond institutions of higher education and into community organizations. MDHE was awarded a College Access Challenge Grant that it has administered for three years. The goal of the grant is to increase the number of Missouri students who view postsecondary education as a viable option, both academically and financially. The program scope includes three primary areas of focus:

1. Improving financial literacy

2. Information sharing, specifically designing a website to provide students and families with information and tools to assist in planning and succeeding in college
3. A subgrant process to support existing outreach activities focusing on college access (Currently, seven college access agencies working in the St. Louis region benefit by College Access Challenge Grants: College Bound, College Summit, Infinite Scholars, the Missouri College Advising Corps, Scholarship Foundation, the St. Louis Internship Program, and the Wyman Center.) (Missouri Department of Higher Education, 2008)

In addition, Missouri was awarded a State Longitudinal Data System Grant in 2009 to develop a data system that securely follows students from early education through the workforce. The expected outcomes include a training and support system for teachers and other users; a data repository to consolidate longitudinal data and the conversion of all aggregate collections to unit records; and a portal to manage the collection, access, and reporting of data for use by teachers and districts (Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grant Program, 2011). Currently, such a system is a cornerstone of the Top 10 by 20 Initiative announced by the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. Discussion and planning for data articulation between MDHE and DESE is an encouraging outcome.

In addition to creating the architecture to manage and report data in concert with MDHE, DESE is poised to bolster college access and outcomes by redirecting school district accreditation standards toward measuring college and career readiness. Although controversial, the proposed standards (MSIP5) include the reporting of key indicators of preparation such as ACT scores, AP offerings and proficiency scores, college enrollment rates, and the frequency of postsecondary remediation. These proposed new standards have the potential to create closer articulation between K–12 curriculum and postsecondary institutions. Measuring progress toward these standards will provide districts an additional incentive to improve student outcomes. Although the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education and the State Board of Education are debating the feasibility of the proposed standards, they are engaging school district leadership in a critical statewide conversation on the importance of postsecondary education and the ingredients necessary to create student success.

The Goal for the Region

CAP's mission is to increase the proportion of adults in the CAP area who earn higher education degrees to 50 percent by 2020. To realize this mission, they are working to establish a common understanding of what low-income students need to successfully pursue higher education and develop a coordinated strategy for maximizing the results for as many students as possible.

Based on the findings from the College Access Pipeline Report by Jones and Palazzolo (2009), CAP identified six core goals to advance St. Louis closer to its mission:

1. Advocate for verifiable (third-party) disaggregated outcome data on students served.
2. Expand and coordinate college access / persistence service delivery.
3. Promote a college-going culture in high schools and youth organizations.
4. Remove obstacles to accessing financial support.
5. Involve higher education institutions in improving academic preparation.

6. Broaden community focus to make college enrollment *and* persistence to completion priorities.

These CAP strategies focus on the period beginning in ninth grade and continuing through a student's postsecondary studies. CAP's primary audience is low-income and first-generation students. For the purposes of this plan, low income is defined as high school students qualifying for the federal free and reduced-price lunch program as well as students determined Pell-eligible at the postsecondary level. First generation can be defined in multiple ways, but for purposes of this plan, a first-generation student is a student whose parents never attended a postsecondary institution or did not attain a postsecondary degree.

CAP Activities

All CAP activities support the core goals and are tied to at least one of the three following foundational elements of CAP:

1. Build a common, research-based understanding of needs and opportunities for increasing college enrollment and retention in the St. Louis area.
2. Advocate for resources and policies that support the pursuit of postsecondary education by low-income students.
3. Convene funders, educators, and college access providers to implement specific strategies and collaboration.

After CAP commissioned the College Access Pipeline Report, the report was shared at an October 2009 forum titled *Building Better Futures*. Nearly 250 stakeholders attended this forum to hear the featured keynote speaker, Greg Darnieder—the Special Assistant on College Access at the U.S. Department of Education—who helped to set the stage for further community planning. At the forum, CAP invited participants to join in advancing the six goals presented on page 11.

CAP approached the TG Public Benefit Competitive Grant Program in 2010 for funding to formalize its efforts to advance its core strategies and increase college degree attainment in the St. Louis region. This program supports the idea that nonprofit organizations and higher education institutions are best positioned to determine and propose solutions to address the issues of college access and success for those whom they serve. In July 2010, CAP was awarded a grant to support four initiatives:

1. Engage in communitywide strategic planning for developing a strong pipeline of educational services to the 26,000 low-income high school students in the region.
2. Establish a communications platform that promotes greater community awareness of college access services available to students and families and helps programs better coordinate their efforts.
3. Create a means for youth development and college access providers to collectively advocate for the needs of their students.
4. Offer professional development for frontline college access practitioners.

There are several diverse activities that both support the CAP initiatives and continue to engage the stakeholder community. The following activities tie directly to at least one of these initiatives:

- **Professional development for college access service providers.** CAP has initiated a Lunch and Learn series that engages 30 school-based student-facing practitioners. The topics are timely and based on the needs of the participants. At the Lunch and Learns, participants learn about a particular topic (e.g., FAFSA, parent engagement) and share best practices with their colleagues.
- **Communications plan.** CAP's communication plan is under development. It represents CAP's understanding of its target audience and incorporates the most efficient means to reach the largest possible population. This includes the development of a website that will provide access to data and resources tailored to students, parents, educators, service providers, and others involved in and interested in college access and success.
- **Policy advocacy.** CAP's steering committee established an ad hoc advocacy committee in December 2010 to identify and recommend policy positions for CAP. The advocacy committee consists of seven members of the steering committee and represents service providers and funders. The advocacy committee discusses statewide policy initiatives under consideration at the legislative and administrative levels in Missouri. The advocacy committee determined that the state policy of most immediate relevance to CAP was need-based financial aid, which represents CAP's fourth goal of removing financial obstacles. CAP's position is that of all the scholarship programs in the state, Access Missouri is the one that best supports first-generation, low-income, and minority students. CAP strongly advocated this year for full funding of the Access Missouri program through testimony at a budget hearing, letters to legislators, and an op-ed in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*.
- **St. Louis scholarship clearinghouse.** The vision is to create one portal serving as a trusted, collaborative clearinghouse that is an efficient means for low-income students in the St. Louis region to learn about scholarship support and donors to make sound investments in students with promise. The clearinghouse would offer donors a range of options that includes scholarship administration (most intensive level of service), student matching and tracking, and simple scholarship listing (least intensive level of service). An initial online scholarship database that lists privately funded scholarships and the criteria associated with each scholarship currently exists.
- **Community engagement.** TG Public Benefit Competitive Grant funds were used to develop a community engagement and strategic planning process focusing on a subset of the six core strategies. Although all six goals are integral for student success and there is overlap among the key activities supporting each goal, CAP leadership chose to initially focus its community engagement efforts on three goals:
 1. Expand and coordinate college access/persistence service delivery.
 2. Promote a college-going culture in high schools and youth organizations.

3. Broaden community focus to make college enrollment *and* persistence to completion priorities.

These three goals were chosen as the community engagement cornerstones because success in these three strategies depends heavily on public will and stakeholder involvement. The remainder of this document primarily focuses on the community engagement and the strategic planning process and its results.

Community Engagement Workgroups

To engage the community in the strategic planning process, CAP convened funders, educators, and college access providers to develop a regionwide strategic plan that would strengthen the college access pipeline in St. Louis. CAP engaged the services of the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to facilitate the community engagement and strategic planning process. Information on AIR and its areas of expertise is in Appendix D.

Workgroup Objectives

CAP convened three workgroups to address and develop action plans. The three workgroups and their charges were as follows:

1. **Expand and coordinate service delivery.** Expand and coordinate service delivery by expanding effective efforts, improving the delivery of services to schools and areas in greatest need, and aligning services within schools to avoid duplication.
2. **Promote a college-going culture in high schools and youth development organizations.** Develop strategies related to the key components of a college-going culture, which include teachers and adults with high expectations, focused planning time, trained advisors, and a college prep curriculum.
3. **Improve college persistence.** Explore strategies that could be employed to improve persistence. Persistence strategies may include supports to adjust to college life, basic and remedial academic courses, financial planning support, and psychosocial support.

These three workgroups were engaged between October 2010 and March 2011 and were charged with the ultimate objective of establishing a regionwide strategic plan with specific action plans that were focused on research, actionable, and measurable. The workgroup sessions also ensured that a network of community stakeholders was engaged in implementation and provided an opportunity for peer networking.

Member Selection

The workgroup members were identified based on their expertise related to the workgroup goal, a commitment to participate in the process, and a willingness to champion the CAP mission. CAP initially drew from the list of volunteers identified at the *Building Better Futures* community forum held in October 2009. During member selection, significant effort was made to create workgroups with a broad representation of the community. Workgroups consisted of representatives from K–12 education, higher education, government (state and local), business, and direct service organizations serving youth and providing college access services. With such high levels of knowledge and expertise in the region, it was difficult to limit the workgroup participation. However, workgroups were kept to approximately 20 members to optimize productivity yet have sufficient breadth to be successful. Each workgroup was led by two cochairs (at least one of whom was a member of the CAP steering committee) and facilitated by consultants from AIR. In total, 68 workgroup participants volunteered significant time and energy to the CAP planning process. The rosters of the three workgroups are in Appendixes E–G.

Foundational Elements

For the strategic plan to be well implemented and produce the intended outcome of increased postsecondary completion, it was determined that the strategies developed by the workgroups needed to be:

1. Be grounded in research-based practices (based on both quality of research and findings).
2. Be actionable and feasibly implemented with the resources available.
3. Be measurable so that progress can be monitored.

Research-Based Activities

A literature scan was conducted to identify research findings for programs focused on college preparation, access, and success. The research was put into a compendium and distributed to the workgroups to help them evaluate the recommended strategies. As a result, each workgroup was provided with an understanding of research and proven practices that addressed needs and opportunities for increasing college enrollment and retention related to each workgroup's focus area.

Overall, there is a lack of rigorous studies available on college access and retention efforts. This is discussed in several literature reviews (Lumina Foundation, 2008; Patton et al. 2006; Spradlin, Rutkowski, Burroughs, & Lang, 2010) and can be partly attributed to the difficulty of identifying control groups. Instituting proper controls to study the impact and effectiveness of different interventions and programs would require denying services, which presents ethical concerns. There is also a dearth of research on the effectiveness of collaborative efforts, such as communities of practice, information sharing, and coalitions. These types of practices are very unique to a specific situation, the goals of the collaboration, and the leadership involved, so although there may be exemplars identified in case studies, they are not targets of rigorous research.

In addition to creating the research compendium, AIR also looked at college access initiatives in other U.S. cities where specific strategies identified by workgroups were taking place. Workgroup participants, therefore, were informed about the research behind the recommendations they made and about the degree to which similar work was taking place in other places. The research compendium is in Appendix H.

Actionable and Feasible Activities

There are many factors that can affect a group's ability to implement a new strategy, including funding, political will, access to human capital, and access to facilities for meeting and hosting events. Bringing about systemic change, implementing new programs, or trying to bring people together around a single agenda is challenging. For this reason, a feasibility assessment was incorporated into the strategic planning process. When assessing potential strategies, workgroup participants were asked to consider the supports available for a given strategy, the resources

required for implementation, the timeframe for implementation, and potential barriers for implementation.

Measurable Activities

Clear benchmarks and measures for the different strategies and action plan activities are critical to ensuring that progress is being made, and efforts are yielding desired results. Many activities go into the formation of an action plan. During the planning process, the workgroups selected the most important activities to be milestones and ensured that the activities could be measured. As strategies are implemented, those involved directly with the work can monitor these measures to see if the work is progressing as expected or falling behind. With this information, CAP can then discuss what adjustments and improvements need to be made to improve outcomes throughout implementation as the work continues.

Summary of Work Completed by the Workgroups

Workgroup members participated in three, three-hour workgroup sessions as part of the strategic planning process. Each workgroup session advanced the planning process, with the goal of honing in on actions that could eventually be included in the final strategic plan.

Session I: Brainstorming of Promising Practices (November 2010)

The purpose of the first workgroup session was to identify the problems associated with low levels of degree attainment and brainstorm and discuss initial recommendations for improving the college-going culture, service delivery, and persistence.

At the beginning of each workgroup session, workgroup participants were presented with statistics on the performance of students in the CAP area on various outcome measures, such as ACT participation rates, FAFSA completion rates, and college persistence rates. Input factors such as free and reduced-price lunch share, teacher-student ratios, teacher degrees, and teacher salaries and experience were also reported to provide a background on students in the CAP area and throughout the state. The presentation covered the five-year trend of data measures, comparing students in the CAP area, comparing students in the CAP area to the rest of Missouri, and comparing students in the CAP area to the rest of the United States.

After the presentation, the workgroups participated in an activity in which they identified the best practices for addressing the CAP goal for their respective workgroup. Based on these best practices, the workgroups brainstormed an initial set of recommendations to consider for the strategic plan.

Between sessions one and two, the recommendations brainstormed by the workgroups were streamlined. Recommendations that were too vague, not action oriented, or not aligned with the project scope were removed. Recommendations aligned directly with other CAP goals were shared with those advancing those goals, including the advocacy agenda. Some recommendations were also moved to other workgroups to best align them with workgroup objectives.

Session II: Prioritizing Recommendations to Include in the Action Plan (January 2011)

Session two focused on narrowing the recommendations. During this session, workgroup participants were presented with the research related to the different recommendations. This research helped inform the workgroups as they further vetted and prioritized the recommendations. Group members completed a detailed rubric for the top recommendations that addressed reach, the support needed, implementation, impact, and potential challenges. At the end of this session, the workgroups had achieved a shortened list of 6–12 recommendations that could be considered for the final action plan. After session two, the vetting process continued, and a questionnaire was sent out to solicit additional feedback from the workgroup members on the shortened list of recommendations. As a result, a final list of strategies was developed for each work group. Table 2 summarizes these final strategies.

Table 2. Final Workgroup Strategies

Workgroup	Strategy
College-Going Culture	Provide professional development focused on the elements of a college-going culture and train teachers, other school staff, and other youth development providers. Develop formal systems to ensure students participate in activities at every stage of the college-going continuum (college exposure, preparation, and access). Engage, inform, and support parents on the steps required to navigate from high school to college.
Service Delivery	Establish common definitions and outcome measures to be used by providers and funders across the region. Develop a regionwide searchable database that provides information on service providers, high schools, and the linkages between both. Expand professional development opportunities for service providers. Focus on peer exchanges, the sharing of best practices, and collaboration.
Persistence	Develop an interagency longitudinal data system that tracks student outcomes beginning in high school and continuing through college completion. Engage a higher education coalition that focuses on sharing best practices and cross-institution collaboration to ensure that low-income students succeed in college. Develop university-sponsored and -led programs that support entering students beginning in high school and continuing through postsecondary completion.

Session III: Developing Action Plans (February/March 2011)

At the third workgroup session, the final set of strategies that would be included in the plan were presented and developed into detailed action plans. During the session, members were tasked with creating a detailed action plan for one of the final strategies that outlined the following:

1. **Action steps:** What will be done now through completion?

2. **Timing of actions:** What is the sequence of the action steps?
3. **Measures:** How we will measure success of benchmark activities?
4. **Considerations for implementation:** What do we need to do to be successful?

The detailed action plans created will help guide the implementation of each strategy. The details of these plans are included later in this report. A summary of the draft benchmark activities is in Appendix I.

Summary of Student and Parent Surveys

Logistical considerations prohibited the extensive representation of parents and students in the workgroups; however, additional input on the strategies was invited from students and parents. In March 2011, CAP invited parents and students to participate in an online survey. The survey asked questions about the final set of strategies and the issues related to their implementation. Students who were invited to take the survey were current college students. This group was selected because they could reflect on what impacted their ability to successfully access higher education opportunities and thus comment on persistence strategies. A total of 154 students and 47 parents completed the survey.

Several of the questions on the survey asked both parents and students about issues related to the implementation of the strategies. Their responses helped identify barriers to implementation and provided suggestions for where to provide services and how to inform students about helpful opportunities. Information about their responses is included in the next section of this report: “A Strategic Plan for the Region.”

Areas for Future Work

It is important to note that many valuable ideas were brought to the table throughout the planning process, including activities such as bolstering the Advanced Placement (AP) strategy across the region, advocating for the A+ Schools Program as a means of improving the college-going culture within high schools, and improving developmental education. Workgroup members felt all these activities could benefit the region; however, they focused on the research base and implementation feasibility to develop a plan they felt was most achievable in the coming years.

Although the activities included in the strategic plan are prioritized for the more immediate future, many of the recommendations made throughout the planning process are important initiatives to address in the future. People involved with college access and persistence work will continue to advocate for policies and legislation that benefit CAP area students. Appendix J includes all the recommendations that came out of the three workgroups.

A Strategic Plan for the Region

Eleven strategies comprise the St. Louis Regional College Access Strategic Plan. The community engagement planning process resulted in three strategies per workgroup, and CAP's work toward its fourth goal of removing financial obstacles resulted in two additional strategies.

Throughout the community engagement and strategic planning process, it became clear that strategies resulting from each workgroup were in no way unique to the respective workgroups, but all CAP strategies together form a comprehensive strategic plan meant to improve college access for students in the CAP area and beyond. Together, the strategies that emerged from the planning process underscored the importance of high schools, youth development organizations, service providers, higher education institutions, and funders working together to achieve the important goal of increasing degree completion in the St. Louis region. Recognizing that CAP's six goals (see page 11) together are based on improving college access and persistence, it is expected that the strategies overlap.

Strategy: Provide professional development focused on the elements of a college-going culture and train teachers, other school staff, and other youth development providers.

Supporting the CAP Mission: This strategy relates to the following goals: *expand and coordinate college access/persistence service delivery and promote a college-going culture in high schools and youth organizations.*

What does the research say?

Several research studies identify components of a strong college-going climate as an important factor in college enrollment. A study of Chicago Public Schools students by the Consortium on Chicago School Research found the following: “Across all our analyses, the single most consistent predictor of whether students took steps toward college enrollment was whether students attended a school with a strong college-going climate.”¹

Where else is this happening?

The Chicago Public School’s Office of College and Career Preparation provides ongoing professional development to its college and career coaches and secondary school counselors. Topics include completing the FAFSA, understanding the financial award letter, interpreting and using data, and transition (8th grade to 9th grade and 12th grade to college). Sessions are held monthly and include opportunities to collaborate and share best practices.

On the Path to Implementation:

Activities to consider for implementing this strategy include the following:

- Develop a common definition of region-specific elements included in a college-going culture.
- Conduct a scan to identify existing professional development related to the elements of a college-going culture to eliminate unnecessary duplication.
- Identify the strongest needs (i.e., college-going culture elements) for the professional development of teachers, other school staff, youth development organizations, and service providers.
- Identify a bank of providers to design curriculum where none exists and deliver the professional development.

Promising **local initiatives** to build on (or other possible **opportunities** to leverage) include the following:

- Existing professional development by local professional organizations (e.g., College Summit, College Bound, the Missouri College Advising Corps)
- Funding available to College Summit to expand its “educators institute” in summer
- Potential funding from the TG Public Benefit Competitive Grant Program
- Existing efforts of the Cooperating School Districts
- DESE’s proposed new accreditation standards focusing on postsecondary success and relying on schools to promote a college-going culture

Willing **partners** and potential **pilot sites**:

- Boys Hope Girls Hope training site in Bridgeton
- Stephanie Krauss, Shearwater
- College Summit (national expertise in providing districtwide training on topic of promoting a college-going culture)
- Cooperating School Districts

Strategy: Develop formal systems to ensure students participate in activities at every stage of the college-going continuum (college exposure, preparation, and access).

Supporting the CAP Mission: This strategy relates to the following goals: *expand and coordinate college access/persistence service delivery and promote a college-going culture in high schools and youth organizations.*

What does the research say?

Research has not been identified on student tracking systems; however, the literature identifies six components that must be part of any long-term college access strategy: (1) college as a goal, (2) academic preparation, (3) a college-going climate within high schools, (4) navigating the process, (5) affordability, and (6) persistence to graduation. Students benefit significantly from activities that address every stage of the college-going continuum.²

Where else is this happening?

The Chicago Public Schools created its Department of Postsecondary Education to focus on increasing students' college awareness, readiness, and access to college. The department also supported the preparation of students to matriculate and meet the challenges of college.

On the Path to Implementation:

Activities to consider for implementing this strategy include the following:

- Develop definitions of exposure, preparation, and access and identify the student activities that fall under each category.
- Conduct a scan of the St. Louis region for programs that currently exist and classify them by exposure, preparation, and access.
- Identify what organizations and programs serve which populations and create linkages.
- Develop a communications plan to inform schools and student support organizations to be aware that students should participate in college exposure, preparation, and access activities.

Promising **local initiatives** to build on (or other possible **opportunities** to leverage) include the following:

- Existing GEAR UP and TRIO grantee recipients
- Cooperating School Districts' existing superintendents meeting
- DESE regional liaisons
- DESE's proposed new accreditation standards focused on postsecondary success

Willing **partners** and potential **pilot sites**:

- Possible GEAR UP proposal, associated with CAP but lead by a partner institution, such as the University of Missouri–St. Louis (UMSL) or Webster University

Strategy: Engage, inform, and support parents on the steps required to navigate from high school to college.

Supporting the CAP Mission: This strategy relates to the following goals: *promote a college-going culture in high schools and youth organizations* and *broaden community focus to make college enrollment and persistence to completion priorities*.

What does the research say?

Research shows that parental involvement can improve a student's academic success, and parents are "often a strong and positive influence on their children's postsecondary aspirations and plans." However, studies also show that parents often lack the information and knowledge necessary to help their children so they must rely on the school to educate their student on the college process.³

Where else is this happening?

The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) has developed the Families, Counselors, and Communities Together (FCCT) program. FCCT workshops provide valuable information on topics such as fostering effective study habits, postsecondary options, the college application process, and applying for financial aid.⁴

On the Path to Implementation:

Activities to consider for implementing this strategy include the following:

- Conduct a scan of existing programs that provide college access information to parents.
- Conduct a needs assessment of what information is currently provided to parents and what information is lacking.
- Survey parents on the preferred method for receiving information (e.g., workshops, print material, and information fairs).
- Coordinate existing efforts and supplement with newly created activities that address existing gaps where parents do not receive needed information.

Promising **local initiatives** to build on (or other possible **opportunities** to leverage) include the following:

- Existing efforts to engage parents (e.g., UMSL Bridge Program, College Bound, and GEAR UP)
- AmeriCorps activities

Willing **partners** and potential **pilot sites**:

- Etoya White, Ferguson-Florissant
- Peggy Hull, Boys Hope Girls Hope
- Timothy Hopkins, MDHE
- Pilot sites: Boys Hope Girls Hope, Shearwater Education Foundation

Strategy: Establish common definitions and outcome measures to be used by providers and funders across the region.

Supporting the CAP Mission: This strategy relates to the following goals: *advocate for verifiable (third-party) disaggregated outcome data on students served and expand and coordinate college access/persistence service delivery.*

What does the research say?

Research has not been identified in this area; however, establishing common measures to encourage collaboration and large-scale social change is an idea that is gathering significant attention. John Kania and Mark Kramer discuss developing a common agenda and shared measurement systems among a large group of stakeholders in their article “Collective Impact.”⁵

Where else is this happening?

Double the Numbers in Washington, D.C., “identified 12 intermediate outcomes that will be linked to the Office of the State Superintendent of Education’s Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System and will help measure the progress of DC students and schools.”⁶ A number of city-based and regional efforts, such as Strive Together in Cincinnati, are using common data indicators to make improvements across the cradle to career continuum.

On the Path to Implementation:

Activities to consider for implementing this strategy include the following:

- Identify a coordinating body to determine common definitions and outcome measures that focus on results and accountability.
- Research definitions and outcome measures currently used by organizations in the St. Louis region and across the country related to college preparation, access, and success.
- Engage stakeholders in the St. Louis region to review and vet a prioritized list of definitions and outcome measures.

Promising **local initiatives** to build on (or other possible **opportunities** to leverage) include the following:

- Work of the Postsecondary Success City Action Network, which is part of the National League of Cities Municipal Leadership for Postsecondary Success Initiative
- Existing groups of service providers that meet informally to discuss strategies
- CAP’s partnership with the Gateway Center for Giving, St. Louis’ grantmakers association
- Deaconess Foundation/Incarnate Word Foundation’s partnership with STRIVE, a similar Cincinnati effort that will provide some technical assistance
- Consultation with the National College Access Network
- Follow similar path that After School for All pursued for developing common outcomes in afterschool provider world

Willing **partners** and potential **pilot sites**:

- Deaconess Foundation
- Boys Hope Girls Hope
- Timothy Hopkins, MDHE
- Shearwater Education Foundation

Strategy: Develop a regionwide searchable database that provides information on service providers, high schools, and the linkages between both.

Supporting the CAP Mission: This strategy relates to the following goal: to *expand and coordinate college access/persistence service delivery*.

What does the research say?

Although anecdotally, an online directory of college access organizations would provide useful information for students and families, the effectiveness of online directories or other information-sharing mechanisms is not an area where research is typically conducted.

Where else is this happening?

Double the Numbers has developed an online directory of college access providers in Washington, D.C. The directory includes over 40 organizations and is searchable by school, provider name, services provided, grades served, and ward. Students, parents, and teachers can access the organization's website and contact through the database.⁷

On the Path to Implementation:

Activities to consider for implementing this strategy include the following:

- Conduct an environmental scan for similar databases to use as a model.
- Identify an organization to create and maintain the database in perpetuity.
- Identify the specific data elements to be included in the database and the uses of the database.
- Develop a master list of all organizations and high schools to be included in the database.
- Develop a method to systematically collect and report information on a regular basis.

Promising **local initiatives** to build on (or other possible **opportunities** to leverage) include the following:

- House the database on CAP's website, which is currently under development
- Funding from businesses or business councils who rely on an educated workforce
- Federal or state funding focused on college preparation, access, and success
- Make a component of United Way's 211 reference database

Willing **partners** and potential **pilot sites**:

- Shearwater Education Foundation
- Timothy Hopkins, MDHE
- MDHE: funding creation and staff time

Strategy: Expand professional development opportunities for service providers. Focus on peer exchanges, the sharing of best practices, and collaboration.

Supporting the CAP Mission: This strategy relates to the following goal: to *expand and coordinate college access/persistence service delivery*.

What does the research say?

Communities of practice are “groups of people informally bound together by shared expertise and passion for a joint enterprise.”⁸ Communities of practice are an emerging organizational form being widely used to “drive strategy, generate new lines of business, solve problems, promote the spread of best practices, develop people’s professional skills, and help companies recruit and retain talent.”⁹ Although research continues to define the characteristics and design of effective communities of practice, it is largely based on case studies.

Where else is this happening?

Leaders in Philadelphia created the College Prep Roundtable that provides a monthly, open forum for providers and institutes of higher education working across the school district to come together and share information about college access and success opportunities for students.¹⁰

On the Path to Implementation:

Activities to consider for implementing this strategy include the following:

- Identify an organization to coordinate and facilitate professional development opportunities.
- Identify service providers to participate in professional development.
- Survey service providers to identify areas of focus as well as preferred methods for peer exchanges, the sharing of best practices, and collaboration.
- Develop a timeline for holding professional development opportunities.

Promising **local initiatives** to build on (or other possible **opportunities** to leverage) include the following:

- Existing professional development opportunities from St. Louis service delivery providers
- CAP peer exchanges
- Potential funding from the TG Public Benefit Competitive Grant Program and the Organizational Capacity Grant

Willing **partners** and potential **pilot sites**:

- Deaconess Foundation
- Boys Hope Girls Hope training space
- Shearwater Education Foundation
- MDHE

Strategy: Develop an interagency longitudinal data system that tracks student outcomes beginning in high school and continuing through college completion.

Supporting the CAP Mission: This strategy relates to the following goals: *advocate for verifiable (third-party) disaggregated outcome data on students served* and *broaden community focus to make college enrollment and persistence to completion priorities*.

What does the research say?

Research has not been identified in this area; however, quality data are necessary to track student progress and the impact of college access and persistence strategies. The importance of using data to improve student achievement is reinforced by efforts such as the Data Quality Campaign and national Race to the Top competition, which used building college and career readiness capacity into statewide data systems as one of its criteria.¹¹

Where else is this happening?

P-20 statewide longitudinal data systems that track students from high school through college completion continue to evolve at a rapid pace throughout the United States. In recent years, a number of city and region-based efforts are also underway. In Washington, D.C., the DC College Access Program created a data system with the capacity to track the extent to which DC students stay enrolled in college.¹²

On the Path to Implementation:

Activities to consider for implementing this strategy include the following:

- Investigate data systems that currently exist to identify leverage points.
- Determine what data should be tracked and reported and identify privacy issues.
- Identify an organization to serve as the data clearinghouse.
- Develop a toolkit on how educational organizations can use this data to inform practice.

Promising **local initiatives** to build on (or other possible **opportunities** to leverage) include the following:

- Existing work by DESE in partnership with MDHE to create a statewide longitudinal database
- Coordination with RCGA Talent Council priority on college completion
- Federal funding for longitudinal data systems and data quality

Willing **partners** and potential **pilot sites**:

- MDHE
- Possible GEAR UP proposal, associated with CAP but lead by a partner institution such as UMSL or Webster University
- DESE accreditation standards

Strategy: Engage a higher education coalition that focuses on sharing best practices and cross-institution collaboration to ensure that low-income students succeed in college.

Supporting the CAP Mission: This strategy relates to the following goal: *broaden community focus to make college enrollment and persistence to completion priorities.*

What does the research say?

Coalitions bring together individuals to work cooperatively toward a common cause or interest. Because every coalition's membership and goals are unique, their effectiveness is not routinely researched.

Where else is this happening?

As part of Success Boston, a college completion initiative, 33 area higher education institutions came together to inventory student support services, highlight promising practices to replicate, and plan further cross-campus collaboration.¹³ In Missouri, meetings of the Council on Public Higher Education Presidents provide an example in which higher education institutions meet regularly to discuss important issues impacting their universities and students.

On the Path to Implementation:

Activities to consider for implementing this strategy include the following:

- Define clear purposes, goals, and desired outcomes for the coalition.
- Identify institutions to be represented in the coalition.
- Identify the type of people from each institution (e.g., president, enrollment management director) to participate in coalition meetings.
- Identify a strong leader to facilitate the meetings and coordinate logistics.
- Hold an initial meeting where the group identifies its agenda for moving forward.

Promising **local initiatives** to build on (or other possible **opportunities** to leverage) include the following:

- Existing local organizations and initiatives focusing on persistence
- Existing work at the state level by the Coordinating Board for High Education and MDHE
- Potential seed funding from a pending proposal with the TG Public Benefit Competitive Grant Program

Willing **partners** and potential **pilot sites**:

- Lynn Beckwith, UMSL
- Freddie Wills, St. Louis College of Pharmacy
- UMSL Bridge (suggested by Brian Hipp)
- Tim Hopkins, MDHE

Strategy: Develop university-sponsored and -led programs that support entering students beginning in high school and continuing through postsecondary completion.

Supporting the CAP Mission: This strategy relates to the following goals: *expand and coordinate college access/persistence service delivery and broaden community focus to make college enrollment and persistence to completion priorities.*

What does the research say?

Research shows that transition and summer bridge programs, targeted academic advising, and learning communities improve student retention at postsecondary institutions.^{14,15,16} Several studies have also identified the need for underrepresented students to “feel a sense of ‘fit’ on a campus, or a sense of belonging,” something student support programs can foster.¹⁷

Where else is this happening?

Posse is a college access and youth leadership development program with sites in seven U.S. cities. The program identifies promising high school students and “places them in supportive, multicultural teams—Posses—of 10 students.”¹⁸ Posse students participate in a precollegiate training program, receive mentorship and support throughout college, and benefit from a career program as they transition from campus to the workforce.¹⁹

On the Path to Implementation:

Activities to consider for implementing this strategy include the following:

- Conduct a scan of existing transition and support programs in the St. Louis region.
- Research similar programs that exist across the country.
- Identify the primary student support strategies to use as a foundation for a pilot program.
- Identify a group of high schools and higher education institutions to develop a pilot program.
- Convene a diverse group of stakeholders to provide guidance on program development.

Promising **local initiatives** to build on (or other possible **opportunities** to leverage) include the following:

- Missouri state offices and initiatives (e.g., A+ Program, State P-20 Council)
- Existing local organizations and initiatives focusing on persistence
- Existing college extension programs (e.g., University of Missouri–Kansas City, UMSL, and Lincoln University)
- College Bound persistence pilot open to community, enrolling first-time freshmen
- Persistence program (pilot) jointly proposed by Wyman and Scholarship Foundation in concert with Southeast Missouri State University, the University of Missouri, and Missouri State University (submitted to TG Public Benefit Competitive Grant Program for a three-year grant)

Willing **partners** and potential **pilot sites**:

- Etoya White, Ferguson-Florissant
- Beth Bender, Gateway High School
- MDHE
- Freddie Wills, St. Louis College of Pharmacy
- Shearwater High School

Strategy: Establish a centralized portal where students and families can obtain current information about scholarship opportunities, apply online for several grant opportunities, and access financial aid planning resources.

Supporting the CAP Mission: This strategy relates to the following goals: *remove obstacles to accessing financial support* and *expand and coordinate college access/persistence service delivery*.

What does the research say?

With the growing use of technology, the use of Internet portals to share information is dramatically increasing. Research on the effectiveness of using these portals is minimal.

Where else is this happening?

Many communities have online portals to resources for prospective college students, including Washington, D.C., Boston, and Louisville. CAP research has identified scholarship clearinghouse efforts at the Hawaii Community Foundation, the Scholarship Foundation of Santa Barbara, and in development stages in Maryland and San Diego.

On the Path to Implementation:

Activities to consider for implementing this strategy include the following:

- Develop an online scholarship clearinghouse that provides a comprehensive listing of private scholarships available to St. Louis region students.
- Establish a central portal online to access the database and related financial aid resources for students and parents.
- Expand the scholarship database to include a matching component where students could provide some limited information about themselves as a method of identifying potential scholarships and/or prospective funders could identify students of interest to them.
- Streamline and strengthen the scholarship application process by establishing a common online scholarship application and some common operating principles in cooperation with multiple scholarship service providers.
- Investigate and design management services to facilitate scholarship delivery, from simple referral to full selection and administration responsibilities.

Promising **local initiatives** to build on (or other possible **opportunities** to leverage) include the following:

- Collaboration between the Greater Saint Louis Community Foundation, the Scholarship Foundation, and Wells Fargo Advisors, which has created an initial online searchable scholarship database at www.capstl.org
- Pilot use of a common application being used by the Community Foundation and Scholarship Foundation in an online form and by Wyman in hard copy

Willing **partners** and potential **pilot sites**:

- Greater Saint Louis Community Foundation and Scholarship Foundation as lead agencies in developing the scholarship database
- Wells Fargo Advisors as an initial funder of the database development
- The TG Public Benefit Competitive Grant Program as the funder of the initial website

Strategy: Advocate for need-based financial aid at the state and federal levels.

Supporting the CAP Mission: This strategy relates to the following goal: *remove obstacles to accessing financial support.*

What does the research say?

The majority of state-funded scholarship programs have had a significant impact on increasing college access (postsecondary enrollment)²⁰ but have questionable results related to retention.²¹ Notable growth in early commitment financial aid programs has occurred among community-based initiatives, such as the Kalamazoo Promise and the Pittsburgh Promise.²²

Where else is this happening?

The National College Access Network (NCAN) is a leading national advocate for need-based aid, particularly the federal Pell program. Most states have need-based aid programs supported by advocacy groups. The El Dorado Promise provides a scholarship to graduates of El Dorado High School covering tuition and mandatory fees. The scholarship can be used at any accredited two- or four-year institution in the nation.

On the Path to Implementation:

Activities to consider for implementing this strategy include the following:

- Establish policy positions on Access Missouri, the state's need-based aid program, and Pell, the federal need-based aid program.
- Create a coalition of service providers, educators, students, and their families to advocate for need-based aid.

Promising **local initiatives** to build on (or other possible **opportunities** to leverage) include the following:

- Current CAP advocacy efforts in support of Access Missouri led by Faith Sandler
- The advocacy work of NCAN and other organizations at the federal level informing local efforts around Pell grants

Willing **partners** and potential **pilot sites**:

- Scholarship Foundation and Faith Sandler as lead spokesperson on this issue
- Members of the CAP advocacy committee to review and recommend policy positions

Timeline for Implementation

The implementation of the strategies in the regional plan will be phased to ensure that all efforts are implemented with fidelity and have the resources to be successful. The following 5 strategies will be implemented first because they provide the foundational elements needed to ensure the success of the other strategies. Each strategy can be fully implemented in a short time frame and will result in stronger relationships throughout the region, which will ease the implementation of the other strategies:

1. Establish common definitions and outcome measures to be used by providers and funders across the region.
2. Engage a higher education coalition that focuses on sharing best practices and cross-institution collaboration to ensure that low-income students succeed in college.
3. Develop a regionwide searchable database that provides information on service providers, high schools, and the linkages between both.
4. Establish a centralized portal where students and families can obtain current information about scholarship opportunities, apply online for several grant opportunities, and access financial aid planning resources.
5. Advocate for need-based financial aid at the state and federal levels

Building on the foundation of the outcomes resulting from these efforts, CAP will focus its efforts on the next 3 strategies, which are primarily focused on service delivery and professional development.

1. Develop formal systems to ensure students participate in activities at every stage of the college-going continuum (college exposure, preparation, and access).
2. Provide professional development focused on the elements of a college-going culture and train teachers, other school staff, and other youth development providers.
3. Expand professional development opportunities for service providers. Focus on peer exchanges, the sharing of best practices, and collaboration.

The remaining 3 strategies are part of the long-term efforts of CAP. Although efforts are currently underway across the region to achieve these strategic outcomes, the strategies will take significant levels of collaboration and time to be completed and well implemented across over the years. These strategies include the following:

1. Engage, inform, and support parents on the steps required to navigate from high school to college.
2. Develop an interagency longitudinal data system that tracks student outcomes beginning in high school and continuing through college completion.
3. Develop university-sponsored and -led programs that support entering students beginning in high school and continuing through postsecondary completion.

Incorporating Student and Parent Feedback

As CAP begins implementing these activities, it is important to consider the feedback received from students and parents. When parents and students were asked what would keep them or their children from taking advantage of activities that would help them succeed in college, location, timing, and transportation were the barriers most commonly cited by parents. It was clear that parents felt inconvenient times and poorly located services affect whether or not their children will take advantage of college success opportunities. Some parents suggested that services be offered outside typical work hours, or several different times be made available. In addition to scheduling, students listed a number of different reasons that could impact whether or not they would take advantage of college success activities, including feeling embarrassed, being too busy, not being motivated, and not knowing about the help available (Student and Parent Questionnaire, 2011).

When asked about where the best location was to provide students free help focused on college success, over 90 percent of parents felt that their children's schools were the best location. The majority of students also felt that their high schools were the best place to provide help, in addition to their college campus. These locations were more popular than off-site spaces like a community center or a place of worship (Student and Parent Questionnaire, 2011).

When considering outreach and communication, nearly every student who completed the survey said e-mail was the best way to inform them about helpful programs and services. Similarly, 35 out of 43 parents indicated e-mail as their preferred communication method, with a much smaller number of parents suggesting regular mail or telephone (Student and Parent Questionnaire, 2011).

In response to specific content or supports needed, parents indicated a desire for information on topics like FAFSA completion, scholarships, ACT preparation, and understanding and navigating the college-going process. By far, the most common response from students was the need for financial support. Access to financial resources, understanding financial aid, and knowing how to manage personal finances are clearly major concerns for both students and parents (Student and Parent Questionnaire, 2011).

Moving Forward

The collective effort needed for implementation has begun. CAP's multisector engagement has laid a foundation to successfully execute this work. Throughout the coming months, CAP is focusing its efforts on identifying funding sources and placing primary focus on leveraging and aligning existing resources, which will be supported by securing additional funds. CAP's steering committee is forming a sustainability committee to package components of this strategic plan into manageable pieces that can be implemented and funded in the short, intermediate, and long terms.

In addition, the sustainability committee will propose an infrastructure for CAP that enables it to continue playing a leadership role in promoting strategies, convening stakeholders and monitoring/measuring progress. Current conversations with one local foundation may lead to sustained project management funding. Through its work with both the National League of Cities and the national Strive Together office, CAP will build on lessons learned from the field to define the most effective structure for continuing progress and momentum.

CAP is continuously seeking individuals and organizations willing to commit to implementing this plan. Appendix K indicates by strategy, the immediate areas of need for each strategy. For some efforts, funding and leadership has been secured and CAP is grateful for the contributions noted below:

Secured Funding:

- **St. Louis scholarship clearinghouse:** Initial funding support is in place from Wells Fargo Advisors for planning and designing a possible scholarship clearinghouse; additional funding will be required to bring this to fruition, but the initial steps are underway. The TG Public Benefit Competitive Grant Program has provided funding for the CAP website, which is home to the interim scholarship database. The Greater Saint Louis Community Foundation and the Scholarship Foundation are providing leadership for this work.
- **Advocacy for need-based financial aid:** To date, Faith Sandler of the Scholarship Foundation has acted as the lead spokesperson on behalf of the CAP advocacy committee comprised of Stacy Clay, College Summit; Jane Donahue, the Deaconess Foundation; David Hilliard, Wyman; Wendy Jaffe, the Trio Foundation; Amy Murphy, the Greater Saint Louis Community Foundation; Faith Sandler, the Scholarship Foundation; and Lisa Orden Zarin, College Bound. The TG Public Benefit Competitive Grant Program has provided financial support for project management related to advocacy planning.

Pending Funding:

- **Professional development institute:** A proposal has been submitted to the TG Public Benefit Competitive Grant Program for support of a professional development institute (PDI) that begins to address the multiple interrelated professional development strategies for service providers, K–12 educators, and higher education administrators. With support from the Deaconess Foundation, CAP is already organizing a bimonthly Lunch and Learn series for frontline service provider staff that will be expanded under the PDI model.

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- ² Jones and Palazzolo (2009)
- ³ Wimberly (2004)
- ⁴ National Association for College Admission Counseling (n.d.)
- ⁵ Kania and Kramer (2011)
- ⁶ Double the Numbers (2011c)
- ⁷ Double the Numbers (2011a)
- ⁸ Wenger and Snyder (2000)
- ⁹ Wenger and Snyder (2000)
- ¹⁰ *College access and success in Philadelphia: Moving towards systemic efforts* (2010)
- ¹¹ Muldoon (2009)
- ¹² Double the Numbers (2011b)
- ¹³ Dennison (2010)
- ¹⁴ Engstrom and Tinto (2008)
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- ¹⁶ Spradlin et al. (2010)
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- ¹⁸ The Posse Foundation, Inc. (2011a)
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- ²⁰ Spradlin et al. (2010)
- ²¹ Spradlin et al. (2010)
- ²² Pathways to College Network (n.d.)

Appendix A

CAP Steering Committee Roster

Name	Title	Organization
Jane Donahue, Co-Chair	Vice President	Deaconess Foundation
Faith Sandler, Co-Chair	Executive Director	Scholarship Foundation
DeAngela Burns-Wallace	Director of Access Initiatives	University of Missouri
Stacy Clay	Executive Director	College Summit
Cynthia Crim	Grants Manager, Charitable Giving	Commerce Bank
Melanie Dileo	Senior Vice President, Missouri State Director Community Development	Citi
Sherry Harsch-Porter	Principal	Porter Bay
Dave Hiliard	President and Chief Executive Officer	Wyman Center
Timothy Hopkins	Research Associate	Missouri Department of Higher Education
Wendy Jaffe	Executive Director	Trio Foundation
Orvin Kimbrough	Senior Vice President, Major Gifts and Marketing	United Way of Greater St. Louis
Patrick McEvoy	Bayless High School Principal	Bayless School District
Mary McMurtrey	Executive Director	Gateway Center for Giving
Amy Murphy	Donor Services and Scholarship Officer	Greater Saint Louis Community Foundation
Lisa Orden Zarin	Chief Executive Officer	College Bound
Kathy Reeves	Corporate Community Relations Manager	Enterprise Holdings
Laura Sakiyama	Chief Operating Officer	College Bound
Allison Williams	Senior Vice President, Programs	Wyman Center

Appendix B

CAP Funders

Citi

College Summit

Commerce Bank

Deaconess Foundation

Enterprise Holdings

Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation (TG Public Benefit Competitive Grant Program)

Trio Foundation

Wells Fargo Advisors

Appendix C

St. Louis Metropolitan Area Counties²

Missouri Counties

- Franklin County*
- Jefferson County*
- Lincoln County*
- St. Charles County*
- St. Louis County*
- Warren County*
- Washington County
- St. Louis City*

Illinois Counties

- Bond County
- Calhoun County
- Clinton County
- Jersey County
- Macoupin County
- Madison County
- Monroe County
- St. Clair County

* denotes CAP area

² Source: St. Louis Regional Chamber & Growth Association (www.stlrcga.org/x64.xml)

Appendix D

Information on American Institutes for Research

Founded in 1946, the American Institutes for Research (AIR) is one of the largest behavioral and social science research organizations in the world. The nonprofit organization is committed to empowering communities and institutions with innovative solutions to the most critical education, health, workforce, and international development challenges. With 1,500 global employees, AIR's foundation is in education research. The organization currently stands as a national leader in teaching and learning improvement, providing the research, assessment, evaluation, and technical assistance to ensure that all students—particularly those that face historical disadvantages—have access to high-quality, effective education.

AIR's staff includes dedicated professionals with a broad range of content expertise, skilled evaluators, accomplished project managers, and experienced seasoned technical assistance providers. Our research, policy analysis, direct practice, and evaluation improve performance in schools, communities, organizations, and the workplace. Our methods are customized depending on the specific questions to be answered and our clients' needs. Our staff members are experts in a variety of areas, and we operate a number of federally funded technical assistance centers.

AIR has an expert team focused on the supports needed to prepare students to be college and career ready. Supports focus on college and career outcomes related to middle school, transition to high school, high school, and transition to college and/or the workforce. Areas of expertise include college and career readiness early warning data systems, community/city engagement, consulting and technical assistance for the creation of college and career readiness interventions, and the evaluation of college and career readiness programs.

AIR's community engagement team draws on its organizational experts to engage stakeholders from multiple sectors to develop a promising strategic plan. The principal consultants that comprise the community engagement team have extensive experience working with schools, school districts, institutions of higher education, corporate entities, and nonprofit organizations, including community-based organizations and foundations. Our community engagement team has worked in partnership with schools and neighborhoods to develop a community engagement strategy in the process of launching community schools.

Appendix E

College-Going Culture Workgroup Roster

Name	Title	Organization
Beth Bender	Principal	Gateway High School
Lisa Brougham	Guidance Counselor	Clyde C. Miller Academy, St. Louis Public Schools
Stacy Clay, Co-Chair	Executive Director	College Summit
Cheryl Compton	Superintendent	Ritenour
Dan Edwards	Asst. Supt for Secondary Schools	St. Louis Public Schools
Wanda Garner	Guidance Counselor	Beaumont High School, St. Louis Public Schools
Aaron Jennings	Manager of Urban Education Initiatives, Brown School of Social Work.	Washington University
Shanise Johnson	Executive Director	St. Louis Internship Program
Tim Kjellesvik	Teen Leadership Program Director	Wyman Center
Stephanie Krauss	President/CEO	Shearwater Education Foundation
Patrick McEvoy, Co-Chair	Bayless High School Principal	Bayless School District
Robert McNair	Director/GEAR UP	GEAR UP St. Louis
Amy Murphy	Donor Services and Scholarship Officer	Greater St. Louis Community Foundation
Harold “Wes” Pratt	Diversity Outreach Coordinator	Missouri State University
Davina Reid	Guidance Counselor	North Tech High School
Mary Rogers	Executive Director	Sherwood Forest Camp
Bragg Stanley	Director of Guidance and Counseling Services	Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Beth Tankersley-Bankhead	Executive Director	MCAC
Dr. Aubrey Todd	Director of Secondary Education	Normandy School District
Robbyn Wahby	Deputy Chief of Staff	Mayor’s Office
Doug Wehner	Director of College Preparation	College Bound
Etoya White	Director of Guidance	Lift for Life Academy
Dr. Chauna Williams	Assistant Superintendent/Curriculum and Instruction	University City Public Schools
Natasha Winston	Admission Counselor for Diversity Outreach and Recruitment	Missouri State University

Appendix F

Service Delivery Workgroup Roster

Name	Title	Organization
Tiffany Barke	Executive Director	Campus YMCA
Heather Bostic	Executive Director Title III	Harris-Stowe State University
Shawn Brice	Director, Office of Quality Schools	Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Alfreda Brown	Regional Director	AHEC
Roxanne Crawford	Area Director (Southeast Middle School Unit Director)	Herbert Hoover Boys and Girls Club
Cynthia Crim, Co-Chair	Grants Manager, Charitable Giving	Commerce Bank
Melanie Dileo	Senior Vice President, Missouri State Director Community Development	Citi
Kate Dopuch	Vice President of programs	Big Brothers Big Sisters
Vince Estrada	Director of Student Services	Maplewood Richmond Heights School District
Dionne Ferguson	School Partnership Manager	College Summit
Terri Fox	Aging Out Coordinator	Epworth
Joan Friend	Director of Enrollment Management	St. Louis Community College
Brian Hipp	Executive Director	Boys Hope Girls Hope
Michael Holmes	Executive Director	St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment
Timothy Hopkins, Co-Chair	Research Associate	Missouri Department of Higher Education
Ruth LaValle	Director	Upward Bound
Laura Sakiyama	Chief Operating Officer	College Bound
Sue Schlichter	Executive Director	Express Scripts Foundation
Andrea Stewart-Douglas	Regional Director	InRoads
Teresa Stock	Advisor	Scholarship Foundation
Allison Williams	Senior Vice President, Programs	Wyman Center

Appendix G

Persistence Workgroup Roster

Name	Title	Organization
Karen Bailey	Director, William Harrison Center	St. Louis Community College
Trent Ball	Associate Dean of Students	Southeast Missouri State University
Dr. Lynn Beckwith, Co-Chair	Endowed Professor of Urban Education	UMSL
DeAngela Burns-Wallace	Director of Access Initiatives	University of Missouri
Alan Byrd	Director of Admissions	UMSL
Ingrid Caldwell	Supervisor, Office of Quality Schools	Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Paul Carney	Vice President of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs	Webster University
Donna Dare	Chief Academic Officer	St. Louis Community College
Harvey Fields	Assistant Director, Cornerstone	Washington University
Betsy Finnegan	Workforce Program Lead	Ameren
Sherry Harsch Porter	Principal	Porter Bay
Johnni Walker-Gillespie	Operations Coordinator	College Summit
Heather King	Assistant Director of Scholarships, Office of Financial Aid	Missouri State University
Michael Kosher	Executive Director for Enrollment Management	Lincoln University
Rachel Lockhart-Korris	Assistant Vice President, St. Louis Civic Relationship Manager	Wells Fargo Advisors
Art McCoy	Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education	Ferguson Florissant School District
Rod Nunn	Vice Chancellor for Workforce and Community Development	St. Louis Community College
Lisa Orden Zarin	Chief Executive Officer	College Bound
Maria Rebecchi	Program Director	Scholarship Foundation
Kathy Reeves, Co-Chair	Corporate Community Relations Manager	Enterprise Holdings
Stan Shoun	President	Ranken Technical College
Dwayne Smith	Vice President of Academic Affairs	Harris-Stowe State Univ.
Doug Sutton	Director, Office of Quality Schools	Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Appendix H

Research Compendium and Bibliography

Summary of Research Findings for Programs Focused on College Preparation, Access, and Success

Sources for the research summarized in this compendium are noted in the bibliography at the end of the compendium.

Explanation of Research Base Categories

This research compendium identifies the associated research base for each category. The research base provides an indication of the volume of research that exists for a certain category and the type of research, but it does not refer to the quality of research findings.

- **None Identified:** No research was identified on the topic.
- **Weak:** Research in this category is mostly qualitative in nature. Programs that have conducted self-evaluations are in this category.
- **Moderate:** Research may be moderate because there are limited studies on the topic. The program or activity could also be difficult to evaluate because a comparison group cannot be identified or interventions are not uniform. Programs that have contracted an external evaluation also fit in this category.
- **Strong:** Research uses quasi-experimental research techniques or strong comparison groups. Generally there are multiple strong studies on the topic.

Academic Preparation (Research Base: Strong)

- Academic prep is one of the few agreed-on factors that directly influences retention rates.
- High school grade point average (GPA) is an important predictor of degree completion.
- First semester college GPA is a significant factor in first-year persistence.
- Seventy-five percent of college dropout decisions are nonacademic in nature.

Admissions Tests as Measures of Accountability (Research Base: Moderate)

- Using admissions tests as a measure of accountability is generally frowned on and considered “test misuse.”
- There are gaps in what admissions tests assess and most state high school standards. States that do use admissions tests should conduct alignment studies and combine them with other measures of accountability.

AP Courses (Research Base: Strong)

- Students who score at least a 3 on an AP exam experience greater academic success in college and graduate from college at higher rates.
- Participation in an AP program increases students' chances of graduation from a postsecondary school within four years.
- Conflicting research: Recent research by the National Center for Educational Achievement found that after taking personal characteristics (such as motivation and family support) and other preexisting factors into consideration, there is no evidence that merely taking AP courses is related to college graduation rates.
- Low-income and minority students have low AP exam passing rates.
- AP incentive programs have increased AP participation and the overall number of passing scores; however, they have not improved actual pass rates.

Advising Programs (Research Base: Moderate)

- Evidence supporting the effectiveness of counseling as a means to reduce dropout rates of undergraduate students is weak.
- Studies have linked **targeted advising** for freshman and at-risk students to increases in retention. These programs involve a specialized advising office—away from more congested advising offices used by upperclassmen—where students can get advice and academic guidance.
- College administrators have repeatedly mentioned that academic advising is an important retention tool.
- Increased advising services are one of the most prominent desires reported by students in surveys.

Career (Research Base: Strong)

- Career academies serve as a viable pathway to postsecondary education but **do not** appear to have been more effective than nonacademy options.
- Career and Technical Education (CTE) participation does not compromise CTE student academic preparation.
- CTE programming may have added benefits for preparing students for the transition into college and careers. Students reported feeling more prepared for college and careers; they were more likely to receive information on college programs, have clear career goals, and have a plan to achieve their academic goals than non-CTE students.

College Access Marketing Campaigns and Internet Web Portals (Research Base: Weak)

- From the national KnowHow2Go campaign to state campaigns such as Go Higher Kentucky and NC Mentor, college access marketing campaigns have gained popularity and visibility.
- Research on the effectiveness of college access marketing campaigns and Internet web portals is minimal. Some campaigns have conducted self-evaluations and demonstrate increased community awareness, website traffic, and usage.

College Coaching (Research Base: None identified)

- College coaching is a recently emerging field so there is a lack of research on its effectiveness.
- The Chicago Public Schools began its college coaching program in 2004 and places college coaches in nonselective high schools across the district.
- The National College Advising Corps, which started in 2007, is the most well-known, national-scale program.

College-Going Culture Activities (Research Base: Strong)

- A widely cited and research report by the Consortium on Chicago School Research found that the single most consistent predictor of whether students take steps toward college enrollment is whether they attend a school with a strong college-going climate.
- Students at schools with a strong college-going climate are significantly more likely to plan to attend a four-year school, apply, be accepted, and enroll.
- A strong college-going climate makes the biggest difference for students with lower levels of qualifications.

College Summit (Research Base: Weak)

- College Summit finds that the college enrollment rate increases by 15 percent over baseline rates at their partner schools.
- College Summit hired Ironbridge Systems to conduct an evaluation of their programs. Details about the evaluation were not identified other than the outcomes being posted on the College Summit website.

College Sunday (Research Base: None identified)

- States participating in College Sunday generally track participation numbers, but the program's effectiveness in increasing the number of completed FAFSA applications and improving college enrollment has not been tracked.

Data Gathering and Sharing (Research Base: None identified)

- Consensus is building that uniform measures of progress and success are necessary to drive improvement in college access and completion.
- Several national initiatives target improving data, including Achieving the Dream, Complete College America, and the Data Quality Campaign.
- Houston Preparing to Dream is an example of a city-level, data-driven effort.

Developmental Education (Research Base: Moderate)

- On average, developmental education (used interchangeably with remediation) is not very effective in overcoming student weaknesses.
- Students placed in remedial courses are more likely to drop out or transfer to a lower level college than similar students who were not placed in such classes.
- Studies find no benefit to remedial instruction for community college students at the margin of the remediation placement test with regard to total credits, persistence, subsequent performance in academic subjects, and transfer to four-year institutions.
- One study found that students who enroll in remedial reading are more likely to earn a degree, but those who enroll in remedial math were less likely to earn a degree.

Dual Enrollment (Research Base: Strong)

- Students who participate in dual enrollment opportunities are more likely to graduate from high school, enroll in college, and persist when compared with similar students who did not participate in dual enrollment opportunities.
- Males and low-income students benefit more from dual enrollment participation than their peers.
- Students with lower GPAs benefit to a greater extent from dual enrollment participation than students with higher GPAs.
- Student support systems before and during college courses for middle- and low-achieving students are important.
- With online dual enrollment opportunities, underserved students have been found to be at a greater risk of failure than students who take the same courses in a traditional, face-to-face format.
- State policies and programs play a major role in promoting or deterring dual enrollment.

Financial Assistance and FAFSA Completion (Research Base: Strong)

- Filing a FAFSA improves a student's likelihood of enrolling in a four-year college. Students who reported completing a FAFSA by May and had been accepted into a four-

year college were more than 50 percent more likely to enroll than students who had not completed a FAFSA.

- Talent Search had a significant impact on financial aid application completion.
- Having a tax professional provide one-on-one assistance in filling out the FAFSA increased the proportion of individuals who submitted the FAFSA.

GEAR UP (Research Base: Weak)

- GEAR UP varies widely from place to place in its approaches and services. Because there is not a uniform set of activities or treatments, large-scale evaluations of the program are nearly impossible. No large-scale study to date has tracked participants to the point of high school graduation. Some smaller studies have found modest positive outcomes.

Learning Communities (Research Base: Moderate)

- Early research found that there appears to be no significant direct effect on retention through the use of such communities, but there may be an indirect effect. One study found that learning communities had a significant positive impact on student GPA, which is a lead predictor of student persistence.
- A more recent study (2008) of community college learning communities found that students participating in learning communities are significantly more likely than their peers to persist from freshman year to sophomore year. The study found ample evidence that basic skills learning communities work for academically underprepared, low-income students at community colleges.

Mentoring (Research Base: Moderate)

- Research is moderately supportive that counseling and mentoring programs can help to improve student persistence but no evidence to support the positive impact of career advising.
- The retention effect of mentoring for racial minorities appears to be stronger.
- “Fit” and a sense of belonging are particularly important for underrepresented students, especially African American students, and these students may benefit more from mentorship programs.
- Qualitative research (e.g., student surveys) generally finds that students believe mentoring services are valuable.

Parental Involvement (Research Base: Moderate)

- Parents are often a strong and positive influence on their children’s postsecondary aspirations and plans.

- There is often a discrepancy between parents’ expectations for their children and their ability to make these expectations a reality.
- When parents lack the information or knowledge to help their children plan for college, they must rely on the school to educate their children and provide information on the college process.
- African American and Hispanic high school seniors indicated a strong parental influence on their college planning activities, especially from their mothers.

Performance-Based Funding (Research Base: Moderate)

- This is an emerging practice among states, and funding formulas for performance are constantly improving.
- Florida has seen large improvements in its community-college completion rate.
- Strong funding formulas for performance reward closing completion gaps such as those for low-income students so that colleges with larger proportions of at-risk students are not penalized.

Promise or Statewide Scholarship Programs (Research Base: Moderate)

- Most state-funded scholarship programs have had a significant impact on increasing college access (postsecondary enrollment) but have not improved retention and completion.
- The most notable growth in early commitment financial aid programs has occurred among community-based initiatives, such as the Pittsburgh Promise.

Service Alignment and Mapping Efforts (Research Base: None identified)

- A number of citywide collaborative efforts have emerged in the past decade. Research on the impact of these initiatives has not yet emerged.
- See examples of city plans in Philadelphia, Boston, and Washington, D.C., to learn more about some of these efforts.

Talent Search (Research Base: Strong)

- Talent Search participants were more likely to enroll in postsecondary education and be first-time applicants for financial aid than nonparticipants from similar backgrounds.

Test Preparation (Research Base: Moderate)

- There have been few published studies on students taking admissions tests since 2000. The tests have changed.
- SAT test preparation efforts yield a positive but small effect on standardized admission test scores.

- The effects of SAT test preparation are larger on the math section of the examination.
- There is mixed evidence with respect to the effect of prep on ACT performance. Only two studies have been published on the effects of test prep on ACT scores.

Transition and Summer Bridge Programs (Research Base: Moderate)

- Existing literature shows that transition or orientation programs improve student retention rates.
- A thorough orientation process is critical to improving student comfort level on campus.

Upward Bound (Research Base: Strong)

- There are some mixed results. One well-known random assignment study said Upward Bound was “ineffective,” but a newer study that addressed errors in the study found significant benefits. The study found positive impacts on postsecondary entrance, the application for financial aid, and postsecondary degree attainment.

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Appendix I

Draft Benchmark Activities

The following are the benchmark activities that were developed by the workgroups for consideration during implementation of each strategy.

Strategy	Draft Benchmark Activities
Provide professional development focused on the elements of a college-going culture and train teachers, other school staff, and other youth development providers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a commonly accepted definition of a college-going culture. • Develop a college-going culture self-assessment instrument. • Develop curriculum tied to the self-assessment instrument.
Develop formal systems to ensure students participate in activities at every stage of the college-going continuum (college exposure, preparation, and access).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve consensus on commonly accepted activities that represent exposure, preparation, and access activities. • Develop a list of St. Louis programs that exists for each type of activity (exposure, preparation, and access). • Design a student clearinghouse.
Engage, inform, and support parents on the steps required to navigate from high school to college.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a college-going process timeline. • Prepare a needs assessment of existing services being provided to parents by auditing schools and service providers. • Assess student knowledge of the college-going process.
Establish common definitions and outcome measures to be used by providers and funders across the region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form a group committed to leading the strategy. • Gather stakeholder input and feedback. • Create a widely accepted list of outcomes and definitions.
Develop a regionwide searchable database that provides information on service providers, high schools, and the linkages between both.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design the database. • Assess student and program level information provided by high schools and service providers. • Launch website.

Strategy	Draft Benchmark Activities
<p>Expand professional development opportunities for service providers. Focus on peer exchanges, the sharing of best practices, and collaboration.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess provider needs and the capacity of different groups to deliver professional development trainings. • Complete an environmental scan of existing curriculums. • Design delivery method.
<p>Develop an interagency longitudinal data system that tracks student outcomes beginning in high school and continuing through college completion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve consensus on a list of outcomes to be tracked. • Identify third-party agency to be the data clearinghouse. • Develop toolkit of how schools use data to inform practice.
<p>Engage a higher education coalition that focuses on sharing best practices and cross-institution collaboration to ensure that low-income students succeed in college.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain commitment from key stakeholders to be active coalition participants. • Consistent attendance and participation at meetings. • Develop long-term plan for coalition.
<p>Develop university-sponsored and -led programs that support entering students beginning in high school and continuing through postsecondary completion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a comprehensive list of programs and providers. • Develop a college choice rubric. • Launch pilot program for institutions.

Appendix J

Comprehensive List of Workgroup Recommendations

Grouping	Service Delivery	College-Going	Persistence
Academic Preparation	Identify resources for teacher preparation and continuing education in the subject(s) taught.	<p>Make college preparation courses available to the majority of students (e.g., Algebra 1 and Algebra 2).</p> <p>Use ACT/PLAN data to guide curriculum and student planning.</p> <p>Identify or develop intervention, bridge, and/or readiness programs for students with low ACT/PLAN scores.</p>	<p>Provide more course options in the evening and weekends to accommodate students with scheduling needs.</p> <p>Implement a college success seminar or similar course that helps students acquire the skills necessary for academic success.</p> <p>Fund a math boot camp in the summer for students who are borderline or testing into developmental coursework.</p>
AP Courses		Advocate for offering AP courses in all high schools and establish standards of achieving course rigor.	
Advising Programs		<p>Promote schedules that include designated time for students to plan for postsecondary pursuits and access guidance and resources from their schools to develop feasible action plan.</p> <p>Create a career plan individualized for each high school student, including required coursework; incorporate one-on-one conversations regarding college and career choices; create time for educational and career planning.</p> <p>Ensure a full schedule and implementation plan for DESE's individual planning process.</p> <p>Ensure there is a college counselor and counseling center in ALL high schools.</p> <p>Reduce counselor-to-student ratios to national standards (1:250) to provide more direct services to students.</p>	
Career and Technical Education and Work-Based Learning		<p>Integrate career and educational planning information into course description booklets.</p> <p>Develop a real perception of the academic needs of majors by helping students connect career goals with high school course choices.</p> <p>Expose students to career and education choice options.</p> <p>Provide internships and job exposure for all.</p>	

Grouping	Service Delivery	College-Going	Persistence
<p>Collaboration Efforts</p>	<p>Identify opportunities for sharing and managing curricular content across local service providers.</p> <p>Build capacity of counseling staff at youth development organizations through professional development. Host quarterly provider roundtables.</p> <p>Build listserv of best practices to share resources.</p> <p>Engage universities in partnerships to research best practices, evaluate efforts.</p> <p>Coordinate private nonprofit efforts with federal efforts (e.g., Talent Search, Upward Bound, GEAR UP).</p> <p>Formalize the CAP coalition to champion streamlined outcomes for college access and retention in the region.</p> <p>Identify opportunities to build communication and alignment between college access service providers and high school principals and counselors.</p> <p>Organize services as student success centers in schools to coordinate different college access programs.</p>	<p>Establish a monthly forum for external services providers, nonprofit providers, and guidance counselors.</p> <p>Develop P-20 campus plans, including schools on college campuses.</p> <p>Develop partnerships between higher education institutions and high schools.</p> <p>Build relationships, partnerships, and deeper understanding of agencies and programs currently available to help the college-going process and career readiness.</p> <p>Engage more corporate entities to partner with CAP initiatives, including job shadowing, career fairs, and connections with guidance counselors.</p> <p>Involve community organizations and churches in the communication of a college or postsecondary culture; build support and programming from community-based organizations and agencies to help educate parents in forums and workshops to talk about college and career options.</p> <p>Develop a high-level coordinating council (e.g., Mayors' Council) among high schools and community organizations.</p>	<p>Create opportunities for dialogue between high schools and colleges, which will help high schools (students and staff) better understand what is expected of them and help colleges understand the challenges of incoming students.</p> <p>Identify champions of the retention effort at postsecondary institutions. This could include an administrator charged with coordinating efforts, an administrator serving as a central resource, and developing a retention committee.</p> <p>Develop a Postsecondary Success Program to bring partners together on a regular basis to coordinate supports for college-going and college success.</p> <p>Establish a higher education institution coalition. For example, in Success Boston, 33 colleges and universities were involved in planning to highlight best practices and cross-campus collaboration.</p>

Grouping	Service Delivery	College-Going	Persistence
<p>College Access Marketing and Internet Web Portals</p>	<p>Develop a CAP area brochure of steps to college access, including coursework, community services, and tax form retention.</p> <p>Develop a brochure about college awareness programs for all schools and students.</p>	<p>Increase college awareness publicity (e.g., door signs and wear your college gear day), post all the education credentials of faculty and staff on doors, host college pride days at high schools, encourage teachers to wear school gear, provide a map of colleges attended/accepted (Missouri and nationwide)</p> <p>Embed Missouri Connections into middle school and high school guidance programs.</p> <p>Change language from not college <i>access</i> but college <i>graduation</i>.</p>	<p>Organize work as “getting ready,” “getting in,” and “getting through.”</p>
<p>College Coaching</p>	<p>Establish “college and career advisors” who remain with students throughout their high school careers to guide their work with counselors, service providers, schedule creation, and course selection.</p>		
<p>College-Going Culture Activities</p>		<p>Offer professional development designed to help teachers integrate college-going activities into their curricula.</p> <p>Agree on and promote norms of a college-going culture in middle school and high school.</p> <p>Develop, support, and execute professional development for school staff around college preparation and access; professional development for staff around college is any postsecondary education and the economic cost of not going on with school.</p> <p>Offer training (for students and educators) on making the right college match.</p> <p>Establish districtwide or multidistrict college tours.</p> <p>Make high school college campus visits easier and an expected norm.</p> <p>Leverage youth development organizations’ expertise to ensure that high school students develop psychosocial and noncognitive skills they will need to navigate college life.</p> <p>Host a citywide graduation celebration.</p>	<p>Host an in-school research fair presentation (college at the high school).</p>

Grouping	Service Delivery	College-Going	Persistence
Data Gathering and Sharing	<p>Develop common outcomes and definitions across providers and funders.</p> <p>Develop a database to track students receiving access services.</p>	<p>Monitor, track, and hold high schools accountable for data points such as ACT participation, FAFSA completion, ACT scores, applications submitted, and other college-going activities.</p>	<p>Determine the metrics and indicators (e.g., continuous enrollment → credits at start of freshman year) → OSEDA → Data Center (regulatory authority), academic expertise. Publish careful report cards on colleges that show their track records for supporting college completion for first-generation college students.</p> <p>Develop a longitudinal data system to track students from high schools through colleges.</p>
Developmental Education			<p>Have remediation courses taught by top faculty, not the lowest paid teacher, to teach the most in need.</p> <p>Develop remedial math and reading classes in colleges and vocational schools.</p>
Dual Enrollment		<p>Increase and promote dual enrollment program opportunities.</p>	
Financial Assistance and FAFSA Completion	<p>Include financial literacy education in college access programs.</p>	<p>Intensify training and help to families and students with FAFSA completion.</p> <p>Train tax preparation organizations on the importance of families keeping tax returns, how to keep copies if lost, and other recordkeeping information.</p> <p>Create a scholarship office where the average student can go and receive help.</p>	<p>Provide FAFSA assistance for all students and parents and training for parents on how to complete the FAFSA process</p> <p>Lobby for need-based financial aid to low-income students through the Access Missouri Program.</p> <p>Provide more financial information for students and parents</p> <p>Structure a way for high schools and colleges to collaborate more regarding the financial process and timeline (e.g., financial aid counselors assigned to specific schools as resources to advise, teach, and guide high school counselors, students, and parents.</p> <p>Identify high schools to work with students directly on FAFSA completion and test-taking skills.</p> <p>Provide college match consultations for each FAFSA filer</p> <p>Connect professors with financial aid advisors and other departments to help with red flag issues; help build collaboration and support of professors to help students get the aid they need.</p> <p>Develop retention-based financial aid assistance.</p> <p>Make it possible for part-time students to be eligible for more financial aid</p>

Grouping	Service Delivery	College-Going	Persistence
Mentoring			<p>Develop, pilot, and/or expand peer modeling, peer mentoring, and peer leadership programs from students who have been through process and are now in college or have completed college.</p> <p>Increase faculty and student interaction opportunities; create specialized programs that allow students to interact with faculty members for mentoring and advice.</p>
Parental Involvement	<p>Survey parents on needs of students.</p> <p>Create parent-focused college access programs.</p>	<p>Develop counselor (and teacher) professional development that addresses the needs parents may have in supporting and understanding their children’s postsecondary options.</p> <p>Educate students and parents on the college path/process; provide clear information on expectations for parents and families; build a strategy or a roadmap for parent involvement from low-income and first-generation student cultures.</p> <p>Establish meaningful parent workshops on resources available and GED opportunities; address parental concerns</p>	
Performance-Based Funding			<p>Create funding incentives for colleges and vocational schools based on the number of students who graduate.</p>
Promise or Statewide Scholarship Programs		<p>Lobby to continue to fund A+ programs and increase priority on education funding; expand eligibility and flexibility for A+ schools.</p>	
Service Alignment and Mapping Efforts	<p>Develop an online directory of service providers.</p> <p>Map CAP area schools to catalog service providers; identify schools without services.</p> <p>Survey schools that don’t have college access services to identify needs.</p> <p>Ensure funders know and invest in geographic areas in need of services; avoid funder duplication.</p>		

Grouping	Service Delivery	College-Going	Persistence
	<p>Engage nonprofits in exurban areas to identify opportunities to assist students in need.</p> <p>Develop a volunteer directory.</p>		
Test Preparation		<p>Increase access opportunities by providing assistance with filling out the ACT and preparing for the ACT.</p>	
Transition and Summer Bridge Programs			<p>Develop college summer camps to give more high school students college experience.</p> <p>Develop orientation programs that extend through the first semester or year of classes.</p> <p>Develop a system of psychosocial support for students transitioning to college.</p> <p>Offer summer programs for incoming students who are deficient in core subjects.</p> <p>Develop or expand college transition programs for freshman summer for both students <i>and</i> parents.</p>
Other			<p>Offer quicker, incremental degree programs (shorter-term graduation, such as an Associate’s degree) that can be cumulative and lead toward a full degree.</p> <p>Map out or create stacked credential options and work with Center for Energy Workforce Development to model the pilot program of stacked credentials in the energy field.</p>

Appendix K

CAP Commitment Request

Strategy	Immediate Needs
Provide professional development focused on the elements of a college-going culture, and train teachers, other school staff, and other youth development providers.	An individual or organization with professional development expertise to lead the effort
	Multiple organizations to support the development and delivery of the professional development
Develop formal systems to ensure students participate in activities at every stage of the college-going continuum (college exposure, preparation and access).	An individual or organization with a strong understanding of college-going activities to lead the effort
	An individual or organization with experience in communications to develop the messaging of information to schools and student support organizations
Engage, inform and support parents on the steps required to navigate from high school to college.	An individual or organization with a strong understanding of parent engagement to lead the effort
	Three to five organizations to pilot parent-focused efforts
Establish common definitions and outcome measures to be used by providers and funders across the region.	An individual or organization familiar with college access and success measures to lead the effort
	Seven to ten organizations willing to participate in the development of the definitions and measures and commit to adopting the resulting set of definitions and measures
Develop a region-wide searchable database that provides information on service providers, high schools, and the linkages between both.	An organization with relationships with high schools and service delivery providers to lead the effort
	Organizations to financially support the creation of the database and staff time associated with data collection
Expand professional development opportunities for service providers. Focus on peer exchanges, sharing of best practices, and collaboration.	An organization connected to St. Louis service delivery providers to lead the effort
	Multiple organizations willing to sponsor professional development opportunities and provide space and materials

Strategy	Immediate Needs
Develop an interagency longitudinal data system that tracks student outcomes beginning in high school and continues through college completion.	A representative from DESE who is involved with the statewide longitudinal database
	An individual or organization with experience translating data into action to lead the effort
	An organization or institution of higher education with experience working with large, complex datasets to serve as the data clearinghouse
Engage a higher education coalition that focuses on sharing best practices and cross-institution collaboration to ensure low-income students succeed in college.	An individual or organizations focused on college persistence efforts to lead the coalition
	Individuals or organizations from higher education interested in participating in the coalition
Develop university-sponsored and led programs that support entering students beginning in high school and continuing through postsecondary completion.	An individual or organizations focused on college transition to lead the effort
	Two to three higher education institutions with a strong track record of enrolling students from the St. Louis region to develop a pilot program
	Three to five high schools with large percentages of students who remain in the St. Louis region to participate in a pilot program
Establish a centralized portal where students and families can obtain current information about scholarship opportunities, apply online for several grant opportunities, and access financial aid planning resources.	An individual or organization with scholarship management and financial aid expertise to lead the effort
	Multiple organizations to support the development and implementation of the common application
Advocate for need-based financial aid at the state and federal levels.	An individual or organization with advocacy experience to lead the effort
	Multiple organizations to build a coalition in support of CAP supported policies

Appendix L

Glossary

Post-secondary education/college education: For CAP’s purposes “college education” is interchangeable with “post-secondary education.” CAP seeks to increase the percentage of students who continue their education beyond high school and that includes technical school, two-year and four-year post-secondary programs.

Low-income: CAP data describe low-income students as: High school students who qualify for the federal free and reduced lunch program; and, students enrolled at the post-secondary level who qualify for federal Pell grants.

First-generation: In some data sources, “first generation” means that neither parent has a post-secondary degree; in other sources it means that neither parent ever attended a post-secondary institution. The source should clarify which definition is used, but CAP considers both definitions relevant to describing those targeted for support and services.

Disparity in post-secondary educational attainment: The largest disparity is the result of variance in family income. First-generation and African-American students also have lower degree completion rates and are disproportionately represented in the lower income quartiles of the regional population.

Persistence: In Missouri, this rate is a self-reported by districts who collect information from students as to their educational status 180 days after high school graduation. Because this is a self-reported number and it is collected differently from year to year and from district to district, it is not considered reliable. In Missouri, this has averaged 71 percent for the past five years. Higher education institutions use a persistence measure of the percentage of students who have successfully completed two full-time semesters. Much of the college access research uses a benchmark of 20 earned credits by the start of sophomore year of college as a predictor of persistence to graduation.

Advocacy: CAP will speak out on issues that CAP and the students it represents care about. CAP will offer opinions and suggestions for how to improve policies for college access to the people who are in control of those policies.