



CONNECTS Task Force on College Readiness

The CONNECTS Task Force on College Readiness is the product of discussions held during the 2013 MDCCC Presidents' Institute. Senior level administrators from over 30 colleges and universities, along with K-12 leaders and community partners, met to discuss how stronger P-20 partnerships can be used to address many of the issues facing our regional youth in the educational and workforce pipeline. Among the many topics covered, attendees agreed that improving college readiness is a top priority and resolved to address the issue through a coordinated effort, the first step of which is forming the CONNECTS Task Force.

The CONNECTS Task Force will unite a wide range of stakeholders in K-12 and higher education to develop a comprehensive plan that relies upon collective impact to maximize results regarding college readiness. The Task Force will meet from May – October 2014 with the purpose of thinking through a strategic plan and timeline for connecting the dots between K-12 and higher education in order to achieve and improve college readiness in our region. CONNECTS is a collaborative effort with members from multiple sectors that will work to improve college readiness through stronger P-20 partnerships and a collective impact approach to regional data-sharing around pivotal indicators of student achievement as well as academic, social, and civic engagement. The primary vehicle proposed to enhance college readiness is service-learning and other community and civic engagement opportunities, which build engagement on the part of the participating K-12 and higher education students and simultaneously improve our shared communities.

Specifically, the Task Force will:

- Represent a variety of sectors essential to successful collective impact (education, business, etc.)
- Discuss and decide on short and long term strategies and achievable outcomes
- Discuss and establish a set of shared definitions (e.g. service-learning);
- Define indicators of success for college readiness and other desired outcomes;
- Determine measurable data points that are not burdensome which participating campuses and K-12 schools/systems will collect and share;
- Develop a framework for improving college readiness with measurable and realistic goals;
- Review the Bill proposal for the Maryland State Legislature to request funding and/or policy changes necessary to execute the plan;
- Create a plan which will be shared with executive leaders at the Nov. 10, 2014 Presidents' Institute for further discussion and development.



Overview for CONNECTS Task Force on College Readiness

The Need: Enhancing College Readiness

Many first-generation youth and low-income youth throughout the Maryland-DC region are not “college ready.” This limits both their access to college and completion rates once in college. Moreover, low-income and first-generation youth tend to have fewer community engagement and community/civic leadership opportunities through which they develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to become community-engaged leaders in their neighborhoods, district, and region.

The Opportunity: Achieving College Readiness *through* Partnerships for Civic and Community Engagement

In the Maryland-DC region K-12 youth have the opportunity to become involved with their communities through both in-school and out-of-school networks as well as faith-based organizations. Tens of thousands of college students in the Maryland-DC region are annually involved in both co-curricular and academically related service such as tutoring, mentoring younger youth, and other types of service and civic engagement activities. However, there are currently a limited number of P-20 education partnerships that connect the dots between K-12 youth engagement and higher education civic and community engagement. ***We are proposing to scale the partnerships and connections between K-12 (or Pre-K12) and higher education partnerships through a collective impact approach to enhance our region’s college readiness pipeline.*** This approach promotes communication and collaboration among educational leaders, youth-serving agencies, community partner organizations, and business leaders in order to braid together and effectively address the issue of college readiness. Only by working together can education policy leaders, K-12 systems, higher education institutions, and industry leaders build a competitive workforce and enhance communities and the quality of life in our region.

Outcomes

Extensive research on service-learning, community-based learning, and project-based learning, and “high impact” practices reveals a wide range of known outcomes. The CONNECTS Taskforce will review the range of outcomes and recommend the selection of specific indicators. A collective impact approach requires agreement around measurable outcomes and data sharing in order to assess the achievement of those outcomes. Known outcomes of high-impact service-learning range from academic achievement to enhancing civic and community engagement to work-force preparation, and the CONNECTS Task Force will use these to determine what indicators are important and possible.

Evolution of Concept and Conversation

Maryland-DC Campus Compact (MDCCC), founded in 2008 and launched in 2009, is the largest regional higher education association in the Maryland-DC region. Its mission is to connect campuses and their communities. It has over thirty member institutions crossing public, private, 2-year, 4-year, and research institutions. It is led by the presidents of the member institutions in its network. Since 2009, the Presidents’ Council and Senior Advisory Group for Engagement of the Maryland-DC Campus Compact has been meeting to discuss what we

can do together which we cannot do or address as single institutions. Throughout the past four years this conversation has evolved to the point where the thirty colleges and universities in this region have come to agreement that they desire to collectively partner with K-12 leadership (schools and school systems) in order to enhance the college readiness of youth in our region.

In June of 2013, Maryland-DC Campus Compact leadership met with Dr. Lillian Lowery, Superintendent of Schools for the Maryland State Department of Education to discuss collaboration. Subsequently, in August 2013, the MDCCC team met with all the Superintendents for public school systems in Maryland through the PSSAM network. In cooperation with MDCCC college and university presidents, K-12 leadership, business, and non-profit regional partners identified College readiness as a primary focus for increasing high school completion, access to higher education, and college completion across the Maryland and DC region.

The MDCCC 2013 Presidents' Institute serves an integral role in the P-20 Collaboration strategic planning process by acting as the platform for expanding the conversation to address the essential questions identified in the Strategic Plan, and to recommend pathways to regional collaboration in order to achieve the stated outcomes. Through dynamic programming and discussion, the Presidents' Annual Meeting will engage the questions, explore potential funding partnerships, and move the conversation toward action. The CONNECTS Task Force will then work with the recommendations from the 2014 MDCCC Presidents' Institute to develop an operational plan and timeline, to identify and secure funding, and to guide the implementation and assessment of the plan.