**Whittier Tech & Northern Essex Community College**

**May 2020 Submission**

**Supplemental Questions to Part A: Early College Designation Application**

**Equity:**

* **How does Whittier ensure equity in identifying students and maintaining participation by underrepresented populations?**

Starting as early as 9th grade, Whittier Regional Vocational Technical High School (Whittier) students are exposed to Early College and are encouraged to take advantage of the opportunities available. In our plan for Early College Designation, we outlined that students would be taught student success-based elements in 9th and 10th grade. In order to deliver this “college preparation” content, Northern Essex Community College (NECC) faculty members would train Whittier’s guidance staff and vocational instructors in the area of college student success. Whittier’s vocational instructors would then integrate the content into their vocational curriculum for underclassmen. As a result of this integration, students would get a feel for college expectations and elements essential to being successful in college. Guidance staff would also be trained and able to teach the content during student planning meetings and the small groups planning time that students with special academic needs have as well. To ensure equity in identifying and supporting students from underrepresented populations, a review of those eligible and interested 9th and 10th-grade students will be monitored to ensure that minority students, first-generation, and low-income students are both academically and personally supported to participate in the program. Additionally, the alternative assessment mentioned in our Early College Designation Application is a multi-faceted assignment model that focuses on developed skills rather than a quick timed assessment which tends to access readiness across time and variables. With the alternative assessment now all 10th graders will be assessed and we are able to capture students that often do not think about EC because they do not see themselves as going to college, a thought often prevalent with Latino male and ELL students.

These factors allow us to ensure equity in identifying students and maintaining participation by underrepresented populations.

Students from all vocational areas have access to and are encouraged to pursue Early College opportunities. The Director of Community Partnerships at Whittier Tech visits all 23 vocational areas at Whittier multiple times throughout each academic year to share information about Early College with students and instructors. Interested students are asked to express interest in the program as soon as possible. All the while, guidance counselors, academic instructors, and vocational instructors also recommend students for the program. All relevant staff has been trained to support the five guiding principles and encourage access and equity within Early College. During IEP Transition Plans and ELL annual meetings at Whittier, information regarding NECC and the Early College Program are provided and discussed as part

of the meeting with students and families. Any students who are interested in early college but who need additional support are connected with NECC’s Learning Accommodations Center or other relevant student support resources. During their time in the Early College program, students are also supported by Whittier teachers in the classroom, along with NECC faculty members. Whittier guidance counselors and NECC success coaches and tutors provide an additional layer of support for the early college student population.

* **Describe in more detail your recruitment of students into the EC program and how students have access to the program?**

Whittier is intentional about exposing students to Early College opportunities in a multitude of ways. Students are introduced to Early College early and often during their time at Whittier. For prospective students and community members, Whittier offers information about Early College programs and the partnership with NECC during the Annual Open House event which attracts thousands of people from the district’s eleven surrounding cities and towns. All print material is available in a bilingual format and translation services are available for parents who do not speak English. Early College is mentioned in recruitment materials for prospective students and families as well. Prospective students even learn more about college credits, and what the Early College program could offer them during annual middle school tours and visits. These visits consist of over 500 prospective students visiting and learning about Whittier over the course of an academic year.

As for current students, Whittier students learn about Early College through their guidance counselor, their vocational instructor, as well as their academic instructors and the Director of Community Partnerships. They learn about Early College through classroom visits, field trips to NECC, morning announcements, daily announcements, poster campaigns around school, and other creative measures. Current Early College students visit classrooms of underclassmen and speak to their experience in the program and the benefits of enrolling. Whittier also hosts annual alumni panel events each year where alumni return to Whittier and address underclassmen. Alumni who have participated in the Early College program are always included on the panel to share their experience and encourage younger students to participate. Many of the recruitment techniques have been derived from the informative MYCAP sessions Whittier staff have attended over the past year.

Early College parent nights are hosted twice a year at the school to provide information to students and families. All families are invited and special outreach to families of underrepresented groups is done via phone, email, and mail. Interested students are asked to express interest in the guidance office during early spring. Currently, upperclassmen who have a qualifying GPA are automatically accepted into the Early College courses available for the upcoming year. Underclassmen and those students who do not meet the qualifying GPA take an alternative assessment. As mentioned previously, the alternative assessment is a multi-faceted assignment model that focuses on developed skills rather than a quick timed assessment which tends to access readiness across time and variables. The factors allow us to ensure equity in identifying students and maintaining participation by underrepresented populations.

**Sustainability:**

* **In addition to tuition, what other costs or funding concerns have you identified at this point and do you have any strategies developed to address?**

At NECC, we have noted several areas of the college that will require supplemental funding, as a function of the increasing number of Early College students, accessing these services. For instance, tutoring, the writing center, and meetings with academic coaches have increased proportionally to the number of Early College students on campus. In addition to more overall online and person traffic the timing of student visits, specifically Early College students, is highly concentrated requiring part-time staff to be funded.  Presently the supplemental cost of these program areas is being fiscally supported by Academic Affairs. The PK12 Office is looking to create additional cohort times for Early College cohort courses to maximize staff time.  Staff is also looking at utilizing student tutors for 100 level courses.

The college is committed to supporting partner high schools with leadership at NECC in the form of an Executive Director of PK12 Partnerships, and an Assistant Director assigned to local schools.  As the numbers grow, we are cognoscente of the caseload for the PK12 staff balanced against the cost of new hires. In partnership with Whittier’s Director of Community Partnerships we are developing annual processes, timelines, and focusing on efficiencies in process management, allowing staff to focus more intentionally on student needs. Whittier also recognizes the projected growth of the Early College program will impact the workload of staff, specifically the Director of Community Partnerships.

**Hybrid Model**

* **Describe the process for the concurrent model and the college experience.  Discuss how students experience the program and the supports provided them throughout the model.  Please outline the logistics of the model and how students will be able to fulfill both Voc requirements and EC requirements within their typical school day**

It should be noted that both NECC and Whittier use different terminology to describe the Early College Program courses than DESE or DHE. Below we will take a moment to clarify and identify the multiple programs running simultaneously at Whittier and how they layer with the academic program that we have applied for Early College designation.

First as with many vocational and technical high schools the academic and vocational/shop programs are run in parallel so that students have full access to both. Whittier uses a two-week model with students being broken down into two groups. For example, Group A students might be engaged in academic coursework on Week 1 and in their vocational shop for Week 2 with Group B students doing the opposite. During academic week, students spend the entire 8 period school day in their academic subject areas. During vocational week, students spend the entire 8 period school day in the student’s chosen vocational area.

The Early College Program, for which NECC and Whittier are applying for designation, is solely an academic program run during the WTHS academic weeks. For the past several years NECC has taught these dual enrollment courses at Whittier during their academic block. This dual enrollment model is taught by an NECC faculty member, not employed by the high school. As part of the designation process we are proposing that the courses be run at the beginning or end of the Whittier day and that students will be transported to NECC’s Haverhill campus for the duration of the course. If the courses bookend the academic day then the Whittier buses could support transporting the students to NECC. The Early College courses provide students up to 12 credits of general education coursework that are fully transferable to 2 and 4-year institutions. For example, English Composition, Intro to Psychology, and Intro to Sociology are all courses that transfer as required or general education electives into most college programs. The Early College Program academic courses offered have a robust academic support system developed which will be detailed below.

The second type of credit earning program NECC and Whittier partner to offer is the Concurrent Technical Program. This type of program is only offered by NECC to vetted and approved technical high schools. The STEM faculty have gone through a comprehensive curriculum alignment process with the Whittier area shop faculty. NECC has aligned the core academic skills and content of 5 courses offered within STEM programs at the college with Whittier’s Advanced Manufacturing Program, CAD Drafting Program, and Electronics/Robotics Program. These credits are earned by the Whittier students during the shop weeks over the course of a full academic year. At present NECC has aligned 15 credits to STEM shops, however, we hope to align additional shop areas to degree programs at NECC.

Academic support for the Whittier Early College program during the academic week, is rigorous and supported by 2 foundational ideas. First that the partner schools must always be ready to identify a student at risk, either academic or socio-emotional, in a course and rapidly deploy any supports required. Second the students, while monitored, must be supported by developing a course framework that fosters both student success and academic responsibility. To meet both needs and maintain both the academic week and shop weeks for students, Whittier and NECC have created a hybrid course with embedded academic support via two platforms in addition to the progress report monitoring system.  The hybrid model divides the total contact minutes (2250) not over a traditional 15 week 150 minutes per week semester but over 8 academic weeks with 225 contact minutes per week for a total of 1800 min (80% of total contact time).  The remaining 20% of course time is an online hybrid component; here students have an opportunity to engage in reading discussion posts, work 1:1 with the instructor on writing, view lectures on-demand, and engage other students in group work.  In addition to the supplement online component of the course 2 days per week the Whittier students work with a staff member at the high school (would be at NECC moving forward) to receive supplemental instruction, review work, and complete assignments.  The Whittier staff and NECC faculty meet regularly and both access the online piece of the class.  Students with support from Whittier staff build the student skills and academic responsibility to thrive in the online hybrid model.

In addition to the progress report monitoring, support staff time, and student and faculty connection focused hybrid model the dual enrolled students at Whittier also have access to all support services offered at NECC.  At present, even with coursework at Whittier, students access the library both digitally and afterschool, tutoring, and the writing center both online and in-person, and our academic tutoring services.  With the transition to coursework at NECC, the college is committed to ensuring that support service hours align Whittier Early College courses.

* **Identify more connections between the pathway and careers besides the Advanced Manufacturing and Health certifications.**

The Whittier Early College program aligns with Whittier’s academic program and is not directly aligned with the high school’s technical programs, and those which offer concurrent credits from NECC. By decoupling the Whittier Early College program from the Technical Concurrent Program available in specific shops we address **access** to the academic credits. The Early College Program is shared with all students starting in 9th grade and in 10th grade all students will be eligible for the coursework.

When students enroll in the Early College program they choose one of five academic concentrations which are aligned with the degree programs at NECC, transfer institutions, and both Whittier academic graduation requirements and the Career Pathways. Through career and college planning workshops in 10th, as developed by the MYCAP training, students are introduced to the Early College Academic Pathways and how they align to the student’s choice of Career Pathway/vocational programs at Whittier. The graph below shows the connection between Early College Pathways, Whittier’s Career Pathways, and any career pathway area where students can also earn the technical concurrent program credits. For example, within the STEM pathway, a student could earn 12 credits within the early college pathway and up to 15 credits through the technical concurrent program, thus transferring to a 2 or 4-year STEM program with almost one whole year completed.

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| **NECC Early College Academic Pathway** | **Whittier Career Pathway alignment: https://whittiertech.org/vocational-pathways** | **Technical Concurrent Program credits available in shop area:** |
| Liberal Arts | Arts & Communication | AY21-22 review planned |
| Business  | Art & Communication, Construction, Manufacturing, Service, Technology, Transportation | Yes |
| Education | Service | AY20-21 review planned |
| STEM | Construction, Technology, Manufacturing, Transportation | Yes |
| Healthcare | Service | AY20-21 review planned |

* **A quick question on your certifications that are offered, are those through testing or through coursework?**

Most of Whittier’s 23 vocational areas provide students with some type of certification or license depending on the vocational area. Some vocational areas award certifications based on testing while other areas award certifications and licenses based off of coursework and modules completed. For example, students in “Health Assisting” must prepare for and pass both a written exam and a practical exam in order to earn their Certified Nursing Assistant license. Students in “Business Technology/Marketing” must successfully complete a certain number of modules and show satisfactory progress and work in order to earn their Microsoft Suite certification. As a regional vocational school, Whittier always remains up to date with necessary regional and national certifications aligning with the opportunity for students to transfer to 2 and 4-year institutions of higher education.