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# Creating an Early College Faculty Network

— Kirstie Dobbs and Russ Olwell, Merrimack  
College/Lawrence High School Early College Program —

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# Today's session

Introduction - Jamboard

Overview of EC faculty role and experiences

Plan for convening (Google Doc)

Zoom Breakout - faculty roles and integration/supporting faculty and EC students

Nuts and Bolts of the convening

Thanks for coming! See you in November

# Introduction and Jamboard

What is most rewarding about teaching/working in an early college?

What challenges do you see/foresee for those working in this field, or to expand this field?

## Efforts To date

State of Massachusetts effort to build early college scale with equity at the core

Student convening for students across Massachusetts this fall

Statewide push to motivate more students for early college, particularly those not fully represented at present

Need for greater support for early college students, particularly made evident by the pandemic



**Laurie Kurdziel**  
**Psychology**

## Faculty experience in Early College

“These students are intelligent, curious, diligent, and especially driven. The early college students have demonstrated a maturity about their education that is rare and incredibly valuable. They always came to class prepared, and bursting with interesting questions, thought provoking stories, and encouragement for fellow classmates. Their drive to succeed was palpable. **Their desire to learn was tangible. And their enthusiasm and energy in class made teaching so wonderfully fun.**”

## More faculty quotes

The early college program not only helps students get into college, who might otherwise be marginalized from obtaining a college level degree, but ensures they have the necessary skill set to be successful throughout their college career. ... The early college program changes the lives of hard working, high achieving students, who possess an immense amount of drive to be positive change-makers in their communities.

The number one thing these particular students possess is grit. There are certain 'valleys' in the semester when I can predict students to be tired and disenchanted, but not with my early college students. When other students feel like calling it quits, my early college students dig in, work hard, and persevere in ways that are truly admirable. As a cohort, they are the type of students that college professors dream of teaching because of their passion for learning and unwavering commitment to their education. This is why these students were also particularly well equipped to handle the school closures during the pandemic.

# Just a few more!

I notice in my students an increased sense of confidence and readiness as they move through the semester and one step closer to college and to adulthood. So many of us believe as teenagers that "we can't "or "we shouldn't", especially when it comes to expressing our thoughts, dreams and goals and what I see in my EC students is an increased and developing sense that, in fact, they can and they should. That, in my opinion, is an immeasurable gift that Early College provides.

I have been teaching at the college level for a long time now and the experience of working with my Abbott students is unlike any I have ever had. In addition to a classroom full of obviously smart people I am continuously bowled over by who my students are. Bringing with them an incredible blend of curiosity, tenacity, grit and energy, these students do more than rise to the challenges I present to them...they challenge me to be at my best. Their fantastic abilities to wonder out loud, to want more than the facts and theories in the textbook and to agree and disagree with civility and respect are a much needed breath of fresh air and inspiring. At the risk of sounding cliché, they are truly an inspiration, a total joy to know and I am honored to work with them.

# Breakout groups:

Breakout 1: intended for early college faculty, led by Dr. Dobbs

Breakout 2: intended for early college support staff and administrators, led by Russ Olwell

# Breakout group 1 - Dobbs

How do I...

- Integrate this work into my scholarship?
- Identify my discipline-specific skill sets that uniquely support early college students?
- Connect my work as an EC faculty member across campus?
- Articulate *my* role within the larger agenda of strengthening democracy through promoting equity and inclusion in higher education?
- Value this for tenure/promotion/rewards system?

## Breakout group 2 - Olwell

What do faculty need to know about early college structure and students?

What professional development do EC faculty need to be successful?

What are ways to disseminate our work as EC faculty members- research and teaching?

What can we do to help promote EC faculty on campus?

# Potential topics for larger convening (Google Form)

November 2021

Invite faculty from across state

Discussion around common issues

Format questions - panel, presentations, potential publication?

Participation interest - organizing, recruiting people

What will draw the most participation among your peers?

Please click on this: <https://forms.gle/MZoaigjvdbdiKEP1N6>

# Thank you for coming!

Please feel free to contact us!

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