

APASS

Academic Pathways to
Access and Student Success

APASS (Academic Pathways to Access and Student Success) is a research and development initiative that identifies and disseminates information about existing and emerging academic pathways that extend from high school to college. Academic pathways are defined as boundary spanning curriculum and organizational structures that bridge K-12 with higher education to facilitate student transition to college. A primary goal of APASS is to share information about academic pathways that place a high priority on enhancing college access for all students, especially racial and ethnic minority, low income and first-generation students historically underrepresented in college.

APASS is conducted by faculty, staff and students affiliated with the Higher Education Program and the Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). Funding to start the APASS initiative was provided by the Lumina Foundation for Education (www.luminafoundation.org), an Indianapolis-based private foundation that funds efforts to expand access to postsecondary education for all students. Additional support was provided by the College of Education, UIUC.

Why APASS?

National statistics show most high school students want to go to college, though many are not prepared to enroll or retained in college when they do enter. Over the past 30 years, barriers impeding college access and success have become well known, and policies and programs are proliferating at the state and local levels to address them. However, often these policies and programs are not understood beyond the small group of people involved in them, leaving the nation without a composite picture of how all 50 states are attempting to enhance curriculum or organizational connections, hence academic pathways, between K-12 and higher education. Understanding how college access is being encouraged is an important first step to knowing whether academic pathways are effective at enhancing college access and success.

What is APASS?

Through extensive study of the literature, networking with experts, and input from the APASS Advisory Committee, the APASS team carried out a National Inventory to document implementation of nine academic pathways in the 50 states. The academic pathways being investigated in all states are:

- Advanced Placement (AP)
- Bridge programs
- College Level Examination Program (CLEP)
- Dual credit/Dual enrollment
- Distance learning/Virtual schools and colleges
- GED programs that bridge to college
- International Baccalaureate (IB)
- Middle/Early college high schools
- Tech Prep/College Tech Prep

In addition, the APASS team sought information about other models, including GEAR UP; career academies; high school reforms including charter schools and High Schools That Work (HSTW); and other curriculum, assessment, and standards-related initiatives. Also, APASS team members visited Florida, Indiana, Idaho, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Oregon, and Washington to gather information about academic pathways implemented in these states.

The APASS Website

The APASS web site at www.apass.uiuc.edu offers visitors comprehensive, state-by-state results. Visitors who access the web site can search by “State” and by “Academic Pathway”. Hot links allow visitors to go directly to related web resources as well as publications authored by APASS team members. In addition, an electronic survey collects information from local organizations offering innovative practices. Results, including lessons learned, by local programs are summarized on the web site, plus program profiles are posted.

Looking Ahead

APASS’s agenda calls for enhancements to the web site and additional dissemination of results to educators and policy makers at the federal, state and local levels. Future research will focus on understanding whether academic pathways result in systemic, P-16 restructuring; how federal, state, and local policies support academic pathways; and what curricular and financial elements common to different academic pathways enhance college access for underserved students.

The Advisory Committee

Jacquee Belcher, President, Georgia Perimeter College

Gene Bottoms, Senior Vice President, Southern Regional Education Board

Alfredo de los Santos Jr., Professor, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, Arizona State University

David Longanecker, Executive Director, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

Terese Rainwater, Program Director, Education Commission of the States

William Trent, Professor, Educational Policy Studies, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Andrea Venezia, Project Director, National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education in San Jose

Project Directors

Debra Bragg, Professor and Principal Investigator, UIUC, e-mail: dbragg@uiuc.edu

Stanley Ikenberry, Regent Professor and Co-PI, UIUC, e-mail: stanike@uiuc.edu



University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
College of Education
51 Gerty Drive, CRC Room 129 • Champaign, IL 61820
217-244-9390 • Fax: 217-244-0851
OCCRL Website: <http://occr.ed.uiuc.edu>
APASS Website: www.apass.uiuc.edu
