



FEDERAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Overview

Early college programs (also referred to as college in high school programs, including early college high schools and dual and concurrent enrollment programs) allow students the opportunity to take credit-bearing college courses towards a degree while still in high school, thereby creating a smooth transition from high school to postsecondary education and momentum towards degree completion. These programs are effective, evidence-based strategies for helping students access, afford, and succeed in college. However, the financial costs of early college programs can pose a barrier to participation, particularly for students from lower-income families. In keeping with the Pell Grant's original intent to increase college access and affordability for this population, "Early College Pell" would unlock a funding stream to sustain and grow early college programs serving low-income students, thereby increasing students' affordable access to college and their chances of success.

Goals

Policy goals: Sustainably increase access for low-income students to higher education through an earlier start; increase college affordability and reduce student loan debt through early college programs; and improve college completion for low-income students through access to evidence-based early college programming.

Programmatic goals: Ensure accountability for quality programming; ensure that student protections are in place so that students can maximize their awards, academically and financially, and are not penalized for starting college earlier; and ensure that Early College Pell includes provisions tailored to the needs of younger scholars while maintaining the general parameters, structure, and purpose of Pell.

Proposal

1 *Implement a rigorous Department-led selection process for participating institutions of higher education that establishes robust student protections*

A Eligible Applicants

- To qualify, participating institutions must be current participants in the Pell program;
- Participating institutions must be nonprofit organizations;
- A state college or university system may apply on behalf of multiple or all colleges in the system, or a consortium of colleges in the same system may apply, as long as each institution's leadership has committed to participating;
- An individual institution of higher education (IHE) may apply, as long as it can demonstrate a partnership with at least one Local Educational Agency (LEA) or State Education Agency (SEA).

B Eligibility Requirements

To qualify for Early College Pell, institutions must meet eligibility requirements in the following areas related to the early college program. Early college programs are defined here as partnerships between school districts and accredited institutions of higher education that provide high school-age students an intentionally-designed, authentic postsecondary experience leading to officially transcribed and transferable college credit towards a recognized postsecondary degree or credential. The programs include early college high schools, dual enrollment, and concurrent enrollment programs.

i) Academic Program and Integrity

- Offer students the opportunity to enroll in an early college course sequence, defined here as the set of

courses, program of study, or degree pathway offered to early college students, composed of at least 12 credit hours (non-remedial) towards a postsecondary degree or credential;

- Demonstrate that the early college course sequence offered by the institution is part of a pathway towards a degree or credential (this pathway can include general education courses)
- Remedial courses are not allowable uses of Early College Pell
- Demonstrate that the early college course sequence is transferable, meaning that the courses offered to early college students are included in a statewide articulation agreement or an articulation agreement with at least one public institution of higher education outside of the partnering IHE;
- For programs taught at the high school, describe how the early college course sequence maintains fidelity to the institution's academic standards, including the qualifications of the instructors and the measures in place to ensure compliance with applicable state higher education requirements and higher education accreditation standards;
- Describe the academic oversight mechanisms in place to ensure early college program quality and compliance with state requirements and accreditation standards;
- Demonstrate accreditation and good standing for the institutions and the programs offered, including the early college course sequence;
- Have a formal partnership agreement governing the early college program with at least one Local Educational Agency and/or the State Education Agency.

ii) Student Support and Advising & Other Protections

Participating institutions must:

- Ensure that participating early college students receive support and advising services, such as academic tutoring, high school to college transition support, guidance counseling, or other comparable services designed to increase student preparation

for and success in the early college program. These supports may be provided by the IHE and/or the LEA partner;

- Ensure that participating early college students have access to financial aid advising for Early College Pell, including FAFSA completion, advising about the impact of participation on students' future Pell awards and financial aid eligibility, and financial counseling regarding how to use any refund checks students receive for Pell grant funds in excess of the costs of tuition and fees. These supports may be provided by the IHE and/or the LEA partner;
- Commit to the Department's Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) definition for Early College Pell recipients (C- or above GPA in the early college program), including the requirement that students who do not meet SAP cannot continue to receive Early College Pell for the following semester.

iii) Equity of Access

Participating institutions must:

- Describe the criteria for admission to the early college program, with encouragement of multiple measures for entrance rather than a single standardized assessment or other equity-focused admissions policies (e.g. automatic option for enrollment for students who meet readiness benchmarks);
- Demonstrate the recruitment and retention plan for early college students who are at risk of not completing postsecondary education, such as students who are low-income, first-generation college, and from racial/ethnic groups underrepresented in higher education;
- Demonstrate a partnership with one or more high-poverty or Title I high schools or LEAs or those that serve a high concentration of students with a demonstrated need for early college programs (e.g. students with college enrollment and/or dual enrollment participation rates below state averages).

iv) Funding and Sustainability

Participating institutions must:

- Commit to supplement, not supplant, the use of recurring public funding already received by the

institution for the early college program from the federal, state, or local government so that low-income student enrollment in the early college program is expanded and costs for their participation are eliminated or reduced;

- Commit not to charge Pell-eligible early college students any costs above those covered by the student's Pell award;
- For statewide applications, applicants must obtain a public maintenance of effort commitment for existing, dedicated state early college program funding.

C Pilot Proposal Priorities

If there is a pilot program instead of a broader policy change to establish Early College Pell, then the following priorities could be considered:

Primary priority:

- Priority will be awarded to institutions of higher education that partner with one or more high poverty or Title I high schools or LEAs or that otherwise serve a high concentration of students with a demonstrated need for early college programs;
- The Department will be responsible for ensuring a diverse array of participating programs by program type (e.g. general studies, career-focused programs), partner type (e.g. two-year, four-year institution), and geography (e.g. urban, suburban, rural);
- Priority will be given to institutions offering students an early college course sequence of 24-60 credits;
- Priority will be given to applications that include a statewide higher education system(s) and/or those that include a statewide transfer agreement, inclusive of the early college program;

Secondary priority:

- Priority could be given to applicants serving a high number of students or partners;
- Priority could be given to schools that participated in the Dual Enrollment Experimental Site.

2 Make adjustments to the Pell system to accommodate Early College Pell students and the unique needs of scholars concurrently enrolled in high school

A Extend Lifetime Eligibility Limits

Students receiving Early College Pell will get an automatic extension of their Pell Lifetime Eligibility Usage (LEU) of up to two full-time semesters, exempting them from the 12 semester LEU cap;

The exemption from the Lifetime Eligibility Usage cap shall be based on the cumulative number of full semesters (12 credits/semester) students are enrolled in over the life of the early college program.

B Establish Satisfactory Academic Progress Requirements Specific to Early College Pell Students

Early college students will have to meet Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirements defined and verified by the U.S. Department of Education as an average GPA of C- or above in the early college program to continue using Early College Pell for the subsequent semester;

Students no longer eligible for Early College Pell on account of not meeting SAP shall not be impacted in terms of their SAP when they reapply to college.

C Limit Size of Early College Pell Award

Pell awards will be limited to tuition, supplies, fees, and transportation. Room and board expenses may be available to full-time residential students only.

3 Ensure robust reporting and evaluation of Early College Pell

- The Department of Education shall be required to perform an evaluation and publicly report on the success of Early College Pell. This can either be done in house or through contracted services;

- Data collected and examined should be disaggregated by ESSA subgroup (students from major racial and ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged students, children with disabilities, English learners, by gender) and by institution type;
- To the extent possible, reporting should include data on the following:
 - Student participation in the early college program
 - Early College Pell awarded (including average award size)
 - College credit accumulation (by semester and overall during program)
 - College GPA of Early College Pell recipients
- High school graduation rates of Early College Pell recipients
- Postsecondary enrollment of Early College Pell recipients (including enrollment without remediation, when applicable)
- Postsecondary persistence of Early College Pell recipients
- Postsecondary completion of Early College Pell recipients
- Participating institutions must submit timely data reports to the Department as a condition of receiving Early College Pell.