



PATHWAYS to Success

COLLEGE READINESS

SUMMER BRIDGE

PREP

DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION

DUAL CREDIT

EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

March 2010



The Best Place to Start

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Introduction

In 2004, El Paso Community College (EPCC) was selected to participate in the first round of the Lumina Foundation's *Achieving the Dream Initiative* (AtD). The initiative charged the selected colleges to increase the percentage of students who successfully complete the courses they take; advance from remedial to credit-bearing courses; enroll in and successfully complete gatekeeper courses; enroll from one semester to the next; and earn degrees and/or certificates. In 2009, EPCC was one of 15 colleges given the opportunity to build on the AtD successes through participation in the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's *Developmental Education Initiative* (DEI). This document is intended to tell the story of what was achieved with AtD and what is ongoing with DEI.

AtD directed colleges to use data to develop strategies and to disaggregate data in order to identify the needs of specific groups to be targeted. The typical suggestion to disaggregate data by ethnicity was not considered useful at EPCC, since our student body is 85% Hispanic. We tried other forms of disaggregation and EPCC president, Dr. Richard Rhodes, suggested disaggregation by time out of high school for high school graduates, GED, and neither high school graduation or GED. The following chart demonstrates the breakdown of college-readiness (based on placement scores) for first-time students enrolling at EPCC in the fall semester of 2003.

% of Students College Ready Vs. Needing Remediation

Academic background before test	Math		Reading		Writing	
	College ready	Not college ready	College ready	Not college ready	College Ready	Not college ready
High school grad < 1 yr.	5%	95%	29%	71%	54%	46%
High school grad > 1 yr.	3%	97%	30%	70%	48%	52%
GED	1%	99%	33%	67%	31%	69%
No high school diploma or GED	1%	99%	16%	84%	26%	74%



This data indicated that we needed an additional goal for AtD at EPCC...that of increasing the number of students coming to EPCC college-ready and thereby decreasing the number of students placing into Developmental Education (DE). It also indicated that the greatest impact could be achieved by improving the college-readiness of recent high school graduates.

This goal led us to the establishment of a partnership with the school districts in El Paso and the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) that is now the envy of communities throughout the country. Through this partnership we improved the college-readiness of high school graduates in the El Paso area by implementing the College Readiness Initiative and by scaling-up the Dual Credit Program and Early College High Schools. At EPCC we implemented a Summer Bridge Program and a PREP Program for entering students who were not recent high school graduates and perhaps not graduates at all.

Further research of our data indicated opportunities for decreasing the amount of time required for students to complete DE coursework if they could not avoid it. Therefore, faculty, staff and student teams worked together to discover and eliminate overlapping requirements in the DE courses and other barriers to student progression.

“Many of our kids will be the first in their family to go to college, and when they get there, it is absolutely critical that they are fully prepared. We must strengthen the connection between K-12 schools, community colleges and universities if our students are going to compete in the 21st century global economy. El Paso Community College, in conjunction with area school districts and the University of Texas at El Paso, is leading the way in preparing students for college and has the results to show the partnership is working.”

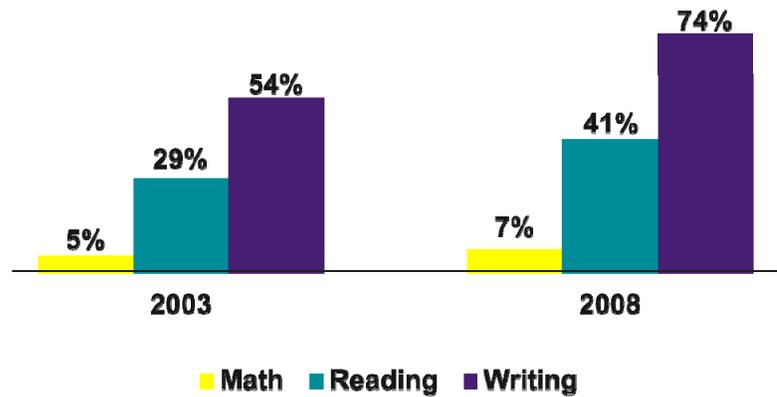


**Silvestre Reyes
United States Congressman
16th District**

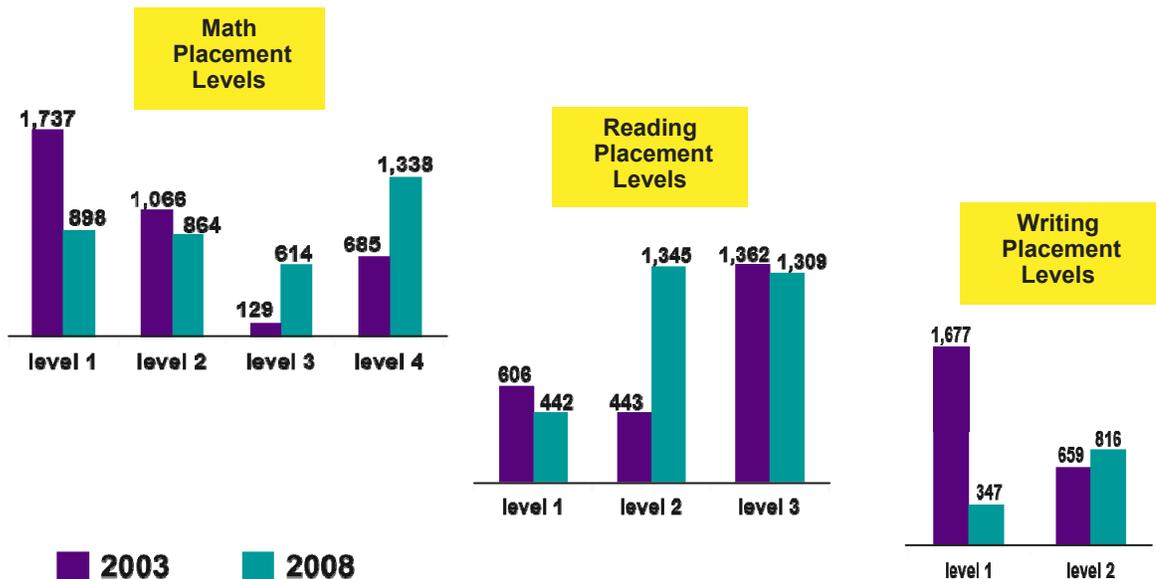


At the end of funding for the *AtD Initiative*, EPCC and our partners had achieved the following results:

Through a combination of college-readiness initiatives, we increased the percentage of recent high school graduates who placed college-ready.

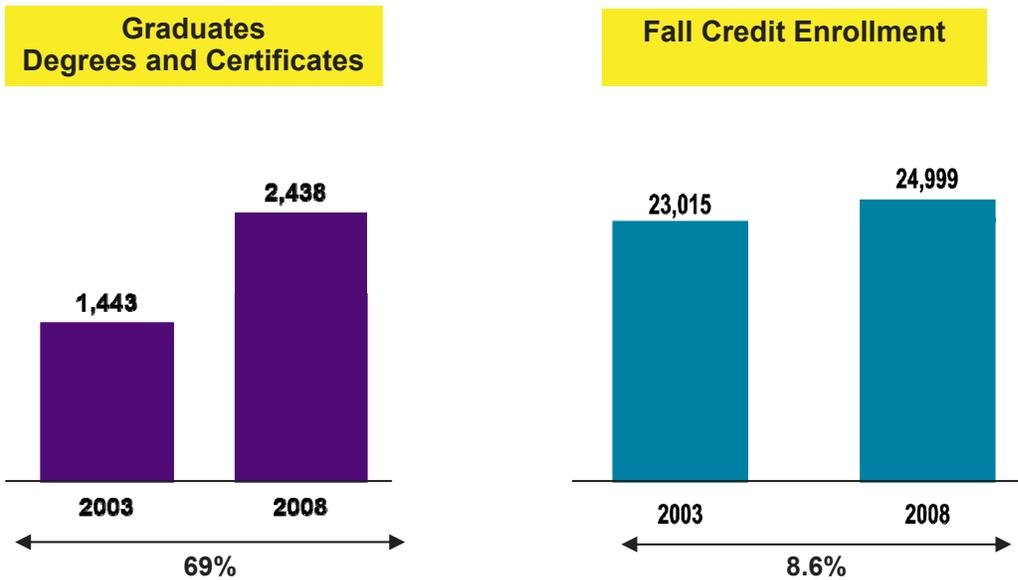


Through interventions to elevate placement and realignment of DE courses, we reduced the time required to complete DE course work. The following charts show that over the five year period, enrollment in the lower level DE courses decreased, while enrollment in the higher level courses increased.



Through the combined efforts in all the strategies described above we significantly increased the number of students graduating from EPCC.

Increase in Graduates Exceeds Increase in Enrollment



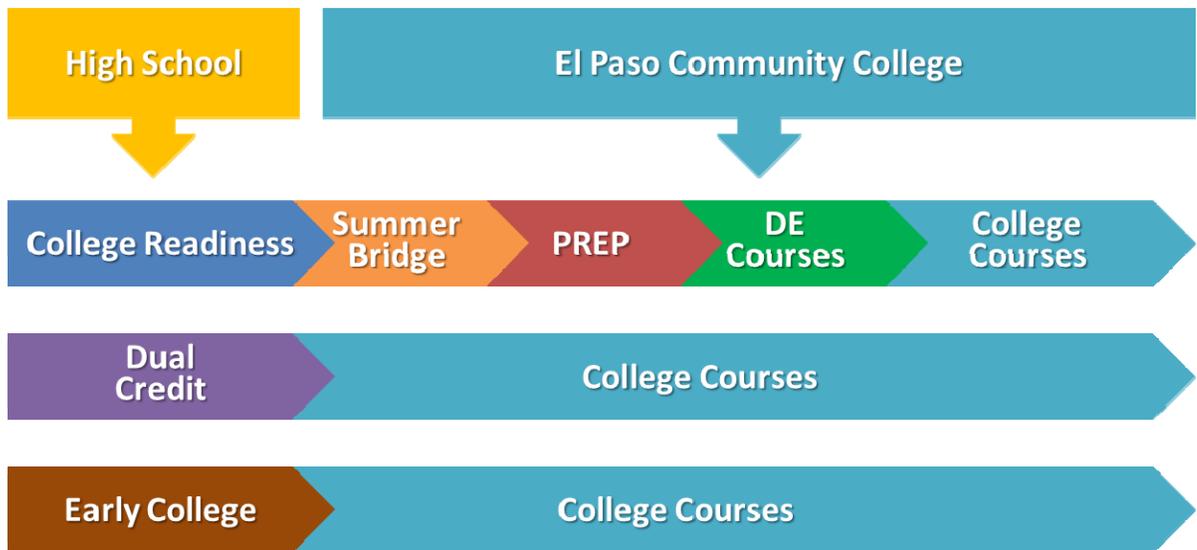
The EPCC family is very proud of the progress made through the *AtD Initiative* and very grateful to the Lumina Foundation for providing the funding and motivation to support that work. As a result of being included in the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's *DE Initiative*, we will be able to scale-up programs that will accelerate student progress through DE coursework.

Reducing the number of students going into DE and reducing the time required for those students needing DE will help reach the goal of doubling the number of low income young people who earn a postsecondary degree or certificate with value in the marketplace by age 26.

The balance of this document describes the *Pathways to Success* that these initiatives have made possible for all first-time-in-college students in the El Paso area and specifically to those enrolling at EPCC.



Pathways



The graphic above illustrates the different pathways available to students in the El Paso area. An in-depth description of each segment of the pathway is described below.



The top line shows what might be called the traditional path. The College Readiness

Initiative provides students the opportunity to take the college placement test during their junior year in high school. Those whose scores indicate deficiencies in the areas tested (reading, writing and math) are provided interventions to improve their skills and then tested again. Those still showing deficiencies are offered the opportunity to attend a five-week Summer Bridge Program that provides workshops and computer-aided instruction to improve skills before being tested again. Those still needing to improve their placement scores after the Summer Bridge Program or those electing not to participate in the Program are encouraged to participate in PREP (Pretesting Retesting Education Program) after enrolling at EPCC. PREP is designed to significantly decrease the rate of first-time-in-college students who must be diverted to DE courses and to accelerate the pace at which enrolled DE students successfully complete these courses. The PREP program is also available to students who are not recent high school graduates. If after going through the college-readiness process, the Summer Bridge and/or the PREP Programs, the placement scores still indicate deficiencies, the student is placed into DE course(s). Deficiencies, especially in reading, may delay the student's enrollment in college level courses for several semesters.



Dual
Credit

College Courses

The second path illustrates how high school students can demonstrate evidence of college -readiness as early as their junior year by taking the college placement test and scoring high enough to begin taking college courses while still in high school.

Early College

College Courses

The third path illustrates how students enrolled in the four EPCC Early College High Schools can get a significant head start on college coursework early in their high school experience. Students in these schools will have earned an Associate's Degree from EPCC by the time they receive their high school diploma.



College Readiness

Traditional Path

The College Readiness Initiative was undertaken to address the need to increase the number of high school graduates who meet the Texas Success Initiative standards upon entry into college and who place into college level courses (avoiding the need for remediation). The catalyst for this effort is the El Paso Area College Readiness Consortium, which is comprised of EPCC, UTEP, the Collaborative for Academic Excellence, the 12 area school districts and the Region XIX Education Service Center. Representatives from the Consortium meet to set into motion activities that will help achieve the stated goal of the Initiative. The Consortium is co-chaired by Dr. Dennis Brown, Vice President of Instruction (EPCC) and Dr. Richard Jarvis, Provost (UTEP).

A second tier organization, the College Readiness Implementation Committee, co-chaired by Ms. Joyce Ritchey, Dean (EPCC) and Dr. Donna Ekal, Associate Provost (UTEP), was created to carry out the day to day activities. Research to-date has revealed that the primary reason high school students do not place into college level courses upon entrance into higher education has more to do with a lack of understanding of the importance of and reason for the Accuplacer placement test (test used at EPCC and UTEP) and a lack of preparation for the test, than it does a lack of preparation through the high school curriculum. This is where the College Readiness Initiative steps in. The Initiative requires that high school juniors and seniors follow the six step protocol below:

- Comprehensive orientation for student and parent
 - Why take a placement test?
 - What do the scores mean?
 - How will the scores be used?
 - How can doing well save time and money?
 - How can the student prepare to do well on the Accuplacer test?
- Complete joint EPCC/UTEP admission application
- Test
- Interpretation of scores
- Post-test interventions
- Re-test

Results of these efforts have led to an increase in the number of students placing into college level certificate and degree applicable courses. Consequently, EPCC has seen a reduction in the number of students requiring DE coursework upon entering college.

One obvious benefit for students taking the placement test during their junior year in high school is that identified deficiencies can be addressed before they graduate. An



unexpected outcome was that some students were able to see themselves as college material for the first time. This is especially true for first-generation students who often have no college-going influences around them. Seeing that their scores placed them into college-level courses, hearing about the availability and affordability of dual credit classes and actually taking the first step in the admissions process, provides a vision of higher education possibilities that was not there before. Today, all of the high schools in the El Paso area have been designated Accuplacer testing sites and, therefore, plan testing based on their other scheduling requirements and pay for the student tests. The results shown below can be largely attributed to the College Readiness Initiative.

Impact of College Readiness Initiative on College Placement		
Discipline	2003	2008
Math	2.1%	7.5%
Reading	29.1%	37.5%
Writing	54.3%	65.8%

Impact of College Readiness Initiative on DE Enrollment Spring 2006 to Spring 2008	
Discipline	Amount of Change
Math	0%
Reading	-24%
Writing	-37%

The League for Innovation in the Community College recognized the College Readiness Initiative with its Innovation of the Year Award in 2006-07.



Summer Bridge Program

Traditional Path

The EPCC Summer Bridge Program, also called Project Dream, provides an intensive five week course of study for recent high school graduates who have developmental course needs in at least one area. The objective of the Program is to increase college readiness by:

- Improving basic skills
- Accessing college resources
- Developing college-going attitude
- Developing success strategies
- Enrolling in college in the fall semester
- Completing the fall semester in good standing

Students take a variety of diagnostic assessments to include a pre and post test of the Accuplacer to compare skills development progress and a pre and post test of the Learning and Study Skills Inventory (LASSI) to determine progress on college success strategies. In addition to instructional activities to build basic skills, participants also learn college success strategies through workshops given by counselors and staff from other programs, such as Career Services and the PASS Program. A mentor is assigned to each class to provide a strong positive role model and provide additional services such as in-class tutoring. Two instructors are assigned to each class; one for language arts and one for math. The success of this program has led to many students progressing more quickly and at a higher level of achievement.

After participating in the 2009 offering of the Summer Bridge Program, 69% of the students enrolled at EPCC in the fall semester. The following chart shows the impact of the Summer Bridge Program on their placement:

	Math	Reading	Writing
Placed into college level	8%	32%	20%
Elevated placement at least 1 level	44%	5%	26%





“The EPCC Summer Bridge Program helped me place out of Math 0300 through Math 0305. The Program has allowed me to take less remedial courses and in the long run focus on not dropping out of college.”

Griselda Espinoza
EPCC and UTEP Student



PREP Program

Traditional Path

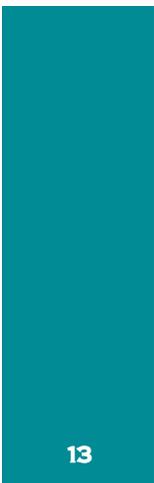
The EPCC Pretesting, Retesting Educational Preparation (PREP) Program assists entering students through a case management approach in understanding the significance of the college placement test, developing an Individualized Preparation Program and working on computer-assisted modules to refresh basic skills. PREP staff also provide additional information and referrals to other College services, such as financial aid, child care and counseling. Students who have never taken the placement test attend a Pretest Overview session where they are provided tips on what to expect when taking a computerized adaptive placement test and also receive information on the developmental course sequence.

Students who have already taken the placement test may feel that their scores do not accurately represent their true skill level. If so, these students are offered the opportunity to refresh their skills and to retake the placement test.

A PREP Specialist works with the student to develop an Individualized Preparation Plan, which takes into consideration factors such as the student's prior education and grades, the length of time since the student was last enrolled in an academic setting and the choice of degree plan and career occupation. Students also take a diagnostic test that pinpoints areas of academic strengths and weaknesses. Students use computer-based modules to refresh basic skills and then take or retake the placement test. PREP staff conduct follow-up contacts to assure that students are completing their intervention program in a timely fashion and are preparing for enrollment in the subsequent semester.

From the fall 2008 through summer 2009 semesters, 50% of the students participating in the PREP Program improved their placement by at least one level. In 2007, EPCC's College Prep Program was presented the Star Award by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board for exceptional contributions toward student success.





Developmental Education

Traditional Path

Before we started with the *AtD Initiative*, the DE discipline was a separate entity from the disciplines that taught college-level courses.

EPCC had the following sequence of DE courses:

MATH	READING	WRITING
MATH 0300	READ 0307	ENG 0309
MATH 0301	READ 0308	ENG 0310
MATH 0303	READ 0309	
MATH 0305		

After a comprehensive study of the issues on all sides, EPCC faculty recommended that the DE instruction be joined with the college-level instruction in the three areas. EPCC hired a Director of Student Success to coordinate support services. To facilitate interaction and collaboration we established standing committees with faculty and staff from each area and a DE Council to coordinate activities between areas.

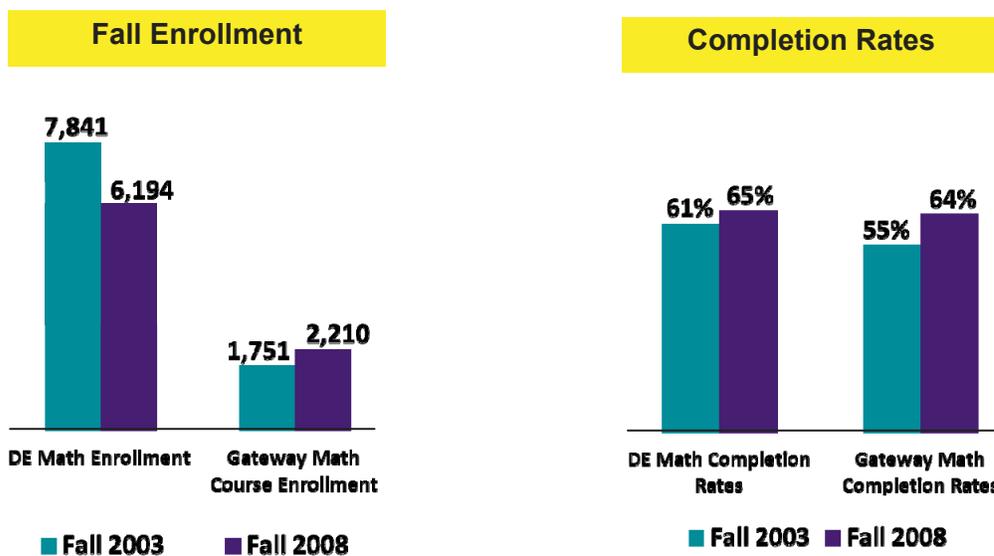


A major undertaking by the faculty in the math department consisted of reviewing each of the developmental math courses, eliminating overlap between courses and ensuring that the outcomes of each course matched the expectations of the following course. Their effort resulted in reducing the math developmental course sequence from four courses to three courses, saving at least one semester for the students who place into the lower levels of the math sequence.



The math faculty also conducted several pilots of interventions designed to improve student success in a discipline where students have the most difficulty. One particularly successful pilot uses an “emporium” model that places the teacher and the student in a lab environment with computers and computer-based instruction modules, and allows the student to proceed through the course material at their own pace.

The following chart shows the results of interventions implemented by the math faculty:



With new funding and support provided by DEI, EPCC will scale-up the PREP Program and the Math Emporium offerings in order to serve more students on each of the five campuses. EPCC is also developing a comprehensive program to guide and support all DE students through the attainment of their first 30 hours of college credit. National research and our own data indicate that students who earn at least 30 credits are very likely to continue and to complete their college experience. The EPCC program will be called “**Start Right**” and will be accomplished by instituting some mandatory enrollment requirements for DE students; by further aligning DE outcomes with college-level expectations; and by enlisting faculty, staff and students to be advocates, mentors and first-alert responders for at-risk students.



Dual Credit Program

Non-Traditional Path

EPCC's Dual Credit Program has several goals:

Jump start high school students' acquisition of certificate and degree applicable college courses

Serve as an incentive to high school students to pursue a higher education degree

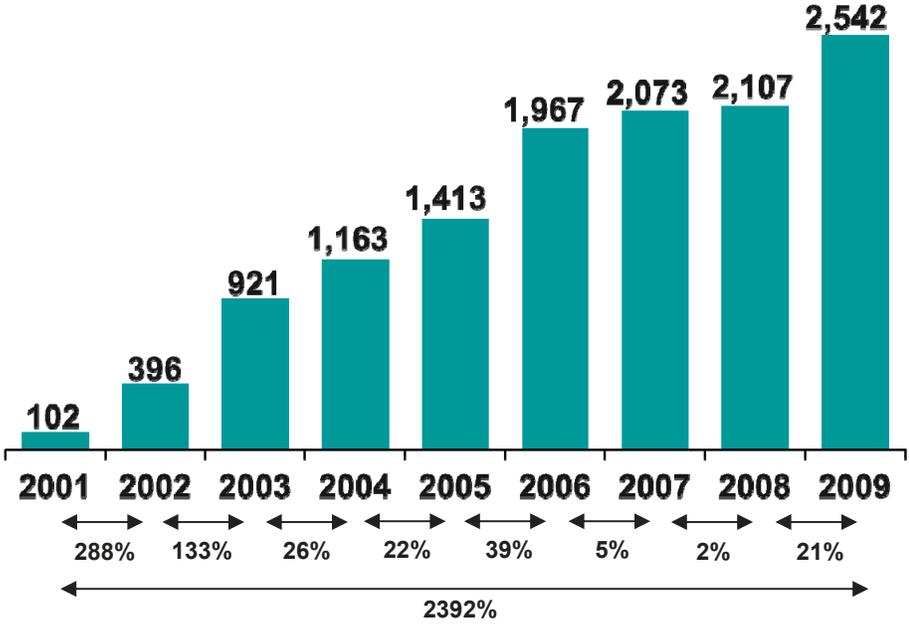
Show high school students that higher education coursework is clearly within their reach, both academically as well as financially

Serve as a catalyst for the high school student to decide to continue their education after graduating from high school

Currently more than 2,500 students in 30 plus high schools, both public and private, enroll in dual credit college classes in the El Paso region. As one of the poorest communities in the United States, the one single act that catapulted students into dual credit classes in record numbers was the College President's recommendation to the EPCC Board of Trustees to waive tuition and fees for students. Complementing this was the agreement from the school districts to purchase the textbooks for the students. These two actions leveled the playing field for all students, allowing for participation on the basis of interest and desire, and not finances.



**Dual Credit Enrollment – Fall Semesters Unduplicated
Not including Early College High Schools**



Further expansion of the Dual Credit Program is only limited by the availability of college credentialed faculty. UTEP, through its Teachers for a New Era Program, is working collaboratively with school districts to assist teachers desiring to attend graduate school and acquire degrees and coursework needed to be fully college credentialed.



Early College High School

Non-Traditional Path

EPCC currently has four Early College High Schools in operation, one will open in the fall and another on the drawing board. The premise is simple; believe that motivated students with varying degrees of preparation (students represent a broad cross section of experiences and abilities) can achieve beyond expectations. In four years, students in these schools obtain a high school diploma and an Associate's Degree (60 fully transferable college credit hours in a variety of fields). College tuition is waived by EPCC and textbooks are provided by the school districts. Students take college courses both in their high school classroom taught by a college credentialed instructor and in college classrooms on EPCC campuses taught by full-time or adjunct college faculty. The four Early College High Schools currently in operation are:

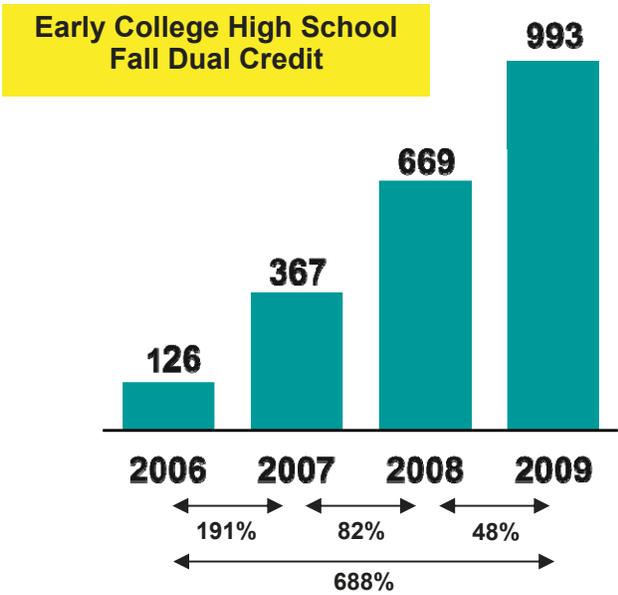
Mission Early College High School (MECHS) – opened on EPCC's Mission del Paso Campus in partnership with Socorro ISD with start-up funding provided by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The school is in its fourth year of operation and has 483 students (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior). MECHS was designated exemplary by the Texas Education Agency each of its first three years.

Valle Verde Early College High School (VVECHS) – opened on EPCC's Valle Verde Campus in partnership with Ysleta ISD with start-up funding provided by the Texas Education Agency. The school is in its third year of operation and has 294 students (freshman, sophomore, junior). VVECHS was designated exemplary by the Texas Education Agency each of its first two years.

Transmountain Early College High School (TMECHS) - opened on EPCC's Transmountain Campus in partnership with El Paso ISD with start-up funding provided by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The school is in its second year of operation and has 223 students (freshman, sophomore). TMECHS is designated a TSTEM (Texas Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) school and was designated exemplary by the Texas Education Agency in its first year.

Northwest Early College High School (NWECHS) – opened on EPCC's Northwest Campus in partnership with Canutillo ISD with start-up funding provided by the Greater Texas Foundation. The school is in its second year of operation and has 193 students (freshman, sophomore). NWECHS is designated a TSTEM (Texas Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) school. **In addition to start-up funds, the Greater Texas Foundation has committed \$800,000 to provide each NWECHS student, in the first four graduating classes, a \$2,000 scholarship to begin their junior year at a university of their choice.**





A fifth Early College High School, Cotton Valley, will open in August 2010 in collaboration with three small rural school districts: Fabens ISD, Tornillo ISD and Fort Hancock ISD. The collaborative received some funding through a planning grant from the Texas Education Agency, with the possibility of an implementation grant. Discussions are also underway for a sixth early college high school in partnership with the Clint ISD.

To date, all expectations for early college high school students have been exceeded. After completing their junior year of high school, 23 students from the MECHS graduated with Associate degrees from EPCC and entered UTEP as juniors (21 were the first in their families to ever attend college). In their first semester at UTEP, their average GPA was 3.4 and 9 students earned a perfect 4.0. They are currently in their second semester at UTEP and will graduate from high school at the same time they complete their junior year of college. An additional 42 MECHS students graduated from EPCC mid-way through their senior year of high school and are now attending UTEP as juniors.



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