**EDUCATION
ADVISORY
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Partnership Models to Promote Improvements in K-12 Education

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I. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Project Challenge:
Leadership at a member institution approached the Council with the following questions:

- *How do institutions organize targeted efforts at improving high school graduation rates and access to higher education in their community?*
- *With what kinds of community organizations do four-year institutions create the most valuable partnerships in these efforts? Why?*
- *What specific initiatives have taskforces commissioned to improve high school graduation rates and college access proposed? How are solutions for poor graduation rates and limited college access implemented?*
- *How successful have proposals focused on secondary school, been in enhancing university student retention and graduation rates? Have certain initiatives been more successful with particular student demographics than with others? Why?*
- *What common challenges do taskforces commissioned to improve high school graduation rates and college access face? How have institutions mitigated these challenges?*

Project Sources:
- Education Advisory Board's internal and online (www.educationadvisoryboard.com) research libraries
- *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (http://chronicle.com)
- National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] (http://nces.ed.gov/)
- The Institute of Learning Partnership (http://www.uwgb.edu/phuturephoenix/)
- Milwaukee Partnership Academy (http://www.milwaukeepartnershipacademy.org/work_groups.htm)
- *Crop College Reach out Program website (http://care.fsu.edu/crop.html)*

Research Parameters:
Per the requesting member's guidelines, the Council targeted its outreach to large public institutions involved in efforts to improve K-12 education.

A Guide to Institutions Profiled in this Brief			
Institution	Location	Enrollment (Total / Undergraduate)	Classification
University A	South Midsize City	39,800 / 30,800	Research Universities (very high research activity)
University B	South Midsize City	34,900 / 26,100	Research Universities (very high research activity)
University C	Midwest Large City	26,800 / 16,000	Research Universities (very high research activity)
University D	Mid-Atlantic Large Suburb	37,200 / 26,500	Research Universities (very high research activity)
University E	Midwest Midsize City	6,600 / 6,300	Master's Colleges and Universities (smaller programs)
University F	Midwest Large City	30,400 / 25,200	Research Universities (high research activity)

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key Observations:

❖ **K-12 initiatives are promoted by PK-16 or P-20 councils depending on the levels of education included in the system.** PK-16 councils typically consist of educational leaders from prekindergarten through college. PK-20 councils additionally include representatives from grad-school. In this brief K-12 is used when referring to the general K-12 environment and PK-16 or PK-20 is used to address specific systems that include additional educational levels.

❖ **Most contact institutions are involved with K-12 initiatives through a council or taskforce that improvement efforts for PK-16 education and access to higher education.** Such councils or task forces may either be state-directed or led by individual institutions. Contacts state that while state-led councils aim at holistic improvements of the state-wide education system, they lack the action-focused agenda that institution-led councils create, making it more difficult to measure tangible impacts of their initiatives.

❖ **K-12 councils' initiatives target three primarily goals: aligning education standards, bridging the achievement gap, among students of different socio-economic backgrounds and improving teacher training and preparation.** Contacts stress the importance of aligning education standards in order to produce a more seamless education system, reducing the difficulty that students face in transitioning from one educational level to the other.

❖ **Institutions have found that pre-collegiate programs targeted toward at-risk students as a helpful method to bridging the achievement gap.** These programs provide academic, social, and financial support services to students, prior to matriculation and during their undergraduate career, who are at greater risk of facing academic difficulty in college. Contact institutions also bridge the achievement gap by creating and investing in improved teacher training programs, ensuring that all students in the state have equal access to highly qualified teachers.

❖ **Contacts institutions recommend strategic partnerships with educational institutions, local business, foundations and governmental institutions as crucial in creating successful K-12 initiatives.** These partnerships often provide institutions with the financial and legislative support needed to make K-12 improvement initiatives a state-wide priority.

❖ **Though several institutions still rely on anecdotal feedback, a number of institutions have created data-driven methods of evaluating the impact of K-12 initiatives.** Evaluation methods include reporting systems that give feedback on college freshman performance to their former high schools, student performance tracking tools used to evaluate teaching and school leadership quality, as well as using student retention statistics used to evaluate pre-collegiate support programs.

tions have undertaken a range of initiatives to improve K-12 education, typically through either a state-directed educational council or prising of representatives from across a state's educational system.

tion	K-12 Initiative Organization	K-12 Initiative Governance	Description and Goals
A			
B	Alliance of Education Leadership Heads - Educator Preparation and Innovation Board of Regents	State-led with institution follow-up	In 2006, the Alliance was convened as the state's P-20 council governor, bringing together representatives from all of the stat boards. University B is represented on the council through its Educ and Innovation Board of Regents, which serves as a liaison betwe and the University System. Though the Alliance doesn't actually ensures that educational leadership throughout the state collabora educational standards, policies and reforms.
C			
D	The P-20 Leadership Council - Individual institution partnerships with local communities	State-led	University D's involvement in the PK-16 to P-20 environme Chancellor-led initiative 15 years ago to prepare students more transitioning to college after high school. The council's memb representatives from the University system, the state's hij commission, and the state department of education, volunteered the educational standards across all levels and to improve access to e students.
and F			

Contacts report that K-12 councils directed by the state and those led by a specific institution present certain noteworthy trade-offs.

| State-led Councils	Institution-led Councils
State-wide councils tend to more holistically approach improvements to K-12 education by viewing K-12 education as a part of a broader system. Accordingly, such councils usually have representatives from all educational levels, the state government, and local businesses, which helps promote a seamless transition from pre-school to the workforce. K-12 initiatives led by the state are incorporated into a state's political agenda and gain state-wide prominence, which provides such councils with dedicated staff members and state funding. However, contacts at University D report that in an economic downturn, formal state-led K-12 initiatives lose funds and political focus, making them less consistent than volunteer-staffed institutional partnerships that operate independently from the state.	K-12 initiatives led by specific institutions tend to be more narrowly focused on the role that only the institution could play in the K-12 arena. As such, contacts suggest that such councils may lose the ability to efficiently align educational standards or effect change across the state. However, a limited agenda allows an institution's K-12 council to operate a more action-focused agenda. For instance, the University C's PK-16 council specifically targeted teaching quality improvements by redesigning school leadership training degrees and by tracking the performance of principals who graduated from University C.

PK-16 Council Organizational Structure
Irrespective of PK-16 councils' leadership, most councils tend to represent three primary stakeholders in a state's educational system, as seen in the diagram below.

Educational Leadership – Councils include academic leaders such as provosts, deans, departmental chairs, as well as PK-16 leaders such as superintendants, high school principles and teachers.

Governmental Leadership and Organizations – Councils typically include state governors, the leadership of the state department of education, or the leadership of the higher education commission

Local Businesses or Philanthropic Organizations – Board members or CEOs of prominent local businesses or leadership of philanthropic organization with an interest in education are also members of some councils.
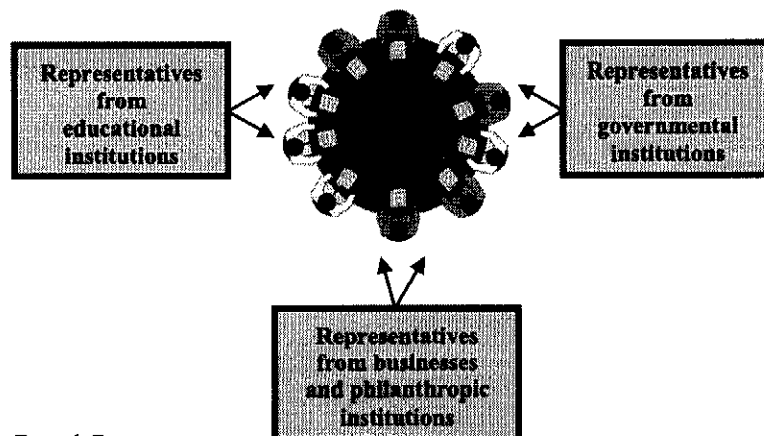
IV. IDENTIFYING PARTNERS IN K-12 INITIATIVES

Contacts indicate that K-12 initiatives depend on strategically developed partnerships. Councils convene representatives from educational institutions, local businesses, and community organizations charged with creating a seamless educational system and addressing critical state educational issues through collaborative initiatives that better coordinate, integrate, and improve education from preschool through to entrance to the workforce. The goal of these councils is to be comprehensive and coordinated in their efforts to promote access, student achievement, educational standards alignment and lifelong learning.

	Contact institutions find that partnerships with high schools in PK-16 councils provide a crucial step toward improving the transition between high school and university for college-bound students. These partnerships offer an opportunity to align academic standards such that students who meet high school graduation requirements are also, academically and socially prepared for a college-level education. A particular state's P-20 leadership council prioritizes aligning academic standards across educational levels by creating a dialogue between higher education instructors and high school teachers to discuss the expected mathematical and writing capabilities of college freshmen. Various University D campuses also partner with high schools on a more local scale. One campus, for instance, partners with a local high school to offer graduate students studying educational development the opportunity to work with a community council for school improvement.
	Contact institutions report that local businesses have a vested interest in initiatives that promote improved education standards given the role educational standards play in the quality of a community's workforce. As a result, contact institutions have found businesses to be very valuable partners in providing both financial support for K-12 improvement initiatives and work experience to high school students. For example, at University A, local businesses are sometimes called upon to fund pre-collegiate programming for high school students, and businesses in that state offer internships to high school students in an effort to encourage them to advance their education.

Contacts at University C emphasize the value of philanthropic organizations as partners in promoting K-12 educational improvements. Such organizations not only provide substantial financial support for programming efforts but also encourage accountability by requiring that specific benchmarks be met to ensure continued funding. |
| | State government representation is an integral part of most PK-16 councils. Partnering with the government provides an opportunity for K-12 initiatives to attain state-wide recognition and to encourage the state-wide education system to rally around K-12 improvements. Government partnerships may also grant PK-16 councils access to state legislative support, creating state laws from what may previously have only been consensus-based initiatives or recommended reform. For example, some PK-16 councils such as the council in a certain state have become state legislated bodies, authorized to influence state educational policies by law.

Contact institutions also partner with nation-wide governmental organizations for financial and programming support. University A operates a number of nationally funded pre-collegiate programs such as the College Reach Out Program, which specifically targets at-risk high school students. |

V. GOALS FOR K-12 INITIATIVES

Most PK-16/ P-20 councils at contact institutions have been formed in response to falling K-12 standards and the resulting incompatibility between high school graduation requirements and college entry requirements. PK-16 councils aim to achieve three primary goals: aligning academic standards, reducing the achievement gap across demographic and socio-economic differences and improving school leadership and teacher training.

Aligning Educational Standards

Defining the Problem

Contacts state that the need to create a seamless educational system in several states arises from the fact that many high school students are still not college-ready at the completion of their high school education. Through increased dialogue in PK-16 council sessions, educators across educational levels are discovering that inconsistent expectations of students across the education system make the transition between high school and college especially tenuous.

Exploring Solutions

Contacts recommend strong collaboration between educators across educational levels as the key to aligning educational standards. Contacts stress that only after consensus is reached on educational standards across the state's educational system can measures be put in place to ensure that students meet these standards. For example, at its inception, one P-20 council considered educational standards alignment as its most pertinent priority. The council created both English and Math alignment committees bringing together instructors from the **University D** and the state's high schools to grade college papers and review math problems with the objective of judging if they were of college standard. Contacts note that marked differences in opinions surfaced on what constitutes college standards, exposing the need to come to a consensus on attainment expectations. Subsequently, council members have instituted policies that universalized attainment expectations and testing requirements, allowing the council to focus on initiatives that assist student reach required standards.

Closing the Achievement Gap

Defining the Problem

Given the increased demographic and socio-economic diversity among college-bound students, specifically the increase in first-generation students and non-native English-speaking students, the challenge of closing the achievement gap in K-12 education today has increasing importance for institutions of higher education. Contacts confirm that after establishing state-wide academic standards, the onus rests on educators across the state to ensure that all students have equal access to higher education.

Exploring Solutions

National Legislature
In some cases, contact institutions have relied on the national or state legislature is used to authorize certain initiatives that purposely target bridging the achievement gap. Contacts specifically cite The-No-Child-Left-Behind-Act of 2002 as central movement to efforts to make education accessible to all students. The act mandates that all students in states must meet individual state-defined academic standards by the 2013/2014 school year and that all teachers must meet the license and certification requirements of the

states in which they teach. Schools that fail to meet these standards may be penalized in a number of ways, including state-takeover, incentivizing schools to ensure that all of their students meet state testing requirements. Contacts at University D and the **University C** report that though the objectives of the No-Child-Left-Behind-Act are laudable, the act also has the potential to incentivize low academic standards, because several states set their testing requirements to ensure that more students meet state requirements and to avoid penalization. This practice leads to an increase in high school graduates that may not meet college entry requirements and has also inhibited efforts to codify standards within state PK-20 educational systems.

Pre-Collegiate Programming
Either individually or in partnership with governmental organizations, local business, and public high schools, several contact institutions have created pre-collegiate programs that specifically target at-risk students who are in need of additional assistance to be competitive in a college environment. **University E**, **University F**, and **University A** have very well developed pre-collegiate programs that cater specifically to at-risk students in their community.

University E
Institute of Learning Partnership
In response to the lower percentage of graduating high school students in the district relative to the rest of the state, the Institute for Learning Partnership at University E created a program to encourage at-risk elementary students to view higher education as the path to a successful future. The pre-collegiate program, designed for fifth graders in the area, encourages student success by providing elementary students with positive role models and other support tools to help them graduate high school and pursue higher education. Fifth graders are paired with University E's students, who serve as mentors throughout the academic year. 1,500 fifth graders are invited to the University E campus annually for a tour intended to expose them to the attractive features of a college education, and mentors follow up with a post-visit meeting at participating elementary schools, maintaining contact with students through visits, letters and phone calls. The program continues to serve each group of fifth graders until the twelfth grade, even providing financial aid to students who would otherwise be unable to attend University E. Contacts observe that since the program's inception, general interest has increased in an education at University E; the first class of this program matriculated at University E this fall.

University F
Family Literary & Tutoring Work Group
The Milwaukee Partnership Academy (MPA) is a PK-16 council with representatives of education, labor, business, government, university, foundation, parents, and community groups. The council's purpose is to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in Milwaukee Public Schools. The MPA creates work groups that develop and implement yearly work plans to reach the academy's objectives. For example, the Family Literacy and Tutoring Work Group supports families in helping their children achieve academic success through improved literary skills. The group organizes workshops and tutor training sessions to improve students reading and writing skills. This initiative specifically targets parents with poor socio-economic backgrounds, encouraging them to be involved in the state-wide effort to improve student success by establishing a culture of learning at home.

University A
College Reach Out Program (CROP)

CROP was created in 1983 as a state-wide initiative to increase the number of low-income, educationally challenged students in grades six through twelve that pursue higher education. Students must meet academic and economic criteria to enroll in the College Reach-Out Program; first-generation college students, students who have been retained or suspended, have below a 2.5 grade point average, or have performed below average on any section of the state's Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) qualify to enroll in the program. Economic qualifiers for the program include students who are enrolled in free or reduced lunch programs or those whose families receive public assistance. CROP aims to develop student learning skills, to broaden students' and parents' understanding of the benefits of higher education and to promote academic, career, and personal development through supplemental instruction. At University A the College Reach out Program is offered through the office of Academic Retention and Enhancement. University A additionally provides a Summer Bridge Program that offers students who have participated in the College Reach out Program and other pre-collegiate preparation programs, support and priority admission to the University providing them with support in the transition process and throughout their undergraduate careers.

Providing Principal and Teacher Preparation Programs

Defining the Problem

Contacts emphasize that though national or state legislature and pre-collegiate programs are helpful, they may only superficially improve K-12 education because structural reform does not necessarily address inadequate training of educational practitioners contacts state that if students do not have equal access to highly-qualified teaching, their academic outcomes will be mediocre at best despite national legislation and support programming.

Exploring Solutions

Improving principals' and teachers' preparation and training provides a preventative and more in-depth solution to the root-cause of poor K-12 education.

Reinventing Principal Preparation
University C

University C has developed a particularly innovative method of improving student success by reinventing school principal preparation. Prior to the inception of the state's current P-20 council in the state, University C had created a temporary council that focused on what role the institution could play in improving P-16 education in the city. Recognizing its prominent role in producing school leadership though its college of education, the university revisited the school principal degree program and created an improved model meant to produce school principals purposely trained to improve a low performing school's performance.

The institution used funding from a number of organizations such as the Broad Foundation (which specializes in improving school leadership in the K-12 environment) and the Public Schools in the city which contribute a million dollars annually to fund the project. Over the past decade, University C has tracked the performance of its school principal graduates using state data on student performance. Contacts indicate that all the schools of University C- trained principals are far outperforming their counterpart public schools.

Advanced Teacher Training
Institute for Learning Partnership, University E

The Institute for Learning Partnership also prioritizes improved teaching preparation as a means to academic excellence. Its mission is to "enhance professional development for educators to improve academic achievement for all learners." The institute provides four programs improve teaching: a Masters Degree in Applied Leadership for Teaching and Learning, a professional development certificate, the Professional Program in Education, and grants to improve teaching and learning.

Masters Degree in Applied Leadership for Teaching and Learning
This program is designed for educators who are actively employed in PK-16 classrooms. Program participants are given the opportunity to work within a community of learners, integrating their educational professional experience with the course of study. The program is based on standards developed by the national Board for Professional Teaching Standards and aims to prepare professional teachers who are reflective leaders, lifelong practitioners, and can improve student's performance as well as the overall quality of education in the region.

Professional Development Certificate (PDC)
The Professional Development Certificate is designed to meet the demand for teachers, pupil services personnel and districts to provide a responsive and practical model for professional growth and improved student learning. Candidates in the program work in collegial groups to develop and master their own individual learning plans, action research projects, and portfolio submissions. The program is suitable for experienced educators at any state in their career and either before or after completion of master's degree studies. PDC is approved by the state's Department of Public Instruction for teacher and pupil service re-licensure and is guided by the National Teaching Standards board.

Professional Program in Education
This program engages university professors and classroom teachers in collaborations to improve students' learning. It includes collaborative research through the institute's grants to improve teaching and learning. The Professional Program in Education also offers participants the opportunity to experience teaching in the field by mentoring students and assisting in classrooms, prior to committing to teaching as a career.

Grants to Improve Teaching and Learning
The Institute for Learning Partnership provides funds to support collaborative school-based action research projects that will improve instructional practices, curricula and learning outcomes. Groups representing subject areas or teams from across PK-16 and University faculty are funded for learning improvement projects, or are encouraged to seek outside funding to support larger research agendas.

Source: Institute for Learning Partnership website

VI. MEASURING RESULTS

Though most PK-16 initiatives and programs rely on anecdotal feedback to evaluate progress, Contact institutions are exploring various data-driven methods of measuring the impact that PK-16 initiatives have on educational standards and student performance. The **University C**, the **University D**, and **University A** employ various data-focused techniques to measure progress.

Using State Data on Student Performance to Evaluate Progress

The **University C** has developed new ways of using state data to track the full distribution of student performance in all city public schools. As a result, leadership of the school principal program in the college of education can measure how students are performing in the schools that are overseen by graduates from the principal program at University C. Leadership at University C has published a number of reports and articles that illustrate how state data can be processed and leveraged to provide accurate information on performance of each student in the state in PK-16.

Contacts indicate that this new method of measuring performance offers a substantial improvement to the 'meet or exceed' standards of measurement that used to be the status-quo; in the past, school performance was measured by the ability of students to meet or exceed the state's proficiency standards required by the No-Child-Left-Behind-Act. Because these academic requirements where set so low, they only accounted for the performances of the bottom quartile of students in the state, failing to encourage true efforts toward bridging the achievement gap. Contacts report, for instance, that African American male student performance actually worsened during the years of the old evaluation model, despite records that proved that students were meeting and exceeding the state's minimum requirements.

Using Retention Statistics to Evaluate Progress

At **University A**, leadership has observed that students who take part in the Summer Bridge Program are being retained and graduating at higher levels than the general student population. Contacts believe that these results are a direct result of the additional support such students receive prior to matriculating, and the continued support they receive throughout their undergraduate years. Contacts encourage institutions to closely monitor and track the performance of students who take part in pre-collegiate programs in order to accurately assess the effectiveness of such programs and to use evidence of success to acquire additional funding for programs.

Similarly, contacts at the **University D** system use a reporting system call the Student Outcome and Achievement Report (SOAR), which reports on first-year university students' performance during the first semester to their former public schools. Public schools are given detailed information about the students from their school that needed remedial assistance upon matriculating at University D, as well as those that excelled without additional assistance. Though it is currently unclear how public schools use this feedback on their past students, contacts believe that this system will help foster a partnership between the leadership from both educational levels, encouraging discussions on how to further improve the transition process for high school students to university.

Contacts across institutions indentify a number of key challenges that PK-16 councils and task forces typically face. Contacts indicate that the cultural differences that exist across educational levels as well as the need to galvanize adequate financial and human resources to form these councils make collaboration particularly difficult.

Navigating the Cultural Challenges between PK-16 and Higher Education

Contacts at the **University C** explain that there is a large cultural divide between higher education and PK-16, particularly with regards to the motivations that govern professors' choice of career as opposed to teachers. Faculty are not socialized to collaborate during their PhD training and are drawn to higher education, in part, so they can focus on their own interests. PK-16 educational success, in contrast, on the other hand, depends heavily on the ability of teachers to collaborate. In fact, according to contacts, schools in poor socio-economic areas that have still managed to be successful, attribute their success to strong collaboration among their teachers.

Contacts at the **University B** note that the cultural differences between professors and secondary school teachers are sometimes reflected in their educational policy vocabularies. The word 'retention,' for instance, has opposite meanings in higher education and in PK-12 education. At the university level, retention of students is a positive attribute use to define student success and positive learning outcomes. In PK-12, retention is negative and refers to those students who have to repeat a grade because they fail to meet academic standards. Consequently, contacts report that it is challenging to encourage these two groups to communicate effectively about improving state-wide education.

Contacts stress that though these challenges cannot be completely eliminated, it is helpful for participants in a PK-16 council or task-force to be aware of the differences that exist in order to cautiously work around them.

Acquiring Adequate Financial and Human Resources

All contacts express difficulty with acquiring the adequate financial and human resources needed to fuel PK-16 initiatives. Contacts at the **University C** indicate that both higher education and PK-12 systems are already resource poor and struggle to maintain collaborative councils and task forces that require additional monetary resources and time investment.

"Collaboration requires committed and skilled leadership. Committed and skilled people can find resources but if you pour resources into collaboration without committed people, it will amount to nothing."

—Council Interview

Addressing Financial Needs
Contact institutions recommend strong partnerships with businesses, education-focused foundations, and governmental organizations to help obtain the funding needed to promote PK-16 improvements. The Partnership Academy, for instance, gains significant resources through the joint efforts of its partners, including a $20 million grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to redesign public high schools a $5 million Carnegie Corporation grant to improve teacher education, and a $300,000 grant from the Milwaukee-based Herzfeld Foundation to support ten of its school-based learning teams.

Similarly, University A's CROP and Trio Upward Bound pre-collegiate programs receive funding from the Florida department of education and the United States department of education respectively. Since these programs are funded by the government, contact institutions are usually assured of regular funding in prosperous economic times.

Addressing Human Resource Needs
Contacts emphasize the importance of establishing committed leadership in order for PK-16 councils to succeed. Contacts at **University A** stress that when PK-16 programs and initiatives are run directly via a

University office such as the office of Academic Retention and Enhancement, it is imperative to obtain the support of university academic leadership. Contacts state that even in cases where programs are primarily funded by the state or other external organizations, the universities that host the programs still tend to cover the costs of operation. As a result, administrative support is crucial, though occasionally difficult to obtain, given that these programs do not always fall directly within an institution's mission.

Contacts at the **University D** observe that to address human resource needs, it is sometimes beneficial to hire employees to permanently staff PK-16 councils or programs through state financial support. However, contacts also caution against the unpredictability of state funding of permanent staff, especially during economic hardship, and suggest that PK-16 councils rather be led by a group of volunteers that rely on foundation or private business funding.