

The UCLA K-16 Collaborative

Abstract

UCLA proposes to establish a K-16 collaborative centered in the Venice/Westchester Cluster of the Los Angeles Unified School District. The Venice/Westchester Cluster comprises some 25,000 students in 18 elementary schools, 5 middle schools and two high schools. The Cluster, notable for its ethnic and socio-economic diversity, has strong leadership, a sound academic foundation and is eager to raise academic performance for its students and increase college-going rates, especially to highly-selective institutions like the University of California.

Using a “college begins in kindergarten” approach, UCLA proposes to develop, in partnership with other institutions and organizations, a comprehensive model for high academic achievement that can be replicated in other K-16 partnerships. The model will include a variety of strategies and activities such as: teacher preparation and development, professional development for principals and counselors, curricular reform, intensive tutoring, student mentoring, career-focused academic outreach, family outreach both by direct contact and media, and outreach to community-based groups. UCLA has already made initial contacts to involve an array of partners in the proposed collaborative including: UC Irvine and UC Riverside, Cal State Los Angeles and Loyola Marymount University; West Los Angeles College and Santa Monica College; the Achievement Council, the College Board and AVID; Dreamworks, Univision and La Opinion; and the Industrial Area Foundation and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

The principal investigator will be Associate Vice Chancellor - Academic Development Raymund Paredes. Co-principal investigator will be Professor Jeannie Oakes of the Graduate

School of Education and Information Studies. The amount requested for the program support is \$300,000.

Project Description and Goals

In the fall, 1995, a series of discussions began at UCLA to consider what the institution could do more effectively to address circumstances of educational disadvantage in K-12 and community colleges. These discussions culminated in a retreat held from May 31-June 2, 1996, involving some 70 participants, including UCLA faculty, administrators and students and representatives from the K-12 and community college sectors, representatives from educational organizations such as the Achievement Council and AVID, and representatives from the UC Office of the President. Participants developed dozens of recommendations for raising academic achievement throughout the academic pipeline and creating conditions of educational equity for all students. Among the recommendations which received the strongest support, in terms of perceived importance and viability, are the following:

1. Develop a strong information campaign on college preparation targeted at K-12 students and their families;
2. Extend academic and student outreach efforts into middle and elementary schools;
3. Work closely with K-12 teachers, counselors and principals to improve the academic performance of educationally-disadvantaged students;
4. Develop stronger student-focused academic activities such as "Saturday academies," summer academic bridge programs and tutoring efforts by trained UCLA students;
5. Establish stronger alliances with community colleges, building on successful models such as Puente and the Transfer Alliance Program;

6. Think globally but act locally; that is to say target collaborative efforts with K-12 and community colleges, using limited resources in a focused manner to develop exemplary initiatives and activities that can be replicated; and
7. Coordinate all campus outreach activities and conduct periodic assessments of their effectiveness.

These particular recommendations form the foundation of UCLA's proposed collaborative.

In response to recommendation 6 above, UCLA determined to work with a limited number of schools, with the goal of maximizing available resources and developing model, replicable programs. With assistance from the Achievement Council, a Los Angeles-based organization that promotes excellence in low-achieving schools, UCLA identified the Venice/Westchester Cluster within the Los Angeles Unified School District as the primary partner in the proposed collaborative. Several key factors influenced this choice. First, involvement with LAUSD seemed critical, particularly in light of the fact that the numbers of students coming to UCLA and UC from LAUSD have been declining steadily in the last decade. Secondly, the Venice/Westchester Cluster is among the most heterogeneous administrative units in LAUSD. The ethnic composition of the Cluster's 25,000 students is approximately 44% Latino, 33% African American, 17% White and 5% Asian American. A large percentage of students in the Cluster are from immigrant families with limited English proficiency. Over 50% of Cluster students are defined as low income. The Cluster area includes two housing projects, Mar Vista Gardens and Oakwood. There is significant gang activity in the area, some of which has resulted in a number of homicides over the last several years. Even with such problems, the Cluster offers vast opportunities for academic success according to a variety of performance data. The Cluster has strong leadership and a sound academic infrastructure. Several magnet schools

operate in the Cluster and the two high schools have extensive honors and advanced placement programs; each has achieved academic excellence in certain areas. Westchester High School, for example, is one of the leaders among southern California high schools in sending African Americans to four-year colleges and universities. Unfortunately, such success is largely relative. Both Venice and Westchester High Schools have high drop-out rates and generally low participation by low-income students and students of color in honors and advanced placement courses. Throughout the Cluster, academic achievement is distributed unequally among ethnic groups and across income categories. The challenge is thus to create greater opportunities for the educationally disadvantaged and to achieve educational equity in the Cluster. The ultimate goal of the proposed collaborative is to extend the successful programs and activities developed in the Venice/Westchester Cluster to other Clusters of LAUSD and beyond.

Proposed Partners in the Collaborative

In designing the proposed collaborative, UCLA has enlisted the support of various educational organizations, institutions, corporations and community organizations to accomplish the project goals. The Achievement Council will provide school-by-school data and analysis on key academic performance indicators; the Council will also participate in designing professional development and family-outreach activities, areas in which it has a successful track record. AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), a San Diego-based program committed to raising student achievement, will design the installation of its professional development and tutoring programs in the Cluster's middle and high schools; the College Board will work with high school teachers in the Cluster to develop its "Building Success" program, a recently-developed teacher-training effort that leads to more effective participation at the high school level in its Advanced Placement Program.

Proposed institutional partners will help to address a variety of issues. UC Irvine and UC Riverside will participate in teacher professional development (some of it by video teleconferencing) and in developing summer bridge programs and other student-centered academic activities. California State University faculty will be involved in designing the collaborative and its agenda and in data analysis. Because Loyola Marymount University trains teachers in the Venice/Westchester Cluster, LMU faculty and staff will participate in teacher-focused activities. Both West Los Angeles College and Santa Monica College will be involved in developing college-level courses for Cluster students and in extending and developing transfer programs to UC and other four-year institutions. Although the UCOP request for proposals emphasizes partnerships with the K-12 sector, UCLA has decided to develop a strong community college component into its proposed collaborative. After all, the vast majority of students from underrepresented groups and economically-disadvantaged backgrounds begin their college educations in two-year schools. There is much untapped potential in community colleges for addressing UC's continuing commitment to maintain diversity. The two large and heterogeneous community colleges in the general vicinity of the Venice/Westchester Cluster will be key components of the academic pipeline to UC that the proposed collaborative intends to develop.

Proposed media sponsors such as KCET, KMEX/Channel 34, Univision (the parent company of KMEX) and La Opinion (the largest Spanish-language newspaper in the United States) would provide expertise on designing an effective family outreach media campaign. (The new president of Univision, former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Henry Cisneros has strong UCLA contacts and has indicated his interest in supporting the proposed collaborative as has Maria Gutierrez, the station manager of KMEX.) Dreamworks, a major new

movie studio to be headquartered in the Venice/Westchester Cluster area, will also provide expertise on media as well as the use of technology in Cluster schools.

The proposed collaborative will also feature joint activities with community groups of high visibility and effectiveness in the Venice/Westchester area such as the Westside branch of the Industrial Areas Foundation, a nationally-recognized organization committed to community development and empowerment; the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; and the Venice Family Clinic. These organizations will assist in designing family-outreach activities and in disseminating information.

Methodology

Soon after receiving notification of funding, the two principal investigators will begin planning for a one-day retreat to be attended by representatives of all the partnership organizations. As currently envisioned, the retreat will begin with a data review session in which the 50 or so participants will examine the indicators of academic success for all Cluster schools in the general context of achieving educational equity for all students. A session will focus on successful models of K-16 collaboratives, ideally with a presentation by Kati Haycock of the Education Trust, a Washington, D.C. based organization which has become a national leader in establishing partnerships. The afternoon will feature small working groups charged with developing plans for general sets of activities such as: a family-directed informational campaign; career-focused student activities; professional development for teachers, principals and counselors; an intensive literacy and reading program involving parents, teachers, community organizations and school, neighborhood and UCLA libraries; establishing a UCLA academy; and tutoring efforts. All of the planned activities within the proposed collaborative will build on established UCLA efforts in K-12 and with community colleges. The proposed

UCLA Academy, for example, will be designed in such a way as to take full advantage of the experience and successes of established bridge programs such as the summer academic excellence program that UCLA conducts for various regional offices of the state migrant education program. In regard to tutoring efforts, UCLA will build on those already successfully in place. UCLA students will be enlisted to participate in tutoring efforts within the proposed collaborative in a structured, sustained manner that is likely to yield the best results.

A special feature of the organizing phase of the proposed collaborative will be the establishment of a research team led by Professor Kris Gutierrez of the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies. A strong, focused research component is vital to the proposed collaborative in that various phenomena that affect academic performance such as transiency cannot be adequately addressed until they are more fully understood. The research team will include not only the typical complement of faculty and graduate students but Cluster teachers as well. Adding teachers to the research effort will lead to a deeper understanding among the teachers about the social, cultural and economic conditions in which they teach and sharpen their ability to adjust to changing educational conditions.

As indicated above, as many as nine working groups will be established for the proposed collaborative. A structure and preliminary agenda for each will be established at the initial retreat. Further planning over the Summer, 1997 will lead to identifying participants for each working group (including UCLA faculty members), scheduling of meetings and establishing time lines for the completion of tasks. Training for the establishment of AVID in Cluster schools will begin. Another major task to be completed over the summer will be the establishment of a collaborative steering committee which will oversee the organization and development of the collaborative and the development of an extramural funding plan. The steering committee will

include not only participants in the collaborative but educators (such as the heads of other LAUSD Clusters) and community leaders outside of it.

The work groups will meet regularly throughout the 1997-98 academic year to design and get underway the various components of the collaborative. All members of the work groups will meet jointly each quarter to share information and coordinate planning. Finally, the proposed UCLA collaborative will establish a newsletter to be circulated among other Clusters in the Los Angeles Unified School District, other school districts and educational agencies, appropriate offices at other colleges and universities (including at all UC campuses) and the UC Office of the President.

Timeline

Planning for the proposed retreat will formally begin upon notification of funding. The retreat will occur six weeks later, probably in early July. Workgroups will be expected to submit a draft of proposed activities for implementation by January 1, 1998. Final collaborative design, including extramural funding strategy, will be ready for implementation by all partners by June 1, 1998. With anticipated funding, implementation of collaborative activities will be fully underway by July 1, 1998.

Expected Outcomes

The proposed year-long planning process will lead to the development of a comprehensive plan for fully implementing the collaborative with clearly-defined roles for all participating organizations and individuals. The actual implementation plan will be based on a sustained discussion, in the various working groups and within the steering committee, regarding the effectiveness of established practices (of, for example, teacher professional development) and

the need for fresh approaches to address the general issue of raising academic achievement. But the primary outcome of the proposed planning process will be the establishment of a broad, well-integrated collaborative designed to engage the issue of academic performance comprehensively with a focus on applying resources at critical points in the academic pipeline when academic achievement begins to decline noticeably. For example, it is likely that the implementation plan will contain a heavy emphasis on reading in the K-3 grades with an array of professional development activities for teachers, tutoring by UCLA undergraduates, activities for parents that emphasize reading in the home, and a program of library (school, community and UCLA-based) activities. The expected result will be a plan that targets resources at critical moments in the K-12 experience to remove the most significant obstacles to academic achievement among the educationally disadvantaged.

As the proposed collaborative takes shape, efforts will be made to help other Clusters in LAUSD establish similar collaboratives and activities. The anticipated outcome will be that the work of the proposed UCLA collaborative will exert a positive influence on academic achievement well beyond the boundaries of the Venice/Westchester Cluster.

Evaluation and Dissemination

Working with the UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation, the Collaborative steering committee will develop an evaluation process and instrument for the proposed project. In addition, drafts of the implementation plan (along with the evaluation component) will be distributed to appropriate UCLA faculty and administrators and to administrators within the UC Office of the President for review.

Disseminating information about the work of the collaborative will occur in several ways. In addition to the newsletter and distribution process described above, participants in the

collaborative will give presentations about their work in various local, state and national meetings conducted by such organizations as the Achievement Council, the College Board and the Education Trust.

Key Personnel

The principal investigator for the proposed project is Associate Vice Chancellor-Academic Development Raymund Paredes. Professor Paredes has wide experience in working with the K-12 and community college sectors, both in his administrative role and his professional disciplinary activities. He served as a consultant on English usage for American College Testing and is a member of the advisory board to the California Reading and Literature Project. He is a member of the Hispanic Education Advisory Committee to State Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin. He currently serves on the California Commission for the Establishment of Academic Content and Performance Standards.

Professor Jeannie Oakes is Assistant Dean and Director of Teaching Programs in the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at UCLA. She is a nationally recognized expert on elementary and secondary schooling policies and practices, especially the effects of ability grouping and teaching. Professor Oakes will serve on the proposed project as Chancellor's Office-principal investigator.

Vitas are attached.