



**Instructional Visit Summary
Gateway to College**

Provider: Community College of Philadelphia
Contract Term: FY 2018 - 2022

Site Visit Date: Friday, April 6, 2018 - 9:00 a.m.
Program Capacity: 130

Site Visit Review Team:

Christina Grant, Assistant Superintendent,
Opportunity and Innovation Networks
Dr. Wanda Y. Jenkins, Director, Special Projects,
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Program Staff:

Dr. David E. Thomas, Associate Vice President,
Strategic Initiatives, Dean, Access and Community
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Overview of Instructional Site Visits:

Instructional site visits consist of four main parts: **Academic Success Questions with Leadership**; **Academic Success Questions with Teachers**; **Academic Success Questions with Students**; and **Classroom Observations**. **Academic Success Questions with Leadership** includes standardized questions that focus on: data and academic outcomes; academic outcomes versus goals; and preparation for classroom observations. **Academic Success Questions with Teachers** includes standardized questions that focus on: the use of academic assessments; academic outcomes versus goals; and the school's overall academic performance. **Academic Success Questions with Students** includes standardized questions that focus on: student backgrounds and previous educational experiences; academic expectations set by Teachers; tests, grading procedures, and supports from Teachers; overall level of satisfaction with the program and recommendations for improvement; the program's mission; the program's Special Education services; and food and health services. **Classroom Observations** was guided by a standardized Classroom Observation Form that assessed elements of: the classroom environment; instruction; and assessments.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Academic Success Questions with Leadership

Academic Outcomes. Gateway to College presented and discussed the program's key academic data, including literacy and numeracy growth, retention rate, graduation rate, percentage of students attending at least 85% of school days, and Special Education data. Gateway to College aggregated and analyzed its own data as a demonstration of the program's ability to make data-informed decisions for positive student outcomes. Gateway to College strategically looks at students' literacy and numeracy placement levels on the Accuplacer, which gives leadership a solid understanding of what supports are needed to bolster skill levels. The majority of students score lower in Math. Gains are measured by the student pass rate for courses that they score below college level. Pre-algebra and pre-calculus, credit recovery courses, are offered if the student does not pass the college level course. The program does not measure gains in credit recovery courses. Gateway to College leadership described their student retention as solid. The program credits support and outreach efforts for the positive impact of their retention plan. Gateway to College hired two new Academic Mentors this year. The Academic Mentors have been instrumental with assisting the Academic Coordinators with a lot of the follow-up calls and conduct intensive tutoring, as recently, the program implemented mandatory tutoring based on last mid-term grades for students who have a D or lower. Program leadership noted that students appreciate the one on one attention and the culture of the program is really improving. Gateway to College provides Accuplacer preparation materials to students as soon as they come in for the information session. Program leadership utilizes diagnostics to see specific areas and levels of deficiency. Students are allowed to take the Accuplacer twice and receive support and tutoring before taking the test again; this is a new process for the program this year and a direct response based on year-to-year outcomes. Program leadership also shares Accuplacer results with the parents of minor students to provide more support. Program leadership noted that special education students are experiencing some challenges in their English courses. If a student enrolls in the program with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that is out of compliance, the previous IEP is temporarily used while the program works with Community College of Philadelphia's (CCP) Center on Disability (COD) and an outside psychological consultant to update the IEP. The COD fully supports special education students. Additionally, Gateway to College works with The School District of Philadelphia's (SDP) Office of Specialized Services to retrieve special education data. Currently, the program has one English Language Learner (ELL) student. This particular student scored high in Math and received pre-ESL (English-as-a Second Language) support for one month. The program also offers an ESL credit recovery course, which is not a college level course. Gateway to College provides personalized learning for students. Program leadership, Academic Coordinators, and Academic Mentors have a good relationship with the professors. Professors offer a lot of support; the English professor offers tutoring hours and most professors reach out to program staff if a student is struggling or is in danger of failing due to missed assignments. The program supports students with postsecondary planning and access by focusing on transition plans to continue students' interest beyond Gateway. Two weeks ago, students visited Kutztown University and have many other college visits upcoming. Seniors complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and use the Common App to apply to multiple schools at once. Program leadership noted that many students want to stay at Gateway to College and transition into a fully matriculated CCP student. Also, as part of the postsecondary planning and access process, some students have been accepted for internships with partnering organizations. **Academic Outcomes versus Goals.** The leadership team attributes strong academic outcomes to a revamp of the program's culture. Throughout the past school year, program leaders have made it a point to emphasize targeted individualized support for students. The leadership team has improved upon student supports by hiring additional academic mentors and by providing work cell phones to its academic support team so that they can more readily

communicate with their students. The staff also believes that a change in office space has made it easier to provide one-on-one feedback for each student, because everyone now feels that they are in a more open environment and the offices are located closer to the classrooms. The Gateway to College team believes that these changes and added supports have led to improved retention and attendance numbers. The leadership team also sees areas for improvement in academic outcomes such as graduation rates. The team expects that graduation rates will rise in the summer because certain 12th grade students will have the opportunity to gain additional credits at that time. The staff also acknowledged that some students have a slightly longer path to graduation because they are attempting to graduate with both their High School Diploma and Associate's Degree. The academic progress of every student is monitored frequently by program staff. The program has built-in staff team meetings to review outcomes such as student pass rates, midterm performance, and attendance. Each academic coordinator and academic mentor has access to the Community College of Philadelphia's Banner System, which gives the faculty updates on all student academic activity. The faculty also reviews the feedback of each student's professor through the Starfish system (Starfish is an application that allows professors to give students kudos when they are performing well, or raise flags when they are falling behind). The faculty uses all of this information to reinforce positive student behavior or to provide interventions for students who need to improve. Program leadership has further plans in place to improve academic supports by continuing to dig deeper into student performance and by looking into additional staffing Academic Mentors who can provide further assistance in case management. **Classroom Observation Preparation.** When asked what we should we expect to see in Hip Hop History and Ethics classroom, program leadership stated that we should see students and the professor engaged in teaching and learning. Students will be working on Unit 3.2- The 8 Pillars of Culture.

Classroom Observations

Review team members observed a Hip Hop and Ethics Class for 45 minutes that was at the start of the class period, and six students were present in class during the observation. The professor was lecturing the class on the "8 Pillars of Culture". The lesson started with a recap from last week's lesson, in which they talked about the values of culture. During our observation, the professor and students continued to talk about various elements that should be in place to value the cultural aspects of: (a) liberty/freedom, (b) order, (c) justice, (d) information/knowledge, and (e) family. The cultural aspect of "family" guided the conversation on the elements of marriage. The professor asked students how many times they have heard rappers talk about marriage in their lyrics. Students reviewed various lyrics from raps created by artist Jay-Z and engaged in heavy dialogue. The next part of the lesson challenged each student to identify which "unanswered question about humanity" was most important to them. The professor initially asked the students to form pairs of twos, but each student was so eager to share their answers that the professor modified the activity into a collaborative class discussion. The professor assisted students with expressing different opinions without making any student feel that their answers were necessarily wrong. The professor then seamlessly related each student's thoughts to the lyrics of a song called Ill Mind of Hopsin 7, by artist Hopsin. After playing the song out loud, the professor asked students to synthesize and evaluate the work in their own words. All students were on-task and actively engaged with the lesson. The degree of student voice was significant and it positively influenced the classroom experience. All students felt comfortable to freely share their opinions and the professor engaged the students in a manner that allowed all students to better articulate their thoughts. The professor used questioning and polling to periodically monitor for understanding.

Academic Success Questions with Academic Coordinators and Academic Mentors

Two Academic Coordinators and one Academic Mentor participated in the Academic Success Questions with Academic Coordinators and Academic Mentors. The Academic Coordinators noted that since the change in leadership (new Director), they have been working collaboratively like a well-oiled machine. The program has been very strict about the attendance policy, wanting students to be at the program five days a week. Academic Coordinators noted that they were able to flex a student's schedule based on the student's work schedule or babysitting conflicts, however, the flexibility is going away. Academic Coordinators are excited to have Academic Mentors join the team and noted they have been a great help and support. The Academic Mentors assist students in Math and English. The Academic Coordinators talked about the mandatory tutoring for students and believes it is a great added step to ensure students feel fully supported. They also noted that the SDP's Reengagement Center has been sending more quality students. Academic Coordinators are charged with making sure they document all action steps and goals for the week for each student on their caseload, which consists of 28. While the Academic Coordinators understand the need for detailed documentation and a tracking system, they believe that the changes are taking time away from the students they serve. The Academic Coordinators noted that they deal with a lot of social issues with students, thus the requirements for more documentation make it cumbersome to try to solve problems for students all day. Academic Coordinators articulated the following strategies they implement to target support for students: (1) review syllabus to make sure students are on task, (2) use advisory as a student hall and team building to encourage students to help one another, and (3) contact professors constantly in regards to academic and attendance. The Academic Coordinators and Academic Mentor believe the program is doing great and conveyed that students do better in the developmental class than the college as a whole. Growth, in areas such as social skills and confidence, is not measured, however, the mentor and coordinators feel that those areas should be measured. The Academic Coordinators and Academic Mentor believes the program could be better if they offered housing assistance because many students have housing issues. They feel the program should help more with careers, and link students to jobs that are aligned with the student's program schedule. Moreover, the Academic Coordinators and Academic Mentor would like to have professional development sessions on all the requirements of obtaining an associate's degree and incorporate those requirements into a postsecondary roadmap for students. The Academic Coordinators would like to see an improvement of overall activities to build moral and trust with mentors, coordinators, and students, such as the most recent trip to Washington, D.C. Lastly, they suggested having more trips and activities on the weekends or in between sessions.

Academic Success Questions with Students

Review team members met with one 10th grade student and two 12th grade students who were selected by Gateway to College leadership to participate in the Academic Success Questions with Students. The student feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with one of the students describing their enrollment in the program as a once in a lifetime opportunity. When asked to describe the best thing about their program, students said that they feel like the program is not only building them to be a better student, but also building them to be a better person. Students also talked about all of the supports they receive at Gateway to College. Students value their interactions with academic coordinators and academic mentors, and they believe that the staff is a major influence to their success inside the classroom. When asked if they feel like the program does a good job explaining what is expected of them, students told us that that their academic coordinators are very straightforward with them and that there is no sugar coating; coordinators review all midterms and they consult with students if they are struggling. Students stated that they were aware of the program's code of conduct, but also noted, since they are on a college campus, the environment alone influences the manner in which they conduct themselves. Two of the students have plans of pursuing a full time 4-year degree once they graduate from Gateway to College, and one of the students intends on earning a Computer Science Associate's Degree at Gateway to College and directly entering the workforce thereafter. When asked what they would change about

the program, if anything, students said that they wish the program would better advertise the opportunity to get an Associate's Degree. Students are very motivated to get their Associate's Degree along with their High School Diploma, if possible, and they wished that their curriculum gave them a clearer path to get both degrees before their time in the program ended.

Recommendations

The review team recommends that Gateway to College develop a graduate profile that maps out a plan to a high school diploma and a plan for an associate's degree. Gateway to College should continue to make adjustments in priorities and programming in regards to the academic goals they have set, as outlined in the contract. The program should continue its great supportive structure and differentiation for students. The Hip Hop History and Ethics Class is so enriching and engaging, that we recommend Gateway to College think of other courses that they can create for students, which may be derived from feedback, by surveying students, coordinators, and mentors.