



Early college program offers outstanding opportunities

Dr. Bob Haas, school board member, River Valley Local (Marion) and Tri-Rivers Career Center

Most board members are aware that students can earn college credits in high school by taking advantage of Ohio's Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program (PSEO).

School board members wanting to help their students succeed in college should learn as much as they can about the program, including the various opportunities it offers students.

Students pay nothing, or in some cases a minimal fee, to take the college courses; the college tuition is deducted from the public school state foundation payment based on the percentage of time the student is enrolled in college courses. Students can travel to the college to take the

courses, college faculty can teach courses at the high school or qualified high school faculty members can teach college courses at the high school.

How well do students who earn college credits perform when they enroll in college?

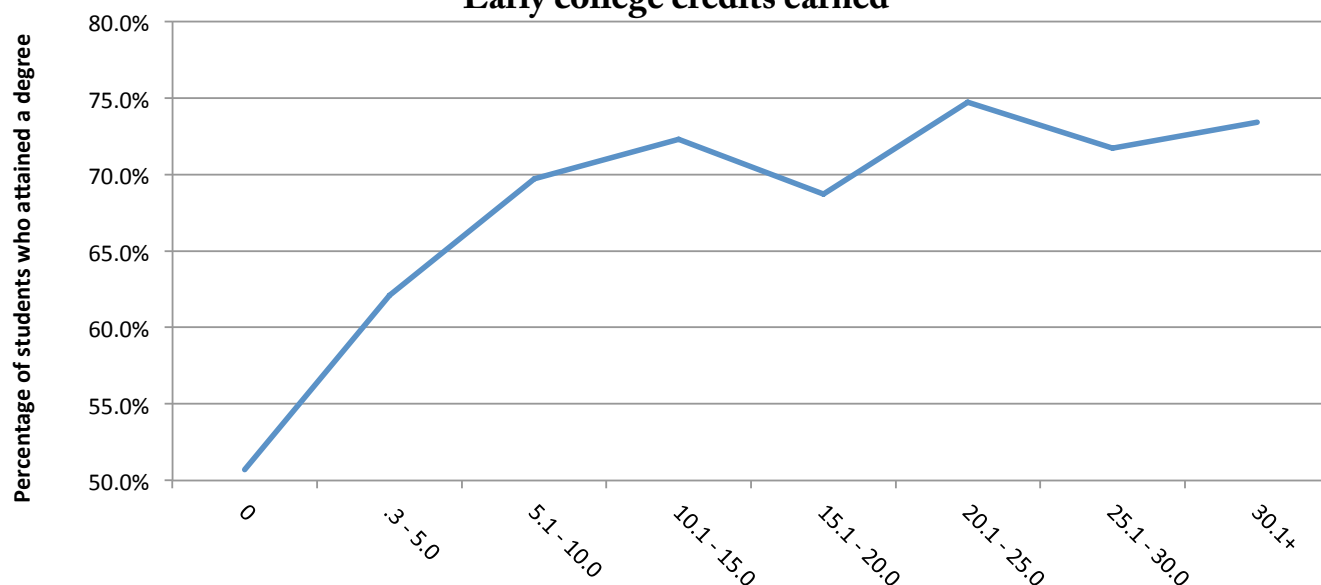
To explore this question, I analyzed enrollment records for students who enrolled in one of Ohio's public two- or four-year colleges between 2004 and 2011. The Ohio Board of Regents provided the basic data for this analysis, which included public college enrollment and degree attainment information from the fall term of 2004 through the spring term of 2011. There were 128,246 students who graduated from high school in the spring and enrolled in college

Postsecondary degree attainment rates for recent high school graduates

	All students		Did not earn early college credits		Earned early college credits		% point difference
	Students	% earned degree	Students	% earned degree	Students	% earned degree	
All students	128,246	51.8%	120,292	50.7%	7,954	68.6%	17.9%
Not Pell eligible	95,486	57.4%	89,304	56.3%	6,182	73.1%	16.8%
Pell eligible	32,760	35.5%	30,988	34.5%	1,772	52.8%	18.3%
First term full time	123,078	53.4%	115,293	52.3%	7,785	69.2%	16.9%
First term part time	5,168	13.4%	4,999	12.5%	169	40.8%	28.3%
Income quintile 1	21,214	37.1%	19,803	35.6%	1,411	58.3%	22.7%
Income quintile 5	41,818	59.6%	39,592	58.8%	2,226	74.5%	15.7%

Note: Data represent students who graduated from an Ohio public high school in the spring of 2004, 2005 or 2006 and enrolled in an Ohio public college the fall term following graduation. Income quintile 1 is the lowest school district median income quintile; 5 is the highest quintile. Degree attainment is tracked through spring 2011.

Early college credits earned



Note: Degree attainment by number of early college credits earned. The data are limited to students who started in fall 2004, 2005 or 2006. Degree attainment is tracked through spring 2011.

in the fall term between 2004 and 2006; 7,954 of those students (more than 6%) had earned some type of early college credits in high school.

The results are clear, as shown in the chart on page 34. Students who earned early college credits attained a college degree at a higher rate than students who did not earn early credits. Overall, 50.7% of students who did not earn early college credits attained a degree compared to 68.6% of students who earned early credits. This difference is greater for low-income students, as determined by Pell Grant eligibility status or school district median income rank.

Research conducted by **Melinda Karp** from the Community College Research Center suggests one possible explanation for the difference in degree attainment for students who have earned college credits during high school: students learn how to navigate college during high school, so they do not spend their first postsecondary year learning to navigate college challenges like registration and more rigorous academic expectations. The research I conducted supports this possibility; the degree attainment difference for students who earned college credits in high school begins to level off after a student has earned 10 college credits, as seen in the chart above.

Students who earned college credits in high school took less time and needed fewer credits after graduating from high school to earn a degree than students who did not earn college credits. Students who earned college credits during high school graduated on time (two years for an associate degree and four years for a bachelor's degree) at

a substantially higher rate than students who did not earn early credits.

Nearly 50% of students who earned at least 30 early college credits obtained a bachelor's degree in three years or fewer, compared to 1.7% of students who earned no early college credits. More than 70% of students who earned more than 30 college credits in high school attained an associate degree in two years or fewer, compared to 16.8% of students who did not earn early college credits in high school.

Although students who earned college credits in high school needed fewer credits to earn a degree after graduating high school, these students actually required more credits to earn a degree if the college credits earned during high school were included in the total credits needed for a degree. On average, students with no college credits in high school who earned a bachelor's degree required 134.4 semester credits to earn the degree. Students who earned college credits in high school needed 126.2 semester credits counting only the credits earned after full-time college enrollment. That number rose to 138.8 credits if the college credits earned during high school were included.

This is an important cost consideration, because the state of Ohio pays a tuition subsidy to colleges based on the number of credits a student earns. However, the higher rate of degree attainment for high school students who earned college credits more than offsets the higher number of credit hours the state funded through tuition subsidies, as shown in the chart above.

The results of my research are unambiguous: students who



Subsidized credits that resulted in degree attainment

Term entered (Fall)	Students who did not earn early college credits		Students who earned early college credits		% points difference
	Subsidized credits	Resulted in degree	Subsidized credits	Resulted in degree	
2004	3,769,702	77%	282,953	87%	10%
2005	3,581,619	75%	307,160	85%	10%
2006	3,440,412	65%	297,582	77%	12%
2004-2006	10,791,733	72%	887,696	83%	11%

Note: Data represent students who graduated from an Ohio public high school in the spring of 2004, 2005 or 2006 and enrolled in an Ohio public college the fall term following graduation. Degree attainment is through spring 2011.

earned college credits during high school attained a college degree at a significantly higher rate than students who did not earn college credits in high school. A program enabling high school students to earn college credits is already in place and is cost-effective and easy to manage.

So, what can school board members do to help their students take advantage of PSEO opportunities?

First, they should encourage school administrators to create a “PSEO-friendly” schedule and work with local colleges to provide college experiences for all qualified students. School board members also should communicate with state legislators to develop state-level policies and funding mechanisms that facilitate early college experiences for students without penalizing school districts or colleges.

Gov. **John Kasich** has recognized that increasing the number of Ohio citizens who earn a college degree is an important component of our state’s economic vitality. Boosting the number of high school students who earn college credits is a cost-effective way to improve Ohio’s future. ⁿ

About the author: Dr. Bob Haas has been a member of the River Valley Local Board of Education in Marion County for 22 years, and a member of the Tri-Rivers Career Center Board of Education for two years. He earned a Ph.D in higher education from the University of Toledo in December 2012. He is an associate dean of business and IT at Marion Technical College, serves as a regional manager for the Ohio Board of Regents Career-Technical Credit Transfer (CT2) initiative and is a member of the Peer Review Corps for the Higher Learning Commission.

Bricker & Eckler LLP

The Depth of Resources You Need

No matter what your district’s size, you need a “go-to” law firm that’s there when you need it and can help with a wide range of legal challenges. From our education, bond and construction law practices, to employee benefits, workers’ compensation, tax appeals, alternative energy, intellectual property and legislative support, Bricker attorneys can meet your needs.

Don’t settle for one-dimensional legal support — get the value your district deserves with our integrated team approach.



Bricker & Eckler
ATTORNEYS AT LAW
www.bricker.com

Columbus 614.227.2300 | Cleveland 216.523.5405 | Cincinnati-Dayton 513.870.6700 | Marietta 740.374.2248