

Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) Planning Group Highlights from Focus Groups (February, 2019)

College of Alameda Student Focus Group Highlights

- College students (more than high school dual enrollment students) expressed concern over the practicalities of progressing through college. Managing expenses was a number one concern, along with managing their class schedules, balancing work and school, and getting answers to questions about college planning. They expressed a lot of concern about the high costs of textbooks, software access, tools and materials required for classes.
- The students value community. They mentioned ways teachers had successfully fostered relationships among students in their classes. They described wanting the college to offer a space on campus where they could meet other Latinx students, as well as more chances to connect to the college through sports and clubs.
- They talked about the challenge of transitioning from high school to college and how they experienced many differences between those two worlds. Some expressed appreciation for those who helped them: teachers who supported their English learning, and an administrator who offered a job on campus. Others expressed disappointment that they were not able to build a relationship with a counselor, met with a counselor who was unable to provide useful information, or would have benefited from a peer mentor.
- The students agreed that the resources that are available on campus are not well advertised. Several were surprised to learn about support services mentioned by others in the group. They agreed that it can be hard to navigate and access the services that could contribute to their success in college.

ARISE High School/College of Alameda Dual Enrollment Student Focus Group Highlights

- These students value the chance to take college courses at the high school and make time after school hours, despite busy schedules. They would like to see more classes offered, especially in STEM areas related to their interest in medical careers, and more chances to visit colleges and workplaces.
- Thinking ahead to the transition to college, many students spoke about wanting the support of a trusted counselor, who would get to know them, guide them through practical steps, check in to make sure they're on track, and help them find employment. Several mentioned a related interest in small group counseling or peer mentoring.
- Financial aid is a top concern as students look ahead to undergraduate and graduate education.

- Several students spoke about the importance of involving and informing their parents, many of whom had little formal education and did not have a clear understanding of post-secondary options.

ASPIRE High School/College of Alameda Focus Group Notes

2/8/19

Facilitator: Jennie Mollica

Notetaker: Paula Armstead

Student Participants: Nicole Gonzalez, Francisco Prado-Cuevas, Oscar Miguel Rodriguez, Jr., Guadalupe Rosas, Jorge Meza-Medina, Elizabeth Cruz, Karina Ruelas, Jasmin Sanchez, Wendy Ruan, Jason Iglesias, Juan Villavicencio

- 12 students (5 seniors, 3 juniors, 3 sophomores, 1 freshman)
- All taking or have taken Medical Terminology 1 and/or 2
- Some have taken Spanish, Leadership, and Geometry for early college credit

Summary Notes

WHY TAKE COLLEGE CLASSES?

- Take college questions because it's a requirement at ARISE HS
- Interested in medical field and want to learn what's involved in it early on
- Openness and flexibility of college professors
- College preparation
- To see if they are ready for college (do I have what it takes, can I do it)
- Location-having classes available on HS campus
- Time-classes fit into schedule or right after class; however, free period may be best
- Would like to take more math and science classes while in HS
- Would like to get more hands-on experience in the medical field while in HS

CHALLENGES

- Amount of writing
- Time and being out late/when its dark outside
- Balancing high school and college work
- Time management, especially due to college class schedules after school

PLANS AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

- 10 of the students said they would be going to a four-year university
- 1 student interested in community college as they didn't feel prepared in math and science
- 1 student said they needed to earn money
- 7 students were interested in the medical field

WHAT AREA IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU? (reference questionnaire)

- 6 students selected social connections as being most important; 3 students selected academics; 3 students selected practical
- Wanting/seeking advice is important; meeting people like yourself
- Meeting with a counselor to help check in with and manage your schedule; counselors check on how you're doing; finding one you trust and can build a relationship with is important; wants weekly check in, in-person
- One student mentioned the benefit of group counseling coming from the counselor and also from peers
- Financial aid is a big need – covering the costs of college and graduate school, a place to live, textbooks. Students have concern that their families cannot pay for college and they will probably get a low-paying job right out of HS. They'd like to know options for financial aid and also long-term financial planning.
- Many wanted support around the transition to college, managing the ways that college is different from high school, and wanting guidance through the transition
- There were several mentions of peer support or mentoring, getting advice and help from someone their age. One was interested in a place where she could connect with Latinx students, specifically.
- Several are thinking ahead to jobs and careers, want the college to help with job search assistance and internships while in college
- Several said involving their parents would be helpful, so they know what their child is considering for the future and where it will lead them (though one student mentioned not being very involved with his parents)
- Interest in visiting the college campus and work places
- Mixed feelings about Latinx Studies – interesting to learn about own culture and others', but not related to career goals
- Receiving assistance with studying and building study skills is important

WHAT THEY WANT TO SEE OR KNOW MORE ABOUT

- More college classes – including more math and science -- at ARISE
- Transportation assistance
- College trips and visits
- Help with finding a place to live near or on campus
- Financial aid
- Provide more guidance during college transition
- Support and guidance while in college – from a counselor they trust, and from a peer mentor
- Study skills classes and tutoring
- Internships and other ways of getting hands-on experience in the medical field
- Job search help when they graduate from college

SURVEY RESULTS

- A place at the college where I can meet with a counselor and get help with things I need (10)
- Financial aid (10)

- Tutoring (8)
- Help with the college application and class enrollment (8)
- Classes or study groups in my neighborhood (5)
- Study skills classes (4)
- Job search help (4)
- Help finding my way around campus (3)
- Mentoring by a current college student (3)
- A place at the college where I can connect with other Latinx students on campus (1)
- Summer prep program (1)
- Transportation help (1)
- Latinx-focused classes, such as Psych of Latinx, Latin American Studies... (1)
- Clubs (1)

Detailed Notes

Why were you interested in taking college classes before finishing high school?

- For starters, not the only reason but it has an impact, it's a requirement at ARISE. We take college classes when we can, given the free time we have. I've chosen Med Term 2 because I'm interested in the medical field. Some things I like is that we get some time to converse with each other, go over what we're learning, and the professor's very open, if we need help we can always ask him.
- I'm also interested in Medical Terminology because I want to be in the medical field, and it will give me an idea of what it's like to take a college class, so when I get to college it won't be so hard. A challenge is balancing that with school work, because I was taking that college class and the other one right after and that was pretty hard. But it helped me that we were taking the college classes here and didn't have to go all the way to the college.
- It was kind of late, when the time change happened, so we would end when it was really dark, and I had to find a ride home and that was difficult.
- If it was during class, during a free period... Usually seniors have a free period because they've finished the classes they needed, so they're teaching assistants to help out a teacher. During that time it would be good to take a college class.
- Medical Terminology was interesting because I was interested in the medical field, and it gave me an idea of how college class is really going to be for us when we go to college. The challenge was writing a lot and staying after school when it got dark really early.
- It's been challenging, because other than school and the college class, I have other things to work on, but I keep on balancing them out somehow. It's difficult at first, but as it goes on it's more balanced.
- Knowing to take it at the right time. We have college applications, have to get home late and do the college apps.
- [What was helpful was helping each other](#). We had to memorize 100 words every 2 weeks, we'd go to Starbucks and do that and do the applications later.
- For me it was hard because I have weak health, so staying after school put a little bit of stress on me. But after 3-4 weeks I got used to it.

- We have time to do the work, and if we don't finish it the teacher says we can finish it next week.
- I don't feel like it's more challenging. It's only once a week, so it depends on you taking initiative and studying for the quiz and doing the classwork.
- For me, it's like I make it seem like any other day. I say it's a normal class, a normal everything, therefore everything seems easier to understand.
- For me the class is easy, but the workload is a lot. I'm taking Med Term 1 and 2 this semester, Monday and Tuesday, 2 times the work. I also have to focus on my school work, and I haven't finished college applications... I find time. I set a schedule of days when I can study.
- I feel like we need tutoring, too.
- I'd like to open it up to math and science, too. It's harder for me to understand, and with extra time with that I could improve my skills.
- Here at ARISE we don't have honors classes, so college classes, especially in math and those subjects, are good because we don't know what those classes will be like in college.
- For science, we've only taken Integrated Science 1 and 2 and Chemistry, we haven't taken biology or others, and that helps with our pathway.
- Anything hands-on, too. We have anatomy class, but I want to get more experience before I go into college.
- It's useful for people who want to study more about anatomy, biology, because we want to go into a medical field.
- [Would you be interested in touring our science facilities at COA?] [Nods yes]

What are your plans or what are you going to do after high school?

- I'm still in the process of trying to figure that out. I'm still shaky on whether I want to go to college.
- I want to go to UC Irvine, I want a career in medicine, I want to go to 4-year college and medical school.
- If anything I would probably go to the community college, because I'm not sure if I want to go far from home.
- I want to go to a 4-year college, learn about medicine, go into the medical field.
- I really don't know yet, I'm still a sophomore, but I'd like to attend Stanford because of its incredible medical programs.
- I've always had a drive to be in the medical field and to somehow be a surgeon. For that, I knew that I needed a medical background and improve myself. I'm sorry if I'm being idealistic, but I want to go to Harvard, my top one ever since I was little, either that or Stanford or UC Davis.
- I'm not sure but I'm thinking of taking a one or two-year break to earn some money and then find a way to go to college.
- I want to go to a 4-year college and study nursing or with animals, CSU Monterey or UC Davis.
- I want to go to a 4-year college and then medical school.
- I hope to go to CSUEB and get into the nursing program to be a pediatric nurse.

- I also want to go to a 4-year college and then a medical school. I feel like I'm not that prepared in terms of math and science so maybe community college first and then transfer.
- I want to go to 4-year college in biological science to go into a medical field.

What would support you your first year of college and support you toward your goals?

- A place where a counselor can help me (5)
 - It's something really important for me, a place where I can talk to a counselor.
 - I'm not the best at trying to manage things. I'd like to check in about how I'm doing in my class. I don't have a lot of people who check in with me. I'd like to check in once a week. I'd like to meet up in person, to have a one-on-one connection with them and more trust.
 - At ARISE we have advisors and meet with them three times a week to do homework and get help with everything. Having somebody there who wants the best for you motivates you to want to do the best, especially if you have a really close relationship with them. Also I think if it was a counselor, you and a couple other people, that would be motivating because you could help each other out. It would be the counselor there to help you out and guide you, but the other students in the small group would be there to help you out in academic ways.
 - I feel like sometimes you're going to be too busy with all the classes and trying to do all your work, and you won't have time to know what to do to reach your goal, so it's good to have that one-on-one with someone who knows what you're trying to do and where you're trying to go after college. If you have someone there to guide you and help you to the next steps that you need to do, that would be very helpful. The physical space is also important, where they can help you with tutoring for a class.
 - Transitioning from high school to college, it's a very different thing, so having the guidance of somehow who can show me how things are, where things are, I could meet with a counselor and get help with things I need.
- Study skills classes, because I personally don't know how to study for an exam. I tend to just read off the paper and don't make flash cards or anything, so that's something that would be helpful.
- Mentoring by current college students, because I'd like support from someone who's been in the same spot that I am, and who's dealt with problems that I might. Meeting with someone every week, in order to get a check in with where I am.
- Tutoring, because I'm not the first person in my family to go to college, my sister's in college, and her first year she didn't quite get the hang of biology, and that was her major and she failed the whole year. That impacted me, because she was my role model and she had straight A's all the way. She didn't have help at the time. I was thinking of having tutors to help me so I won't do the same mistake.
- A place to meet people
- Visits to medical facilities, seeing the routine there
- Financial aid, the practical stuff.

- Money will be a problem in the future, straight out of high school and getting a job that's low-paid to earn a little income.
- I chose practical stuff, financial aid. In the community we're in, it's something that will affect us greatly. Not a lot of us could afford college, so finding our options, how to get those options, and getting them in the end will help us in the college process.
- Financial aid could be a barrier toward goals you want to accomplish, like if you want to go into the medical field and medical school can be expensive, so you'll be focused on paying it off and not really focused on your academics. Even in terms of the type of school that you go to, you want to go to that college because it offers what you need, but you can't afford it.
- I was stuck between the counselor and tutoring. For the counselor, I don't manage my time that wisely and I'm not really organized. If I had a counselor, he or she could keep me on track. For tutoring, even though I do my work and do good on it, I don't ask for much help, so it stresses me out, it takes more time to figure it out. If I have a tutor with me, it would be helpful, I won't do the same mistake.

What are other things on the list that you think would be valuable

- Transportation help, because some of us will want to go far if we get accepted. We'll have to go back and forth if we want to visit family.
- Job search help, because after you're done with college, you have your major, but what do you do after that.
- Also internships during college, in terms of your major.
- They should help you find a job related to the major that you were studying. My brother graduated from UC Davis, and he still doesn't know what to do right now, he's finding jobs related to what he majored in.
- It would be useful while you're in college to be an intern, in a hospital, to see how it is to work there and see if that's actually what you want to do.
- Providing internships like that here. I took an internship sophomore year and I got experience in a hospital.
- I also wanted to do that, but I didn't know there was an internship like that. Students don't see what's outside their school, like internships. It would be useful during school time, because you have other things to worry about after school.

Some colleges offer classes about Latino Studies, a cohort of students can take the class together and talk about issues that are especially relevant to Latino culture and history. Is that an interest?

- I'm currently taking History of Latin America, so I'm kind of used to Latin Studies. I also take Ethnic Studies about different races... I think it's interesting learning about backgrounds of other races and my race, so yes.
- I had History of LA and Ethnic Studies last year. I'm interested in it, but I know that's not part of what I wanted to be when I grow up... I just wanted to have another background.
- ARISE is a social justice school, so being open to those classes would be good. After high school, it would be good to keep up with those classes. I want to get into medical school, too, but even just as an extra class. It's something interesting to learn about.

Are there any of these that would not interest you at all.

- Involving my parents, family and community. I'm not really involved with my parents. I don't communicate with them that much. I'm not attached to them.
- For me [involving my parents, family and community] would be important. My mom didn't go far in school, and she didn't really understand what college would be like. It would be nice if the college would have events to inform my mom about what I'm going to be doing. I'm not that good at explaining majors, so she could know what I'm going to be doing for the next 4 years and how it will benefit.
- I'm the oldest, so I'll be the first one going to college and I don't really know how that will be. Showing my parents around, how it will be in college and going around there, it will be useful because even I don't know.
- It helps them feel safer, understanding this is what they're going to be doing, it will be reassuring to them.
- I'm just agreeing.

Anything else?

- More college classes in schools. It's hard to commute from home. If we didn't have those classes offered in school, I wouldn't have taken them.
- At ARISE, it's helpful that we have field trips to see campuses. That's useful so that we see a campus. You can actually see yourself being there. It's different actually being there rather than reading about it. It helps you make a decision about which colleges you want to apply to.
- Just figuring out living on campus. I don't know what that's like.
- Figuring out how to apply, how much it's going to cost.
- To provide more guidance for the students during their transition. College is very different from high school. You're on your own. It's your responsibility. Having the guidance, it will make it easier for you to transition, rather than having that responsibility all on your own.
- Figuring out how to live on campus. You're trying to manage the money. Finding a place to live.
- Colleges should also be open to the clubs related to what you're trying to major in.
- Having the support needed for the students to be prepared for college and the real world.
- Provide guidance, necessities to help you for the future. Provide a mentor or someone who's ... It's nice to talk to someone [in the field you're interested in].
- Support for the student.
- Helping to find a place on campus, near the school.
- I'm not sure.
- Going back to financial resources, more resources provided. Something that's helpful with our Medical Terminology classes is our textbooks are provided. Something like that could help to reduce the costs.

Why did you take a college class in freshman or sophomore year?

- My sister took it in her sophomore year, and she was already prepared for it. I wanted to be prepared as well. I wanted to see Med Term as a start, so I could go to other college classes in the future.

- I wanted to get an understanding of what it is to take a college class, to prepare myself for if I want to go to college in the future.
- It's better to be informed early on, to understand the medical field and its hard conditions. I wanted to be informed earlier than others.
- I decided to do it this year because the work isn't as much as I've heard from 11th and 12th graders.

College of Alameda Focus Group Notes 2/12/19

Facilitator: Jennie Mollica **Notetaker:** Lilia Celhay

Student Participants: Daniel Cruz-Rodriguez, Justo Matias, Lidia Torrel, Alejandra Moreno Orozco, Rafael Marrero, Joycelynn Gomez, Jesse Jasso

- Three students have been at COA 2-3 years, 2 students have been at COA 2-3 semesters, 2 students are in their first semester at COA
- Two students have not declared a major. Other students have declared majors in Electrical/Construction, Architecture/Engineering, Biochemistry, Chemistry, and Automotive.

Why college of Alameda?

- Three students mentioned that family connections at or near the college attracted them to come here.
- Two students mentioned the location was convenient and didn't have too much traffic.
- Three students mentioned first trying to attend a different community college (2 at Chabot, one at Laney) but ending up at COA. One found classes were cancelled at Laney, another found it inconvenient to get into Chabot, and one found it hard to get attention from counselors at Chabot.
- One student is also taking classes at CCSF to meet certain requirements.
- One student heard about COA while in International High School.
- One student mentioned that the Automotive program at COA is highly regarded.

What have you liked about the college classes and what has been challenging?

- One student mentioned that academic programs are strong, but there should be more focus on technical trades.
- Two students mentioned liking their teachers. One student said that he was exposed to helpful resources during his math classes with Vanson.
- Two students mentioned liking the sense of community on campus. One mentioned liking the instructors' practice of grouping students so they get to know each other.
- One student appreciated being offered a job on campus, which helps with balancing work and school.
- Challenges included:
 - a. Inconvenient scheduling of science classes in the morning only
 - b. Instructors at Laney and BCC rated higher than COA's on Rate my Professor
 - c. Applications for financial aid were difficult, frustrating, especially the first year.
 - d. Counselors not familiar enough with the COA catalog, resources and procedures, especially trade programs.
 - e. Not familiar with how to use Moodle.

- f. Textbook costs are very high, most over \$200, and usually can't be sold after the class. "My first semester I struggled a lot with textbooks."

Your first year?

- Three mentioned how hard it was to cover the costs of textbooks. One mentioned getting to know which classes require fewer books, like math and communications classes. One said that EOPS used to cover the costs of books and supplies, but now only covers the costs of books. One mentioned using up financial aid during the first years and now no longer having access to it.
 - "I had no clue about this attempted unit thing. I was completely cut off from financial aid, because federal laws say 90 attempted units... I didn't know about all that."
 - "Book sticker shock is huge. High schools provide them for free."
 - "When I got here I had to take ESL classes, but when I got to take general classes like chemistry and English, you just had to pay more money for those books."
- Several students mentioned entering the college with limited English. One student described how teachers helped her with English during her first semester, when her English was not perfect. One student talked about the ESL assessment process and being assessed ready for ENG 1A, "even though I didn't finish ESL classes." "I tried it, it was a hardship, but I ended up getting it."
- Several students mentioned the importance of getting guidance during the first year
 - "Understanding how to use the counselors, and really how to start, have something in the middle, and end school."
 - "One thing I really wished was to have a peer mentor. I didn't know how to end college, I didn't know the difference between an Associate's degree and a Master's degree and a certificate. I didn't know what Liberal Arts meant. Imagine someone coming in trying to learn another language and this."
 - High school and college are very different.

What are your goals?

- Students described wanting to transfer to CSUEB, UC David, UCSF, law school.
- Students have several more years at COA.
- Students mentioned wanting to become a pharmacist, district attorney, musician, mechanic, and industrial artist.

QUESTIONNAIRE

What is the most important?

- Three students mentioned needing a consistent counselor, to develop an Education Plan and avoid taking the wrong classes. They emphasized the value of someone they could develop a relationship with and trust.

- Students also mentioned wanting mentoring by a current college student, study skills classes, and help with college applications for transfer.
- Several students discussed the value they would find in a place at the college for Latino students to connect with each other. Students who spoke Spanish talked about how they would feel comfortable being somewhere where they could speak their own language. Several students who are Latino but whose primary language is not Spanish talked about how they would like to learn more Spanish from the other students in this space. The space could be “like a little library,” with computer access, a lounge, board games.
- Several students agreed that sports teams could help students connect to the school and find community.
- Job search assistance would be helpful. Students are not familiar with the Career Center at COA. Students mentioned wanting to have employer lectures and opportunities for students to interact with them.
- Work experience and internships, including ways to get required hours for work certifications
- Students generally felt that resources should be advertised more efficiently, so that students can know about what is available through the college. One student said EOPS was not even advertised to her and it took her 3 semesters to find it. “I feel like all the resources are not advertised as they should be.”
- Several students emphasized needing help to cover various expenses, including online access to math homework (over \$100), books, tools, required class supplies.
- Students said that EOPS is helpful because it provides help with books, supplies, tools, applications, consistent counseling.

SURVEY RESULTS

- Financial aid (6)
- A place at the college where I can connect with other Latinx students (4)
- A place at the college where I can connect with a counselor and get help with things I need (4)
- Tutoring (3)
- Study skills classes (3)
- College-related events in my neighborhood (3)
- Help with the college application and class enrollment (2)
- Job search help (2)
- Mentoring by a current college student (2)
- Clubs (1)
- Sports (1)
- Classes or study groups in my neighborhood (1)

Audio recording:

https://cccconfer.zoom.us/recording/play/OS9qLPiELJXMDwRu5OUd5nK4rfY4fXgx6G3-8_oqw9QJRPZsBc8qnKPtoIW3dJ6G

Transcript: https://cccconfer.zoom.us/recording/download/UJCOj9dBUGYVZjcUI0Vs-W7eh03YN1Zb6O8GTiPQ7CmkEJ-wpfW4r_HDbuWRb14A