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COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF VERMONT
JOHNSON STATE COLLEGE
LYNDON STATE COLLEGE
VERMONT TECHNICAL COLLEGE



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Report on Act 77 of 2013

16 VSA §4011(e) Reports

**Annual Report on Early College Programs
in the Vermont State Colleges System
to the House and Senate Committees on Education**

Submitted by Chancellor Jeb Spaulding

Early College Report to Legislature

Legislation: Act 77 of 2013 An Act Relating to Encouraging Flexible Pathways to Secondary School Completion

Summary of Legislation: This act creates a Flexible Pathways Initiative within the Agency of Education to expand opportunities for secondary students to complete high school and achieve postsecondary readiness. Among other programs, the act provides the opportunity for students to complete 12th grade entirely on a college campus. Early college participants within the Vermont State Colleges System (VSCS) include the Vermont Academy of Science and Technology (VAST) at Vermont Technical College (VTC), and early college programs at the four other Vermont State Colleges. For the purposes of this report, the act specifically amends 16 VSA §4011(a) to require any postsecondary institution receiving funds for early college to “report to the House and Senate Committees on Education annually in January regarding the early college program, including data relating to the levels of participation, the success of the program in achieving the stated goals of the program to enhance secondary students’ education experiences and prepare them for success in college and beyond, and the specific outcomes for participating students relating to programmatic goals.”

Early College Findings: Early College programs in the VSCS, expanding from the original VAST program, began in Fall 2014 and are now in their fourth year, with modest additional growth from 230 students in Fall 2016 to 243 students in Fall 2017. This report provides analysis of the outcomes of students participating during 2016-2017, the third year of the program.

1. **Providing statewide access and diverse opportunities.** The VSCS Early College and VAST programs provide access to students statewide, with a diverse array of opportunities: a residential option at Johnson, rigorous sciences coursework in VAST, an inclusive first-year program option at Castleton, and a flexible blend of in-person and online courses at CCV.
2. **Growth in first generation student participation.** Most of the growth in Early College participation in the past year (112 to 131 students) has been at CCV, where the dual enrollment program serves as a critical “on-ramp” to support Early College participation among first-generation students. Approximately 50% of all Early College students at CCV participate first in dual enrollment, and 47% of all Early College/VAST students enrolled in Fall 2017 were identified as first-generation.
3. **Closing college aspiration gaps among first generation students.** Overall, 79% (182 students) of VSCS Early College/VAST participants in 2016-2017 continued their college studies for a second year in Fall 2017. Of these, 104 students continued in the VSCS, and 78 attended other colleges in Vermont and elsewhere. This postsecondary continuation rate continues to be substantially higher than that of Vermont’s overall continuation rate (60% as reported by the Agency of Education¹). 82 students who continued in college following their 2016-2017 Early College/VAST programs were identified as first-generation students, an increase from 46 first-generation students who continued after their Early College/VAST year in 2015-2016.

¹ <http://education.vermont.gov/documents/data-postsecondary-enrollment-data>

Enrollment of VT HS Students in EC and VAST Programs – 2015-2017
 2017 data as of October 15, 2017

ACADEMIC YEAR 2017-2018		<i>Early College</i>					Total EC	VAST	Total
	CCV	CU	JSC	LSC	VTC				
Fall 2017	131	19	31	4	2	187	56	243	

ACADEMIC YEAR 2016-2017		<i>Early College</i>					Total EC	VAST	Total
	CCV	CU	JSC	LSC	VTC				
Fall 2016	112	18	31	7	0	168	62	230	
Spring 2017	106	16	28	7	0	157	58	215	
Full AY students	106	16	28	7	0	157	58	215	
Fall-Spring Continuation Rate								93%	

ACADEMIC YEAR 2015-2016		<i>Early College</i>					Total EC	VAST	Total
	CCV	CU	JSC	LSC	VTC				
Fall 2015	69	12	34	5	0	120	51	171	
Spring 2016	60	10	31	5	0	106	50	156	
Full AY students	60	10	31	5	0	106	50	156	
Fall-Spring Continuation Rate								91%	

EC and VAST Program Students by VT County of Residence – Fall 2017

	EC	VAST	TOTAL		EC	VAST	TOTAL
Addison	6	1	7	Orleans	16	1	17
Bennington	3	1	4	Rutland	12	6	18
Caledonia	4	1	5	Washington	34	6	40
Chittenden	34	8	42	Windham	16	1	17
Essex			0	Windsor	11	12	23
Franklin	17	2	19	Total In-State	186	56	242
Grand Isle	5	1	6	Out-of-State	1		1
Lamoille	18	3	21	Total	187	56	243
Orange	10	13	23	% First-Generation	46%	46%	45%

Continuation Rate of EC and VAST Students – Fall 2016-2017

Class of 2016-2017

FALL 2017	EC	VAST	Total	%
Returned at the VSCS	74	30	104	45%
Attended other colleges	58	20	78	34%
Total continuing	132	50	182	79%
<i>of which:</i>				
First-Generation Students	64	18	82	36%
Not First-Generation	54	30	84	37%
Unknown First-Generation Status	14	2	16	7%
Did not continue at any college	36	12	48	21%

Class of 2015-2016

FALL 2016	EC	VAST	Total	% Total
Returned at the VSCS	48	27	75	46%
Attended other VT colleges	12	10	22	13%
Attended out-of-state college	28	12	40	24%
Total continuing	88	49	137	84%
<i>of which:</i>				
First-Generation Students	32	14	46	
Not First-Generation	40	34	74	
Unknown First-Generation Status	16	1	17	
Did not continue at any college	25	2	27	16%

Community College of Vermont

The Community College of Vermont continues to experience growing enrollment in the Early College Program. For the fall 2017 semester, we received 153 applications and of those, 131 students enrolled for the fall semester. Students attend 11 of CCV's academic centers, with the largest enrollments in Brattleboro, Montpelier and Winooski. This year's Early College cohort represents 42 high schools as well as home schooled students; schools with the largest number of participants include Spaulding High School, Colchester High School and Essex High School.

Last year, 62 Early College students identified as first generation, and in the current year cohort, 61 students are first generation. This year, we added Free & Reduced Lunch status to our Early College application, and 47 students responded indicating they were eligible. In the previous year, VSAC data showed 33 Early College students were eligible for FRL. In order to ensure access to the Early College program across all demographics, CCV maintains strong partnerships with high schools and communities and participates in local events, college fairs, and outreach activities where students and families can learn about college opportunities.

Once students are enrolled, CCV provides resources to ensure a positive experience in Early College. Our academic centers offer student orientations, advising, mid-semester check-ins, learning labs, and other activities to help students transition to a college culture, build confidence, and develop strategies for success. In last year's cohort, Early College students achieved an impressive course pass rate of 94% with an average GPA of 3.1.

CCV's Early College students recognize the time and cost savings of completing their first year of college in high school. They also enjoy the flexibility CCV's course schedule gives them to work, pursue other interests, and stay engaged in sports and extra-curricular activities at their high schools. Will Nally, completed Early College at CCV last spring and enrolled at Johnson State College last fall. While in Early College at the Montpelier academic center, Will coached varsity soccer at Cabot High School and also played on a community team. He worked several part-time jobs, which allowed him to save money for college. In a *Times Argus* interview, Will shared, *"I've enjoyed being able to go to school and work at the same time. It was pretty important to me and allowed me to avoid a lot of debt and stay close to my family. That was a big part of being with CCV."*

Sophia Blanchard, a current Early College student at CCV's Upper Valley academic center, also works part-time while taking courses that help her work toward a career in healthcare. With only one credit needed to graduate from high school, Early College gives her the opportunity to advance her studies while working at a local nursing home. *"Early College has honestly been a blessing. It helped me get away from the aspects of high school that were holding me back, and I think it will allow me to go further than I thought I would go before."*

Johnson and Lyndon: Early College Student Reflections

Johnson State College continues to serve a strong and diverse group of students, with 31 enrolled this fall. Lyndon State College has continued to support a small number of strong students, with first-semester grade point averages remaining above 3.0. Both programs are looking ahead to their outreach to potential Early College students as Northern Vermont University with several applications already received for 2018.

“I’ve made quite a few friends outside of the JSC Early College group. It’s really great to be able to make friends/connections with people who are from different age groups.”

“I’m doing Early College because I wanted to challenge myself my senior year. I already have the majority of my high school credits done.”

“I am treated like an adult, and people are very respectful. I don’t see any reason to stay at my high school when I can do so much more. I can graduate high school with college credits, and not many people can say that.”

“I heard about the Early College Program from my guidance counselor, she thought I would make a great candidate for the program.”

“I chose Johnson State College for my Early College year as I have been in the Upward Bound Program, hosted by JSC, for the past three summers and am very comfortable with the campus because of Upward Bound.”

“I loved the idea of Early College because you get to take college classes for free and are able to have the college experience while in your senior year of high school.”

“When I found out about the Early College Program I was extremely excited. Coming from a small high school I had taken a majority of the classes that were offered there. At the time, I was considering graduating early.”

“Early College was one of the best decisions of my life...My life has completely moved in a positive direction. I will never regret my decision and I hope other peers will look at this program and take it into consideration. It’s truly amazing.”

“It was a good opportunity for me to learn in a different setting as I am originally a homeschool student. It was a big change for me. It was a nice way to see what college is all about.”

“The program is getting me a head start on what I want to do which is, to restore and repair the hardware inside computers. I also like that I am able to utilize the facilities and clubs on campus. For example I worked with a math and English tutor in academic support and am thinking about joining the ski and ride club.”

Castleton University

The Early College program at Castleton University is thriving. This year's class represents 11 different high schools and one home-school program. Our students are taking full advantage of the Castleton community both in the classroom and through extra-curricular activities. We are seeing a shift from a mostly commuter student population to a more balanced population of residential students and commuters. After reviewing the academic records of each student from the fall semester, 84% of these students will qualify for significant merit scholarship awards should they enroll in a degree program at Castleton next year. Interest remains very high in this program and we anticipate another successful cohort in the fall of 2018.

Early College Student Emily Buchtman, Fair Haven Union High School:

"This program was wonderful and a fantastic opportunity that not a lot of people get to experience. This Early College Program has made me gain an understanding to what the future of college would bring at its own intensity as well as surround myself with determined students that want to be there. While I struggled in some parts, I succeeded in others. It taught persistence, stress management, time management, and motivation. Even though there were late nights and emotional ones, there were days full of learning and fun. The classmates I had in were unforgettable. We remain close and even study partners. You take the step of going to college so why not do it with people that are just as afraid and determined as you are. I feel more prepared for my future as a result to this program. I'm forever grateful for what this program has shown me and I really hope that others will choose the same path as we did."

Castleton Early College Faculty Professor Andrew Alexander:

"For the fall 2018 semester, I taught 17 Early College students in my First Year Seminar (FYS) at Castleton University, which I teach as a section of English Composition. I can say that from my perspective, and from the comments I have heard from many of my students, the Early College program is a wonderful opportunity of high school seniors to get a jump on their college careers."

"I found that students choose to take advantage of the Early College program for a variety of reasons, I have discovered that no matter the reasons for starting early, all these students can do very well with the right amount of support and encouragement."

"Early College students are nearly indistinguishable from "regular" college freshmen. They come to campus with the same anxieties, the same doubts, and the same capabilities. One student who consistently expressed worry about her ability to succeed in college--she openly wondered if she belonged in college at all--earned a 4.0 in her first semester. The same student enrolled in a 3xxx level Sociology class on advocacy and activism and excelled. She even joined Castleton's sexual violence and abuse awareness club, Peer Advocates for Change, fitting right in in a way that almost no one had any idea she was technically still a high school senior. Another student's experiences come to mind as well; she joined the Heal Kenya club and will be serving as its vice president this semester. The simple fact of the matter is EC students fit in well, bring the same doubts and skills, and contribute to campus in ways equal to their slightly older counterparts."

Vermont Tech

The Vermont Academy of Science and Technology (VAST), currently in its 29th year at Vermont Tech, enrolled 57 students this fall, a near-historical high. Every VAST student takes a minimum of 15 Vermont Tech credits each semester, and VAST students may major in any of Vermont Tech's associate or bachelor's degree programs. Students may also enter as an "Undeclared" student who takes an English, math, science and two electives each semester. At the end of VAST, students automatically become a sophomore at Vermont Tech, having completed their first year of their degree, tuition-free. Students who stay at Vermont Tech beyond their VAST year are automatically awarded the "VAST-forward Scholarship" of \$3,000 a year for up to three years. They may also continue to work with their sending school to receive a second high school diploma as well as the VAST diploma.

VAST students participate in first year student orientation with special sessions where the similarities and differences between VAST and a typical high school are explained. VAST graduates speak to incoming students about the rigor of the program and how to make the most of the year. During the year, VAST students meet with the program director for biweekly meetings and form a tight cohort where students help and encourage each other. All VAST students are required to attend sessions and develop a resume, and there are biweekly sessions devoted to supporting students sending out applications to other colleges.

Of the 57 VAST graduates in 2017:

- 16 attended the Williston campus and 41 attended the Randolph Campus.
- They arrived at VAST from 29 different high schools, 32 different towns and 1 other country. 5 were born outside the United States.
- Of the 16 students on the Williston campus, all but 1 were commuters. Of the 42 Randolph students, two thirds commuted and one third lived on campus.
- Over one-third of these students will be the first in their families to graduate from college. Half the class is returning to Vermont Tech to pursue 17 different degrees.

"It gives students the extra challenge to take rigorous college-level courses and prove they can do it. We've had students go to MIT, Rensselaer Polytech, Clarkson."

–Rosemary Distel, Associate Academic Dean

"I went to a high school in a really small town that had about twenty-four people in my graduating class and I wanted more of a peer pool to talk to. When I heard about VAST I was excited about the idea of people who were in my classes wanting to be there and being invested in what they were doing." –Emma Horowitz-McCadden, VAST student, undeclared major.

"I really like that it is both your senior year of high school and freshman year of college at the same time. If someone was considering doing the VAST program I would say try hard to get into the program, it's a good program, it gives you a jumpstart on your career." --Sonny Parrott, VAST student, mechanical engineering