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UNIVERSITY

Report on Act 77 of 2013

**Annual Report on the Early College Program
at Norwich University
to the Agency of Education and the House and Senate Committees on Education**

Submitted by Dr. Karen Gaines, Provost and Dean of the Faculty

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The Early College Program at Norwich has been transformative for both the students who join us and the university. By coordinating across units—The Provost’s Office, Admissions, the Center for Academic Success and Achievement, the Center for Career Readiness, and beyond—we have continued to grow and improve the early college experience for students across Vermont.

At Norwich, the Early College Program not only enhances academic preparedness but also cultivates essential skills such as time management and navigating the social and logistical challenges of transitioning from high school to college. In other words, our Early College Program helps them develop the skills "to act as well as to think - to execute as well as conceive." To do so, we collect real-time student success data that allows us to identify potential problems and respond with increased student support and resources when they are most needed. This is evident in the high academic success rate of our Early College students.

We do this through a holistic approach that emphasizes the creation of “moral, patriotic, efficient, and useful citizens.” This focus on character development alongside academic growth is particularly valuable for early college students transitioning into higher education at a younger age.

We continue to grow and refine our Early College Program and remain committed to providing accessible, high-quality educational opportunities that empower students to achieve their academic and career goals. We are proud of the impact this program has had and look forward to its continued success in shaping the future of education at Norwich University.

Sincerely,



Karen F. Gaines, Ph.D.
Provost and Dean of the Faculty
Norwich University

I. Introduction

Norwich University is one of three higher education institutions in the state of Vermont to offer the Early College program to high school seniors and has been a participant in the program since 2015. Norwich is the only private university to offer early college and has the added benefit of an emphasis on leadership as a military university and the inclusion of the Corps of Cadets lifestyle for interested students.

In Fall 2024, Norwich welcomed 72 students in the Early College cohort from fifteen Vermont high schools along with one homeschooled student. Four lived on campus including three civilian residential students and one in the Corps of Cadets military lifestyle. This is the largest cohort Norwich has enrolled in Early College since the beginning of the program.

II. Flexible Pathways Admissions Summary

Melanie Rossier-Parr, Associate Director of Admissions

Norwich University Admissions works to promote our Early College Program as a unique, challenging, and rewarding experience for rising high school seniors. Admissions works to create relationships with schools throughout Vermont – connecting with guidance counselors, teachers, and principals on the benefits of the opportunity of early college for a range of students looking to do something more in their senior year. Many local families are familiar with Norwich for our sporting or military events, so we also try to connect with them regarding our many academic opportunities. The Flexible Pathways Admissions Counselor attends college fairs with information on traditional and early college pathways, travels to schools to give presentations, and conducts webinars for both school staff and student’s families.

The Admissions Counselor works closely with the Academic Advisor regarding any shared questions and on planning informational sessions, accepted student days, and orientation sessions for flexible pathways students.

Currently, students need only the Norwich application, a current high school transcript, and the Principal Authorization Form to apply for the Early College Program. However, we always encourage students to add a letter of recommendation and/or personal essay to give us a more holistic view of the student. If the student is accepted to the program, the Admissions Counselor communicates that acceptance to the student, explains next steps, and keeps in touch monthly by phone and email to check in regarding any questions, new student paperwork, financial aid, billing, timeline, etc.

The Admissions Counselor also continues to communicate with early college students and families into the school year, as we encourage our flexible pathways students to matriculate to Norwich University after they have had experienced life on campus. We have had 15 early college students matriculate to a degree program for Fall 2024 and 35% of our current early college students have applied for matriculation for Fall 2025.

III. The Early College Experience: What the Data Shows Us

Joseph Face, Associate Director, Office of Institutional Effectiveness

The following data includes Early College cohorts from Fall 2022, Fall 2023, and Fall 2024, with a total of 165 students.

A. Most Common Courses Taken by Early College Students Norwich

The most common course taken by Early College (EC) students is EN110 Writing for Public Contexts. Over the three-year period included here, 145 (87.88%) of EC students enrolled in this course.

The **ten** most common courses are as follows:

Course	Student Count
EN110 - Writing and Inquiry I	145
PY211 - Introduction to Psychology	62
BI215 - Human Anatomy & Physiology I	30
MG101 - Introduction to Business	25
MA107 - Precalculus Mathematics	23
EC106 - Structure & Oper World Econ	20
MA121 - Calculus I	20
MA101 - Mathematics: A Liberal Art I	20
MA232 - Elementary Statistics	17
BI101 - Principles of Biology I	15
CS100 - Found/Comp Sci&Info Assurance	15

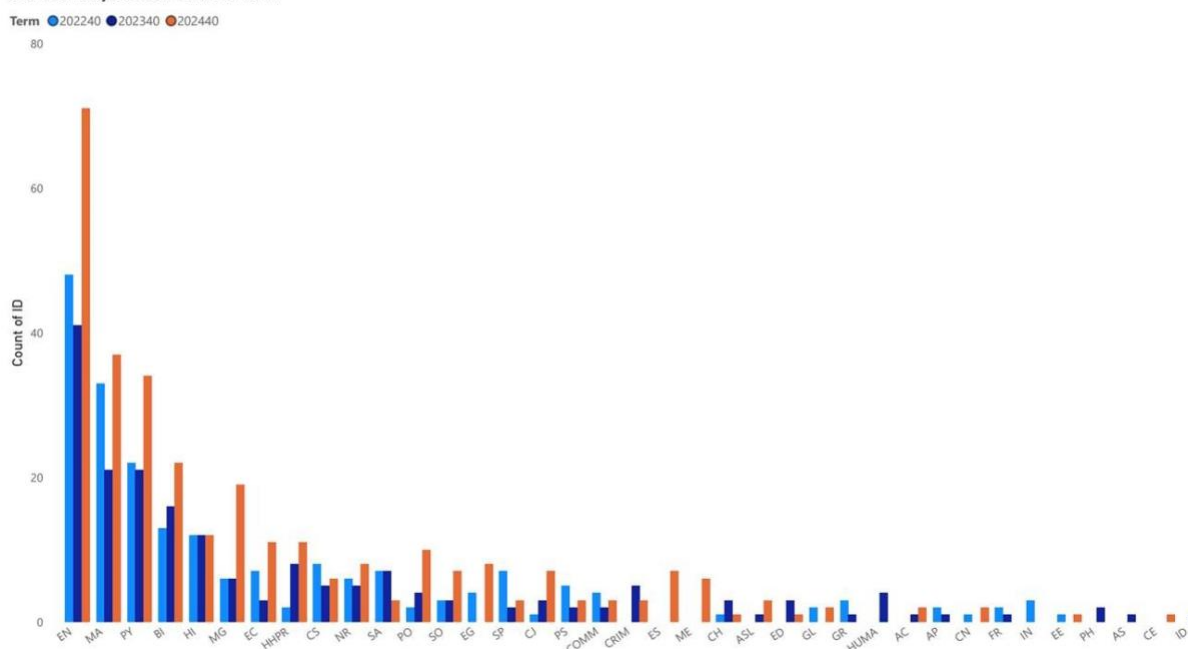
Most common subjects taken:

Course	Subject	Student Count
EN	English	160
MA	Mathematics	91
PY	Psychology	77
BI	Biology	51
HI	History	36
MG	Management	31
EC	Economics	21
HHPR	Health and Human Performance	21

Looking at this data, it is clear that EC students are looking to take introductory-level courses, which often meet the university's general education goals, align with required classes at most colleges, and therefore add to the ease of transferability. They also help students develop foundational academic skills, explore interests, and prepare for more advanced courses.

The chart below shows the count of enrollments by EC students in the various subjects, grouped by semester. This allows us to see trends a bit more easily. The most popular subjects are becoming even more popular.

Count of ID by CoursePrefix and Term



B. Retention

Norwich's overall retention rate for residential students is around 93%. As shown below, Early College students retain better than the first-time, residential student fall-to-spring retention rate, which is about 90%.

- Fall 2022 to Spring 2023: 47 out of 50 returned (94%)
- Fall 2023 to Spring 2024: 41 out of 43 returned (95.35%)
- Fall 2024 to Spring 2025: 67 out of 72 (93.06%)

C. EC Student Academic Success

The overall data shows that not only do Early College students retain well from fall to spring, but they also achieve academic success during their time here. Overall, EC students have high GPAs (>3.5) and low DFW rates.

Semester	Average Term GPA		
	Early College Students	All Residential Students	All Residential First-Time Students
Fall 2022	3.51	3.0	2.78
Fall 2023	3.71	3.07	2.88
Fall 2024	3.68	3.07	2.85
OVERALL	3.43	3.04	2.84

Early College students are successful students, as only 48 out of a possible 726 grades were DFWs, for a passing rate of 93.39%. Perhaps this isn't surprising, as they tend to be high-achieving students: Early

College students have an average high school GPA of 3.64, which is 0.2 to 0.4 points higher than the average high school GPA of each incoming student class per year.

D. Matriculated Status

Of the 93 EC students from Fall 2022 and Fall 2023, 27 (29.03%) have either matriculated or are in the process of matriculating (i.e. have been accepted for Fall 2025). When Fall 2024 EC students in that group, the numbers change to 31 out of 165 (18.79).

In the list of majors, it is worth noting that of the 8 students who are now in the Nursing program, 7 took Nursing courses as an EC student.

Current Major	Count
Architectural Studies	3
Biology	1
Civil Engineering	1
Computer Security - Info Assur	4
Criminal Justice	3
Cybersecurity & Advanced Techn	1
Exercise Science	1
Health Science	1
History	1
Mechanical Engineering	1
Nursing	8
Physical Education	1
Political Science	1
Psychology	3
Studies in War & Peace	1
Total	31

E. Sending High Schools

The list of high schools that EC students attend are:

Union-32 Jr/Sr High School	40
Spaulding High School	36
Northfield Jr-Sr High School	19
Montpelier High School	17
Harwood Union High School	11
Stowe High School	8
Williamstown High School	5
Randolph Union High School	4
South Royalton High School	4
Miscellaneous High School	4
North Country Union High Sch	3
Hartford High School	2
Lamoille Union High School	2
Twinfield High School	2

Homeschooled	2
Unknown	1
Danville High School	1
Mt Mansfield Union High School	1
Orford High School	1
Oxbow High School	1
Peoples Academy	1
Saint Johnsbury Academy	1
South Burlington High School	1
Vermont Commons School	1
Woodstock Union High School	1
Great Bridge High School	1

Note: a few students had more than one high school listed and that's why there are 170 instances of high schools listed for 165 EC students.

IV. **Advising and Vocation**

Lisa Brucken, Flexible Pathways Advisor and Success Coach
 Meghan Oliver, M.Ed. Director, Center for Career Readiness

A. **Advising**

Students first meet with their academic advisor over the spring and summer to discuss their fall class schedule. During that meeting, the student and advisor double-check their high school graduation requirements, discuss academic interests, and make note of any schedule needs. As part of that conversation, the advisor asks, "Why Norwich?" Although specific answers vary, one common denominator most mention is the desire to experience a face-to-face college environment. Many students have taken concurrent classes in their high school through CCV and transfer those credits into Norwich. These are often helpful for prerequisites allowing students to take higher level classes.

1. **Pre-Enrollment and Orientation**

In May 2024, Admissions offered an accepted students' day for families which was an overview and reminders about the program. Forty students attended. Separate sessions were offered for parents and students. Former Early College students spoke to the group about their experience and answered questions.

In August 2024 we created specific programming for Early College students on Norwich's Academic Day, held during orientation week. The Center for Writing, the Center for Career Readiness, and the Center for Academic Success and Achievement held workshop sessions. Upper-class peer tutors also helped ECP students walk their class schedules on campus, so they knew where to go on their first day of class.

2. **Advisor Professional Development**

The Flexible Pathways Advisor is a participant in Norwich's NETVUE grant on vocation, which supports the integration of vocational reflection into the advising and curricular practices at Norwich. In collaboration with other educators, Lisa Brucken is on three committees with colleagues from CCV and VTSU and a variety of high school counselors state-wide. She is part of the Early College Equity Workgroup and a subcommittee for post-enrollment, as well as a participant in the Vermont Early College Practitioner Community of Practice.

3. Center for Career Readiness

The Center for Career Readiness is here to support Early College students in a variety of ways. Most of the ECP students we see are exploring their major and career paths. Many of these students are exploring colleges that may be a better fit for their career aspirations.

Our team supports students in whatever decisions they choose for themselves even if they choose to transfer to another school for a specific academic program we may not have. We help them think about things such as what type of program or school environment they would thrive in, and what do they need to apply, such as letters of recommendation or a resume. We also help them explore different career paths and build the skills they will need to develop as they move through their academic experience.

Many early college students are unsure if they can use our services but that is a common misconception. We are here to serve all undergraduate students both full-time and part-time and help them develop the tools they need to be successful throughout their college experience and beyond!

V. Testimonials

Students Who Participated in the Norwich ECP

“The ECP was so helpful in finding out if I was sure about what I wanted to choose for a major, it also helped me be prepared for when I was in college and allowed me to decide if college was even right for me. I would recommend everyone to choose this path if they are considering college for their future, if not for the reasons I said but just to get ahead of the game!” *Physical Education Major, Class of 2027 [Year of ECP: 2023-24]*

“The Early College Program at Norwich University helped me save money, time, and meet amazing people inside and outside my community. I recommend it to any strong student looking for a challenge and a more independent lifestyle!” *Studies in War and Peace Major, class of 2027, ECP Year 2022-2023*

“I participated in the Early College Program during the 2022-2023 academic year, and my experience was overwhelmingly positive. The professors fostered an inclusive environment, making ECP students feel like a natural part of the freshman class. This supportive atmosphere helped alleviate the initial nervousness I felt walking through campus on the first day. Furthermore, choosing to continue my education at Norwich University has positioned me ahead of my high school graduating class, allowing me to graduate a year earlier and gain a competitive advantage in securing a professional career.” *Nursing Major, class of 2026*

“The generosity of the early college program paired with the depth of classes at Norwich University has allowed me to experience a unique senior year and has also set me ahead for life.” *Stowe High School, class of 2025*

“Early college at Norwich has been such an amazing opportunity for me in my last year of high school, I feel so much more prepared for college next year and it's allowed me to realize that I love learning. It was the perfect level of challenge and provided me with so much flexibility, I've been telling every current junior in high school that I know to do early college!” *Spaulding High School, class of 2025*

Faculty Testimonials

“Early college students have been integral to the theatre program most semesters, where they have worked as actors, sound designers, costume designers, choreographers, and even (for short plays)

directors. Because they are often highly talented and hardworking, the students have been quickly promoted to important roles and gained valuable artistic and professional experiences.”

Dr. Jeff Casey, Associate Professor of Theatre, Theatre Director

“I find Early College students are courteous, hard-working, and curious. They are engaged and ask shrewd questions which can be helpful in the first-year writing sequence where we are teaching new ways to look at academic discourse and rhetoric.”

Prof. Lindsay Gacad, English & Communications Lecturer, Communications Coordinator

“Last year, early College students in my economics class brought energy and enthusiasm to class discussions and group work. They were some of the most prepared students, and I appreciated their perspectives and contributions to the class.”*Dr. Jacqueline Strenio, Assistant Professor of Economics*

“I find early college students to be engaged in class and equipped with solid writing skills. They work hard, ask questions of assignments, and are a pleasure to teach. They are good role models for many of my first-year students!” *Dr. Rowly Brucken, Professor of History, History Program Director*

“Norwich's Early College students are consistently enthusiastic, hardworking, and intellectually curious. They offer thoughtful contributions to class discussion and bring positivity and energy into the classroom.” *Dr. Anne Summers, Senior Lecturer in English*