

# DELAWARE CHARTER SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT



2015-2016

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### **Mission:**

The mission of Early College High School at Delaware State University is to provide highly motivated students with a curriculum that is integrated with the relevant curriculum at Delaware State University such that all students graduate with one to two years of college credits and are in a favorable position to graduate from college. The school shall provide a safe, caring and nurturing environment that develops students' academic, social skills and personal character traits necessary for successful college completion, with a special focus on high school students who will be the first generation in their families to become college educated.

### **Vision**

The vision of Early College High School at Delaware State University will be a nationally recognized early college, which increases access to higher education and produces students who have the expectations and skills to make a significant impact in the global community.

### **Academic Program:**

In partnership with Delaware State University (DSU), a Historically Black College and University in Dover, Delaware, the Early College High School at Delaware State University (ECHS@DSU) was designed to be a dynamic high school where students will be engaged, motivated, and supported by the unique learning environment that is created by the early college high school model. The school replicates the nationally recognized early college high school model and seeks to serve particularly first generation college attendees in grades 9-12. To meet these academic and cultural goals, the Board of Directors (Board) of the Early College High School at Delaware State University has selected Knowledge Works (formerly EdWorks) as a partner and will use their early college model design. In the tradition of early college high

schools across the nation, students at ECHS@DSU will have the opportunity to earn a high school diploma *and* up to 60 hours of college credit during their four-year high school career, and will develop the drive and focus necessary to succeed at all levels of education and in their chosen careers.

Innovation, curiosity, and intellectual risk-taking are at the heart of ECHS@DSU, and each of these concepts align with the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that students will need as future leaders in their professions. The early college high school model sees mastery of core subjects and 21<sup>st</sup> century themes as essential to ensuring that all students are able to thrive in a complex, connected world.

The school opened its doors to a 9<sup>th</sup> grade class in the 2014-2015 school year. In the 2015-2016 school year a new freshman class arrived and joined our newly promoted 10<sup>th</sup> graders. Over the summer of 2015, approximately 200 students participated in the a five-week Summer Bridge program, where they completed a college class as well as other high school requirements. Moving forward, the school will continue to hold a mandatory Summer Bridge Program for all rising 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders. The goal for the school is that students who participate in this school program will graduate with an important combination of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, a high school diploma, and up to 60 college credit hours that will help them to transition successfully into the next steps of college and career.

**Key Accomplishments:**

- 10<sup>th</sup> grade students, first enrolled in SY 2016, have earned a total of 555 college credits
- 11<sup>th</sup> grade students, first enrolled in SY 2015, have earned a total of 1698 college credits

- Increased demand for the school resulted in the need for a lottery
- Returning 10<sup>th</sup> grade students and new ninth grade students attended a five-week Summer Bridge Program in which students took one college course as well as completing state PE requirements and Literacy Workshops
- Won the Silver Service Leadership award through the Jefferson Awards
- National Honor Society established at the school with the installation of 27 inaugural members
- First season for DIAA approved sports teams
- Received Community Partnership Award from Delaware State
- Received Drivers Education Smart Drive Scholarship
- Instituted a variety of activities and clubs for the students
- Developed a rigorous College Readiness Rubric to monitor readiness for each student numerous times throughout the year
  - Worked with Performance Plus to computerize the College Readiness Rubric
  - Presented to State Board on the College Readiness Rubric
- Instituted the Teaching Excellence Framework for teacher observations where all teachers received monthly coaching on their instructional practices
  - Presented to State Board on the Teaching Excellence Framework
  - Served on a panel for alternative evaluation at the Policy & Practice Institute on the Teaching Excellence Framework
- Presented at EdWorks National Conference on Leveling the Playing Field, a look at how consistent data, like the college readiness rubric, can make college more accessible to underrepresented minorities

### **Tier 3 Narrative:**

#### Academic Performance

*Identify areas or factors where the school has met standard in academic performance.*

The Early College High School @ Delaware State University has limited data from the DSSF to measure academic performance because there were no juniors present. In April of 2017, the junior class will take the state assessment, the SAT. Once there are seniors in SY 2018, ECHS@DSU will be able to receive a score for a College and Career readiness metric. DSSF did not calculate an ECHS@DSU On-Track in 9<sup>th</sup> Grade value in either 2015 or 2016. According to a review of transcripts, four 9<sup>th</sup> graders in the 2015-2016 school year had not earned enough credits to be considered a 10<sup>th</sup> grader, or 3.8% of the ninth grade class.

At the Early College High School College @ DSU, Career Readiness is a major focus. Based on the success rates of students taking college classes in year one, there needed to be a way to determine when students were ready to be sent to the University to take a college course with other college students. During the fall of 2015 the ECHS @ DSU College Readiness Rubric was developed to have an objective measure to determine readiness. Students were rated at the end of each quarter in the factors that determine college readiness: grades, attendance record, discipline record, norm referenced assessments and teacher recommendation based on classroom performance and attitude. Using this tool, students who were determined to be eligible to take college classes were much more successful than in the first year where students were allowed to sign up without an objective measure. This system increased the success of the academic program and increased student self-governance and accountability. Mid-way through the 2015-16 school year, the scoring became electronic using Performance Plus. Teachers can access reports on

students and the overall school data showed increased college readiness over the course of the school year. During the 2016-2017 school years students will be assessed using the rubric eight times throughout the year to coincide with the grade reporting schedule.

In order to best prepare students for the expectations of their college classes, all teachers were expected to fully utilize Schoology as an instructional tool by spring of 2016. Additional trainings for the staff were provided to use this tool as means to support students and monitor their progress. Schoology when utilized to its fullest mirrors most of the aspects of the college Blackboard system. This expectation will continue throughout the full 2016-2017 school year.

In its second year, the Early College High School @ DSU did not have any 11<sup>th</sup> graders, so there is no SAT data to be reviewed. PSAT data for both our 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students can be used as indications of where are students are in terms of meeting proficiency on the SAT. The college readiness benchmark scores as determined by the College Board were utilized for indicating preliminary college and career readiness benchmarks for the 2016 SAT which predicts a 75% likelihood of achieving at least a C in a set of first-semester, credit-bearing college courses. For the tenth grade, 83% of the students met the benchmark on the English/Writing/Reading portion of the PSAT, while only 26% of the 10<sup>th</sup> graders showed proficiency on the Mathematics assessment. In the spring of 2016, the 9<sup>th</sup> graders took the PSAT 8/9 Assessment, and 44% of the students were found to meet the benchmark in English/Writing/Reading while 22% of the students had met the benchmark in Mathematics. During the 2016-17 school year, all three grades will test in the spring: 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> will take the PSAT and 11<sup>th</sup> will take the SAT.

*Identify areas or factors where the school has not met standard in academic performance. Provide an analysis of strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth in these areas. What are the school's academic performance outcomes that will improve student growth, proficiency, and college and career readiness levels as measured by the Performance Framework?*

N/A

*List Any Academic Performance Conditions That Were Placed Upon the Charter School during the 2015-16 School Year and Discuss the Changes that the Charter School Made In Response*

N/A

### Organizational Performance

*Discuss the Charter School's Organizational Compliance and Soundness During the 2015-16 School Year. Identify areas or factors where the school has met standard in organizational performance.*

For the 2015-2016 School Year, the Early College High School at Delaware State University met all targets within the Operational Framework, which resulted in an overall rating of *Meets Standard*. In the 2014-2015, ECHS@ DSU did not meet in three areas, so in order to meet the standard this past year, ECHS spent time ensuring the understanding of the methodology for the measure's data, which was monitored monthly and shared at board meetings. Each measure was given a green, yellow or red rating. For areas that had a red or yellow rating, an action plan was developed to address the area, and this turned the rating around.

Prior to the end of the month the web site was reviewed for compliance, and any missing items were identified and added to the sit. This consistent monitoring was done and will continue to be done to ensure target areas were not met last school year were met this past year, and will continue to be met in the future. Even though all teachers had HQT status during the 2014-2015 SY, there was a failure to follow up on ensuring the teachers completed all surveys and submitted all paperwork. This past year, this was more closely monitored: individual conversation with anyone who was out of compliance and tying pay scales into submission of documentation to DEEDs.

Attendance was addressed on a school-wide and individual student basis. The college-ready factor of being in class, especially as it related to the college courses was communicated to all students and their families. All students were held accountable for any unexcused absences. Families of

students who had unexcused absences were contact by phone, email, regular mail and in-person as necessary by the school principal. This very conscious offer of addressing all absences, along with the impact of poor attendance on a student's eligibility to register for college courses, had a positive effect on ADA.

*Identify areas or factors where the school has not met standard in organizational performance. Provide an analysis of strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth in these areas. What are the school's performance outcomes in meeting its organizational responsibilities including, but not limited to, administrative operations, reporting, and legal responsibilities as measured by the Performance Framework?*

N/A

*List Any Organizational Health Conditions That Were Placed Upon the Charter School During the 2015-16 School Year and Discuss the Changes that the Charter School Made In Response*

N/A

Financial Performance

*Discuss the Charter School's Financial Viability During the 2015-16 School Year.*

*Identify areas or factors where the school has met standard in financial performance.*

N/A

*Identify areas or factors where the school has not met standard in financial performance. Provide an analysis of strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth in these areas. What are the school's financial performance outcomes that will demonstrate viability and sustainability as measured by the Performance Framework?*

<b><i>Financial Performance Expectations</i></b>	<b><i>Strengths</i></b>	<b><i>Challenges</i></b>	<b><i>Opportunities for Growth</i></b>
<b>Asset to Liability Ratio: .30</b>	As a second year school with a small enrollment, under 200 students, and with a school model that involves large upfront costs, the Board knew that the early year's operations would result in a deficit. The school arranged for a \$1 million line of credit prior to opening to ensure the financial obligations would be met for the first few years with an understanding that increased enrollment in the subsequent years would permit that initial debt to be repaid and produce positive cash flow to result over a five-year planning horizon	As a second year charter school, the amount of fixed assets is low and because of the overall five-year plan of finance. The amount of debt is relatively high. The five-year plan of finance projects that this ratio will be in line with standards during that planning horizon.  In year two, the new school leader inherited a school that had already drawn down \$500,000 in its line of credit. No additional monies needed to be drawn down during the second year to cover operating expenses. The school actually	Fixed asset list that meets Board policy  Pay off the line of credit to decrease interest payments throughout the year, and only draw down the exact amount that is needed  Clear plan for the paying down off the line of credit before the end of year five  Restructure Summer Bridge Program to reduce costs of salaries and supplies.

	<p>Even with unique expenses (listed under challenges), the school was able to operate in year two without needing to borrow any additional funds from the line of credit, and was able to make interest payments on the line of credit</p>	<p>ended the year with surplus as well as their 2% contingency.</p> <p>Unique expenses that are needed to run the program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summer Bridge Program; need to pay for salaries for instructors for a five week program</li> <li>• College Textbooks; college course textbooks are significantly more expensive than K-12 textbooks</li> <li>• Daily School Transportation: bringing students from across the state made daily school transportation cost higher than the state allotment.</li> <li>• College Shuttle: Transporting students from the ECHS school building to the university for classes is a necessary cost for the program model.</li> </ul>	<p>Apply for State Dual Enrollment funds to assist with college textbook/course fee costs.</p> <p>Explore other transportation companies and/or DSU for the Shuttle Bus.</p>
<p><b>Days Cash: 12 days</b></p>	<p>Use of Additional funding sources</p>	<p>ECHS is a recipient of the NON SEA grant, a reimbursement grant, the school paid for items that will be paid for by this grant and the money had not yet been reimbursed by the US DOE</p>	<p>Once Non-SEA Grant money is disbursed, the funds will be used to reimburse for items detailed in the grant: Summer Bridge, Computers, etc.</p> <p>Work with the Delaware State University Development Office to create fundraising and grant opportunities: Fundraising Gala is being planned for May 2017. Grant</p>

			opportunities are being explored specific to early college education, STEM, one-to-one initiatives.
<b>Enrollment Variance: 93%</b>	Enrollment is increasing. In Year 1, the September 30 <sup>th</sup> Unit Count was 125. And despite a change in leadership and fear of uncertainty, the enrollment in Year 2 was 207. The recruitment efforts have increased. Open Houses at the school to showcase the program have been added. Attendance at recruitment fairs and high school nights have proven to be beneficial to increase awareness about the school and its programs.	<p>At the start of the Summer Bridge Program in the second year of the school, the enrollment for the school had fallen to 88 students in the class that began the school with 125. This caused for more recruiting enrollment efforts.</p> <p>The rigor of a faced-paced, early college, dual-enrollment program proved to be too much for some students.</p> <p>The natural attrition in an early college high school is high.</p>	<p>Because of the high attrition rate of an early college high school, a retention plan needs to be developed in order to place more supports (tutoring, RtI, college peer mentors, etc.) around struggling students.</p> <p>An awareness education program must be developed to educate the public about the stress and rigors of dual enrollment.</p> <p>Work with the University and the Board to create a marketing plan to increase efforts.</p>
<b>Debt to Asset Ratio: 3.47</b>	<p>The budget was redone when the Sept. 30<sup>th</sup> count was complete, this budget showed financial viability.</p> <p>The school has a \$1,000,000 credit line, during the 2015-2016 school year no additional monies were used from this credit line. The entire amount borrowed was borrowed during year one. The school made interest payments during year two</p>	<p>As a second year charter school, the amount of fixed assets is low and because of the overall five-year plan of finance, the amount of debt is relatively high. Thus, the debt-to-asset ratio is high. However, the five- year plan of finance projects that this ratio will be in line with standards during that planning horizon. .</p> <p>.</p>	<p>Create a 3-5 year financial forecast</p> <p>Create a detailed vendor list with annual expenditures</p> <p>Meet with school administrative team monthly to complete an internal budget review to more closely monitor expenses and revenue</p> <p>Clearly list the in-kind support from DSU (detailed by month)</p> <p>Utilize other monthly financial reports generated by financial system to review revenue and expenditures</p>

*List Any Financial Health Conditions That Were Placed Upon the Charter School During the 2015-16 School Year and Discuss the Changes that the Charter School Made In Response*

There are several Financial Health Conditions that were placed upon the Early College High School during the 2015-16 school year:

**Increased Transportation Costs:** Due to the early college model, the “Power of Place” is a strong characteristic. The original vision for the school was to have the high school housed on campus so students could simply walk to their classes. Students must take classes at Delaware State University. The 2015-16 budget indicated transportation costs for daily attendance at school; however, an additional shuttle bus had to be added in order to transport students the half mile from the Early College High School to Delaware State University in order to attend classes. The number of students becoming college ready (based on the ECHS College Readiness Rubric) grew from 32 students first semester to 70 students in the second semester. The students had classes at all times during the day, so a shuttle bus was needed to transport the students in a schedule that was created to get students to the University and then back to ECHS to attend classes there as well.

**Student Attrition:** With an early college model, student enrollment has a natural attrition due to the fast-paced rigor of the curriculum and the pressures of dual enrollment. ECHS is combatting this in several ways: “Hornet Hello Programs” and with increasing at-risk identification through a College Readiness Rubric developed by the School Leader. The Hornet Hello Program requires that all students who accepted invitations to ECHS attend to hear about the rigors of the program and exact details that the students will be required to do in the early college model. This helps parents and students make more informed decisions before actually registering to attend the school. The College Readiness Rubric measures

students in the key areas of college readiness: grades, attendance, behavior, teacher recommendation, and performance on assessments. By using the rubric throughout the school year, students who are not college ready are identified earlier and supports are put into place to ensure success.