

POLICY RESEARCH BRIEF



research • communication • advocacy • support

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ENLACE FLORIDA is a statewide network promoting college-readiness, access, and success for underrepresented students in Florida.

FloridaCAN!

Empowering Communities To Work Alongside Our Schools For Student Success

In 1999 the KnowledgeWorksFoundation, the Ohio Department of Education, and the Ohio Board of Regents established the Ohio College Access Network (OCAN), the first statewide coordinating body for college access programs in the country. OCAN, an independent 501 (c)(3) organization, helps Ohio students pursue a college education by providing technical assistance, support, and grant opportunities to local community-based college access programs throughout the state. When OCAN was founded, 11 organizations served 50,000 students. Today, 70 OCAN member community organizations serve over 200,000 students, making it the model college access network that has inspired the development of similar community networks in 12 other states. This best practice in college access, according to Dr. Lorelle Espinosa, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives for the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP), "is appropriately grounded in states like Ohio, where education policymakers, researchers, and practitioners must work together to create successful linkages that start in pre-K education and culminate in statewide economic health and a democratic citizenry."¹

Many of these state networks are part of the National College Access Network (NCAN), which promotes, coordinates, and supports college access programs at the national level. These networks have been recognized and have received funding from private sources, including Lumina Foundation for Education and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, state appropriations, as well as federal funds, such as the College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) program. The emergence and success of these organizations testifies to the value they add to state efforts to increase the college-going and college graduation rates of its students, particularly those from limited-income families. While Florida's school districts, colleges, and universities administer a number of successful college access programs, Florida has not yet created a true College Access Network of their own. The time has come for Florida to emulate the best practices of other states and institutionalize a college access network that will empower communities to work alongside our schools and increase the number of students who are prepared to enter and succeed in higher education.

ENLACE Florida aims to increase Florida's level of college degree attainment to 60% by 2025 and has received a grant from Lumina Foundation for Education to continue developing a statewide network designed to support Florida in meeting this BIG GOAL. As it expands the KnowHow2Go college readiness program across the state, ENLACE Florida is prepared to institutionalize its network of friends and partners into the Florida College Access Network, FloridaCAN! Advised and supported by Lumina Foundation, NCAN, and IHEP, informed by discussions with OCAN, and other college access networks, ENLACE Florida is developing a statewide network that, through community empowerment, will add value to and complement the efforts of the school districts, state colleges, and universities that are currently administering college access programs. Following in the footsteps of Michigan, which received a federal College Access Challenge Grant to launch its state network, Florida can intensify its efforts to increase the number of students who earn a post-secondary degree or credential by engaging Florida's future talent pool and establishing a network of organizations that provide college readiness, access, and success services to students and families within communities surrounding our most struggling schools.

¹ Ohio College Access Network, "Bipartisan College Access and Economic Opportunity Caucus Launched Today" May 19, 2010, accessed on May 28, 2010 at: <http://www.ohiocan.org/Default.aspx>

What is a Network?

Paul Vandeventer, President and CEO of Community Partners with 27 years of experience in community development, defines a network as “many different organizations working in concert as equal partners pursuing a common social or civic purpose over a sustained period of time.” There are many different types of networks operating in many different fields. There are already many networks operating in Florida, including the Florida Network of Youth and Family Services, which represents agencies which serve homeless, runaway and troubled youth; The Florida Network of Children's Advocacy Centers, a coalition that aims to improve Florida's response to child abuse; and a Florida Network of Victim Witness Services, which provides assistance to advocates for the rights of crime victims. A common feature of these disparate organizations is that they were all developed to pool the resources of organizations that recognize that they can make a bigger impact by working together. These joint efforts, also known as “collaboratives” or “coalitions,” create “greater scale and focus, more productive kinds of working relationships and greater, more lasting effectiveness to addressing public problems.”²

There are at least three different types of networks, according to Vandeventer, with the levels of risk and the stakes involved escalating from: *Cooperating* to *Coordinating* to *Collaborating* Networks. ENLACE Florida is developing into a Collaborating Network. In a Collaborating Network, members join together to pursue some kind of fundamental, systemic reform and have developed procedures to represent and promote their common interests and resolve internal conflicts. To make the network work, the members “typically begin to ‘give up’ old notions and begin to think differently about how the system in which they have been working can work differently.”³

ENLACE Florida, a statewide network established in 2006, has been promoting policies and advocating for enhanced college readiness, access, and success through non-partisan research, communication, advocacy, and support. ENLACE currently exists as a *Cooperating* network led by *individuals* from universities, community organizations, state colleges, school districts, student and parent groups. ENLACE “community clusters,” coalitions of individuals determined to promote college readiness, access, and success for under-represented students, exist today in different forms in Ft. Lauderdale, Gainesville, Jacksonville, Miami, Orlando, Tallahassee, and Tampa. Through the programs administered by ENLACE Florida, KnowHow2Go Florida, College Goal Sunday Florida, and the Florida Student Education Policy Conference, relationships have been developed with individuals and organizations in all parts of the state. Over the next two years, with financial support from Lumina Foundation for Education, the Leadership Team of ENLACE Florida has endorsed and designed plans to guide the transition of the current network to a *Collaborating* network, with formal relationships among non-profit community-based organizations to deliver college readiness and access services and advocate for education reforms. The objective is to create, strengthen, and ultimately integrate organizations and individuals who promote or provide college access services into a more productive and effective statewide college access network.

College access networks, comprised of individuals and organizations that share a commitment to improve communities, add value to the efforts of all organizations providing supplemental services to our future talent pool—under-represented students. A college access network—a *coalition of the willing*—contributes to the development of a service delivery model that minimizes the duplication of services. According to Jamie Merisotis, President of Lumina Foundation for Education, “When organizations and individuals work in partnership, that is, when they establish and maintain effective networks—imposing barriers can be overcome and ambitious goals achieved.”⁴

The Emergence of College Access Networks

The National College Access Network was founded in 1995, and it grew out of the informal national network of college access providers that had been growing since President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty. President Johnson's approval of the Economic Opportunity Act in August 1964 created Upward Bound, the first of what would come to be known as the TRIO programs. The Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 established another college access program known as Talent Search, and the reauthorization of HEA created TRIO's Student Support Services program. The fourth TRIO program, Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC), was created with the reauthorization of HEA in 1972, followed by the fifth TRIO program, the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program, in 1986 and the Upward Bound Math/Science Program in 1990.⁵

² Paul Vandeventer and Myrna Mandell, *Networks that Work* (2007), 9-10.

³ Ibid, p. 15.

⁴ www.luminafoundation.org/publications/Lessons-Spring_2010.pdf

⁵ Edward J. McElroy and Maria Armesto, “TRIO and Upward Bound: History, Programs, and Issues—Past, Present, and Future,” *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 67, No. 4 (Fall, 1998): 373-380.

Federally-funded college access programs expanded yet again with the reauthorization of the HEA in 1998, which created the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP). The objective of GEAR UP is to increase postsecondary access and completion by providing college readiness and access services to disadvantaged students through partnerships among school districts, colleges and other organizations. In 1999, the first year of the GEAR UP program, federal resources funded 164 partnerships across the country and served more than 100,000 students. An additional 73 new partnerships were funded in 2000 and served about 45,000 students.⁶

Many states, including Florida, followed the lead of the federal government by creating college access programs of their own. In 1983 the Florida Legislature created the College Reach-Out Program (CROP) “to motivate and prepare educationally disadvantaged, low-income students in grades 6 through 12 to pursue and successfully complete a postsecondary education.” By 2009, 10 state universities, 25 state colleges, and 4 independent postsecondary institutions administered CROP programs and provided services to about 7,600 students.

In addition to the federal and state programs, many higher education institutions, school districts, and community-based organizations created college access programs of their own. The proliferation of these programs across the country created an opportunity to improve services and strengthen the programs by creating networks, a challenge first seized at the national level by NCAN. A statewide coalition of providers was created in Illinois in 1998, when college and career readiness and access organizations joined together to form the College and Career Readiness Network. This group of non-profit agencies, higher education institutions, educational systems and individuals was reorganized and renamed the Illinois College Access Network (IllinoisCAN) in 2003.⁸ Combined with OCAN, which had been operating as a college access network since 1999, IllinoisCAN, NCAN, and other networks reflected and further promoted the growth of college access providers. There are currently 13 state college access networks operating in the United States. Southern California is included in Table 1 below because it covers a region that is as large as many other states.

Table 1
Statewide College Access Networks

State	Year Established	Link
Arizona College Access Coalition	2008	www.azcollegeaccess.org/default.aspx
Delaware College Access Network	2007	http://www.yesyoucande.com/DECAN/index.html
Illinois College Access Network	1998	www.illinoiscan.org
Indiana Pathways to College Network	2002-03	http://inpathways.net/
Iowa College Access Network	2006	http://www.icansucceed.org/
Kentucky College Access Network	2007	www.kentuckycan.org
Maine (Connect Aspirations to a Plan, MELMAC Education Foundation)	2003	www.melmacfoundation.org/
Michigan College Access Network	2009	http://www.micollegeaccess.org/
Minnesota	2006	www.mncollegeaccess.org/MCAN.html
Ohio College Access Network	1999	www.ohiocan.org
Oregon College Access Network	2007	www.oregoncan.org
SoCal College Access Network	2004	www.socalcollegeaccess.org/
Virginia College Access Network	2006	http://www.virginiacan.org/

⁶ Policy and Program Studies Service, National Evaluation of GEAR UP: A Summary of the First Two Years, (2003), <http://www.gearupdata.org/GearUpResearch/Reports/GEAR%20UP%202yr%20summary.pdf>.

⁷ <http://www.fldoe.org/eeop/crop.asp>

⁸ <http://www.illinoiscan.org/history.asp>

Engaging Florida's Future Talent Pool

Florida's dramatic population growth over the last 30 years has transformed the character of the students we teach in our public schools. In 1979, 69.2% of Florida's K-12 students were white; in 2009, only 44.3% of Florida's K-12 students were white. A sharp increase in Florida's Hispanic student population is the primary cause for the relative decline in Florida's white student population. As detailed in Table 2 below, Hispanic students accounted for only 6.9% of the student population in 1979, but in 2009, Hispanic students represented 26.3% of Florida's student population. The result is that in 1999, Black and Hispanic students accounted for 49.4% of Florida's student population. When combined with American Indian, Asian, and Multiracial students, a majority of our students come from *MINORITY* populations.

Table 2
Growth of Minority Student Populations in Florida's Public Schools, 1979-2009

	1979		2009		Change 1979-2009
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	
White	1,042,009	69.2%	1,167,302	44.3%	-24.9%
Black	348,001	23.1%	608,038	23.1%	0.0%
Hispanic	103,902	6.9%	692,458	26.3%	19.4%
Asian	10,446	0.7%	67,843	2.6%	1.9%
Am. Indian	1,857	0.1%	9,143	0.3%	0.2%
Multiracial	-	0.0%	89,598	3.4%	3.4%
Total	1,506,215		2,634,382		

Source: Growth of Minority Student Populations in Florida's Public Schools, 2009-10 (May 2010), Florida Department of Education. Retrieved on May June 2 2010, www.fldoes.org/eias/eiaspubs/

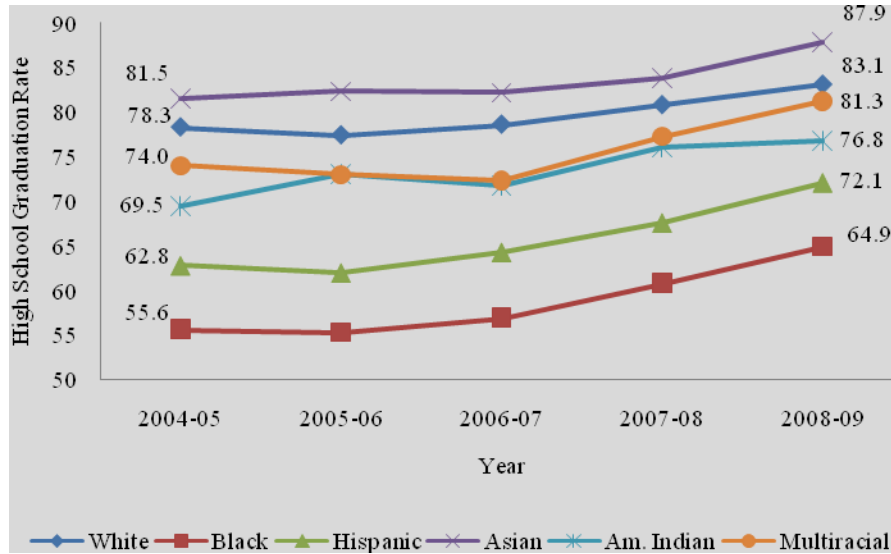
A related development of equal significance is the growth in Florida's limited income students. In the last ten years, the percentage of Florida's K-12 students eligible for free or reduce lunch has increased from 44% to 49.6%. Although the rates have increased across all racial and ethnic groups, the fact remains that there are significant disparities in the socio-economic status of our students, a critical indicator of academic success rates. As detailed in Table 3, 72.3% of Black students in 2008-2009 were eligible for free or reduced lunch, compared to only 29.8% of White students.

Table 3
K-12 Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch

	1999-2000	1999-2000	2008-2009	2008-2009	Change 1979-2009
White	26.3%	32.1%	29.8%	27.1%	3.5%
Black	69.6%	39.7%	72.3%	33.7%	2.7%
Hispanic	62.4%	25.5%	66.3%	33.5%	3.9%
Asian	32.0%	1.3%	32.6%	1.6%	0.6%
Am. Indian	42.4%	0.3%	45.5%	0.3%	3.0%
Multiracial	44.7%	1.1%	48.5%	3.8%	3.8%
Total	44.0%		49.6%		5.6%

The challenge facing Florida's education leaders and policy makers is the fact that the student populations growing at the *fastest* rates have *lower* rates of academic achievement. High school graduation rates, college-going rates, and college completion rates differ significantly by race and ethnicity.

Figure 1
Florida High School Graduation Rates by Race & Ethnicity



Source: Florida Public High School Graduation Rates, 2008-2009(Nov. 2009), Florida Department of Education. Retrieved on May June 2 2010, www.fldoes.org/eias/eiaspubs/

Unfortunately, not all of these high school graduates go on to enter and succeed in higher education at the same rates. Although Hispanic student enrollment in Florida's state colleges and universities has increased over the last decade, the college-going rate of Hispanic students remains unacceptably low. According to the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), "states need to close the gap in college enrollment between these students and their peers. Although the college-going rate of Hispanic 18- to 24-year-olds in the United States grew 2 percentage points to 27 percent from 2005 to 2007, Hispanic students lagged behind the rates for black students (33 percent) and white students (43 percent) in 2007. There are similar disparities in college completion rates. While Florida can proudly point to the highest completion rate at all 2-year colleges in the southeast, there are significant disparities between racial and ethnic groups. As reported by the SREB in 2009, the 3-year graduation rate of black students (21.4%) and Hispanic students (29.5%) at 2-year colleges in Florida lagged behind the completion rate for white students (36.4%).⁹ The time has come to engage Florida's future talent pool by establishing an infrastructure that maximizes resources and minimizes the duplication of services within the community designed to improve college-readiness, access, and success.

Florida's College Access Programs

College access programs in Florida and throughout the country generally promote a college-going culture by providing services to students and families designed to increase their understanding and awareness of how to prepare for, apply to, finance, and ultimately succeed in higher education. The programs typically offer services such as tutoring, mentoring, academic advice, financial literacy, visits to college campuses, and some offer scholarships. While the programs are generally similar, they can be categorized into four different types of organizations:

1. **Community Based Organizations (CBOs):** independent organizations, typically non-profits, whose primary mission is to provide college readiness, access, and success services.

⁹ SREB, *Fact Book, 2009*; see also ENLACE Florida, "Indicators of Student Success in Higher Education: A Look beyond the Good News Regarding Graduation Rates in Florida," *Policy Research Brief, III:4* (July 2009), go to www.enlaceflorida.org

2. **Higher Education Based Organizations (HBOs):** College readiness, access, and success providers based at a public university or state college, typically funded by the state or federal government, such as the College Reach-Out Program (CROP) and GEAR UP.
3. **School Based Organizations (SBOs):** College readiness and access providers based at a school or school district, including school counselors, teachers, and other resource persons who deliver services.
4. **Service Based Organizations (SeBOs):** College readiness, access, and success providers that are a part of clubs, religious organizations, civic organizations, and other groups for which educational work is an important but not necessarily a primary organizational purpose, such as the YMCA.

In Florida, most college access programs are administered by HBO's and SeBO's. According to the National College Access Network (NCAN) directory, there are only 59 college access programs in Florida, much less than California (239), Texas (138), and New York (110). If these numbers are accurate, Florida's program to student ratio of 1 to 69,256 is 41st in the country, far behind states with a college access network (1 to 28,392), led by Kentucky (1 to 6,772). However, many college access programs in Florida, including many administered by local education foundations, are not recognized by or members of NCAN. Our preliminary research indicates that there are at least 79 college access programs in Florida.

One should note that 61 of the 79 college access programs are administered by HBOs or SeBOs. In comparison with other states (see Table 4), relatively few community based organizations provide college access services. In Virginia and Ohio, CBO's are the *primary* providers of college access programs. Given that CBOs rely heavily on revenue streams from private sector sources, the development of this sector will contribute significantly to the sustainability of college access services to Florida's needy students and families.

Table 4
College Access Organizations in Florida, Ohio, and Virginia

State	Estimated Number of College Access Organizations	CBO's*	HBO's	SBO's	SeBO's
Florida	79	11	29	7	32
Ohio	70	39	25	6	0
Virginia	88	52	19	15	2

Sources: www.ncan.org, www.ocan.org, <http://www.schev.edu/reports/reportsindex.asp>. Note: Although Take Stock in Children operates in all 67 counties, it is listed here as 1 CBO.

Federal (Talent Search, Upward Bound, TRIO, GEAR UP) and state (CROP) programs represent the major providers in Florida. They offer valuable college access services to under-represented students around the state and will continue to do so. However, the success of the OCAN, VirginiaCAN and other networks has demonstrated that states do not have to rely exclusively on programs funded and administered by public revenues and institutions. When OCAN was founded in 1999, 11 organizations served 50,000 students. Today, 70 network members serve over 200,000 students. Moreover, data demonstrate that OCAN is accomplishing its mission to help "Ohio residents pursue postsecondary education by building and supporting (through hands-on technical assistance, professional development and grant opportunities) local college access programs throughout the state."

- High schools with OCAN member programs have an average 3.8% increase in college-going rates among their graduates.
- High schools with OCAN member programs have an average 4.5% higher graduation rate.
- 37 college access programs administered by CBO's in Ohio serve nearly 200 of Ohio's school districts and schools in 51 counties touching nearly 200,000 students annually.
- OCAN and its members helped secure \$90 million for students in the form of financial aid. (For more information go to www.ohiocan.org)

In Virginia, the results are equally impressive. A study completed by VirginiaCAN with funding from a federal College Access Challenge Grant determined that Virginia has 160 "college access agencies and sub-providers" which offer direct services to students in pursuit of a higher education. Since the 2006 inauguration of VirginiaCAN, high school graduation rates in Virginia have

shown a steady improvement: “Graduation rates improved for each of Virginia’s regions in 2008-2009 compared to 2007-2008 with the statewide average increasing from 82.2 percent to 83.2 percent.”

Policy Implications

Although Florida already has strong and successful college readiness, access, and success programs, they generally operate in isolation, with little to no coordination of services or sharing of best practices. By pooling their resources and expertise, these college access programs, supported by the states, institutions, and school districts, will scale up their services and become more effective providers of services to limited-income, first generation students. Florida must continue to confront the challenge of boosting the academic performance of these students or risk falling behind the nation and the world, where educational attainment rates are rising. Neither Florida nor the nation will reach the BIG GOAL of raising educational attainment rates to 60% by 2025 without scaling up and intensifying efforts to boost the academic achievement of our future talent pool—limited income, first generation, and under-represented students.

The establishment of FloridaCAN! will require a collaborative effort of individuals and organizations determined to serve the growing number of Florida’s limited-income students, often racial or ethnic minorities, who have traditionally registered the lowest high school graduation, college-going, and college completion rates. FloridaCAN will not single-handedly improve college readiness and expand college access for under-represented students, but it will supplement and work in concert with programs and policies administered by the state, higher education institutions, school districts by empowering community leaders and supporting community-based organizations serving our students before and after-school. College access networks have been proliferating throughout the country, showing that this best practice adds value to educational reform efforts. The goal, as with all other networks in other fields, is to build enough momentum through collaborative action to produce systemic change.

A number of organizations, operating independently in Florida, offer the standard menu of services delivered by members of a traditional college access network. FloridaCAN! will support, coordinate, and build the capacity of the organizations who provide college-readiness, access, and success services to limited income, first generation students. The services FloridaCAN will provide, some of which are already offered by ENLACE Florida, are representative of college access networks throughout the country. They include, but are not limited to:

- Technical assistance and support to community-based providers;
- Non-partisan research on college-readiness, access, and success issues;
- Annual State Report on college-readiness, access, and success;
- Re-grants to local providers for planning, startup, expansion and sustainability;
- Bi-monthly policy research briefs and occasional policy alerts;
- Delivery of statewide college-readiness programs, especially but not limited to KnowHow2Go Florida and College Goal Sunday Florida;
- Delivery of statewide financial literacy programs to students and families;
- Organization of an annual statewide conference for providers, educators, and scholars;
- Organization of an annual statewide Education Policy Conference for college students;
- Student-led advocacy for college readiness, access, and success.

Given Florida’s leadership in the field of educational reform, it is time to create and emulate a best practice in the field of college readiness and access by creating a true college access network. FloridaCAN, by forging collaborative relationships among organizations and individuals around the state, will accelerate and strengthen efforts to:

- Increase the quality and quantity of college readiness, access, and success services provided by community-based organizations
- Increase the number and percentage of limited-income, first generation students aspiring to a post-secondary degree
- Increase the number and percentage of limited-income, first generation students who are prepared academically, financially,

¹⁰ <http://vaperforms.virginia.gov/indicators/education/hsGraduation.php>

and socially to succeed in post-secondary education

- Increase the number of students filing a FAFSA
- Increase the number of limited income, first generation students applying for admission to higher education
- Increase the number of students enrolling in post-secondary institutions
- Increase graduation and retention rates in higher education

ENLACE Florida, having secured funding from Lumina Foundation for Education to develop FloridaCAN and solicited additional support to scale-up its efforts, invites all organizations and individuals who offer college access services and share our mission to contact us. We are forging a *coalition of the willing* to engage our future talent pool as equal partners. Please contact Braulio Colón, Associate Director, ENLACE Florida, at bcolon@enlace.usf.edu.

ENLACE FLORIDA is a statewide network promoting college readiness, access, and success for Latinos, African-Americans, and other underrepresented students in Florida through non-partisan research, communication, advocacy, and support. The views expressed in this Policy Brief were developed independently and do not reflect the opinions of the universities with which the Leadership Team and staff are affiliated. For more information, visit: www.enlaceflorida.org



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