

## Strengthening the High School → College Connection

# Smart Scholars Early College High School Program

The Smart Scholars Early College High School Program is a newly implemented program designed to help students who are at-risk educationally earn 20 or more college credits by the time they graduate from high school and benefit from an academic and support structure to help them achieve this goal.

A four-year, \$6 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation supports 2,570 minority or low-income students in the first cohort of 11 Smart Scholars Early College High Schools. ***The Gates grant was awarded with the understanding that the State would provide matching funding for a second cohort of early college high schools.*** With the second cohort we expect to serve at least 2,600 additional students.

The New York State Board of Regents is requesting \$6 million in State funds. While the State commitment for the Smart Scholars program is slated to be \$6 million, these funds will be spent over a 4 year period. **There is only a \$2 million cash expenditure included in the 2010-2011 State fiscal year for Smart Scholars.**

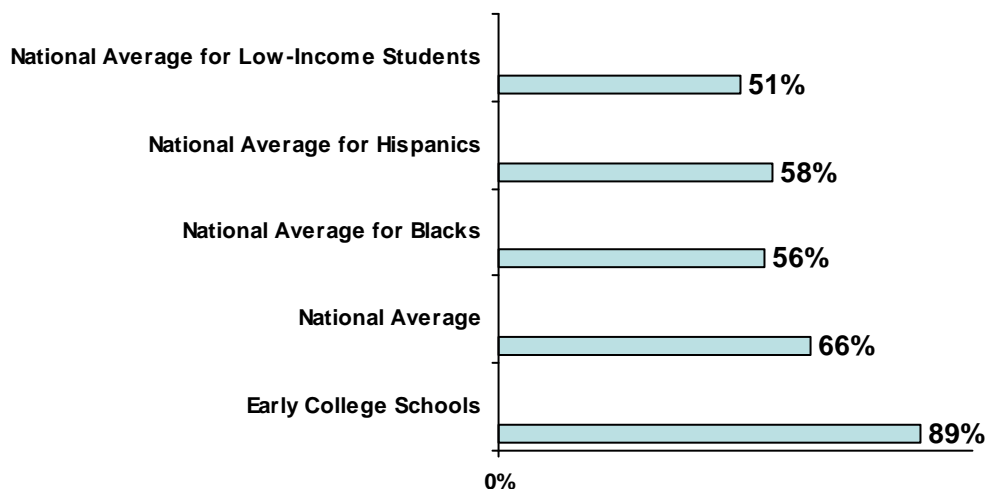
### Evidence of Success

The majority of students attending early college high schools are from disadvantaged backgrounds. A study of the Class of 2008 graduates from the network of schools within the national Early College High School Initiative (ECHSI) reported impressive results:

- The four-year high school graduation rate for this cohort was approximately 92%.
- 40% of the graduates earned more than one year of college credits while in early college, while 83% earned at least some college credits.
- 89% went on to some form of postsecondary education that fall.
- 60% of the graduates who enrolled in postsecondary education after graduating in 2008 attended four-year institutions, 36% attended two-year colleges, and 4% enrolled in certificate or other programs of fewer than two years.

As the following table demonstrates, the ECHSI students' college enrollment rate exceeded the national averages for most subgroups:

### Percentage of Graduates Enrolling in College Immediately After High School



SOURCE: Student Information System, Jobs for the Future, National Center for Education Statistics

NOTE: "Low-income students" refers to the bottom 20 percent of all family incomes. Data for early college schools are for 2008; national averages are based on 2006 data, the most recent year available.

## Benefits of the Smart Scholars ECHS Program

Critical components of ECHS programs are the academic and social support networks that the partnerships provide. The Smart Scholars ECHS will support the following objectives recommended by the New York State Commission on Higher Education (2008):

- Expanding the knowledge and use of best practices for preparing college-ready students, including students from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Reducing the need for remedial coursework at the college level
- Increasing high school graduation rates for disadvantaged students
- Increasing postsecondary education participation rates for disadvantaged students
- Reducing college costs for disadvantaged students
- Strengthening and expanding transfer of credit and articulation policies throughout the SUNY and CUNY systems, and potentially extending to independent colleges in the New York State

## Benefits for Society and Our State Economy

By raising the high school completion and postsecondary school enrollment rates of minority and low-income students, ECHSs are benefiting both the State and the broader society. In his book, *Raising the Grade: How Secondary School Reform Can Save Our Youth and the Nation* (Jossey-Bass, 2008), former West Virginia governor and CEO of the Alliance for Excellent Education, Bob Wise provides national and state data on the potential economic benefits of high school reform. One benefit that ECHSs support is the reduction of students taking remedial courses in college. Wise identifies the following related gains:

- **Reduction in the cost of providing remediation at community colleges and increased income from students earning bachelor's degrees**
  - By increasing the number of students who graduate high school prepared for college - and thus not requiring remediation - New York could realize an annual savings of **\$98,614,826** in college remediation costs.
  - Research shows that the need for remedial reading is the leading predictor that a student will drop out of college. If the students who drop out of college because they needed remedial reading were able to continue and earn a bachelor's degree at the same pace as nonremedial students, New York would experience an increase in aggregate annual earnings in the amount of **\$93,473,405**.

## Conclusion

New York has the opportunity to increase high school and college graduation rates for thousands of minority and low-income students by investing in the Smart Scholars Early College High School Program. Approval of the Board of Regents funding request in the 2010-2011 State budget will be a significant step toward realizing these objectives.

**The Regents support the Executive's budget to match Gates Foundation funding to establish new Smart Scholars Early College High Schools and expand programs to keep kids in high school with the promise of a free college education**

