

OFFICE OF EARLY COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2030



Overview of Goals,
Strategies & Actions

EARLY COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

The Massachusetts Early College Initiative is rooted in a deep commitment to students, particularly those who are underrepresented in higher education. Early College programming fosters a strong belief in students' abilities and their futures and empowers students by equipping them with the academic and executive skills needed for success in postsecondary education, a clear understanding of connecting college coursework with career goals, and the confidence to thrive in higher education.

2025

The Strategic Vision working group committed to presenting a completed five-year strategic plan and a ten-year vision that focuses on the growth and development of the Early College initiative across the Commonwealth by June 2025.

By 2030, The Office of Early College in partnership with the Department of Higher Education will work in tandem to fully develop and implement the following goals:

- **Goal 1:** Increase Early College enrollment to 22,000 high school students by October 2030, with at least 70% of student participants statewide from groups underrepresented* in higher education.
- **Goal 2:** Promote high quality programs that achieve the outcomes outlined in the Designation criteria, including graduating the majority of students with a minimum of 12 college credits that are transferable to a Massachusetts public college or university.
- **Goal 3:** At least 65% of all students in each program matriculate immediately to college, and at least 75% of these students persist to a second year.

2030

2035

By 2035, Early College will significantly reduce disparities between student groups in college attainment and economic mobility in the Commonwealth, by expanding higher education degree attainment, and graduating students with the information, skills and resources to succeed in post-secondary education and beyond. To enable this, the initiative will increase the availability, quality and intensity of Early College across the state, removing financial and institutional barriers to success.

* FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS GOAL AND FOR EARLY COLLEGE DATA COLLECTION PURPOSES, UNDERREPRESENTED STUDENTS REFERS TO GROUPS OF STUDENTS CURRENTLY UNDERREPRESENTED IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND INCLUDES BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO: STUDENTS FROM LOW-INCOME BACKGROUNDS, BLACK AND/OR HISPANIC STUDENTS, ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS, AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES.

GOAL 1

ENROLLMENT & SCALE



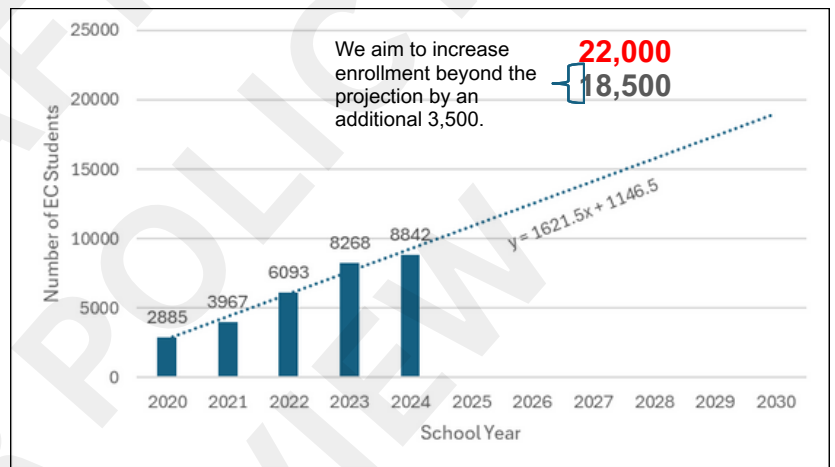
Increase Early College enrollment to 22,000 high school students by October 2030, with at least 70% of student participants statewide from groups underrepresented* in higher education.

Rationale

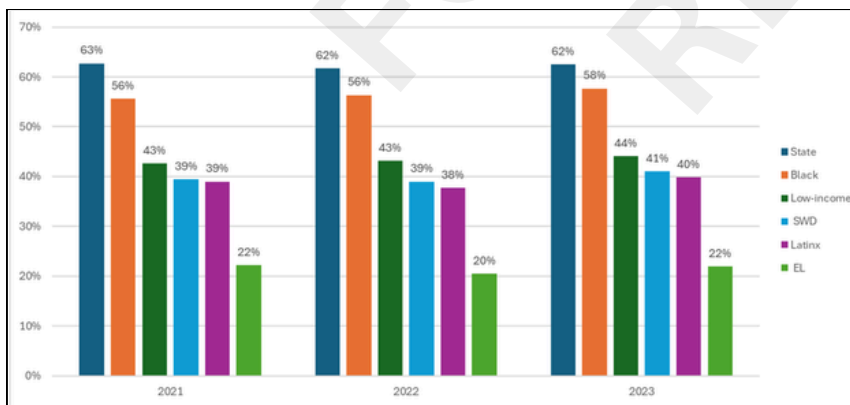
Keeping business as usual, Early College is projected to enroll 18,500 students by October 2030.

With enhanced efforts we can increase enrollment by an additional 3,500 or more.

Projected Early College Enrollment



Immediate College Enrollment Rates of High School Graduates in MA



Including 70% underrepresented students in Early College renders Designated programs more reflective of their school demographics on average and closes the gap in college enrollment by a greater margin than lower percentages, due to a larger rate of change.

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GOAL 1 STRATEGIES: YEAR 0

2024-2025

PROGRESS & NEXT STEPS

A. PROGRAM EXPANSION

Highlight: Identified 30+ high priority schools for Early College programs with over 50% underrepresented students and below average state college going rates.

STRATEGY	PROGRESS
A01. Evaluate current program landscape to identify areas for strategic growth, expanding access for underrepresented students.	COMPLETE
A02. Establish benchmarks and strategies to expand programming to reduce equity disparities.	PARTIALLY COMPLETE
A02. Collaborate across agencies to support IHEs to increase capacity.	IN PROGRESS
A03. Implement targeted statewide recruitment strategies, including quarterly recruitment events and specific strategies to reach target areas.	COMPLETE
A04. Conduct outreach prioritizing schools with low college matriculation rates and without an Early College program	PARTIALLY COMPLETE

Next Steps: Develop and implement full, strategic Recruitment and Expansion Plan. Continue to support IHE capacity in collaboration with DHS.

B. ALIGNED POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Highlight: Partially completed B1 from previous Year 1 plan - Develop a new streamlined plan for Designation that includes more support and plan for programs once they achieve five years of Designation.

STRATEGY	PROGRESS
B01. Refine proposed Goal 1 and related strategies and actions to align with updated Designation Criteria.	COMPLETE
B02. Refine guidance documents and tools for programs and reviewers.	IN PROGRESS

Next Steps:

1. Develop detailed annual action plans
2. Finalize program resources

GOAL 1 STRATEGIES: Y1-Y5

2025-2030

YEAR

A. PROGRAM EXPANSION

**2025-
2026**
YEAR 1

- A1. Implement statewide Recruitment & Expansion Plan with targeted outreach to close disparities in access.
- A2. Evaluate Recruitment & Expansion Plan efficacy and refine approach to reach expansion goals.
- A3. Set annual strategic expansion goals based on Recruitment & Expansion Plan and annual program data to support equitable access across high school locations and types.
- A4. Assess IHE capacity and establish effective supports to continue to enable program growth.
- A5. Implement high impact strategies to support IHE capacity to expand.
- A6. Provide technical assistance and application support to targeted outreach schools.

**2026-
2029**
YEARS
2-4

- A1 & A2. Continue implementation, assessment and refinement of statewide Recruitment & Expansion Plan.
- A5. Continue support for IHE capacity.
- A6. Continue technical assistance to schools.
- A7. Review expansion data and adjust annual goals and strategies to reach 5-year outcomes.

**2029-
2030**
YEAR 5

- Continue all Year 2-4 strategies and add
- A8. Evaluate results and projected 10-year goals to establish the next phase of enrollment and recruitment targets.

GOAL 1 STRATEGIES: Y1-Y5

2025-2030

YEAR

B. ALIGNED POLICIES & PROCEDURES

**2025-
2026**
YEAR 1

B1. Develop a new streamlined plan for Designation that includes more support and plan for programs once they achieve five years of Designation.

B2. Develop guidance for updated Designation process, criteria and evaluation.

B3. Communicate and support implementation of refined criteria for new programs and existing programs transitioning to new criteria.

B4. Research effectiveness of varied models to determine whether any additional criteria is necessary to best serve students.

B5. Review policies, procedures and program data to refine communication and identify and support adjustments to reach 5-year goals.

B6. Develop new Designation plan materials and resources for programs and reviewers.

**2026-
2029**
YEARS
2-4

B3-B6: Continue development and refinement of new Designation materials and resources for program implementation and reviewer tools.

**2029-
2030**
YEAR 5

B7. Assess efficacy of all models in reaching program enrollment goals.

B8. Determine areas for refinement to reach 10-yr vision

GOAL 2

PROGRAM QUALITY

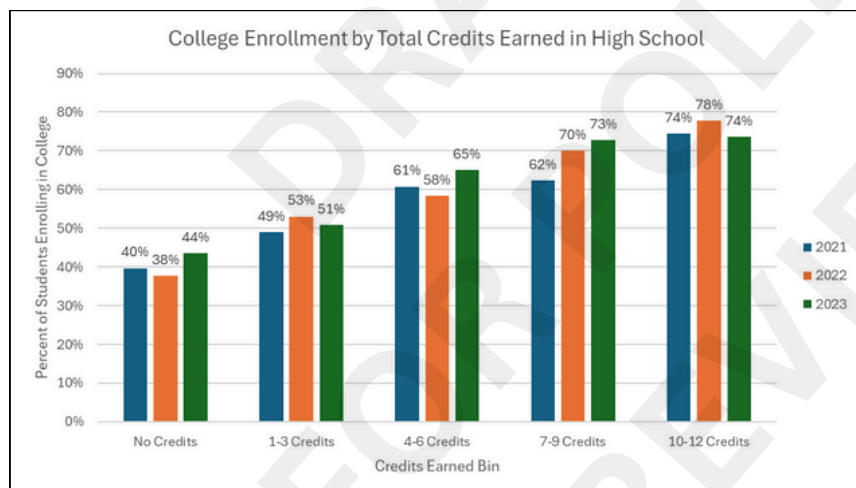


Promote high quality programs that achieve the outcomes outlined in the Designation criteria, including graduating the majority of students with a minimum of 12 college credits that are transferable to a Massachusetts public college or university.

Rationale

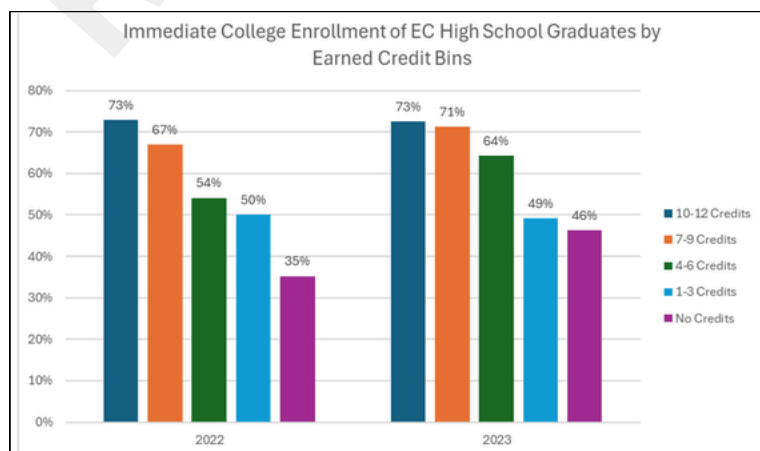
12 credits is a critical threshold for multiple reasons:

- It is a college semester's worth of credits for a full-time student, 10% of a bachelor's degree, and 20% of an associate's degree
- It is the credit threshold at which Early College participants surpass the state average for immediate college enrollment



National research conducted by Julie Edmunds et. al., indicates that when Early College programs provide both access to dual credits and high quality supports, it makes a profound difference in students' post-secondary outcomes.¹

In addition to the impact of college credit completion during high school on college enrollment, initial regression analysis of Early College data for the class of 2023 supports findings from national research which indicates that the completion of the FAFSA is a significant predictor of college enrollment.



¹Edmunds, J., Unlu, F., Furey, J., Glennie, E., & Arshavsky, N. (2020). What Happens When You Combine High School and College? The Impact of the Early College Model on Postsecondary Performance and Completion. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 42(2), 257-278. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epub/10.3102/0162373720912249>

GOAL 2 STRATEGIES: YEAR 0

2024-2025

PROGRESS & NEXT STEPS

A. QUALITY ASSURANCE & SUPPORT

STRATEGY	PROGRESS
A01. Refine goals and 5-yr outcomes aligned to updated Designation criteria for Guided Academic Programs, Enhanced Student Supports and Connection to Career	COMPLETE
A02. Update evaluation framework and built out proposed evaluation benchmarks.	COMPLETE
A03. Develop and communicate an implementation plan for the evaluation framework and process.	IN PROGRESS
A04. Streamline reporting and progress monitoring expectations with aligned supports, including annual expectations and periodic reporting.	MOVE TO Y1
A05. Draft refined and aligned guidance to support proposed updated criteria.	IN PROGRESS

Next Steps: Streamline reporting tools to support the updated evaluation process

B. ALIGNED POLICIES & PROCEDURES

STRATEGY	PROGRESS
B1. Finalize and communicate updated Designation criteria and related policies	IN PROGRESS
B2. Refine application process and applicant review process	IN PROGRESS
B3. Align procedures related to Designation and the evaluation framework, including Full Designation, to refined criteria	MODIFIED - IN PROGRESS
B4. Update third year site visit and progress report rubrics to align with benchmarks for success	MOVE TO Y1
B5. Finalize specific processes for specialized models or pre-designations.	MODIFIED - MOVE TO Y1

Next Steps:

1. Develop detailed guidance and program communication plans for updated criteria and policies.

GOAL 2 STRATEGIES: Y1-Y5

2025-2030

YEAR

A. QUALITY ASSURANCE & SUPPORT

**2025-
2026**

YEAR 1

A1. Develop targeted program supports based on needs identified through progress monitoring.

A2. Identify the areas of support and technical assistance best provided by the DESE OEC team and those best provided by partners.

A3. Evaluate targeted interventions, technical assistance and other supports to make adjustments that enable more programs to achieve their goals.

A4. Support implementation of individual program evaluation and redesignation plans.

A5. Provide technical assistance to Designated programs to set goals to establish/improve student success in programs and meet the criteria for program quality, evaluation for each stage of Designation.

A6. Using the updated related Designation criteria, build out guidance to support partners and providers in delivering robust academic programming and high-quality supports

A7. Support programs in setting annual statewide completion goals for key college and career readiness indicators (e.g., MyCAP, MassCore, FAFSA completion, and college applications)

**2026-
2029**

YEARS
2-4

A1-A7 Continued

A8. Implement new evaluation plan including ongoing progress monitoring and aligned supports based on program Designation timelines.

**2029-
2030**

YEAR 5

A8 Continued

A9. Evaluate results and the efficacy of guidance and supports, as well as the current context to establish plans to reach the 10-year vision.

GOAL 2 STRATEGIES: Y1-Y5

2025-2030

YEAR

B. ALIGNED POLICIES & PROCEDURES

**2025-
2026**
YEAR 1

B1. Provide guidance on updated Designation criteria and related policies

B2. Refine application and applicant review processes (Program Design Plans) for new applicants and current designees.

B3. Align procedures related to Designation and the evaluation framework, including Full Designation to refined criteria.

B4. Update reviewer toolkit to align with benchmarks for success

**2026-
2029**
YEARS
2-4

B5. Implement procedures related to Designation and the evaluation framework, including Full Designation to refined criteria.

B6. Assess progress and refine guidance and procedures to enable increased success for EC participants.

**2029-
2030**
YEAR 5

B7. Evaluate outcomes to inform 10-year vision and plan.

GOAL 3

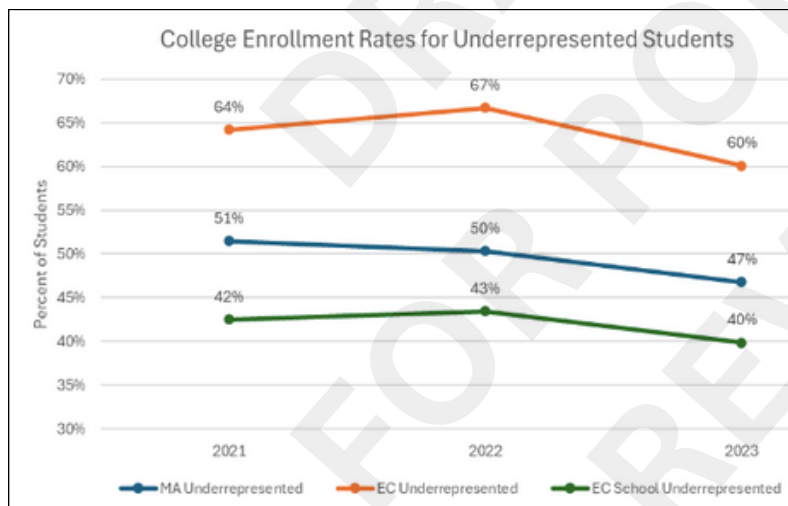
COLLEGE MATRICULATION & PERSISTENCE



At least 65% of all students in each program matriculate immediately to college, and at least 75% of these students persist to a second year.

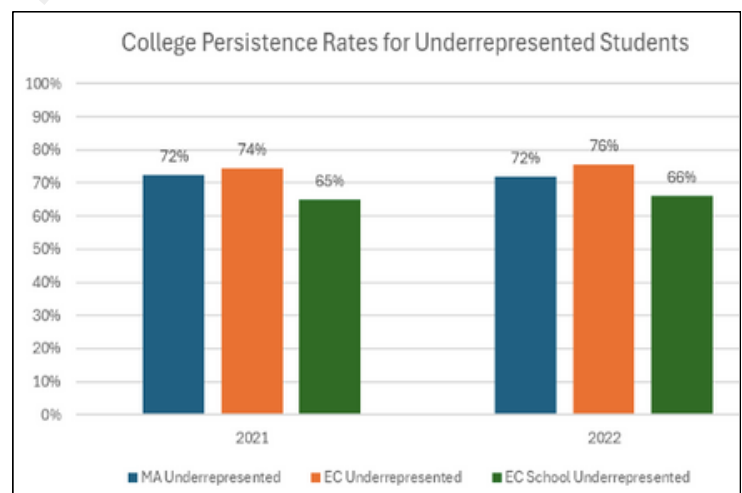
Rationale

At 65% college enrollment and 75% college persistence rates for all students, respectively, Early College would maintain its association with a positive difference in outcomes for participating students from historically underrepresented backgrounds, relative to similar students who do not participate.



As existing programs expand and new programs are designated, to remain 70% underrepresented students, Early College will largely have to draw from existing EC schools' non-participating underrepresented students as well as underrepresented students at schools not yet offering Early College.

Of those target populations, Early College will specifically focus on students who are enrolling in college at an average of 22 and 14 percentage points less than current Early College participating underrepresented students, respectively.



GOAL 3 STRATEGIES: YEAR 0

2024-2025

PROGRESS & NEXT STEPS

A. QUALITY ASSURANCE & SUPPORT

STRATEGY	PROGRESS
A1. Review and refine updated and clear Designation criteria supporting immediate college matriculation and persistence, and degree attainment for EC graduates.	COMPLETE
A2. In partnership with MA EC technical assistance provider, ensure clear Designation guidance and support for high quality guided academic programs that maximize transferable course offerings and provide a foundation for student success in college.	MOVE TO YEAR 1
Next Steps: Credit analysis	

B. ALIGNED POLICIES & PROCEDURES

STRATEGY	PROGRESS
B01. Work to refine proposed goal and desired 5-year outcomes related to matriculation and persistence.	IN PROGRESS

Next Steps:

1. Align EC transfer guidance to statewide policies impacting transfer.
2. Align technical assistance and develop models to support high quality program development.

GOAL 3 STRATEGIES: Y1-Y5

2025-2030

YEAR

A. QUALITY ASSURANCE & SUPPORT

**2025-
2026**
YEAR 1

A1. In partnership with MA EC technical assistance providers, ensure clear Designation guidance and support for high quality guided academic programs that maximize transferable course offerings and provide a foundation for student success in college.

A2. Communicate expectations and issue guidance on best practices for transition plans for Early College participants preparing to enter college.

A3. Support programs in setting annual statewide completion goals for key college and career readiness indicators.

A4. Provide technical assistance, guidance, resources, and models of success to promote college persistence.

A5. Evaluate technical assistance, resources and supports to programs for their efficacy in improving college outcomes.

A6. Evaluate program and institutional policies and practices regarding transfer and persistence success.

A7. Support programs in meeting college and career readiness goals

**2026-
2029**
YEARS
2-4

A2-A7: Continued

**2029-
2030**
YEAR 5

A8. Evaluate program outcomes and related supports to refine technical assistance and support to reach the 10-year vision.

GOAL 3 STRATEGIES: Y1-Y5

2025-2030

YEAR

B. ALIGNED POLICY & PROCEDURES

**2025-
2026**

YEAR 1

B1. Finalize benchmarks for specific programs and across all programs.

B2. Align on and clarify state level policies and practices for transfer pathways and agreements.

**2026-
2029**

YEARS
2-4

B3. Support programs in using disaggregated data analysis to address equity gaps in outcomes.

B4. Assess progress of transfer policy alignment and pathway agreements, bringing together DESE, DHE and program leaders as needed to improve transfer rates for students.

**2029-
2030**

YEAR 5

B5. Evaluate outcomes related to this strategic goal to inform the 10-year vision and plan.

STRATEGIES FOR ALL GOALS: YEAR 0

2024-2025

PROGRESS & NEXT STEPS

A. DATA & TRACKING

STRATEGY	PROGRESS
A00. Through weekly data convenings, interagency team evaluates data resources and practices to support development of EC policy and build out EC data dashboards	COMPLETE
A01. Hire a data analysis team for Early College who leads the work on developing a new iteration of EC data dashboards as well as produce a dashboard guidance document.	COMPLETE
A02. Create mechanisms by which programs could preview their newly inputted data in next iteration of dashboards and provide feedback.	COMPLETE
A03. Meet with programs to trouble shoot any data discrepancies and questions they identified in preview and provide program guidance on data procedures and expectations.	IN PROGRESS
A04. Through interagency work, establish and document consistent internal data use to inform direction and analyze program quality and student success	IN PROGRESS

Next Steps: Credit data analysis and transfer systems and support plans.

STRATEGIES FOR ALL GOALS: YEAR 0

2024-2025

PROGRESS & NEXT STEPS

B. FISCAL ALIGNMENT & SUPPORT

STRATEGY	PROGRESS
B01. Establish a bi-weekly fiscal policy working group that explores potential long-term and short-term fiscal models	COMPLETE
B02. Gather stakeholder input on funding priorities and needs	COMPLETE
B03: Finalize FY26 funding model	COMPLETE
B04. Identify areas for improved funding administration	COMPLETE
B05. Through IHE capacity survey and follow up, identify concerns with inadequate funding for college reimbursements	IN PROGRESS
B05. Transition to new grants management system at DESE which better documents fiscal requirements and responsibilities	COMPLETE

Next Steps: Align funding model to new Designation and Evaluation plans including potential funding incentives tied to outcomes

C. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATION

STRATEGY	PROGRESS
C00. Implement a variety of stakeholder engagement strategies to gather input and share progress	COMPLETE
C01. Develop and implement a proposed communication plan for policy updates and the 5-year strategic plan	IN PROGRESS

Next Steps:
1. Engage Evaluation Task Force to review proposed Evaluation plan

STRATEGIES FOR ALL GOALS: Y1-Y5

2025-2030

YEAR

A. DATA & TRACKING

**2025-
2030**
YEARS
1-5

A1. Maintain statewide data dashboards

A2. Implement guidance and support programs with consistent data collection, analysis, and reporting to evaluate program success across goals, providing trainings and technical assistance as needed

A3. Evaluate data to identify equity disparities and support programs in setting specific goals to enhance outcomes for underrepresented groups

B. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATION

B1. Evaluate efficacy of stakeholder engagement and refine approach to continue to partner with practitioners and leaders to inform and refine strategic plan implementation.

B2. Evaluate efficacy of communication plan and refine each year to improve timeliness, clarity and consistency of information shared out.