

Testimony for the Hearing on Higher Education

Submitted by Clara Haskell Botstein, Associate Vice President for Early Colleges, Bard College

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Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Clara Haskell Botstein, and I am the Associate Vice President of the Bard Early College network. As you may know, Bard College, a nonprofit, independent liberal arts college with its main campus in Annandale, NY, runs a network of public early colleges that offer students the opportunity to earn up to two years of credit-bearing, intellectually ambitious college study during the four years of high school, tuition-free. Since 2001, in partnership with public school systems, Bard College has improved college access and readiness through its early college campuses in New York City, NY; New Orleans, LA; Newark, NJ; Cleveland, OH; and Baltimore, MD.

Bard College's flagship early college high schools are Bard High School Early College (BHSEC) Manhattan, founded in 2001, and Bard High School Early College (BHSEC) Queens, founded in 2008. Together, these two flagship schools serve approximately 1,135 students from across New York City. At these campuses, which are both accredited branch campuses of Bard College and New York City public high schools, college preparatory and college courses take place within the same public school building and are taught by faculty who hold terminal degrees in their fields and have college teaching experience, as well as a commitment to teaching younger scholars. Upon successful completion of course requirements, students can earn a state high school diploma and a Bard College Associate in Arts (A.A.) degree, worth 60 transferable credits.

The Bard Early College model has proven extraordinarily effective in positioning young people of all backgrounds to succeed in higher education. At the Bard High School Early Colleges in New York City, 93% of students earn an Associate's degree alongside a high school diploma (Class of 2015), and 96% of graduates continue their education at a four-year college or university, 76% at Institutions of Higher Education in New York State, including CUNY and SUNY campuses, private liberal arts colleges, and Ivy League schools. To date, well over 90% of BHSEC graduates (97% in the Class of 2008) have completed their baccalaureate degrees, a significantly higher percentage than the national average of 59%. Moreover, a recent independent, quasi-experimental study conducted by Metis Associates on BHSEC Manhattan and BHSEC Queens found that BHSEC students were significantly more likely to finish bachelor's degrees than comparison students who attended traditional public high schools in New York City (31% difference) and comparison students who attended New York City's specialized and selective public high schools (13% difference).

Bard College is proud of its early colleges and the success of our students. Our goal is to promote public policies that support the sustainability and growth of evidence-based early college models and allow increased access for students to high-quality early college opportunities. We believe early college is one of the most ambitious and successful education reforms for adolescents in New York State and across the country, and that by supporting and scaling early college high schools, we can dramatically increase access to postsecondary education, affordability of college degrees, and degree completion for

students from all backgrounds, particularly those who are low-income and underrepresented in higher education.

Funding and Policy Challenge

While early college high schools leverage K-12 per pupil funding to offer students a college education, there are costs associated with offering a college program of study at no cost to students above the costs of traditional high school. These costs can include the college tuition (waived for students), professor salaries, student support services, college textbooks and other materials, transportation, and program coordination and implementation costs.

While early college high schools have a strong return on investment and bring significant savings to students, their families, and the state from higher and faster college completion rates and reduced spending on remedial education, as documented by numerous studies, they require upfront investment. Investing in early college high schools will help more New York students, particularly from low-income and/or underrepresented backgrounds, enroll in and complete college at a much lower cost.

Early College High Schools in the FY 2016-17 State Budget

We applaud Governor Cuomo's FY 2016-17 Executive Budget proposal to include \$3 million in additional funding for early college high schools, with an emphasis on early colleges that allow students the opportunity to earn an associate's degree. This proposed funding, which would be allocated through a competitive grant program run by the New York State Education Department (NYSED), would support early college high schools in part based on the number of college credits earned annually by students; the funding would also prioritize regional diversity and schools in academically challenged districts. This funding will be critical for supporting and scaling evidence-based early colleges models across New York State.

Furthermore, we support the continuation of funding for the Smart Scholars Early College High School Program that currently supports 24 early college high school programs across New York State. These Smart Scholars Early College High Schools allow participating students the opportunity to simultaneously complete requirements toward a high school diploma and earn a minimum of 24 and up to 60 transferable college credits at no cost to the students. Between 2010 and 2015, over 2,400 Smart Scholars Early College High School students graduated with over 45,650 college credits. Last school year, 88.5% of 1,055 Smart Scholars graduated high school on time, 81% graduated with college credit, earning an average of 19 college credits, and 87% of graduates planned to continue their college education.

Smart Scholars funding was first allocated to New York's early college high schools in 2013 and has been critical for their sustainability and success. Since 2013, however, the number of early college high schools and the size of the schools have grown without a proportionate increase in funding. In this year's Executive Budget, Governor Cuomo proposed \$1.465 million for Smart Scholars Early College High Schools – a decrease from \$2 million in last year's budget.

NYSED and the Board of Regents have asked for an increase in Early College High School funding to a total of \$7 million for FY 2016-17 to support actual program costs, expand

seats in existing programs, and allow more qualifying early college high schools across New York State to access funding. We urge the Senate and Assembly to include \$7 million for early college high schools in the final FY 2016-17 State Budget.

Conclusion

To ensure that New York can remain a leader in early college education and can support and expand its successful network of early college high schools so more New York students can access, afford, and complete postsecondary education and be on a clear path to college and career success, we urge the Senate and Assembly to build on the Governor's Executive Budget and include a total of \$7 million for early college high schools in the final FY 2016-17 State Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony, and do not hesitate to reach out to me (at cbotstein@bard.edu or 914-388-0699) if you have any questions or if you would like additional information.

Sincerely,

Clara Haskell Botstein

Associate Vice President for Early Colleges
Bard College