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# THE IMPACTS OF EARLY COLLEGE: FINDINGS FROM THE LATEST RESEARCH

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# EARLY COLLEGE RESEARCH CENTER UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO

Mission: Conduct, synthesize, and disseminate research on early college and related topics such as dual enrollment, postsecondary pathways, and the transition to and success in postsecondary education.

Expertise: 20+ years of research including:

- 20-year experimental study of the impact of early colleges in NC
- Evaluation of efforts to implement early college strategies in comprehensive high schools in: Colorado, Connecticut, Indiana, Michigan, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, and Texas
- Multiple studies of implementation, long-term impact, and cost of dual enrollment



**EARLY COLLEGE  
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# WHO IS IN THE ROOM?

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Raise your hands if  
you are...



## PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

Early colleges have positive impacts on high school and postsecondary outcomes and cumulative wages; no perceived impact on annual earnings.



Ways to increase the impact of the early college and to think about their unique role/value-add

Serving  
students  
who need  
it

Keeping  
students in  
the early  
college

Supporting  
the whole  
student

Providing  
pathway  
options

# EARLY COLLEGE IMPACTS ON HIGH SCHOOL, POSTSECONDARY AND WORKFORCE OUTCOMES

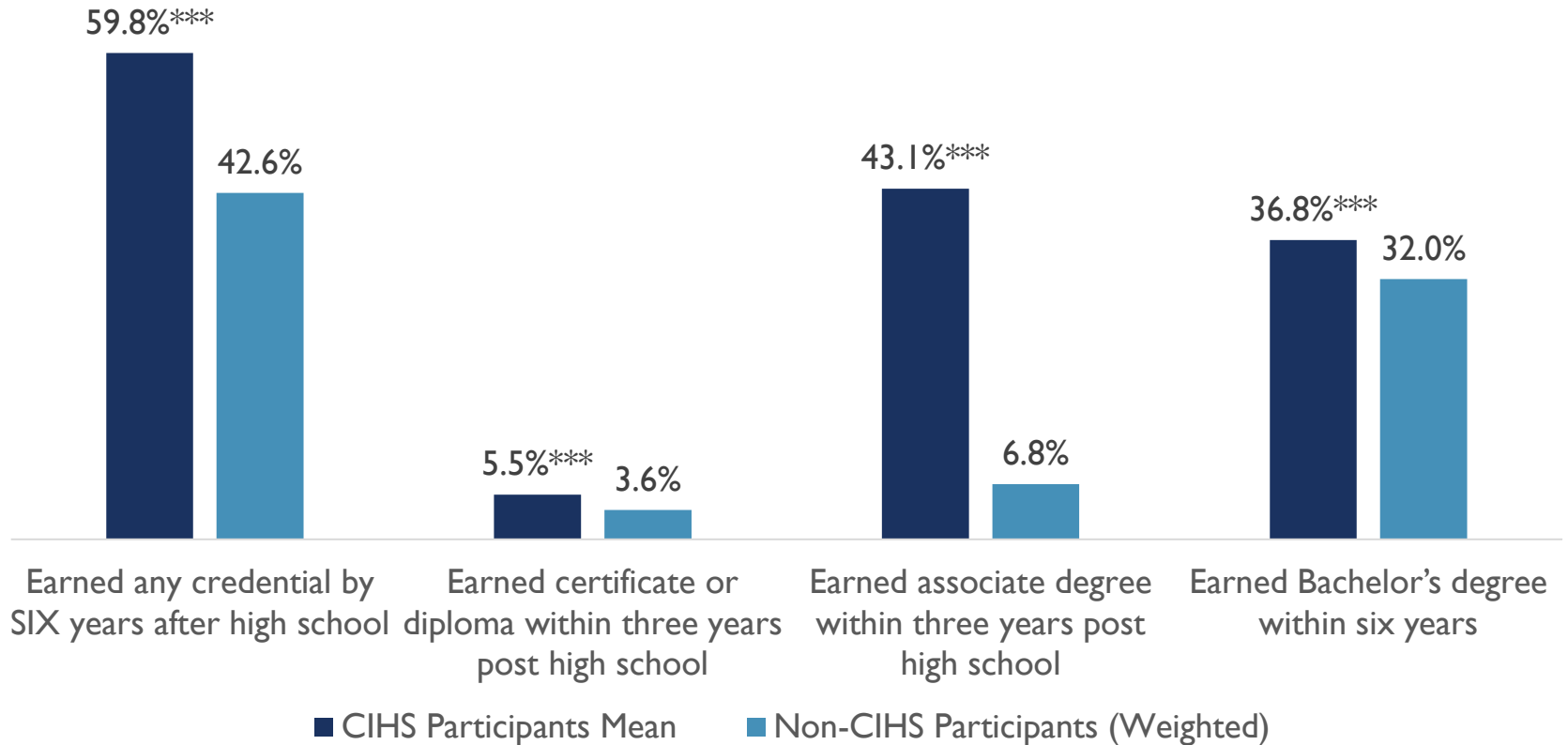
Caveat: Most early college research has been done on small school, stand-alone model.

Other models (programs within schools, academies) may have different results.

## POSITIVE IMPACTS OF EARLY COLLEGE ON STUDENT OUTCOMES

- High school (Edmunds et al, 2012, 2013, 2017)
  - Better attendance, lower suspensions
  - Higher graduation rates, much higher number of college credits earned in high school
- College: (Edmunds et al. 2017, 2020, 2022; Song & Zeiser, 2021).
  - More likely to enroll in college
  - More likely to earn a degree
  - Complete a higher number of advanced courses
  - Shorter time to degree
  - Graduating with less debt.

# IMPACT OF NC EARLY COLLEGES ON POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT



<sup>a</sup>Credentials could be earned in high school or post high school

\*\*\*p ≤ .001

## WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT IMPACT ON EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS?

No difference in employment (incl. employed or enrolled) 7 years post 12<sup>th</sup> grade

Non-significant difference in annual wages of \$465-\$701 7 years post 12<sup>th</sup> grade

Positive impact on cumulative wages (\$4,623-\$6,133), likely due to graduating earlier

**Caveat:** Workforce outcomes come from Unemployment Insurance data, which does not include federal, out-of-state or gig workers.

QUESTIONS  
ABOUT OUR  
RESEARCH  
AND THE  
FINDINGS?



# HOW CAN WE INCREASE THE IMPACTS OF EARLY COLLEGES?

Insights  
from our  
research

# CONNECTING TO CURRENT DISCUSSIONS



As students can earn lots of credits/an associate degree through dual enrollment in a regular high school, what is the unique contribution or value-add of the early college model?



What is the core difference between dual enrollment in the regular high school and an early college? What do early colleges do differently?

Answering these questions can help us think about the unique role and ways to increase impact.

How would you answer these questions?

# EARLY COLLEGE UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION: A TEST BED FOR INNOVATION AROUND POSTSECONDARY ACCESS

How do we truly expand the number of students accessing and succeeding in college? (Not just get some students an extra associate on their way to a bachelor's.)

*What can we learn about effective academic and affective supports that can help students be successful?*

*How can we ensure that a wider range of students earn credentials that are right for them and their goals? What can we learn about the partnerships necessary to support this?*

# INCREASING IMPACT OF EARLY COLLEGE

## Target Population

- Serving students who need the early college

## Keeping Students

- Importance of keeping students in the early college

## Supporting the Whole Student

- Need for affective and academic supports

## Pathway Options

- Adding technical credentials as options

# TARGET POPULATION: INCREASING IMPACT AND UNIQUE ROLE

In NC, CIHS are required by law to serve the following groups:

1. High school students who are at risk of dropping out of school before attaining a high school diploma.
2. High school students with parents who did not continue education beyond high school.
3. High school students who would benefit from accelerated academic instruction. (G.S. 115C-238.50.)

Impacts are often higher for economically disadvantaged students.

There is no value-add to serving students who would have been fine anyway.

Compare this to regular high schools where dual enrollment participants (particularly those with lots of credits) tend to have the most traditional advantages.

# KEEPING STUDENTS: INCREASING IMPACT

- Percentage of students leaving the NC early college in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade ranges from **<5% to 38%**.
- **Clear evidence that the average student who leaves the CIHS in 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grade does WORSE than if they had never gone to the CIHS.**
  - Our estimates on bachelor's degree attainment range from -2.6 pp to -10.2 pp depending on the assumptions.
- Critical to do what you can to keep your students, including those who might be challenging to serve.

This is where supporting the whole student and pathway options come into play.

# SUPPORTING THE WHOLE STUDENT: INCREASING IMPACT AND UNIQUE ROLE

- Academic support
- Explicit instruction around college readiness skills
  - Notetaking/time management
  - Self-advocacy
  - Taking responsibility for own learning
- Social-emotional support
  - Growing body of research that early college students experience higher levels of stress

Unique role for early college: Testing varying supports and finding out which are most effective; sharing these supports with regular high schools.

# PROVIDING PATHWAY OPTIONS: INCREASING IMPACT AND UNIQUE ROLE

- Research shows that, for students who don't get a bachelor's degree, the highest earnings are for more focused technical credentials.
- More and more early colleges are offering a wider range of pathway options, including CTE. Potential benefits include:
  - Attracting a wider range of students, increasing enrollment.
  - Helping keep students in the CIHS.
  - Potentially increasing impacts on earnings.

Unique role for early college: Testing out ways to help students get a technical credential while not shutting off their access to a four-year college.

# REVISITING THE CURRENT DISCUSSIONS



As students can earn lots of credits/an associate degree through dual enrollment in a regular high school, what is the unique contribution or value-add of the early college model?



What is the core difference between dual enrollment in the regular high school and an early college? What do you do differently?

Would you change your answers now? What strategies do you see for increasing the impact of the CIHS?

## COOPERATIVE INNOVATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS INCREASE STUDENTS EARNING A POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIAL



### NC Career & College Promise Dual Enrollment Program Pathways

- Career and Technical Education pathway
- College Transfer pathway
- Cooperative Innovative High Schools pathway

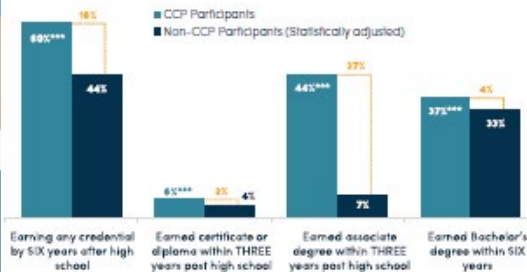
At Cooperative Innovative High Schools, one of the pathways in North Carolina's Career and College Promise program, **students can earn an associate degree or two years of college credit while attending an approved high school partnered with a college or university (e.g., an early college)**. In 2022, North Carolina had 134 of these partnerships.

### CIHS is reducing the gap in bachelor's degree attainment for:

- Members of underrepresented minority groups  
Gap narrowed by almost 1/3
- Low-income students  
Gap narrowed by almost 2/3



### CIHS STUDENTS EARNED MORE POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS



\*\*\*p<.001

Note: Credentials include both those earned in high school and post-high school

### About the Study



The sample includes approximately 660,000 high school students from 2009-2019, including students who attended a CIHS and students who did not.



The study team used statistical approaches to make the CIHS participants and non-participants look the same and then compared postsecondary credential outcomes for the two groups.

The **CCP Evaluation Partnership** is a five-year partnership between the NC Community College System, the NC Department of Public Instruction, Early College Research Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and the RAND Corporation. This study is supported by the Institute of Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education through Grant R305H1900036 to UNC Greensboro. To learn more about the study, email Julie Edmunds at [jedmunds@serve.org](mailto:jedmunds@serve.org).



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RAND



North Carolina Department of Public Instruction



NC COMMUNITY COLLEGES

For more information on the Cooperative Innovative High Schools Pathway, see this website (<https://bit.ly/3dms8tX>) from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. To learn more about these and other study findings, visit [earlycollegeresearch@nc.gov](mailto:earlycollegeresearch@nc.gov).

- Resources you can find on the ECRC website:
  - Infographics on impacts of CIHS
  - Briefs on different implementation issues
  - Links to peer-reviewed articles

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