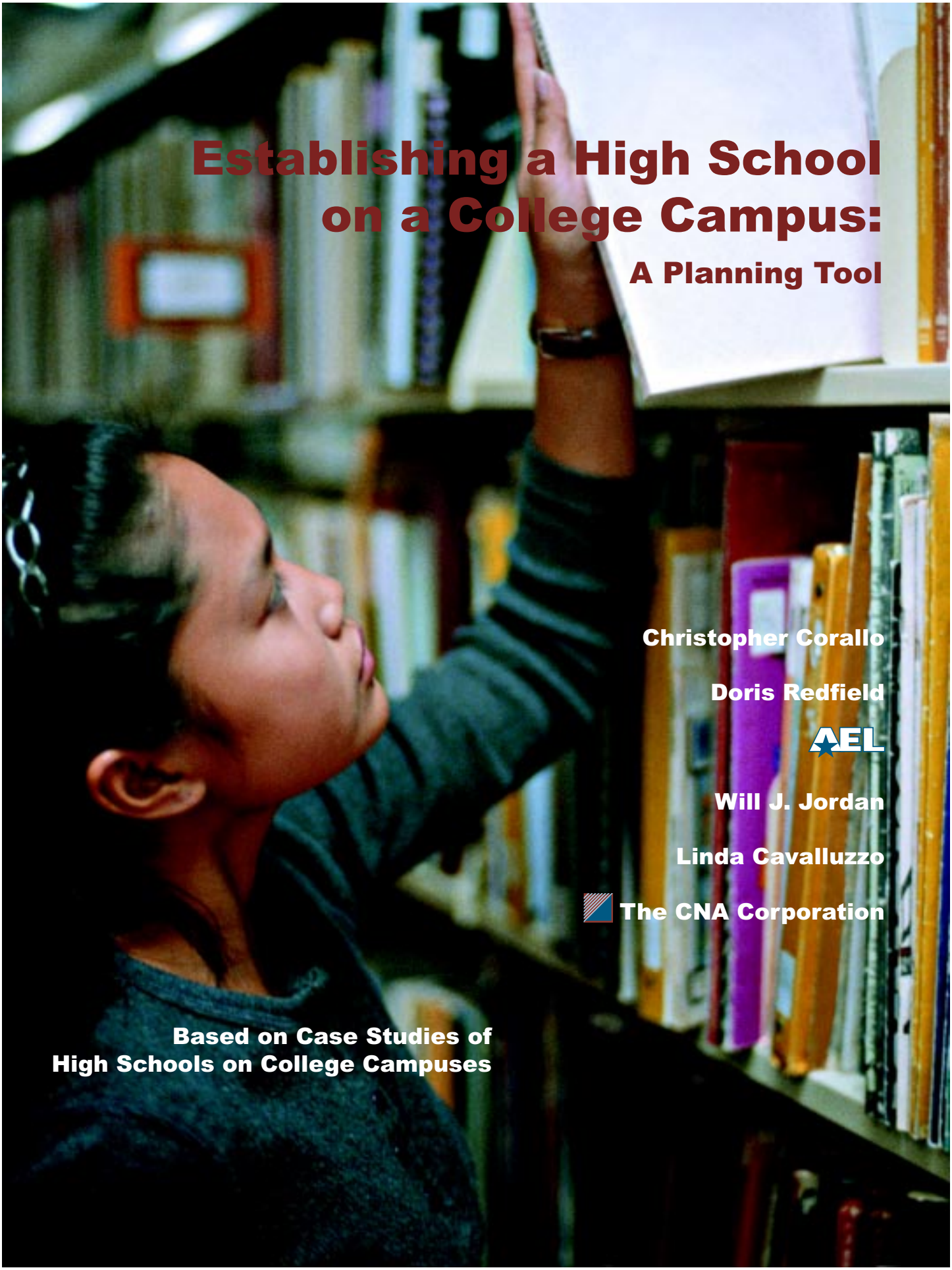

# Establishing a High School on a College Campus:

## A Planning Tool


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Based on Case Studies of
High Schools on College Campuses

# Introduction

## Purpose of This Planning Tool

Education leaders have long sought creative strategies for motivating high school students to invest more time and effort in learning, to explore career and higher education options, and to formulate meaningful personal goals for the future. To this end, many innovative educational programs have been developed, some designed to stretch the capacity of the most able and motivated students (e.g., gifted and talented programs) and others to intervene with students at risk of dropping out or underachieving. High school programs that are located on college campuses, including college-based dual enrollment programs and middle college high schools, may address either of these purposes, or both of them simultaneously (National Dropout Prevention Center, n.d.). Policymakers, researchers, and foundations are expressing increased interest in these programs for their potential as effective interventions and as strategies for transitioning students from secondary to postsecondary education.

The purpose of this planning tool is to provide educators with a road map for developing a high school/college collaborative program on a college campus. The tool is designed to guide the user through decisions about building a high school/postsecondary education partnership, developing a planning team, building a program of study, developing a budget, and planning for strong public relations. This tool is based on findings from five case studies of high schools located on college campuses.

## Why Have a High School on a College Campus?

Recently, the Department of Education reported that more than one-fourth of students who entered four-year colleges and almost half who entered two-year colleges never returned for their second year (Mortensen, 1999). Bailey, Hughes, and Karp (2002) described mechanisms through which dual enrollment programs, i.e., high school or college-based programs that offer both high school and college credit for qualifying courses, could help to reduce those numbers. If properly implemented, dual enrollment programs prepare students for college-level work by adding rigor to high school curricula, which Adelman (1999) found was the most important predictor of college completion. In addition, other researchers have noted that dual enrollment programs may raise the motivation and achievement levels of students who are bored, uninterested, or wasting time in their senior years of high school (Lords, 2000; National Commission on the High School Senior Year, 2001). In a study of the effectiveness of Washington State's "Running Start" program, Crossland (1999) found that 11th- and 12th-grade high school students who took college-level courses at community and technical colleges and transferred to the University of Washington were more likely to graduate. They also earned higher grade point averages than students who began their college studies at the university without prior dual enrollment experiences.

Difficulty with college-level academic expectations has been one cause for high early-loss rates from postsecondary schools. Noel, Levitz, and their associates (1985) found that psychological adjustment to the college campus, unfocused goals, and unrealistic expectations for the college experience also contributed to early attrition. It appears that college-based dual enrollment programs could reduce losses associated with these factors, particularly for low and moderate performers. Students report gains in confidence by being on a college campus, in college classes in the context of small programs that provide careful monitoring and support (Cavalluzzo, Corallo, & Jordan, 2002).

In addition to the potential benefits that may arise from greater breadth, rigor, and relevance of college courses to students' future lives, policymakers see a range of possible benefits from dual enrollment programs (Boswell, 2001). These benefits include:

- lower college costs for students and their families
- accelerated progress toward a degree
- increased aspirations to attend college
- increased academic opportunities for students from small or rural high schools
- reduced demand for space on high school campuses that may be at or near capacity
- closer ties between colleges and their communities

Both the Education Commission of the States (2000) and the Bridge Project at Stanford University (Kirst & Venezia, 2001) have suggested that policymakers expand successful dual enrollment programs as one possible way to improve the quality of the high school experience and ease the transition from high school to college.

## The Foundation of This Decision-Making Tool

The decision-making tool is based on the findings from a literature review by Husted and Cavalluzzo ( 2001) and five case studies of high schools on college campuses. The literature review and study were conducted by a team of educators and researchers from AEL and CNA Education. AEL is a private, nonprofit corporation headquartered in Charleston, West Virginia. Since 1966, AEL has worked to improve education and educational opportunity through research, development, and services to national, state, and

local school systems and education agencies. AEL has extensive experience in needs assessment and evaluation, and deep knowledge of current research and best practices. CNA Education is an arm of The CNA Corporation (CNAC), a not-for-profit research agency located in Alexandria, Virginia. CNAC has a 60-year history of working closely with practitioners, program managers, and policymakers to provide high-quality, objective research, analysis, and evaluation services across a range of disciplines to federal, state, and local education agencies. Case study leaders were Chris Corallo, AEL, an educator specializing in educational systems design, management structures, and leadership development; Dr. Linda Cavalluzzo, CNA Education, an economist specializing in education and workforce issues; and Dr. Will Jordan, CNA Education, a sociologist specializing in research and evaluation of educational interventions for at-risk youth.

Five sites in four states were selected for participation in the series of studies: The Dual Enrollment Program at Santa Fe Community College in Gainesville, Florida; the Middle College High Schools at Contra Costa Community College in San Pablo and San Joaquin Delta Community College in Stockton, California; Middle College High School at Mott Community College in Flint, Michigan; and the Middle College High School at Nashville State Technical Institute in Franklin, Tennessee. Individually and collectively, the programs serve a diverse range of students. Some program students are at significant risk of dropping out but looking for an opportunity for a fresh start. Others are academically strong and seeking opportunities other than programs such as Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate programs to earn college credits while still in high school.

In each program, researchers found a strong belief across stakeholders that the programs were highly successful at improving student motivation, aspirations, educational attainment, and learning. However, the ability to develop rigorous statistical evidence of program effectiveness was limited. In several cases, it could be shown that students in these programs performed well relative to students in the school district overall. However, because of the lack of rigorous evaluation of effects, the contribution of the programs to student attainment and achievement remain unclear.

Many of the students who participated in these programs were identified by school counselors, teachers, and administrators as having the potential to succeed but disengaged from their studies. They were thought to be unlikely to graduate from high school, or unlikely to attend and succeed in college if they remained in their comprehensive high schools. Consequently, these programs employed a variety of strategies and practices that are designed to ignite motivation and increase self-esteem, academic success, and, ultimately, the career and higher education prospects of their students. The features of these programs include the following (see Bickel et al., 2001; Husted & Cavalluzzo, 2001; Kemple & Snipes, 2000; Raywid, 1995 & 2001):

- small size
- counselors and high school faculty who develop sustained caring relationships with students
- educational programs that have clear ties to work and career

In addition, AEL-CNA Education case study sites exhibited several of the structural attributes and process variables commonly found in effective schools (Purkey & Smith, 1983), including

- strong leadership
- collaborative planning and collegial relationships
- sense of community
- clear goals and high expectations
- orderly school environment

### Using the Planning Tool

This tool is designed to guide users through important steps for planning a high school on a college campus. These steps include (1) assessing the foundation of support, (2) building a planning team, (3) designing the program of study, (4) developing a budget, (5) recruiting and selecting students, and (6) program evaluation. Each step is first described in narrative form and later shown in a schematic. The schematic will lead users through a series of questions at each planning step to guide their thinking.

The tool is based on the findings from the research literature (Husted and Cavalluzzo, 2001) and *Case Studies of High Schools on College Campuses: An Alternative to the Traditional High School Program* (Cavalluzzo, Corallo, and Jordan, 2002). The Cavalluzzo et al. (2002) report of the case studies should be used as a companion to this tool because it provides stories and concrete examples of how real schools dealt with the issues to be considered in each planning step. The tool includes a table that refers the user to specific sections of the report for examples, discussion, and information on each of the planning steps.

## The Steps for Planning a High School on a College Campus

### Assessing the Foundation of Support

The study of high schools on college campuses (Cavalluzzo, Corallo, & Jordan, 2002) found that the success

of such programs was closely tied to the level of support of the stakeholder groups (e.g. school district administration and faculty, college administration and faculty). The programs that had strong support from all stakeholders flourished from the start and attributed their success to this strong foundation. Other schools had only pockets of support at first or a charismatic key leader who initially got the program up and running and then left for another position. These schools had problems institutionalizing the program and often had to go back and reestablish the foundation of support.

The first step in planning a high school on a college campus is to determine the support for the concept among all potential stakeholder groups. This includes determining the interest of the individual stakeholder groups in being partners in the design and operation of the program. This is accomplished by having potential partners explore a common understanding of the need for the program and establishing a mission. Through this exploration a clear understanding of the benefits of the project to each partner will emerge. The willingness of each partner group to take on the role of advocate in moving the planning and development process forward should also be assessed.

In addition to assessing the strength of the partnership, there should be a careful examination of the culture surrounding high school/college dual enrollment course work. Strong dual enrollment legislation allowing funding of college courses for high school students will make the development of a high school on a college campus more feasible. As part of this initial foundation building activity, the partner organizations should have some preliminary discussion of potential funding sources, including dual enrollment funding.

## Engaging the Partners in Planning

The successful programs were found to have a dynamic principal or director who was involved in the planning process from the very beginning. These leaders took an active role in bringing the school district and college partners together and establishing a strong planning process. In most of the high school sites studied, the principal or director developed a planning or advisory team that included representatives from the partner school district and college as well as other stakeholder groups such as parents and community members. These planning and advisory teams continued to meet and monitor the success of the program until it was strongly institutionalized.

## Designing the Program

The high school programs on which this planning tool is based serve different purposes. The differences in the programs are directly linked to the types of students each serves. Some of the schools serve students who are already achieving at high academic levels. These programs were found to have more college course offerings than those designed for at-risk students. The programs serving high-risk students have more social-emotional supports and opportunities to strengthen basic skills than programs designed for high achievers. All the schools have programs designed to meet the needs of their student populations.

The first step in designing a high school on a college campus is to determine the characteristics of the students to be served. Through this process the planning team will identify the needs of the target group of students. The program should then be designed to meet these needs. At this point in the planning process consideration should be given to planning the program of study, identifying the academic support systems the students will need, identifying the social-emotional supports needed, and determining how the program should be staffed for implementation.

Once these aspects of the program have been decided, the planning team should turn its attention to considering the location of the school on the college campus. The location on the campus of the schools studied varied from school to school. Some of the programs were completely integrated, with high school and college classes taking place next to each other. Other programs were more self-contained, with areas of the campus dedicated to the high school. The more integrated programs tended to have students taking more college courses.

## Planning the Budget

Once the program has been designed, the planning team should begin to detail the budget. The high schools studied used a variety of ways to fund their programs, including the standard per-pupil reimbursement from the local school system, dual enrollment funds, grants, and in-kind contributions by program partners. The planning team should be able to project the program costs and compare them to available revenues. The program may need to be altered if funding is not available for the full program. Teams should be careful to take all expenses into consideration. For example, in the schools studied, one of the most difficult funding issues is the purchase of college course textbooks. The schools had to be very creative to find ways to provide these books to the students.

## Recruiting and Selecting Students

When starting a new high school program it is important to plan for student recruitment. This will be essential until the

program has been institutionalized and has a recognized track record. All the programs studied had some type of recruitment plan. Most of the schools needed to recruit students in order to fill their available student openings.

A strong selection process will also be important. The staff of the high schools studied identified the careful selection of students to match the program offerings as important to the success of the students and the program. One school reported that poor selection of students in the first year almost caused the program to close down. They acknowledged that they did not have a selection process in place the first year and took anyone referred to the program. All the schools now have a strong application process that includes having students express in writing why they are interested in the program. The application submission is followed up by an interview of the student by the selection team.

## Charting Progress

As part of the initial planning process it is important to determine the criteria for evaluating the success of the new program, and to set up a data collection process so that effectiveness can be evaluated and improved. A strong evaluation plan will not only help the continued development of the program but can be used to garner further support.

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Founded in 1966 as a not-for-profit corporation, AEL provides services to educators, education publishers, and policymakers. Services include rigorous research design and implementation, research reviews, intensive product and program evaluations and randomized field trials, technical assistance, and award-winning professional development programs. AEL serves as the Regional Educational Laboratory for Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. For these same four states, it operates the Eisenhower Regional Consortium for Mathematics and Science Education. In addition, it serves as the Region IV Comprehensive Center.


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## I. ASSSESSING THE FOUNDATION:

Before beginning the planning process it is important to take stock of the issues and structures that will be the foundation for the program.

### Assessing the interest of partner groups

- What are the issues that are encouraging the interest of each of the partners?
- What is the level of interest of each partner?

### Developing a common understanding of need/mission

- Has a clear need been established through analysis of data?
- What is the mission of the partnership and, eventually, the program based on the established need?
- Are there alternatives other than a high school-college collaborative that can meet this need?
- Is this a duplication of services?

### Assessing the willingness of the partners to advocate for the program

- Who is "behind" the program?
- Are top leaders willing to speak in favor of the program?
- Is there "buy-in" from the state education agency to assist with issues around dual enrollment?
- Is there stability in the advocacy groups?

### Delineating the benefits to the partners

- What does each partner gain from participation in the project?
- Can each partner clearly articulate the benefits?

### Assessing strength of dual enrollment legislation/process/culture

- Is there currently a culture of dual enrollment?
- How do students access dual enrollment?
- Are articulation agreements with two and four-year programs in place?

### Assessing potential funding sources

- Can start-up funds be secured?
- How are dual enrollment courses funded within your state?
- How can other program costs be shared?

## II. ENGAGING THE PARTNERS IN PLANNING:

Once a strong foundation has been established, structures for planning should be put in place.

### Selecting a program director

- Does the leader have strong communication skills?
- Does the leader have hands-on management style?
- Does the leader have the ability to foster collaboration?
- Does the leader have the ability to build bridges?

### Developing a planning team

- Are all partners represented on the team?
- Who will lead the team?
- Is there a planning process in place including a timeline with stated outcomes?

### Engaging key players with influence from all partners

- Is there a process in place for engaging key players?
- Do advocates for the program have “talking points?”

### Developing a public relations plan

- Is there a plan in place to keep stakeholders informed of the program development efforts?
- Does the plan target key people who may need to be kept informed and groomed to support the program?
- Does the plan include multiple approaches for communication and dissemination of information, includng news articles, print brochures, public forums, Web sites, and individual meetings?
- Does the plan include structures for ongoing information sharing and consultation with key stakeholders after the program is up and running?

## III. DESIGNING THE PROGRAM OF STUDY:

The planning structures will be fully engaged as the actual program is designed.
There are several key issues to be considered in designing the program and they should be considered in the following sequence.

### Describing the target student body

- What are the characteristics of the targeted students, including academic strengths and weakness, academic motivation, social-emotional needs, motivation for post-secondary education?

### Identifying their needs

- Based on the characteristics of the students, what are the defined needs of the students?

### Planning the program of study

- What courses do students need in order to meet high school graduation require-ments?
- What high school courses will be offered?
- How many college courses will students be able to take?
- How many and which courses will be considered dual enrollment courses?
- Will the college courses create a post-secondary pathway, certificate, or degree?

### Identifying academic supports needed

- What academic support services will be needed to help students be successful in their high school courses?
- What academic support services will be needed to help students be successful in their college courses?
- What supports will be needed to ensure that students are taking the proper high school and college courses?
- How will the supports be funded and staffed?

### Identifying social-emotional supports needed

- What counseling services will be needed to ensure student success?
- How will the program engage the student's family to help attain the academic goals?
- How will discipline issues be handled?
- How will student attendance be monitored?
- What are the social implications for high school students being on the college campus?

### Staffing the program

- How many high school teachers will be needed to provide the program of study described?
- How many college instructors/seats in college classrooms will be needed?
- How will counseling and guidance services be offered?
- What administrative support staff will be needed?

### Determining the physical location and organization of the school

- Where will the school be located on the campus?
- Will the school be "self-contained" in a separate facility?
- Will the school be fully integrated into the college campus?
- Will students be integrated into college classes?
- Will support services be located in one area or integrated into the campus?
- Will high school students use the college's support services?
- How will students be transported to and from the campus?

### Deciding on structures for governance

- Who will run the day-to-day operations of the school?
- Who will that person answer to?
- Will there be a role for teacher leadership?

## IV. PLANNING THE BUDGET:

Once the program is in place it is time to build a budget based on program costs.

- Based on the program needs, what is the cost of the program as planned?
- Are all hidden costs taken into consideration such as textbooks, supplies, and transportation?
- What are the available revenue streams and will they provide sufficient funds?
- Will adjustments to the program need to be made based on budget issues?
- Are memoranda of agreement between the partners in place to ensure consistent funding and provision of "in-kind services?"

## V. RECRUITING AND SELECTING STUDENTS:

Planning is necessary to ensure a good fit between the program and the students who will attend.

### Recruiting students

- Are there structures in place for identifying students who would benefit from the program?
- Are there structures in place for making contact with these students and sharing information about the program?
- Are there structures in place for providing the students with some experience with the program before they decide to enroll?

### Developing an application and student selection process

- Does the application process give the selection committee enough information about the student to decide if the program is appropriate for them?
- Does the process include multiple procedures such as a written application and an interview?
- Who will be involved in the selection process?
- Are there clear criteria outlined for selecting students?

## VI. CHARTING PROGRESS:

Evaluation is key to continued improvement and support.

- Is there a plan for gathering and maintaining baseline and benchmark data?
- Is there a process in place for collecting data from an appropriate control group?
- Is there a plan and sufficient funding to evaluate this program?