Assessing the Use and Impact of ECMC Foundation's *REALIZING THE COLLEGE DREAM* Curriculum

ABOUT THE PELL INSTITUTE

The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education conducts and disseminates research and policy analysis to encourage policymakers, educators, and the public to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for low-income, first-generation students and students with disabilities. The Pell Institute is the first research institute to specifically examine the challenges affecting educational opportunity for these growing populations.

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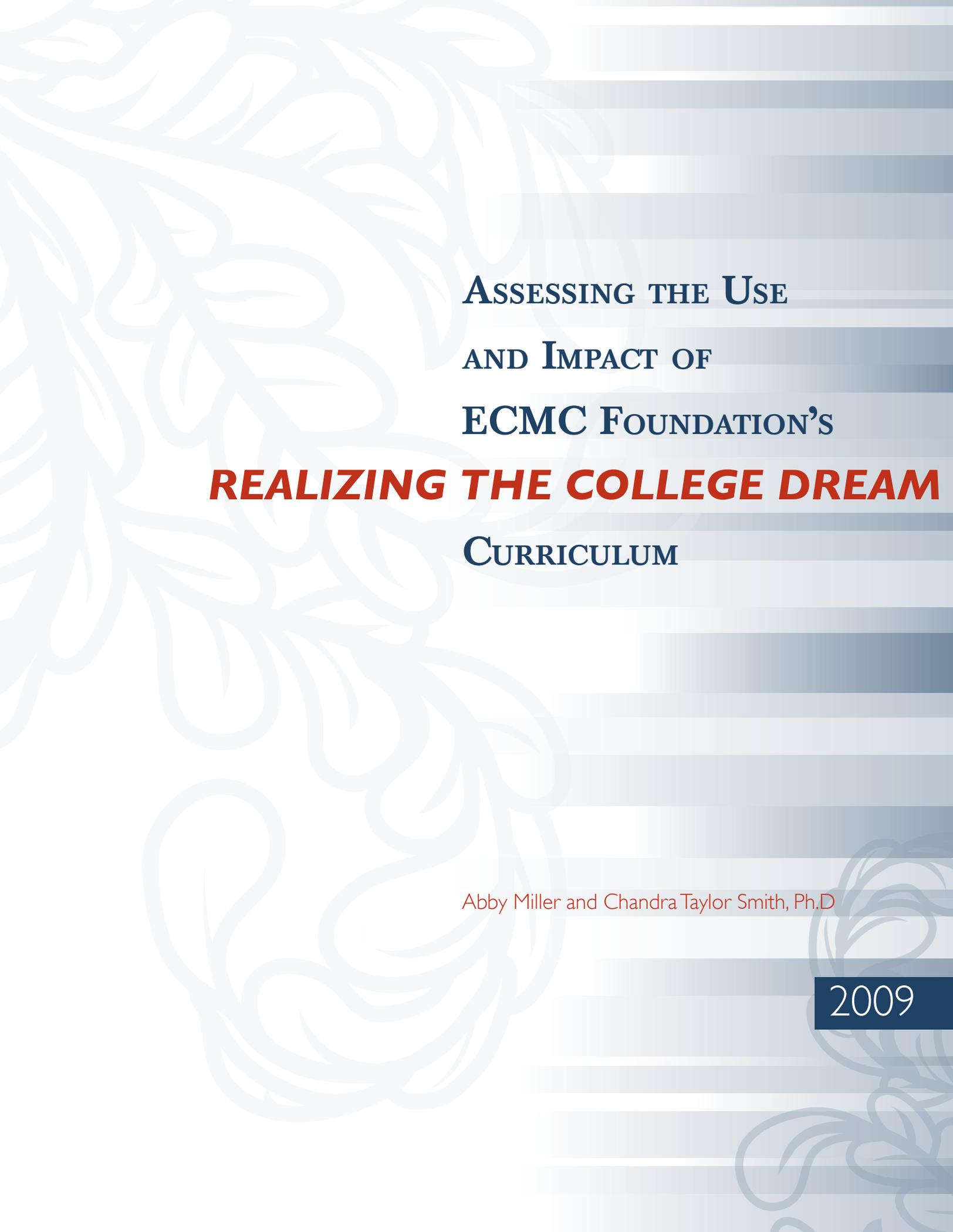
Assessing the Use and Impact of ECMC Foundation's

REALIZING THE COLLEGE DREAM

Curriculum

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INTRODUCTION

In his March 10, 2009 speech before the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce entitled "A Complete and Competitive American Education," President Barack Obama stated that "The relative decline of American education is untenable for our economy," and declared that "what's at stake is nothing less than the *American Dream.*"[1] ECMC Foundation shares the President's concern and seeks to improve higher education access and success for low income, college-going students so that all Americans can hope to attain the "*American Dream*". In 2004 ECMC Foundation published a guide called *Realizing the College Dream* (RTCD) which is designed for educators and staff to help low-income, first-generation college, middle and high school students increase their expectations of attending postsecondary education, and take steps to realize this goal. Developed by the University of California, Berkeley's Center for Educational Outreach, the guide includes lessons that can be used in a variety of settings (classroom, after-school, summer school, community-based organizations) geared for youth in middle school and high school as well as parents, family members, community college students and other adult learners. Instructional strategies are hands-on and interactive, and lessons are aligned with national curriculum standards in writing, mathematics, social studies, and technology.

President Obama further proposed that the new "Secretary of Education will use only one test when deciding what [education] ideas to support…: It's not whether an idea is liberal or conservative, but whether it works."[2] After several years of use by educators and staff, ECMC Foundation has also stepped up to President Obama's challenge to determine whether RTCD indeed works. ECMC Foundation commissioned The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education to conduct an evaluation of the RTCD curriculum, primarily to gauge its usage by teachers and professionals working in student outreach services. The results of the evaluation suggest that RTCD is reaching hundreds of thousands of students and parents at middle schools, high schools, and community-based organizations. RTCD users are overwhelmingly enthusiastic and appreciative of this free resource, and its ability to adapt to the specific needs of low-income, first-generation college students and families. These educators and student support service professionals who implemented the curriculum are actively spreading the word to colleagues about its usefulness. While similar materials may be available through pre-college outreach programs, respondents felt that no other materials they had previously encountered were able to target their disadvantaged populations' needs quite as effectively. In sum, *Realizing the College Dream* is a timely and effective tool for enhancing low-income, first-generation college students' ability to attain the "*American Dream.*"

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1   Obama, Barack (2009, March). *A Complete and Competitive American Education.* Remarks before the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Washington, DC.

2   Ibid.

Federal TRIO Programs are designed to help low-income, first-generation college students, and students with disabilities gain access to and succeed in higher education. ECMC Foundation developed a six-hour interactive training led by five TRIO professionals, and organized three national trainings across the country.

ABOUT THE *REALIZING THE COLLEGE DREAM* CURRICULUM

ECMC Foundation produced *Realizing the College Dream* (RTCD) in 2004 to target support for low-income, first-generation college, middle and high school students. These historically underrepresented college students often lack the awareness, information and resources that are necessary to take the steps toward college application and attendance.[1] RTCD is available free of charge on the ECMC Foundation web site (www.ecmcfoundation. org/RTCD_download.html). The guide conveys, among other concepts, the value of higher education and the financial aid opportunities available. The primary content of the guide is divided into three sections:

- *Thinking of Yourself as a College-Bound Student: Lessons and Workshops for Students*
- *Debunking the Myth that "You Can't Afford College:" Lessons and Workshops for Students*
- *Getting Involved and Staying Involved: Workshops and Presentations for Families of College-Bound Youth*

The Office of Federal TRIO Programs initiated a partnership with ECMC Foundation to distribute RTCD to TRIO Program grantees involved in Upward Bound, Upward Bound Math-Science and Talent Search programs. Federal TRIO Programs are designed to help low-income, first-generation college students, and students with disabilities gain access to and succeed in higher education. ECMC Foundation developed a six-hour interactive training led by five TRIO professionals, and organized three national trainings across the country. These trainings introduced education professionals to the guide and demonstrated how to effectively use the materials with students. Additional trainings included staff and volunteers at numerous other organizations, including the Virginia Department of Education and the Oregon Department of Education.

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From 2004-2007, ECMC Foundation organized and funded eleven full-day training sessions across the country attended by over 1,300 TRIO grantees, high school counselors and teachers, staff from other organizations working with middle and high school students, and adult students. In addition, RTCD continues to be downloaded from the web site on a regular basis by professionals, students and parents throughout the country.

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1   Cabrera, A.F. & La Nasa, S. M. (2001). On the Path to College: Three Critical Tasks Facing America's Disadvantaged. *Research in Higher Education*, 42(2).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While ECMC Foundation trainings and downloads reveal who has received the guide, they cannot tell us how the guide has been used by professionals as they interact with students and their families. In order to ascertain the usage, effectiveness and value of the materials, ECMC Foundation commissioned this study from The Pell Institute for the Study of Higher Education. The goal of this study is to learn how well the materials have been used since their distribution through trainings, the website, and other channels.

In order to collect data on how well RTCD has been used, The Pell Institute employed both an online survey to yield quantifiable results about usage and effectiveness ratings, and open-ended telephone interviews with RTCD users. While survey results yield data that indicate usage rates and characteristics of RTCD users, summaries of telephone interviews with selected respondents provide further insight into how exactly the curriculum was used, and why respondents found the materials to be of value.

Respondents to the ECMC Foundation/Pell Institute *Realizing the College Dream* usage survey have reached a total of nearly 30,000 students and parents, and several programs have reached over 1,000 individuals each. More extensive questionnaires conducted with selected survey respondents through telephone interviews show an overwhelmingly enthusiastic appreciation of the curriculum's "down-to-earth" tone, and its ability to meet the specific needs of their low-income, first-generation college students and families. While similar resources may be available through pre-college outreach programs, respondents felt that no other materials they had previously encountered were able to target their disadvantaged populations' need quite as effectively.

Survey respondents largely represent student outreach programs across the nation such as the TRIO programs (Upward Bound, Upward Bound Math-Science, and Educational Talent Search) and Virginia's Project Discovery. Counselors at postsecondary institutions, high schools and middle schools are also represented in the sample. The majority (68%) of respondents has used at least one component of the RTCD curriculum, and those who have not yet had the opportunity or resources to implement the curriculum recommended or distributed it to other colleagues in the field. Respondents primarily heard about RTCD through press releases, training announcements, and/or through colleagues.

Considering that survey respondents represent just a fraction of the total student outreach population using the guide, the materials could potentially be having an effect on the lives of hundreds of thousands of low-income, academically underprepared students. It should be noted that respondents to the survey are more likely to be "super-users" who believe in and advocate for RTCD, since they took the time to respond to the survey. However, it can still be assumed that additional staff who either were unable to complete the survey, or whose emails we do not have access to, are also using the materials.

Respondents rated nearly all sections of RTCD with the highest effectiveness scores, and the majority ranked possible outcomes (i.e., increased knowledge of the financial aid and the college application process) with the highest two ratings on a scale of five. Respondents were particularly pleased with the ability of the materials to raise participants' awareness of the benefits of higher education, and knowledge of college preparation activities and the application process. Nearly all respondents (97%) plan to continue using RTCD, and many are actively spreading the word about the materials at conferences and through colleagues, because they are so enthusiastic about their experiences with the curriculum.

The activities included in RTCD encompass invaluable and previously unfamiliar concepts to disadvantaged students, such as applying for financial aid, and realizing the value of a college degree through increased earnings. Support staffs are continually referring RTCD to colleagues, and customize the contents of the curriculum to meet the ages and characteristics of their target populations. Respondents did not have any complaints about the RTCD materials themselves, but rather about a lack of institutional or organizational support to provide resources for their programs.

Respondents expressed enormous appreciation of the "down to earth" and relatable tone that specifically targets their underrepresented college-going populations.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

In order to examine the usage and effectiveness of RTCD, The Pell Institute developed a survey instrument in collaboration with ECMC Foundation that asked respondents about usage and implementation details, including:

- *Whether or not they received a copy of RTCD, and if so whether they implemented at least one component of the curriculum in any format or setting*
- *Target population characteristics*
- *Number of students, parents or others reached*
- *Whether used on an individual basis or group setting; in the classroom, with counselors or through extracurricular activities*
- *Frequency of use*
- *Effectiveness ratings on a scale of 1-3 for each section*
- *Outcome ratings on a scale of 1-5 for items such as "increased knowledge of the college application process," and any methods of formally measuring outcomes*

The survey also prompted users to indicate whether or not they plan to use the curriculum in the future, if so which particular sections, and if they have not implemented any components yet, why not. The survey collected background information such as location, position and organization or institution, and sought permission to follow-up with additional questions by phone. We provided additional space for general comments about usage and/or effectiveness. The survey was available online only and distributed through email in June 2008. (Please see Appendix A for a copy of the survey.)

The Pell Institute surveyed contacts provided by ECMC Foundation who were known to have received or requested copies of RTCD since its publication, as well as support program staff who were likely to have knowledge of and contact with RTCD. Contact lists provided by ECMC Foundation included RTCD training attendees and individuals who downloaded the toolkit from the ECMC Foundation website. These contacts were merged into one unduplicated master ECMC list.

The activities included in RTCD encompass invaluable and previously unfamiliar concepts to disadvantaged students, such as applying for financial aid, and realizing the value of a college degree through increased earnings.

In order to reach support professionals who were likely to have learned about RTCD either through ECMC/Department of Education training announcements, meetings or colleagues, the online survey link was distributed via email through support staff association listservs. These listservs included:

- *Council for Opportunity in Education's (COE) TRIO program membership*
- *National College Access Network (NCAN) membership*
- *National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP) for professionals in Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) programs*

ECMC Foundation provided a total of 1,282 email addresses, COE provided an additional 6,623 email addresses, the NCCEP/GEAR UP listserv reached 223 program directors, and the NCAN list included approximately 450 members.

A total of 198 individuals responded to the survey. Of these respondents, 53% were either individuals on the ECMC lists or colleagues to whom those individuals had forwarded the survey; and the remaining 47% of responses came from external listservs, although it is possible that some received the survey link through a colleague on the ECMC and COE lists since we do not have direct access to email addresses on the NCAN and NCCEP lists (see Appendix D for additional details about the response rate and re-survey instrument).[1]

Phone Interviews

Telephone interviews provided further insight into the usage indicators collected through the online survey. The Pell Institute requested telephone interviews on behalf of ECMC Foundation with survey respondents who: 1) indicated that they have been actively using the toolkit, and 2) granted permission for follow-up phone calls or emails. We also selected case study candidates based on geographic region, target audience and other program features in order to provide a diverse range of responses. We selected a total of twelve survey respondents, and followed-up with these individuals by email and telephone. Nine of these individuals were available, and the summaries of their interviews can be found below, following the quantitative survey results. (The interview guide can be found in Appendix B of this document.)

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1   Undeliverable email addresses are factored into the response rates. A total of 391 from the ECMC Foundation lists, and 1,615 from the COE list were undeliverable. It is unknown how many surveys sent to the two NCAN and NCCEP listservs were returned, or how many responses came specifically from these lists.

SURVEY RESULTS

Respondent Profile

LOCATION

Respondents who indicated their location (n=118) represent 35 states from all regions of the U.S. Virginia and Oregon had the highest number of responses, with twenty and fourteen respectively, followed by California and Hawaii, with ten responses each. It was expected that Virginia and Oregon would have high response rates, as ECMC Foundation has The CollegePlace centers in these two states, and has focused its toolkit trainings and promotions heavily at those locations. A total of 79 respondents (40%) did not indicate their state.

TOP STATES OF RESPONDENTS

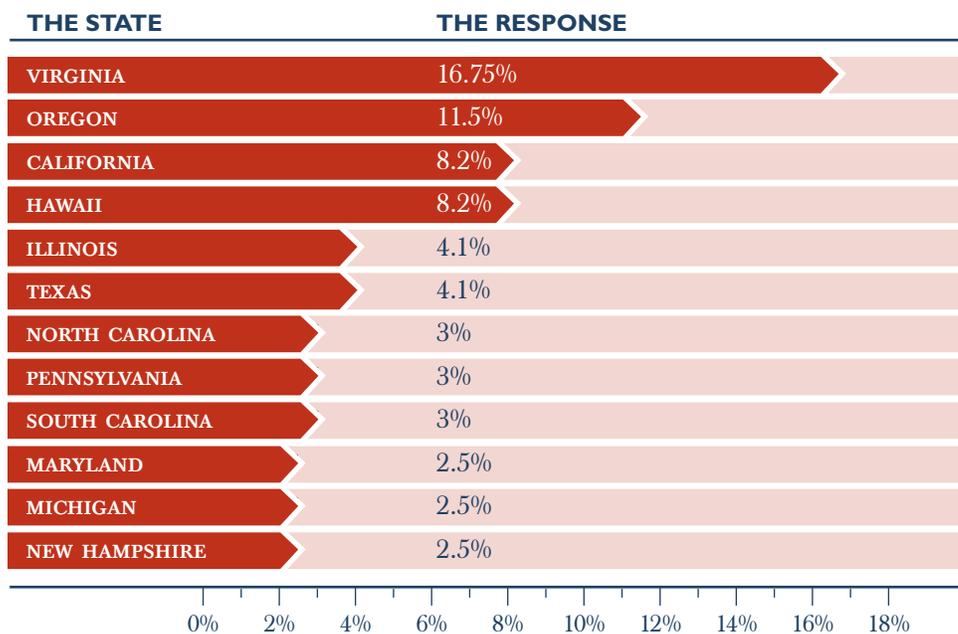| THE STATE	THE RESPONSE
VIRGINIA	16.75%
OREGON	11.5%
CALIFORNIA	8.2%
HAWAII	8.2%
ILLINOIS	4.1%
TEXAS	4.1%
NORTH CAROLINA	3%
PENNSYLVANIA	3%
SOUTH CAROLINA	3%
MARYLAND	2.5%
MICHIGAN	2.5%
NEW HAMPSHIRE	2.5%

TABLE 1. Top States of Respondents, n=85

Table one displays the states with the highest number of responses. Other states represented by respondents include: Alabama, Connecticut, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Utah, Vermont, Washington DC, and Wyoming.

One should keep in mind that the respondents to this survey reflect a representative sample rather than a complete census of RTCD users. We are aware of RTCD usage in other states not listed, for example the National College Advising Corps (NCAC) headquartered at University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill has actively implemented RTCD in conjunction with its program. NCAC places recent college graduates as advisors in partnering high schools to help low-income students gain access to postsecondary education. This successful program has garnered much attention and expanded its reach to thirteen states, serving roughly 30,000 students in 2008-2009.

There are likely to be professionals at other similar outreach organizations nationwide who are using RTCD, but who may not have had time to respond to the survey. In addition, outreach professionals are often moving between organizations, and it is likely that our contact information for those who relocated between 2004 to 2008 is out of date.

JOB TITLE

Nearly two-thirds of respondents are outreach program staff (60%) while one-fifth are school counselors (20%) and less than a tenth are teachers (6%). The remaining respondents identified their position as "other," including Independent Living Program Coordinators, Curriculum Development Specialists, College and Career Coordinators, Life Skills Trainers, and Administrators.
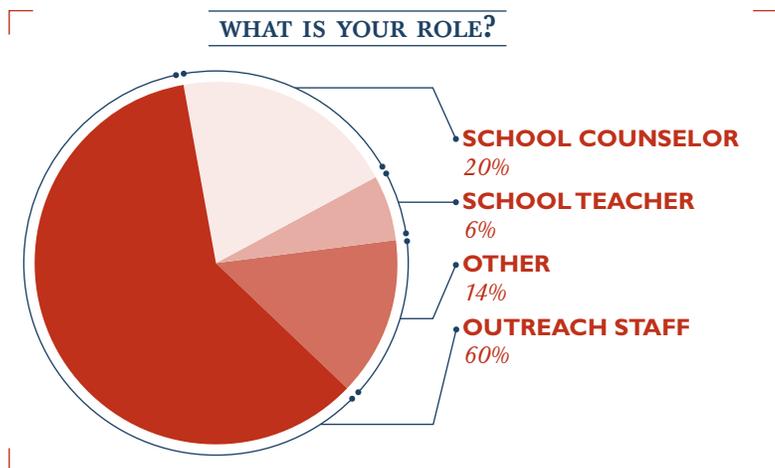
WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

SCHOOL COUNSELOR
20%

SCHOOL TEACHER
6%

OTHER
14%

OUTREACH STAFF
60%

CHART 1. Respondent Job Position/Role, n=169

TYPE OF SCHOOL/ORGANIZATION

Over one-third of respondents indicated that they work for outreach programs (36%), and just over one-quarter are at postsecondary institutions (26%), followed by 16% at high schools and 9% at middle schools. The rest work for "other" organizations (9%) or community centers (3%). "Other" organizations include state child welfare-independent living programs, workforce development programs, nonprofit agencies, state financial aid agencies, and city governments. These "other" positions and organizations should be considered for future dissemination of the RTCD materials, as their staff have actively implemented the guide and found it to be useful.

Some specific organizations cited other than postsecondary institutions and TRIO programs include UC Berkeley's Early Academic Outreach Program (EAOP), the Arlington, Virginia Assistance Center, The California Student Opportunity and Access Program (SOAP), Imperial Valley Regional Occupational Program (IVROP), Middle Georgia Center For Academic Excellence (MGCAE), Southern Maryland College Access Network (SoMD CAN), and The Education Resources Institute (TERI).
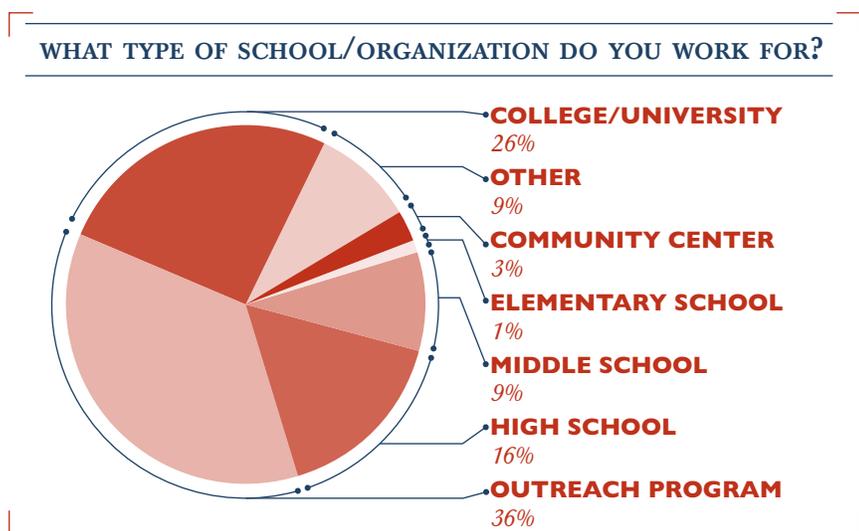
WHAT TYPE OF SCHOOL/ORGANIZATION DO YOU WORK FOR?

COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY
26%

OTHER
9%

COMMUNITY CENTER
3%

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
1%

MIDDLE SCHOOL
9%

HIGH SCHOOL
16%

OUTREACH PROGRAM
36%

CHART 2. Respondent Organization Type, n=195

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RTCD Use

Sixty-eight percent of respondents said they have used the materials, and 31% have not. When analyzed by source, 70% of respondents from the ECMC list, 66% of COE respondents, and 71% of other respondents indicated that they had used RTCD.

It should be noted that while several respondents may not have used RTCD directly, they did recommend and distribute the curriculum to colleagues on their campus or at their organization. In addition, while individuals contacted through the email survey primarily represent outreach program staff affiliated with either TRIO, GEAR UP or NCAN, many counselors and other staff at K-12 institutions whose contact information we did not have access to are also likely using the guide.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS REACHED

We asked respondents to indicate the number of individuals that each of their programs is serving using RTCD (note that each respondent represents a single program). The total number of individuals reached by our respondents is 28,648. This includes students, parents and staff. On average, respondents are reaching 216 participants each. The largest total population reached by a single program is 2,600. Six respondents indicated that they are reaching over 1,000 individuals each through presentation of RTCD materials.

	STUDENTS	PARENTS	OTHER	ALL
AVERAGE	202	43	19	226
MAXIMUM	2,400	350	250	2,600
TOTAL	25,435	2,748	465	28,648

TABLE 2. Total Participants Reached by RTCD Survey Respondents

Considering that survey respondents represent just a fraction of the total student outreach population using the guide, the materials could potentially be having an effect on the lives of hundreds of thousands of low-income, academically underprepared students. It should be noted that respondents to the survey are more likely to be "super-users" who believe in and advocate for RTCD, since they took the time to respond to the survey. However, it can still be assumed that additional staff who either were unable to complete the survey, or whose emails we do not have access to, are also using the materials.

RTCD Source

We asked respondents how they initially heard about and obtained the RTCD curriculum. Forty-two percent learned about the curriculum through a press release, 37% through a colleague, 34% through a training, 17% through a conference, and 17% through an "other" source. Over one-quarter, or 27%, heard about RTCD through multiple sources.

HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT RTCD?
check all that apply

THE SOURCE	THE RESPONSE
PRESS RELEASE	42%
WORKSHOP	34%
CONFERENCE	17%
COLLEAGUE	37%
OTHER	17%

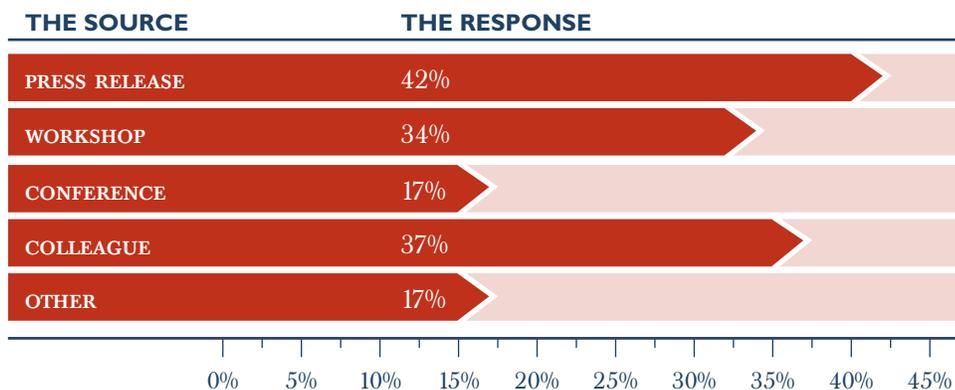0% 5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30% 35% 40% 45%

CHART 3. Sources of Information About RTCD, n=125

Information about RTCD effectively reached respondents through a wide variety of sources. Of those who heard about RTCD through press releases, only 6% cited ECMC Foundation press releases–the remainder heard about RTCD through offices and programs including the following:

- *Announcements distributed by college Presidents' offices*
- *U.S. Department of Education Office of Federal TRIO Programs*
- *Council for Opportunity in Education*
- *National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP) Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP)*
- *UC Berkeley's Early Academic Outreach Program*
- *Project Discovery*
- *Pathways to College Network*
- *Access to Student assistance Programs In Reach of Everyone (ASPIRE)*
- *Oregon Student Assistance Commission (OSAC)*
- *New England Educational Opportunity Association (NEOA)*
- *Independent Living Programs*
- *AHC, Inc. (an affordable housing program in the Washington, DC area)*
- *The Chronicle of Higher Education*

The majority who heard through trainings (76%) did so through the ECMC/U.S. Department of Education trainings. Some other trainings and conferences cited include:

- *The Mendocino County Office of Education*
- *ASPIRE in Medford school district (OR)*
- *Northwest Association of Special Programs (NASP) conference*
- *NCAN Best Practice Gallery*
- *Southeastern Association of Educational Opportunity Program Personnel (SAEOPP) conference*
- *Virginia Community Action Partnership (VACAP) annual conference*
- *Oregon Teacher In-service day.*

"Other" sources include staff meetings at schools, and online searches for college access-related materials.

Of the 125 who reported hearing about RTCD, 116–or 93%–obtained a copy of the curriculum. The most common methods of obtaining a copy of RTCD were through RTCD trainings (34%), trainings including those cited above (24%), colleagues (21%), and downloads through the website (20%). The majority who obtained RTCD through trainings did so through those organized by ECMC Foundation (86%).

HOW DID YOU OBTAIN YOUR COPY OF RTCD?
check all that apply

THE SOURCE	THE RESPONSE
DOWNLOAD	20%
RTCD TRAINING	34%
WORKSHOP	24%
CONFERENCE	8%
COLLEAGUE	21%
OTHER	18%

0%   5%   10%   15%   20%   25%   30%   35%
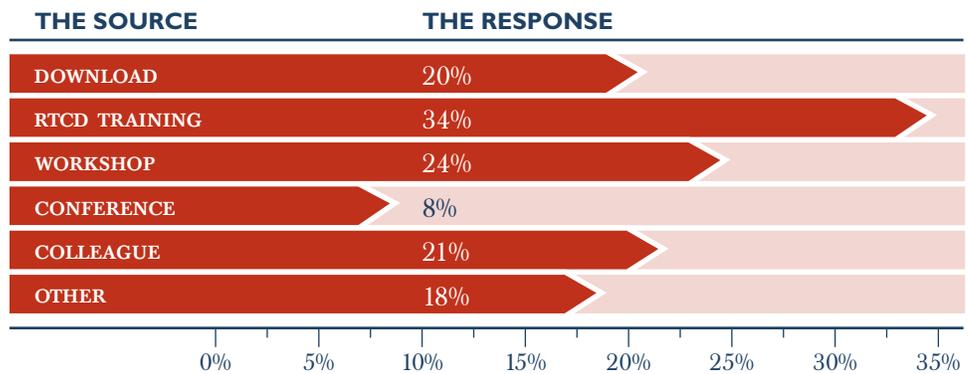
CHART 4. Sources for Obtaining RTCD*, n=116
* While respondents may have heard about the guide through multiple sources, they were most likely to obtain it from only one source (88%).

Respondents have been using or been in possession of their toolkits for an average of 21 months. Over half (59%) have had a copy of RTCD for one year or longer.

LENGTH OF TIME SINCE OBTAINING RTCD

6-11 MONTHS
26%

LESS THAN 6 MONTHS
15%

4+ YEARS
2%

3 YEARS
21%

2 YEARS
20%

1 YEAR
16%

CHART 5. Length of Time Since Obtaining RTCD, n=115

Target Populations

The most common student populations targeted through RTCD are low-income, first-generation college-going high school students. Underprepared students and middle school students are also common audiences for RTCD materials.

WITH WHOM DO/DID YOU USE RTCD?
check all that apply
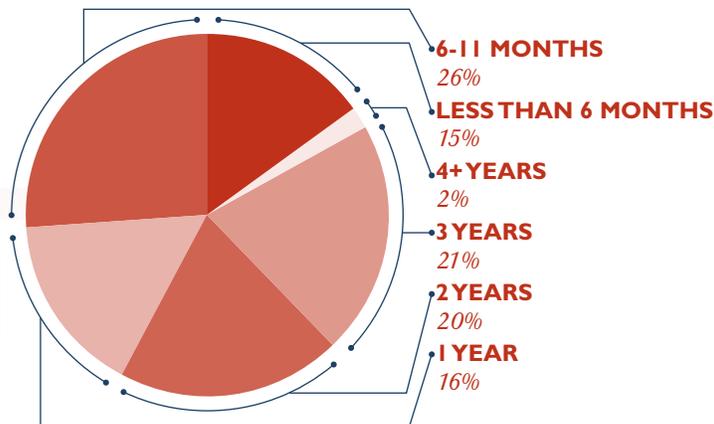
THE TARGET POPULATION	THE RESPONSE
ELEMENTARY STUDENTS	2%
MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS	41%
HIGH SCHOOL FRESHMAN/SOPHOMORES	70%
HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS/SENIORS	67%
MINORITY	52%
LOW-INCOME	73%
FIRST-GENERATION	70%
UNDERPREPARED	53%
MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENTS	10%
HIGH SCHOOL PARENTS	27%
OTHER	5%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80%
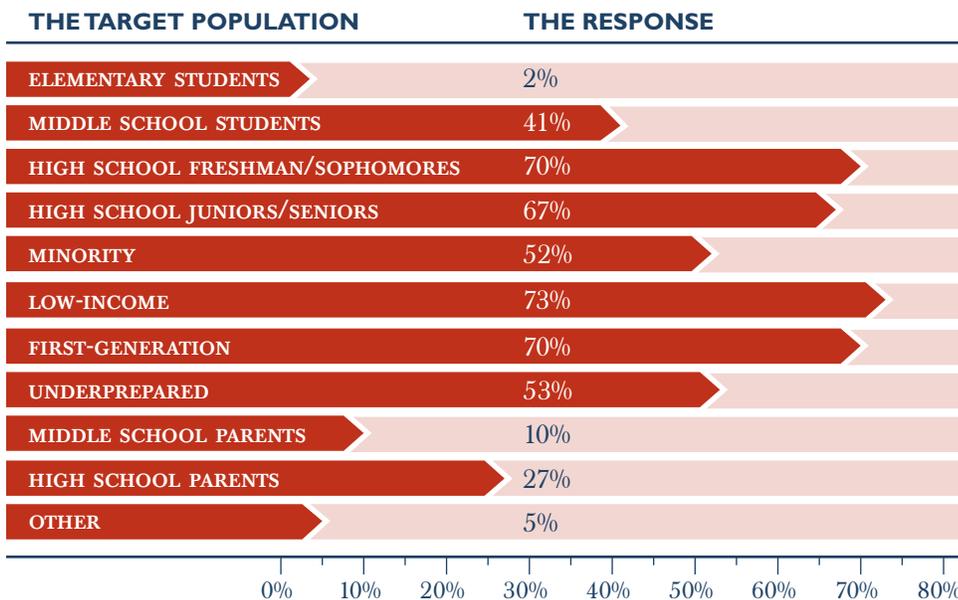
CHART 6. Target Populations for RTCD, n=93

The following chart displays the number of populations that respondents are targeting. The majority of respondents target more than one of the populations listed above; over half (56%) are reaching out to five or more populations, ranging from elementary school to college.

NUMBER OF TARGET POPULATIONS

ONE	13%
TWO	11%
THREE	9%
FOUR	11%
FIVE	17%
SIX	18%
SEVEN	12%
EIGHT	5%
NINE	4%

0% 2% 4% 6% 8% 10% 12% 14% 16% 18% 20%

CHART 7. Number of Target Populations, n=93

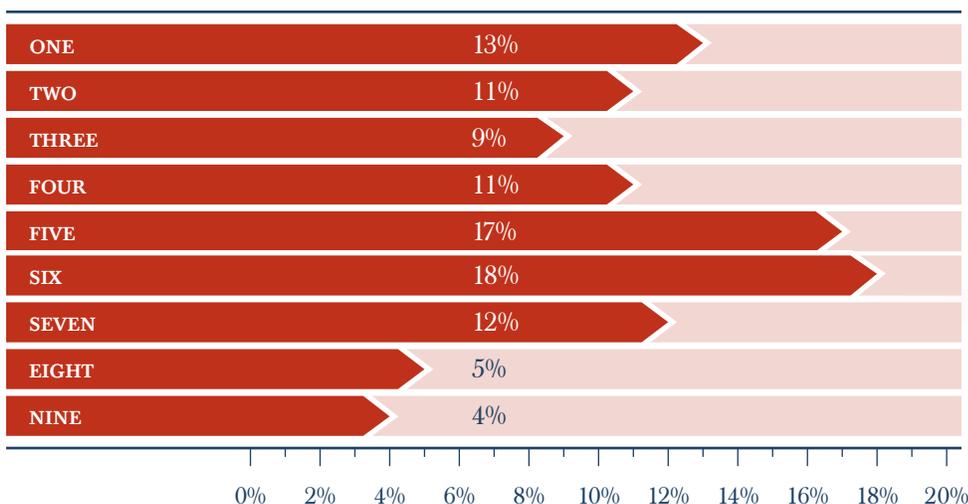## Usage/Implementation Details

The majority of respondents use RTCD in group formats (72%), while 20% and 9% use RTCD on a one-on-one or other basis, respectively. Other formats include classroom resources distributed as handouts to either students or other staff, and research for developing classroom curricula.

In terms of setting, RTCD is most commonly used in outreach programs (62%), followed by classrooms (40%) and counseling or advising sessions (30%). Fifteen percent indicated using RTCD in conjunction with an extracurricular activity. While the majority who use RTCD do so in only one setting, over one-third (37%) use the materials in multiple settings.

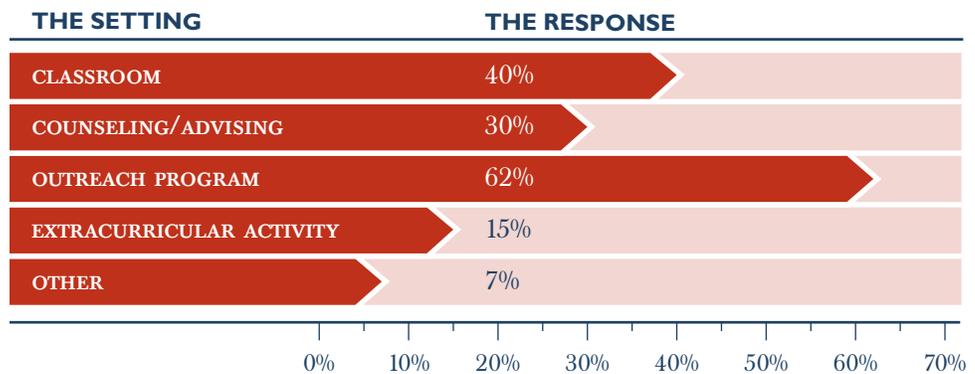### IN WHAT SETTING HAVE YOU USED RTCD?
check all that apply

THE SETTING	THE RESPONSE
CLASSROOM	40%
COUNSELING/ADVISING	30%
OUTREACH PROGRAM	62%
EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY	15%
OTHER	7%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70%

CHART 8. RTCD Usage Setting, n=131

NUMBER OF SETTINGS IN WHICH RESPONDENTS USED RTCD?

TWO 24%
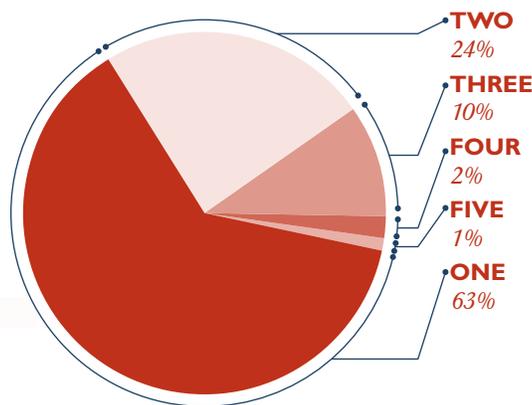THREE 10%
FOUR 2%
FIVE 1%
ONE 63%

CHART 9. Number of Settings in which Respondents Used RTCD, n=131

Nearly all respondents (95%) use RTCD materials broken up to fit within existing curricula, rather than in their entirety and on their own. Nearly half of respondents use RTCD on a regular (weekly or monthly) basis (43%), while about one-third use it on an annual or semi-annual basis (30%).

HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE THE RCTD CURRICULUM?

MONTHLY
27%

SEMI-ANNUALLY
19%

ANNUALLY
11%
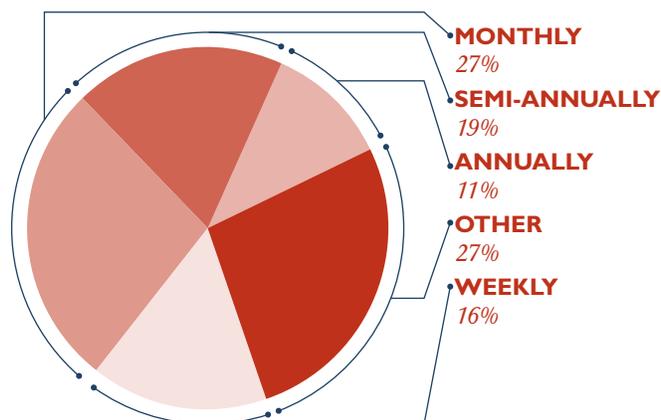
OTHER
27%

WEEKLY
16%

CHART 10. RTCD Usage Frequency, n=79

Fifty-one respondents described in detail the implementation of RTCD materials in their programs. Examples of interesting uses of RTCD are highlighted in the verbatim responses below:

"College Mock activity has been used many times with many different age groups. Several activities are pulled out to use in group settings at different times to fit our needs. Our pre-college TRIO Programs offer an annual one-day RTCD conference for about 75-100 students/parents where we follow the curriculum as outlined in the notebook." –Talent Search representative, University of Kansas

"Delivered workshops to Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs middle school students on the reservation as part of a larger Native American "leadership" conference; provided 1-hour workshops using "Dream a little Dream". Response was strong in raising awareness of the cost of living and the education necessary to earn money at the level necessary to meet those costs." –Director, TheCollegePlace, OR

"I worked in partnership with Oregon Student Assistance Commission (OSAC) to bring the original training to our Independent Living Program (ILP) Contractors. Those ILP Contractors in turn used the curriculum with their foster teens and young adults during their interactions with the youth. I used the curriculum with co-workers and family members…our staff and ILP Contractors had very positive feedback on the curriculum." –State Child Welfare/ILP Coordinator, Oregon Department of Human Services

"I adapted the curriculum for use with the Dean's Future Scholar summer program for middle schoolers in the College of Education at the University of Nevada, Reno. I took pieces of the curriculum to develop five 45 minutes workshops that two graduate students implemented." –Assistant Professor, University of Southern California

"I broke the curriculum up and placed it in my current curriculum based on grade level. For example, I felt that the Career Interest Survey was best for my 8th and 9th graders, while Mock College Admissions were best for 10th through 12th graders." –Program Services Coordinator, Cañada College Upward Bound (CA)

"The curriculum was used in a workshop once a month to help students to better understand what is needed for college and how to get the necessary information on things such as financial aid and admission requirements. It gave them visual understandings about how much more could be earned with a college education."

—*Program Coordinator, Project Discovery*

"I implemented the curriculum by incorporating it into the existing curriculum used for the program. I used the interactive activities to engage students both as icebreakers (crossword puzzle), workshop material (mock admissions), workshop organization (KWL chart), and homework assignments for parents and students (financial aid and career interest interviews). I found the material very useful, and have incorporated more of the material with time. The activities were very useful for getting both parents and students engaged and connected to idea that college can be a reality." –Outreach Specialist, Project Discovery, Alexandria, VA

"I integrated the RTCD curriculum into materials that I already had, using the broad outline of the RTCD program, especially Section A, to form the foundation and structure to the class. The material was adapted for a 1x a week college counseling session for Juniors (which involved no homework or out of class assignments), though I adapted some of the material to work for some classes for seniors as well (mock admissions, for example). The curriculum that I developed was implemented in 5 different high schools, whose schedules, settings and class sizes were all different." –Curriculum Development Specialist, Southern MD College Access Network

"I run a weekly after school class for middle school students. It is run at their school, and I have anywhere between 10 and 18 students enrolled. The focus is college readiness, and many of the students are minority and/or low-income. I mix curricula from a variety of sources and use technology to have students do their own interactive searching. We also go on field trips and have guest speakers. I enjoy this curriculum because it is easy to use and well written." –Education Specialist, YMCA of Greater Seattle

"I use it in classroom/group settings with high school students during advisory (a 30min-1hr classroom period). I also use it as a guide for college summer interns who are working with high school students. This guide gives them ideas of programs to implement with the students. They have used the curriculum in ways that I haven't." –College advisor, Center for Creative Arts/ College Access Center, Chattanooga, TN

"We usually met before school in small groups with some college field trips throughout the year. I also blended it into my language arts classes and parent conferences." –Supplemental Education Services (SES) Tutoring and GEAR UP Coordinator, Woodburn School District, OR

"SoMD CAN has developed a 2-yr long curriculum timeline with lesson guides for 32-sessions to deliver to junior and senior high school students. We used the "Realizing the College Dream" as a base for our development. SoMD CAN sees approximately 160 students weekly at four high schools during the students' lunch period once a week for grade levels 11 and 12. SoMD CAN presents the curriculum in a group setting with break outs for one-on-one counseling. SoMD CAN works closely with the school administration and the guidance office to reach those students who would not normally avail themselves of the services provided by a guidance counselor. SoMD CAN actively recruits the targeted population through weekly, individualized reminders." –Executive Director, Southern Maryland College Access Network/SoMD CAN

"The curriculum was used in a workshop once a month to help students to better understand what is needed for college and how to get the necessary information on things such as financial aid and admission requirements. It gave them visual understandings about how much more could be earned with a college education." –Program Coordinator, Project Discovery

"The Kutztown University Preparatory Academy (KUPA) consists of three precollege programs: Academic Alliance (privately-funded), Upward Bound, and Upward Bound Math-Science. Using primarily Sections A and B of RTCD, we developed a scope and sequence for the college awareness portion of our KUPA curriculum." –Interim Director, Upward Bound, Kutztown University, PA

"We have "Saturday Sessions" for our participants. We would break the students up according to age group on these Saturdays and hold one section a month. We also have Parent Advisory Meetings where we used Section C. We also implement the financial aid material into our Junior and Senior Seminars. We plan to continue using the information (although some of the college information is tweaked as info/prices change through the years)." –Assistant Director, Upward Bound, Southeast Community College, Nebraska

"We used the Realizing the College Dream *during our 6-week Summer Math academy and during the regular school year. During the summer approximately 100 students participate in the workshop in groups of about 25. The groups are facilitated by college tutors, University of California, Davis (UCD) outreach staff, and high school staff. During the school year, every 10th grade student participates in the* Realizing the College Dream *curriculum in small groups. Usually the material is presented in their World History or English 10 class. We dedicate a couple of days to blanket the entire 10th grade class."* –Regional Outreach Counselor, UC Davis

"I used this curriculum in 45 minute increments and mostly worked with Sections A and C. The population I worked with was/is low-income, first-generation high school and college students. I use the RTCD in small groups, one-on-one, and in large groups. One thing I love about this curriculum is how flexible it can be, so I have used it in many different types of situations with many different students." –Counselor for Student Support Services and Talent Search, Kutztown University, PA

"I've used the RTCD in presentations, especially to seniors and parents. I used it in a PowerPoint style and as simple handouts for people to take with them. The myth section is nice because it allows students to interact with me and I actually give them True/False cards so that they are active while we go over this section." –Associate Director, University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) Talent Search

"I integrated the RTCD curriculum into materials that I already had, using the broad outline of the RTCD program, especially Section A, to form the foundation and structure to the class. The material was adapted for a 1x a week college counseling session for Juniors (which involved no homework or out of class assignments), though I adapted some of the material to work for some classes for seniors as well (mock admissions, for example). The curriculum that I developed was implemented in 5 different high schools, whose schedules, settings and class sizes were all different."

—Curriculum Development Specialist, Southern MD College Access Network

RTCD Effectiveness and Outcomes

Respondents were asked to rate each section of RTCD on a scale of one to three, with one being the least effective, and three the most effective. Of the fifteen sections and activities listed, all but three received the highest possible rating on average.

Activity B2: Being a Wise Borrower, and C2: Planning a Financial Aid Night appear to be the least valued of the RTCD materials. While not poorly received (these two activities still received an average score of 2: moderately effective), it could be that the target audience is too young to be thinking about the specifics of personal finance. In the outcome comments (included below), respondents indicate that the most useful materials help by providing their students with an overall financial picture and awareness of the steps toward college attendance, rather than the nuances of financial aid deadlines or spending budgets. However, the sections that respondents plan to use in the future do not agree with these findings (see page 19), and it could be that staff are waiting to use activities B2 and C2 with students once they are older or more advanced.

The specific sections and their average ratings and number of responses are listed in the table below.

SECTION/ACTIVITY NAME	AVERAGE RATING	N
Section A Overall: Thinking of Yourself as a College-Bound Student	3	60
A1. Dream a Little Dream	3	71
A3. College 101	3	75
A4. The Life and Times of a First-Generation College Student	3	73
A5. Mock College Admissions	3	72
Section B Overall: Debunking the Myth that "You Can't Afford College"	3	62
B1. Debunking the Myths of Financial Aid	3	71
B2. Being a Wise Borrower	2	70
B3. Who Wants to Spend $20,000?	3	70
B4. Comparing Financial Aid Packages	3	73
Section C Overall: Getting Involved and Staying Involved	2	62
C1. Preparing for College	3	74
C2. Planning a Financial Aid Night for Students and Families	2	70
Section D: Appendices	3	66

TABLE 3. Average Section Ratings and Number of Responses

When looking at the distribution of scores, each section received more "3" (the highest) ratings than other scores. Exercise B2 and Section C are the least likely to be used *currently*, as these had more N/A (not applicable) responses than ratings, however they are likely to be used in the future as indicated on page 19.

RTCD EFFECTIVENESS

Rate each of the following sections and lessons, if applicable

THE SECTION/LESSON	THE RESPONSES			
	LEAST EFFECTIVE	MODERATE	MOST EFFECTIVE	NOT APPLICABLE
A OVERALL	1%	23%	62%	13%
A1	1%	31%	51%	17%
A2	2%	27%	53%	18%
A3		27%	56%	17%
A4		22%	51%	27%
A5	3%	21%	51%	25%
B OVERALL	2%	23%	56%	19%
B1	3%	15%	62%	20%
B2	1%	30%	33%	36%
B3	6%	24%	41%	29%
B4	4%	23%	41%	32%
C OVERALL	4%	23%	29%	44%
C1	1%	23%	42%	34%
C2	7%	16%	34%	43%
D	4%	21%	45%	30%
	LEAST EFFECTIVE	MODERATE	MOST EFFECTIVE	NOT APPLICABLE

CHART 11. Ratings of RTCD Section/Exercise Effectiveness

Respondents were asked to rank the strength of each of the following possible outcomes from using RTCD on a scale of 1–5, with 1 being the weakest, and 5 being the strongest outcome:

- *Increased knowledge of financial aid*
- *Increased knowledge of college application process*
- *Increased understanding of the benefits of higher education*
- *Increased interest in furthering education*
- *Increased career awareness*
- *Increased participation in college-preparatory activities (e.g. taking college entrance exams, applying for admissions/financial aid, going on college visits)*
- *Increased academic preparation for college*
- *Increased academic achievement*

With the exception of increasing academic achievement, which was not seen as direct a result of using the toolkit as other possible outcomes, the majority of respondents assigned the top two highest ratings to each of the remaining seven possible positive outcomes. Increasing the awareness of the benefits of higher education is perhaps the most salient outcome as indicated by the high percentage of 4 and 5 ratings (75%).
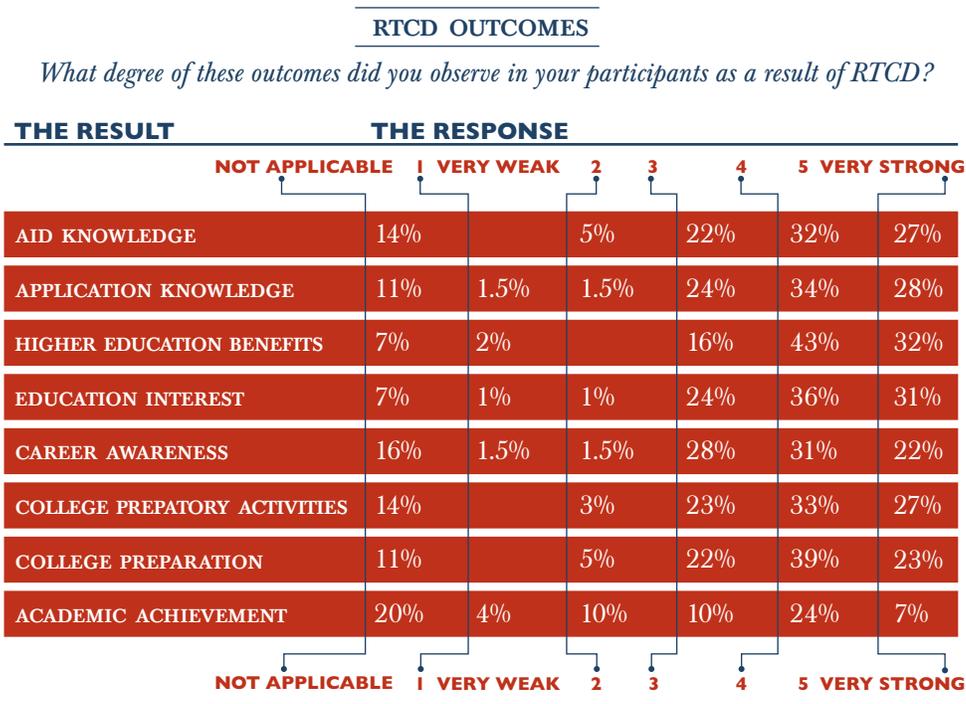
RTCD OUTCOMES

What degree of these outcomes did you observe in your participants as a result of RTCD?

THE RESULT   **THE RESPONSE**

	NOT APPLICABLE	1 VERY WEAK	2	3	4	5 VERY STRONG
AID KNOWLEDGE	14%		5%	22%	32%	27%
APPLICATION KNOWLEDGE	11%	1.5%	1.5%	24%	34%	28%
HIGHER EDUCATION BENEFITS	7%	2%		16%	43%	32%
EDUCATION INTEREST	7%	1%	1%	24%	36%	31%
CAREER AWARENESS	16%	1.5%	1.5%	28%	31%	22%
COLLEGE PREPATORY ACTIVITIES	14%		3%	23%	33%	27%
COLLEGE PREPARATION	11%		5%	22%	39%	23%
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT	20%	4%	10%	10%	24%	7%

NOT APPLICABLE	1 VERY WEAK	2	3	4	5 VERY STRONG

CHART 12. RTCD Outcomes

Only ten respondents indicated that they formally measure outcomes. Of those, two measure results through surveys, two through pre/post testing, three through a combination of surveys and pre/post testing, two through evaluations, and one through case studies.

Below are some verbatim comments from respondents about their outcomes using RTCD:

"We've enjoyed the material and felt it produced quality outcomes. The material allowed for students to open up and discuss several issues when it came to getting into college. They became more aware of some factors that hadn't been considered (i.e. why one might not want to accept anything given on a financial aid package)." –Assistant Director, Upward Bound, Southeast Community College, Nebraska

"Response was strong in raising awareness of the cost of living and the education necessary to earn money at the level necessary to meet those costs." –Director, TheCollegePlace, OR

"I found the material very useful, and have incorporated more of the material with time. The activities were very useful for getting both parents and students engaged and connected to the idea that college can be a reality." –Outreach Specialist, Project Discovery, Alexandria, VA

"I teach a course to seniors at my school that guides them, and their families through the college application process. Often I found myself staring at a blank screen with no idea how to begin to explain something like the different kinds of school a student can apply to, etc. I used the curriculum, specifically the PowerPoints, to explain complex information in a very easy-to-understand way. It was so user-friendly. I also used the curriculum to help me think about the pieces and parts that I might've missed because of my limited experience in working with low-income, first-generation college students. Some of it I knew, but I loved how complete, comprehensive and clear it was to use - it was ready to use, whereas other resources I used need work first before I could use it. I can't say thank you enough." –Director of College Placement, Bronx Lab School, NY

"Thanks for your work! My first cohort of GEAR UP kids are graduating and many are going on to college - Eastern Oregon University, Portland State, and Western Oregon University. I have worked with them since they were 7th graders. Long term mentoring and parent partnerships work." –Supplemental Education Services (SES) Tutoring and GEAR UP Coordinator, Woodburn School District, OR

"We found that students enjoyed the college curriculum and they learned 50% more than what they knew at the pre-test." –Regional Coordinator, Early Academic Outreach Program, University of California, Berkeley

Reasons for Not Using RTCD

Among the 64 respondents who do not use RTCD, 53 (83%) listed a reason why. Of those, the majority have not had time, were not aware of the guide, or had not obtained a copy until they received the survey. Only five (9%) indicated that they do not have a need for the materials, either because the students they serve do not align with the RTCD target populations, or because their existing curriculum materials are too similar to RTCD, or because they are not in the position to do so.

REASONS FOR NOT USING RTCD
check all that apply

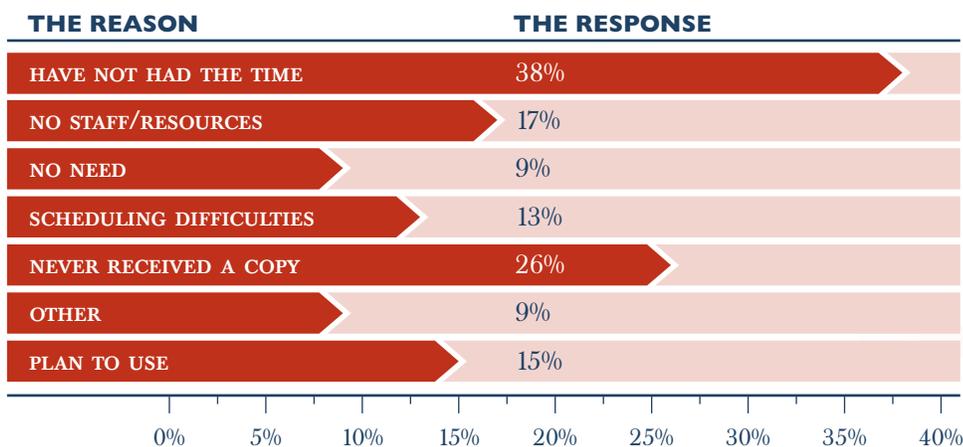| THE REASON	THE RESPONSE
HAVE NOT HAD THE TIME	38%
NO STAFF/RESOURCES	17%
NO NEED	9%
SCHEDULING DIFFICULTIES	13%
NEVER RECEIVED A COPY	26%
OTHER	9%
PLAN TO USE	15%

CHART 13. Reasons for Not Using RTCD, n=53

Respondents unanimously have observed that first-generation students and parents take away a knowledge of the college application process that they would otherwise lack, as a result of using materials from the toolkit.

Future Plans for Using RTCD

Nearly all respondents (97%) will continue to use RTCD in one setting or another. Only five respondents do not plan to use RTCD in the future, and of those, only one has already used the guide. Thus, professionals who have been using the guide are highly likely to continue using its materials. In addition, those who are not currently using RTCD are likely to implement it in the near future.

IN WHAT SETTING DO YOU PLAN TO USE RTCD IN THE FUTURE?

OUTREACH PROGRAMS
44%

DO NOT PLAN TO USE
2%

OTHER
8%

CLASSROOMS
25%

COUNSELING/ADVISING
21%
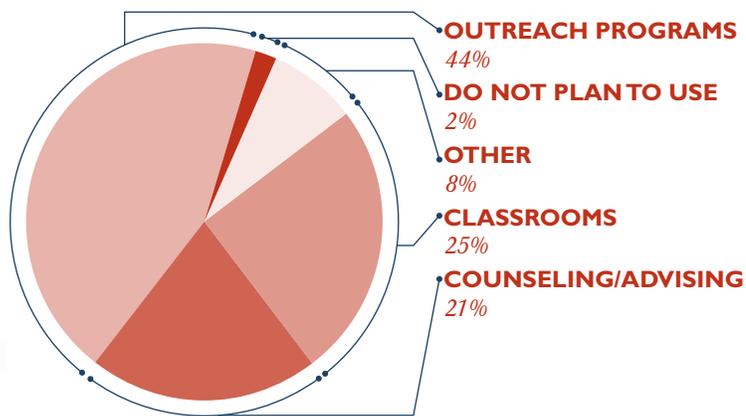
CHART 14. RTCD Future Setting, n=113

Of those who plan to use RTCD in the future, 40% plan to use it in two or more settings.

The majority plan to use Section A1 ("Dream a Little Dream") in the future, followed by B2 ("Being a Wise Borrower"), B3 ("Who Wants to Spend $20,000?"), B4 ("Comparing Financial Aid Packages") and C1 ("Preparing for College"). Respondents are least likely to plan to use Sections B1 ("Debunking the Myths of Financial Aid"), and A3–A5 ("College 101," "The Life and Times of a First-Generation College Student," and "Mock College Admissions") in the future.

Note that these results may appear inconsistent with the ratings of each section on page 20. The number of respondents is smaller on this question; possibly due to survey fatigue, respondents may not have reached these final sets of questions. It could also be that respondents have already used sections A3-B1 with their students and do not need to repeat them, and they may not have used sections such as B2 yet because they are waiting for their students to advance to a higher grade level. More importantly, than which sections respondents will use in the future, is that almost all are planning to continue using and recommending the guide.

WHICH RTCD LESSONS DO YOU PLAN TO USE?
check all that apply

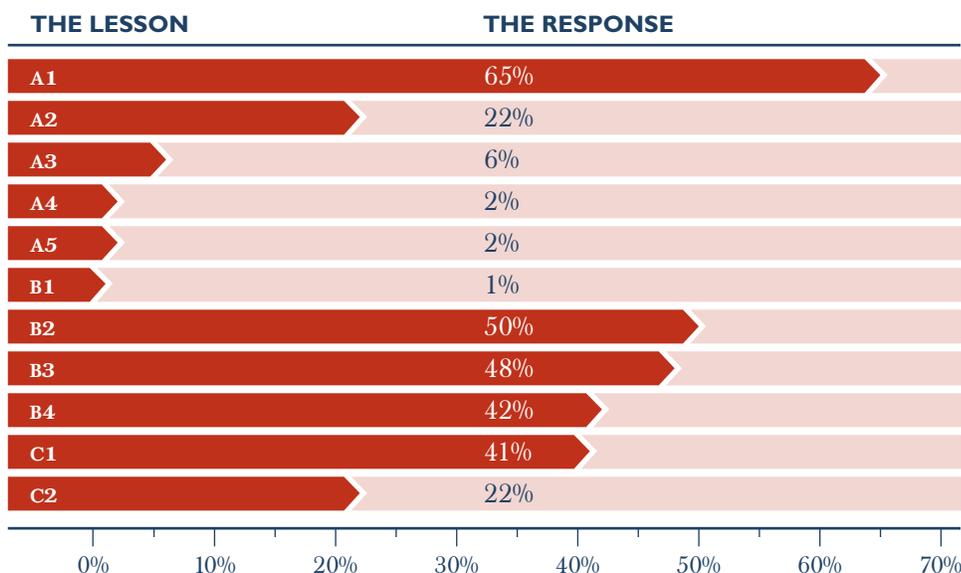| THE LESSON	THE RESPONSE
A1	65%
A2	22%
A3	6%
A4	2%
A5	2%
B1	1%
B2	50%
B3	48%
B4	42%
C1	41%
C2	22%

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%

CHART 15. RTCD Future Lesson Use, n=103

The following are verbatim comments about the curriculum, including suggestions for improvements to RTCD:

"The materials may have to be updated regularly to keep it interesting and relevant to the students. Having a binder of actual lessons and exercises gave the counselors more confidence when they do pre-college workshops. They were able to engage the students more." –Program Director, Educational Talent Search, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York

"We felt the info was useful but mostly already in our curriculum. It was good to see it in a different format. I wish the CD had the presentations as PowerPoints and not just PDFs." –Assistant Director, Upward Bound, Keene State College, NH

"Would love to see some tools to use with elementary age students." –Coordinator, College Resource Centers, Cincinnati Youth Collaborative

"RTCD is a wonderful curriculum for our high school students in helping them to learn more about the realities of a college education." –Interim Director, Upward Bound, Kutztown University, PA

"THANK YOU! This curriculum really saved me in my first year but then moved my students farther, faster during my second year. The folks who put this together should continue to do this very important work. I would love to be a part of anything that helps to continue to develop and add to this curriculum. I recommend this to as many people as I can. And it's free! WONDERFUL!" –Director of College Placement, Bronx Lab School, NY

"Realizing the College Dream allows creativity into my workshops with my students. It makes my job easy and the students have enjoyed it!!"

"The information provided in the curriculum was very informational and helpful for our students." –Assistant Dean, Olive–Harvey College, Chicago, IL

"I enjoy this curriculum because it is easy to use and well written." –Education Specialist, YMCA of Greater Seattle

"Overall, excellent curriculum. Thanks." –ETS Coordinator, Utah Valley State College

"Continues to be a great resource." –Assistant Director ,TRIO Pre-College Programs, Boise State University, ID

"The curriculum is fabulous. I love using it." –College advisor, Center for Creative Arts/ College Access Center, Chattanooga, TN

"The program is a success for the students I work with. Thanks." –Program Coordinator, Project Discovery

"Very helpful information and logically formatted. Thank you so much for the great resource tool!" –Student Advisor, St. Louis Community College Florissant Valley Campus, MO

"The training was great. I hope to attend more in the future!" –Program Manager, Help Achieving Lifelong Objectives (HALO) program, Polk County, OR

"The workshop and information added depth to my classroom presentations." –College & Career Center Coordinator, Kahuku High & Intermediate School, Hawaii

"Very valuable for my target population, underrepresented in college." –MESA Director, MESA/ Ukiah & Ft. Bragg Middle & High Schools, CA

"I like the curriculum, but need to see it prioritized. In other words, since I have only .5 hour per week available with most of my kids, which resources should I use? This is the hardest part of RTCD for me." –Program Coordinator, Skyline Community Action Program, Project Discovery, VA

*"*Realizing the College Dream *allows creativity into my workshops with my students. It makes my job easy and the students have enjoyed it!!"*

"Great materials. Easy to understand, easy to present, great handouts and visuals. Thanks!"

"It is well written, lends itself to a classroom setting, and was well received. Since the same students are enrolled in the program for 3-4 years, the instruction has not been repeated since then. Once we have enough new cohorts, we will be able to use it again."

TELEPHONE INTERVIEW SUMMARIES

The Pell Institute conducted telephone interviews, the summaries of which supplement quantitative survey findings by providing further insight into the usage of the *Realizing the College Dream* toolkit. The Pell Institute requested interviews on behalf of ECMC Foundation, with survey respondents who: 1) indicated that they have been actively using the toolkit, and 2) granted permission for follow-up phone calls or emails.

The interviews represent a diverse mix of geographic regions and target audiences at the following programs and institutions:

- *Ubuntu Mentorship Program, Otterbein College, Columbus, OH*
- *Project Discovery, Blacksburg, VA*
- *TRIO Programs at Kutztown University, Kutztown, PA*
- *GEAR UP in Woodburn, OR*
- *TRIO Programs at Cañada College, San Francisco, CA*
- *Hispanic Alliance for Career Enhancement, Chicago, IL*
- *Southern Maryland College Access Network*
- *University of California, President's Office, Regional Academic Collaboratives*
- *Washington Manor Middle School, Oakland, CA*

The interview summaries that follow produced several common themes:

1. *Respondents learned about RTCD either through colleagues or training announcements, and continue to refer the curriculum to other practitioners working with college access programs.*

2. *Respondents expressed enormous appreciation of the "down to earth" and relatable tone that specifically targets their underrepresented college-going populations.*

3. *Respondents selectively disperse and customize the order of materials based on their students' grade levels.*

4. *The most common frustrations are not related to the toolkit materials themselves but rather surround a lack of participation that results from programmatic and funding issues. Respondents often lack the resources or the buy-in necessary to run their programs and recruit additional students.*

5. *Respondents unanimously have observed that first-generation college students and parents take away a knowledge of the college application process that they would otherwise lack, as a result of using materials from the toolkit.*

6. *Respondents often prefer more interactive materials that better engage their students, and sometimes adapt the materials from Power Point presentations to more active formats such as games and internet searches.*

Unless dictated by programmatic changes, respondents plan to continue using and recommending RTCD and feel that it has made a tremendous difference in the lives and futures of their students. (The interview guide can be found in Appendix B.)

"I loved how complete, comprehensive and clear it was to use—it was ready to use, whereas other resources I used need work first before I could use it. I can't say thank you enough."

Ubuntu Mentorship Program, Otterbein College, Columbus, OH

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The director of Ubuntu at Otterbein College in Columbus, Ohio, created the program in 2005. "Ubuntu" is an African term for community, and the program links together middle through college-level students from local public schools in a mentoring program. College students mentor high school students, who in turn mentor middle school students regarding access to higher education. The director of the program refers to the mentoring process a "shell game," because students must first learn the materials in order to teach them. He originally learned about RTCD through an administrator in the Columbus schools in 2006, and has since integrated components of the RTCD curriculum into his program.

TARGET PARTICIPANTS

The schools participating in Ubuntu are located in a low-income urban area. Of the student participants, 14 are in college, 24 are in high school and 18 are middle school students. Nearly all participants are receiving free or reduced lunch, and 90% are African American.

Fifty-six students total enrolled in the program in the 2008-09 academic year, down from 100 the previous year due to a decrease in funding, which necessitated dropping two participating schools due to rising transportation costs. Also, enrollment at the local schools is dropping and the district is currently restructuring the system to combine middle and high school grades, 7–12.

PROGRAM SPECIFICS

The Ubuntu director spent the summer working with both high school and college student mentors to customize RTCD materials for participating middle school students. Student mentors in the program meet in the afternoons during the school year to learn mentoring methods, and mentor five to six students each. The director distributes packets to the high school students with instructions about mentoring and explanations about access concepts.

Student mentors created a diary in which they documented their experiences, thoughts about mentoring and sources of inspiration. The idea was originally built on *Freedom Writers*, the book popularized by a movie of the same name, about a teacher at an inner-city classroom.

MATERIALS

The director uses the RTCD materials–primarily those pertaining to careers and financial aid–in conjunction with the program "here and there." He hasn't delved into the budgeting activities yet because of time restrictions, and he feels they are too detailed for students in his program. The RTCD activity demonstrating the difference in salary earned by degree is "striking and telling." He likes to use flip charts, and various presentation formats. With "myths of financial aid," for example, he had students draw concepts on a large sheet of parchment paper. He helps teach the students how to compare the various local colleges and academic programs. He also borrows materials from "I Know I Can," a publication from the Columbus City schools.

Students who participate in the program develop a better sense of the college process than they would have otherwise, and their grades improve. In addition, they are interested in the ideas behind the program and talk a lot about the mentoring relationships they have developed with students at other levels.

RESULTS

Students who participate in the program develop a better sense of the college process than they would have otherwise, and their grades improve. In addition, they are interested in the ideas behind the program and talk a lot about the mentoring relationships they have developed with students at other levels. Most mentors are "absolutely devoted," and middle school students are "enamored" with their high school mentors. He finds that RTCD materials are "teacher-friendly," and appreciates the Power Point presentations as well as the more interactive formats, such as the crossword puzzle.

CHALLENGES

Many participants have behavior problems, and participation in the program is self-selective–therefore students do not always show up to mentoring sessions. Some student mentors had "focus issues" and dropped out because they couldn't sustain their interest in higher education. Also, most are involved in other activities, such as sports, and do not always make the time for mentoring.

The director has made some exceptions in the past and allowed students who live outside the school district into the program because they need the help. However, he would like to make the program more selective, in order to improve attendance.

Program resources are limited; the initial funds provided by a foundation have run out and they now rely on a national community service grant.

FUTURE

Structural program changes aside, the director plans to continue to use RTCD materials in the same way. He is appreciative of the free resource.

Project Discovery, Blacksburg, VA

PROGRAM BACKGROUND
The director of Project Discovery in Blacksburg, VA learned about RTCD when she attended the ECMC Foundation training held in Virginia in 2005. She began using RTCD materials in the 2007-2008 academic year in monthly workshops for high school students. The Project Discovery high school program consists of core workshops on topics such as financial aid and careers, for which they rely on several different curricular sources, including RTCD. The middle school program focuses more on social activities.

Twenty Project Discovery programs are located in Virginia; this one covers the Southwest region. Project Discovery is a free program, and partners with community organizations and local schools to offer activities such as monthly visits to college campuses including Radford, Virginia Tech, and East Tennessee State University, in addition to the workshops. The program also provides fee waivers for the SATs and college applications, recommendations, and a college guidebook to participating students.

TARGET
This program targets low-income, middle and high school students. Guidance counselors identify students who need help, but are not typically active in schools, whom she refers to as "non-joiners with potential." The director works with six schools in her region–three middle and three high schools. In some local schools, the program is structured as a club that students can join. Currently, 82 students total are enrolled in the program. Of these, 50 are in high school, and 15-20 are in each workshop.

MATERIALS
The program director mostly uses the first three activities in Section A ("Dream a Little Dream," "Exploring Career Options" and "College 01"), and Sections B and C in their entirety ("Debunking the Myth…" and "Getting Involved…").

RESULTS
Of 22 seniors this past year, all graduated and 16 attended college. The director has noticed increases in the knowledge of the application process, the benefits of higher education and career awareness.

Career-related materials encourage students to start thinking about what they really want to do with their lives. For example, a recent high school graduate had no concrete career plans, and was planning to live with her mother following graduation. However, because of the materials, she submitted a community college application and is now enrolled in a nursing program. The director notes that "repetition helps"–really driving home the point, and drilling the information into these students who otherwise would not be aware of their options.

Students think about doing things with their lives they never would have otherwise considered. The "What would you do with $20,000" exercise is especially helpful, results are "amazing." Students review and discuss scenarios such as buying a car, and think about what those purchases would really get them in the long run compared with an education. She hears "crazy" responses initially, about lavish purchases that students would like to make, but the students eventually become more realistic as the materials "get them to thinking." The RTCD materials are user-friendly, in "terms that kids can relate to."

Although she has distributed evaluation surveys, she finds that the responses are not as helpful as the students' responses to the workshop exercises themselves, since students do not take the time to complete meaningful evaluations.

Upward Bound, SSS & Talent Search, Kutztown University, PA

BACKGROUND

The TRIO counselor at Kutztown University in Pennsylvania heard about RTCD through a colleague in the Academic Alliance program who attended the RTCD training. Academic Alliance is a partnership between the Allentown school district and corporate sponsors, and consists of workshops on the weekends. The counselor's colleagues "loved [RTCD] from the beginning" and encouraged its use by other staff in the program.

The counselor used the curriculum in conjunction with Upward Bound as a 45-minute weekly seminar class entitled "Dream Works," for both high school and college students who are primarily low-income and first-generation. She also uses parts of RTCD for Talent Search, SSS and Upward Bound Math-Science.

MATERIALS

The counselor mostly uses Section A ("Thinking of Yourself as a College-Bound Student), and enhances some of the materials, for example by putting the Dream exercise to music and asking students to visualize and talk about their dreams. She also uses parts of C ("Getting Involved…") and has used the materials in both one-on-one and group settings.

With previous courses, she would have to write out lesson plans, but with RTCD she can use existing materials as they are written. She had to leave some parts out that involved more lengthy activities, such as writing out paragraphs, because the class is only 45 minutes long.

RESULTS

RTCD has been well received by program coordinators and students alike. She likes that RTCD is "very interactive," and students can "incorporate all studies," such as writing and math into activities as a "huge project." They can be creative using different media such as collages. She also appreciates that the program is "all laid out" for her, and she can use the entire thing without having to make any changes.

The counselor finds that the use of computers in conjunction with the curriculum is especially effective because students learn how to find information about college costs and financial aid on their own, rather than being fed the information by a teacher. However, she would like to see alternatives to computer-based activities, since computers are not available for her Talent Search program. She supplements the materials with some external resources; for example information sheets about each major, and classified newspaper ads.

As a result of using RTCD, students are more aware of the different types of colleges and universities, and the cost of attendance. Students did not previously realize, for example, that one could start at a community college and then transfer. She feels the curriculum has "opened horizons."

CHALLENGES

The only problem that the counselor has run into is that sometimes students do not show up—and this is more of an issue with the school than with RTCD. She feels that programs such as Project Discovery should be "mandatory with consequences." More students showed up to Academic Alliance because of the convenient timing on the weekends. In addition, she feels frustrated that she cannot track students who move out of the area, as the school must keep that information confidential.

GEAR UP, Woodburn, OR

BACKGROUND
The director of GEAR UP programs in Woodburn, Oregon schools heard about RTCD through colleagues, then attended the ECMC Foundation training in Portland. He teaches students using RTCD materials in the mornings before school, and further involves students in workshops and field trips. He also works through the District advisory program, which facilitates mentoring, college visits, and scholarships for the same population.

TARGET
The director currently serves 400 students who run the gamut from 7th grade to high school seniors. His students are primarily low-income and first-generation college, with a heavy representation of Latino students.

MATERIALS
The director has used all sections and activities of RTCD, and feels the most useful are "Exploring Career Options" and "Preparing for College."

In comparison with other materials he's using, such as the College Board's "CollegeEd" curriculum, he finds RTCD to be "more sustainable…empowering…easy to use….flexible and less formal."

RESULTS
His first cohort of 75 students in the pilot program just graduated from high school. Of those, 60 entered college, 40 at four-year institutions and 20 at two-year institutions. These college attendance rates were "way higher" than in past years for these populations, when "just a few" graduated from high school and enrolled in postsecondary coursework.

In addition to high school graduation and college attendance rates, students who participate in the program are also taking more rigorous courses once in college. He teaches students the difference between an "easy A" and a more meaningful B in a harder class, such as calculus. This is a shift in thinking for these students, many of whose friends are pregnant, and not even thinking about college.

Additional outcomes include career awareness and involvement in college preparation activities. Students understand better the steps needed to get to college, for example why GPA matters. They are more aware of the application process, and college seems more "doable." He arranges for college campus visits, so that students can see and hear the stories of others like them who are succeeding, which is effective.

CHALLENGES
The main challenge is finding time to set aside for the materials; he has met with students both before and after school. He used to have an advisory period similar to homeroom for 20 minutes, but that was cut out from the middle schools.

FUTURE
There has been a "culture shift" over the last five years; teachers have become more involved with their students' college prep activities and conduct more college visits. He knows of other teachers at schools in the county who are using RTCD materials in the classroom.

He plans to keep using RTCD materials in the same way, but would like to see more activities available online as games or other interactive formats, so that students "can be engaged on their own."

Students think about doing things with their lives they never would have otherwise considered.

Upward Bound, Cañada College

BACKGROUND

The director of Upward Bound at Cañada College, in the San Francisco Bay area, first learned about RTCD through a COE announcement about the RTCD training, then attended the Boulder training in January 2005.

She uses RTCD during a six-week summer access program for 50 students in grades eight through twelve. The program started five years ago, with mostly freshmen and sophomores, approximately 35% juniors, and no seniors at the time. The program has since expanded to include "rising" 9th graders. They have 10-15 new students each year. It's a "small, new program." They have used RTCD for four of the program's five years.

The program entails a college prep class that focuses on the SAT, FAFSA, and skills such as writing and grammar. The class is required of each student in the program.

TARGET

In addition to the middle and high school students, she uses RTCD with approximately 35 parents of students in the program, for a total of 85 participants.

MATERIALS

The director uses all activities with the exception of "Being a Wise Borrower" and "Preparing for College," and assigns materials based on grade level. Some especially useful materials are "Myths of Financial Aid" and worksheets comparing aid packages. The guide is a "good blend" of information such as curriculum standards and activities. However, she feels that the format is "dry" in some cases, and has converted the straight Power Points into games for younger students, for example a "Jeopardy"-style quiz.

Students enjoy the materials, they are "easy to comprehend." In some cases however, the material feels "dumbed down" to older students. The tone is ideal for middle students, Freshmen and Sophomores, and she also uses some with Juniors and Seniors.

RESULTS

Using the pre/post survey from the curriculum, she noticed a "big difference" in what students learned, particularly in terms of the steps toward college preparation. Students were not familiar with certain terms before, but now "knew everything." The survey was also useful in helping to determine which materials to teach to which grades. However, she feels that the survey is somewhat "static" in that it doesn't change from year to year as students progress.

Of the twelve seniors last year, and eighteen the year before that, 100% graduated on time and were accepted into colleges other than two-year institutions. So far, all have stayed in higher education. Only three total of the 175 participating students so far have needed additional time beyond four years to graduate.

RTCD is not only free, but also a "good, down to earth" resource focusing on her target population. As she said, "Where else are you going to find" these targeted, free resources for her population?

The curriculum is different than others she has encountered because the examples provided illustrate characteristics and situations specific to the populations they serve (low-income, first-generation college, and underrepresented). These students initially do not have the motivation to even apply for college, but the examples show them that it's a real, attainable possibility. The tone is "down to earth" and relatable. Students respond well to real scenarios that apply to their circumstances. For example, the "Comparing Financial Aid Packages" activity describes a student who is similar to them, with limited funds and a lack of college-going family background.

She "loves" the worksheets but can't use the same materials every year with the students as they progress in school. She has to alter the materials by grade level, although they are not organized in that manner.

CHALLENGES

The materials are not always appropriate for each age group. For example, the "Dream a Little Dream" game is "too sophisticated" for 8th graders but "too simple" for 12th grade, so she mostly uses it with 10th graders. She has developed it into an interactive game for seniors with scenarios related to living arrangements and prompts for information retrieval from websites such as Craigslist. For Freshmen, she uses a broader game from Kansas State University similar to the "Life" boardgame–it's fun but educational, and a good introduction to the RTCD topics.

FUTURE

She has recommended RTCD to the Freshman success class at her college, and to the Peninsula Habitat for Humanity and College Track programs. She "highly recommends [RTCD] to everyone."

RTCD is not only free, but also a "good, down to earth" resource focusing on her target population. As she said, "Where else are you going to find" these targeted, free resources for her population?

The RTCD materials are user-friendly,
in "terms that kids can relate to."

Hispanic Alliance for Career Enhancement, Chicago, IL

BACKGROUND

The school programs coordinator for the Hispanic Alliance for Career Enhancement in Chicago learned about RTCD from a colleague who attended the NCAN conference approximately four years ago. She previously worked with 7th–12th grade students in an after-school access program, and also used the materials at monthly parent meetings.

Students who participate in the program are academically at-risk. The program provides tutoring and mentoring, and has a warning system in place that alerts staff if students or parents do not show up to sessions.

TARGET

The program targets low-income, first-generation college students, and many ESL immigrants, all of whom need assistance with college preparation and awareness.

This past year (2007-08) was the seventh year of program. They enlisted 66 students in 7th through 12th grades, and about 40 parents attended the monthly meetings.

MATERIALS

She has used different materials by grade level through regular workshops. The materials aimed at preparing students for college are especially useful for immigrants who made up the majority of her program's population. They don't understand, or are perhaps not even aware of the requirements for college admissions.

Financial awareness materials are also especially helpful; her students didn't previously know how to use credit cards or other basic financial skills they will need in college and for their careers. She feels it is greatly important to help undocumented students through the financial aid process, and perhaps those materials should be continually updated as new resources are available.

She has adapted some materials for parents, for example the "Myths about Financial Aid" activity, because "all parents want to know about financial aid." She tries to get parents more involved in students' lives. Parents feel "empowered" to have college and financial aid specifics such as deadlines, and then make their kids aware of this information. She developed a parent advisory committee, whose members act as ambassadors and recommend the program to other parents in the community.

She finds that the materials are not as appropriate for the program components which are more academic in nature.

She found that RTCD is "SO comprehensive."
It's had a "huge impact." She "loved" that she
could use various handouts from the curriculum
here and there. It was previously hard to find free
activities, and is "nice to have [them] in one place."

RESULTS

She found that RTCD is "SO comprehensive." It's had a "huge impact." She "loved" that she could use various handouts from the curriculum here and there. It was previously hard to find free activities, and is "nice to have [them] in one place."

In most cases 100% of seniors enrolled in postsecondary education, with the exception of this past year, in which one did not. All but one of those enrolled in college completed at least two years of study.

It is "hard to find new and interactive and free college readiness materials…[RTCD] is comprehensive and interactive."

FUTURE

She is at a different organization now, where she is launching a new program that will be more of a hybrid of a diversity recruitment for corporations, and career prep/college readiness for high schools. She has not yet used RTCD in conjunction with this program, but would like to, especially the financial aid quiz and college 101 materials. The program has enlisted three public high schools with 30 students at each school participating, and she would also like to involve the parents.

Southern Maryland College Access Network

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The Southern Maryland College Access Network provides regularly scheduled curriculum-based workshops, financial aid nights and college visits for students in the surrounding rural areas, to help prepare them for college. The program's executive director hires part-time pre-college advisors who visit four local public schools, each with between 2-25 students in the program. She holds 21 financial aid nights per year, and conducts one college campus visit each year to St. Mary's, the local honors college. Many were previously unaware of the various options within the state, and would not have considered the institutions to which they end up applying.

PARTICIPATION

In the 2007-2008 academic year, 678 11th and 12th grade students were on the original roster—of those, 455 were regular attendees (defined as participants who attended two sessions or more of the 32 offered). This participation rate represented a 100% increase since 2006, the first year of the program, when they had 222 participants.

To increase attendance, the program sometimes rewards participants with raffles such as iPod giveaways, or gift cards which have been donated to the organization. There is typically a requirement to qualify for the prize, for example students must attend financial aid night or a minimum number of sessions. In addition, those who attended at least half of the 32 sessions were invited to attend a local sports skybox, and were then featured in the local newspaper.

MATERIALS

The executive director "broke down" RTCD materials to fit into one-half hour "manageable" sessions by grade level, and supplemented the curriculum with some of her own materials. The program staff "constantly tweaks" the workshop information.

The director constructs worksheets for each lesson that guide the advisors by providing a summary of each session's goals, activities, materials and relevant education standards. The education standard component is helpful when teachers at school question the program's importance.

She then uploads curriculum materials online, where advisors can download files and make copies to distribute to students at the schools. The program does not have an office and uses each participating school's facilities.

A "warm-up" activity typically consists of group research, whereby the students look up information online or from college guidebooks pertaining to applications and financial aid. The Cost of Attendance comparison helps explain to students how to look at award letters. They also work on goal setting, time management, and steps toward college application.

In addition to RTCD materials, the director uses various resources from the internet, newspaper classifieds, Blackboard teaching software, and worksheets from the College Board, the Common Application, finaid.org, and NCAN, among others.

It is important for her to brand and tie together materials to be identifiable as connected to the program. Guides like RTCD make her job easier by gathering in one place all the existing pertinent information.

RESULTS

The workshops help students "form goals, and get ideas about the future." Of the senior attendees this past year, 85% were accepted into postsecondary education. She would like to track students through postsecondary education to measure retention but does not have the resources necessary to do so; funding is quite limited.

Students appreciate having a place to solicit feedback and confirm deadlines. They feel encouraged by the program, which provides for a more seamless transition to college.

School administrators are happy with the program, although some teachers have been resistant to its implementation (see "Challenges"). Some students become so reliant on the director and her counselors that they call each week after school hours with questions about financial aid or college applications.

One student she worked with is now enrolled at MIT, and developing a website for the program. Another student who was once homeless and whose family discouraged her application to college is now enrolled on a full-ride scholarship, thanks to her program advisor who "hunted her down" and called the college on her behalf. A first-generation college student who is now attending Morgan State University almost lost her financial aid because of a change in her dependency status, until the program director stepped in to help.

First-generation college students' families are often so excited and proud about their kids' college plans, they invite the program staff and other teachers to going away parties.

These students would have faced more of a struggle without the help of the program, and in many cases would not have even applied for the particular schools they ended up attending without the program's support and encouragement. Students and their families regularly call her with questions, even on weekends.

In addition to the knowledge gained and steps taken towards college attendance, participants are often unsocial, and the program provides them with a community during the lunch hour.

CHALLENGES

Some sessions are better attended than others. However attendance is not required because the director feels that her program staff would have to spend a lot of time making phone calls to track students down. She currently sends passes to class to remind students of workshops.

Some teachers discourage their students from attending sessions, even though the principal and superintendent support the program, because they would rather provide the service themselves. However, teachers' materials do not necessarily target students specifically. At these schools, "hardly any kids show up."

Ideally, she would like to see RTCD broken into two curriculums by grade level, and would also like additional funding in order to distribute the curriculum as one package rather than individual handouts. They would like for students to have the worksheets all in one place.

FUTURE

The director hopes to continue expanding her program into the middle schools, and regularly partners with the local Chamber of Commerce to build on her existing program.

With previous courses, she would have to write out lesson plans, but with RTCD she can use existing materials as they are written.

University of California Regional Academic Collaboratives

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The Director of Regional Academic Collaboratives for the University of California President's Office (also a Professor at the University of California, Berkeley) works with local school districts to help low-performing rural students develop a college-going culture. He designed a summer program academy for 65 schools in California, as well as some schools in Arizona and Hawaii.

The summer academy entails 30 hours of college readiness instruction, two of which are pulled directly from RTCD. The director found RTCD through a colleague on campus, and has distributed 300-400 CDs of the curriculum at conferences.

Counselors in the program train teachers to use the tool (initially Berkeley trained the counselors). A total of 3,000 students in California are currently enrolled in the program.

He originally created the program because research on the 8th-9th grade transition shows a 40% failure rate. Students are "clueless" about college and careers prior to using RTCD, and the materials help them understand the steps needed to refine and reach their goals.

MATERIALS

The director relies on the "Debunking the Financial Aid Myth" activity from RTCD, and presents that in conjunction with financial aid officers from UC and CSU. "Dream a Little Dream" is also "a favorite."

The program also uses elements of RTCD at workshops mandated for parents. At these workshops, students share their 'dreams' that they've constructed in the program with their parents. Both the students and parents "love" that, some parents "break down and cry."

RESULTS

They track pre/post college and career awareness at the academy overall (not specifically for RTCD). Those results show only an 8% failure rate compared to the 40% rate cited earlier. His program has won awards at both the state and national levels.

The academy program has shown "extraordinary" results, and they are now expanding their reach and targeting urban students as well. The program is "being replicated everywhere."

FUTURE

The director continues to disseminate and recommend RTCD to institutions within the system. He plans to continue utilizing RTCD as his program expands.

Washington Manor Middle School, Oakland, CA

BACKGROUND

A teacher and "multicultural specialist" at a middle school outside of Oakland, Cailfornia heard about RTCD through her principal, who learned about it through Berkeley's Center for Educational Outreach at a conference in 2006. Although she was a dance and physical education teacher at the time who "had never done anything like this before," she was popular among the students, and the principal asked her to pilot the curriculum.

TARGET

She taught RTCD curriculum for three years, as one-half of a daily elective class for 6th-8th graders. She has reached approximately 200-300 students total, in three sections per year of 30-40 students each. Most of her students are immigrants–not necessarily low-income, but all are for the most part first-generation college. Roughly 40% are Asian American.

MATERIALS

She used all of the materials in RTCD, with the exception of Section C ("Getting Involved and Staying Involved: Workshops and Presentations for Families of College-Bound Youth"), since she only worked with students, and not their parents. She finds the cost of living and career cluster guides especially useful, particularly "The More You Learn, the More You Earn." These activities "drove the conversation" with students, about topics that parents don't typically discuss at home. She does not provide her students with too much detail regarding financial aid since they are fairly young. She did apply some math concepts to practical personal finance lessons, for example to explain the basics of a car loan.

While RTCD materials were effective, she finds there is "nothing better" than live speakers. She enlisted various guest speakers for the class which turned out to be much easier than expected; professionals in the community were more than happy to participate and connect with her students, and to provide examples of why college attendance is important.

Past speakers included an African American veteran, a nurse, a yoga teacher who recently went back to school, the principal who is African American and was adopted and ended up at Stanford, a janitor who talked about technical school, some of the parents, a medical assistant from Laos who spoke English as a third language, and African American male law students. They talked about some of the hurdles they faced such as debt, and resources they utilized such as scholarships. Current students spoke about what it's like to be away from home. She also brought in speakers who don't have college degrees but wish they did, such as mechanics. She now has a video bank of the speakers.

While her students for the most part are engaged in education, she helped them begin a conversation they were not yet having at home. For example, she explained the difference between grants, scholarships and loans, at a basic level.

She also used the computer lab for some activities, where students looked up careers and "what it takes" to enter and progress in certain fields. She helped point students in the direction of the many free and online resources available to help students in California prepare and apply for college.

For the final project of the class, each student prepared a poster with the college of his or her choice, including a pie chart with student demographics. She preferred these types of visual activities to help get points across and relate to the students.

RESULTS
She "loves" RTCD and students find the materials useful. She "got [students] fired up" and motivated to apply for and attend college, and to help boost their respective demographics. The "only surprising" aspect was "how enjoyable" it was to teach this class. The logistics and preparation could be "a little cumbersome…but gratifying."

While her students for the most part are engaged in education, she helped them begin a conversation they were not yet having at home. For example, she explained the difference among grants, scholarships and loans, at a basic level.

She is unable to track the outcomes of students from her class because they are on a new software system, although she would like to know if the class has made a difference long-term.

FUTURE
The new superintendent has implemented AVID, which will take the place of her class with RTCD. She is disappointed that she will no longer be able to use RTCD.

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As a result of using RTCD, students are more aware of the different types of colleges and universities, and the cost of attendance.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The RTCD usage survey shows that the curriculum is very well used and regarded among education outreach support staff. Survey respondents represent a diverse range of positions, organizations, and locations. The 135 respondents alone who are actively using RTCD are reaching nearly 30,000 low-income, and underrepresented college-going students. The small number of respondents who do not use RTCD still have a need for its materials, but simply have not had the time or resources to implement additional programs.

RTCD is most commonly used by outreach professionals working for college access programs that target low-income, first-generation middle and high school students. They learned about the curriculum guide through press releases, workshops and colleagues, and plan to continue using RTCD on a regular basis. Many respondents customize the materials according to the age range of their participants.

Respondent comments and interviews indicate that RTCD is a comprehensive, effective, accessible and flexible resource that enables professionals to address the specific set of challenges faced by disadvantaged students. Many of these students are unaware of the steps needed to gain access to higher education, and RTCD materials explain these steps in a relatable and constructive tone. Students gain a sense of confidence and motivation that enables them to reach and thrive in postsecondary education.

Perhaps most importantly as an indicator of the success and effectiveness of RTCD, those who have implemented components of the curriculum are so satisfied with the materials that they are acting as advocates and recommending the guide to other colleagues throughout the field.

Outreach professionals in programs such as TRIO, GEAR UP, College Access Networks, Project Discovery, TERI and Pathways to College Network, as well as independent living programs, city and county governments, workforce development programs, nonprofit agencies, and state financial aid agencies all find the guide useful and would like to see similar resources available in the future.

In conclusion, this evaluation demonstrates that *Realizing the College Dream* is among the timely and effective tools that contribute to a national goal of improving the American economy by improving our educational system. *Realizing the College Dream* is helping low income, college-going students, who have historically been left behind, achieve the "*American Dream.*"

SURVEY FINDINGS

APPENDIX A: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

ECMC Foundation - Realizing the College Dream *Survey*

Thank you for your interest in the ECMC Foundation's *Realizing the College Dream* Teacher Advisor Guide.

We would like to find out whether or not you have used the curriculum, and if so how you have used it.

Please take 5-10 minutes to complete this brief survey by **Friday, May 30th**. To change responses or move forward, please click on the "previous" or "next" buttons at the bottom of the page. Do not use your browser's navigation buttons to move within the survey. You must complete the survey in one sitting, your responses will not be saved if you re-open the survey at a later time. To submit your response to us, simply click the "submit" button on the last page.

You may direct any questions about the survey to piproject.manager@pellinstitute.org. To find out more about *Realizing the College Dream* or other ECMC Foundation publications and activities, please visit www.ecmcfoundation.org.

Thank you very much for your participation.

* Indicates Response Required
How did you first hear about *Realizing the College Dream* (RTCD)?

Please specify			
Press release/email (organization name):		Colleague (name/title/organization):	
Workshop (name/location):		Other (please specify):	
Conference (name/organization):			

How did you first obtain a copy of RTCD?

Please specify			
Website download (website name):		Conference (name/organization):	
Training session (name/location):		Colleague (name/title/organization):	
Workshop (name/location):		Other (please specify):	

When did you first obtain your copy of RTCD? (month/year)

* Since obtaining your copy of RTCD, have you used it in any setting or format
*(i.e., in a classroom, as a presentation, other)***?**

Yes		No	

If you have used *Realizing the College Dream* (RTCD), in what setting?

Please select all that apply	
☐ Classroom/school	☐ Outreach program i.e. TRIO, GEAR UP
☐ Extracurricular program	☐ Other (Please specify):
☐ Counseling/Guidance	

In what format have you used RTCD?

Please select all that apply	
☐ One-on-one sessions	☐ Other (please specify):
☐ Workshops/group settings	

With whom do/did you use RTCD?

Please select all that apply	
☐ Elementary school students (4th–5th grades)	☐ First-generation college applicants
☐ Middle school students (6th–8th grades)	☐ Academically underprepared students
☐ High school freshmen/sophomores	☐ Parents of middle school students
☐ High school juniors/seniors	☐ Parents of high school students
☐ Racial/ethnic minorities	☐ Other (please specify):
☐ Low-income students	

Approximately how many TOTAL have you reached through the RTCD curriculum?

Total (estimate if neccessary)			
Students		Other	
Parents		TOTAL	

Please rate each of the following RTCD sections and lessons

if applicable, with 1 being the least effective, 2 being moderately effective and 3 being the most effective, or N/A if you did not use that section/lesson.

	Effectiveness			
	1 Least	2 Moderate	3 Most	N/A
Section A Overall: Thinking of Yourself as a College-Bound Student				
A1. Dream a Little Dream				
A2. Exploring Career Options				
A3. College 101				
A4. The Life and Times of a First-Generation College Student				
A5. Mock College Admissions				
Section B Overall: Debunking the Myth that "You Can't Afford College"				
B1. Debunking the Myths of Financial Aid				
B2. Being a Wise Borrower				
B3. Who Wants to Spend $20,000?				
B4. Comparing Financial Aid Packages				
Section C Overall: Getting Involved and Staying Involved				
C1. Preparing for College				
C2. Planning a Financial Aid Night for Students and Families				
Section D: Appendices				

Please indicate to what degree you observed the following specific outcomes in your participants as a result of using the RTCD curriculum
if applicable, with 1 being a very weak effect and 5 being the strongest.

	Effectiveness					
	1 Weakest	2	3 Moderate	4	5 Strongest	N/A
Increased knowledge of financial aid						
Increased knowledge of college application process						
Increased understanding of the benefits of higher education						
Increased interest in furthering education						
Increased career awareness						
Increased participation in college-preparatory activities (e.g. taking college entrance exams, applying for admissions/financial aid, going on college visits)						
Increased preparation for college						
Increased academic achievement						

Do/did you use the curriculum:

	In its entirety, in the original order
	Broken up to fit within my existing curriculum

Please provide more detail about how you implemented the RTCD curriculum in terms of scheduling, target population(s), setting, format, and other considerations:

Do/did you use the RTCD curriculum:

Please select one			
	Weekly		Annually
	Monthly		Other (please specify):
	Semi-Annually		

* Do/did you formally measure outcomes of your RTCD curriculum usage?

Yes		No	

If so, how did you measure outcomes?

Please select all that apply			
	Survey(s)		Case studies
	Focus group(s)		Other
	Pre/Post-testing		

Please provide more detail about data collection efforts and findings below:

If you have not yet used your copy of RTCD, why?

Please select all that apply			
	Have not had the time		My students do not need the materials
	Do not have the staff/resources		Scheduling difficulties
	Material is unclear/difficult to use		Other (please specify):

In what setting do you plan to use RTCD in the future?

Please select all that apply		
	Do not plan to use	Outreach programs (i.e., TRIO, GEAR UP, or other access programs)
	Counseling sessions	
	Classroom settings	Other

Which RTCD lessons do you plan to use in the future?

Please select all that apply		
	A1. Dream a Little Dream	B2. Being a Wise Borrower
	A2. Exploring Career Options	B3. Who Wants to Spend $20,000?
	A3. College 101	B4. Comparing Financial Aid Packages
	A4. The Life and Times of a First-Generation College Student	C1. Preparing for College
	A5. Mock College Admissions	C2. Planning a Financial Aid Night for Students and Families
	B1. Debunking the Myths of Financial Aid	

Please tell us more about yourself and your school or organization:

*What type of school or organization do you work for?

	Elementary school		Community center
	Middle school		Outreach program
	High school		Other organization:
	College/university		

*What is your role?

	School counselor		Outreach program staff
	School teacher		Other

* May we have your permission to contact you by email or phone to find out more about your experiences with RTCD?

Yes		No	

*What is the best way to reach you?

Phone		Email	

Please provide your contact information below:

First Name					
Last Name					
*Title					
* Organization/School					
Street Address					
Address Line 2					
City		**State**		**Zip Code**	
Phone Number					
*Email Address					

Please provide any additional comments regarding your experiences with the RTCD curriculum in the space below:

APPENDIX B: TELEPHONE INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. *Tell me more about your experiences with RTCD—(how you learned about it, impressions, feedback, outcomes, uses, etc)*

2. *Who are you targeting with the curriculum—any specific populations of students, or parents (which)? If so, how did you reach them?*

3. *How have you used the guide (format, setting, scheduling)? Have you run into any problems scheduling sessions to use the curriculum? Have you found any innovative uses of the curriculum?*

4. *How is the curriculum different than others you have come across?*

5. *Is there anything you don't like about the guide (materials, organization, content, format, etc.)?*

6. *What were the results of using the guide? What were your initial goals and which did you meet? Were there any surprising or interesting findings? Do you have any reports to share?*

7. *What are your plans for future use of the curriculum? What, if anything, would you do differently the next time you use the curriculum?*

8. *Have you told any colleagues about the guide? If so may we receive their contact information?*

9. *Do you have any supplemental information or materials, or websites that you would like to share?*

10. *Please tell us anything else that you think might be helpful in regards to your experiences with the guide.*

Thank you for your feedback.

INSTRUMENT

Thank you for your interest in *Realizing the College Dream*; we hope that you found the training to be useful. This **one-page survey** about the *Realizing the College Dream* curriculum will take **two minutes** to complete, and it is critical that we receive your feedback in order to continue funding training sessions and resources to help you better serve your students.

To complete your survey response, simply click the "submit" button at the bottom of the page.

* Indicates Response Required

1. Have you used any components of the *Realizing the College Dream (RTCD)* curriculum?*

Yes		No	

2. Approximately how many participants have you reached through the RTCD curriculum *(if applicable)***?**

Total (estimate if neccessary)			
Students		Other	
Parents		TOTAL	

3. If you have used *Realizing the College Dream*, in what setting?

Please specify			
Classroom/school		Outreach program i.e. TRIO, GEAR UP	
Extracurricular program		Other (please specify):	
Couseling/Guidance			

4. If you have not yet used your copy of *Realizing the College Dream*, why?

Please select all that apply			
	Have not had the time		My students do not need the materials
	Do not have the staff/resources		Scheduling difficulties
	Material is unclear/difficult to use		Other (please specify):

* Email Address	

If you wish to share any comments regarding your experiences with *Realizing the College Dream*, please provide them in the space below:

Thank you very much for your participation. You may direct any questions about the survey to **piproject.manager@pellinstitute.org**. To find out more about *Realizing the College Dream* or other ECMC Foundation publications and activities, please visit **www.ecmcfoundation.org**.

APPENDIX D: RESPONSE RATE

A total of 198 individuals responded to the survey. Of these respondents, 53% were either individuals on the ECMC lists or colleagues to whom those individuals had forwarded the survey; and the remaining 47% of responses came external listservs, although it is possible that some received the survey link through a colleague on the ECMC and COE lists since we do not have direct access to email addresses on the NCAN and NCCEP lists.[1]

Taking into account the undeliverable email addresses, the ECMC Foundation list–which is the population most likely to have been directly exposed to RTCD as the majority of these individuals had either attended trainings or downloaded the guide online–had a 12% response rate. While no formal standards of acceptable online survey response rates have been established thus far, the targeted lists do not belong to a continually updated membership database, and therefore were not expected to produce a high response rate. Rather, these individuals provided their contact information either through training events or online downloads over the past several years, and were likely to have changed positions or moved to another institution or organization during the interim. Recent studies have shown declining survey response rates with the movement towards online survey instruments, due to skepticism of "SPAM," or unsolicited emails to large groups.[2]

In order to increase the response rate, we extended the deadline and sent out two reminders by email to the ECMC and COE lists. In addition, we contacted individuals identified as "super-users" by ECMC–those who have not only used the materials, but also have actively distributed them and volunteered feedback prior to receiving the survey–to request that they forward the survey within their networks or send us additional email addresses of known users of the guide.

The response rate was still lower than expected, most likely due to the timing of the initial survey launch at the end of the school year when the majority of our target population of teachers and student outreach staff experience a busy workload. Therefore, in the Fall of 2008, we re-surveyed individuals who had attended ECMC RTCD trainings but did not respond to the original request. This abbreviated one-page re-survey instrument consisted of only four of the original twenty-one questions and collected the most basic, important information to ECMC about RTCD: whether or not respondents used the guide, with how many individuals, and in which settings. (The re-survey instrument can be found in Appendix C.) This re-survey resulted in an additional 59 responses, and with the exception of questions that were not re-surveyed, results below reflect the total 198 respondents.

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1   Undeliverable email addresses are factored into the response rates. A total of 391 from the ECMC Foundation lists, and 1,615 from the COE list were undeliverable. It is unknown how many surveys sent to the two NCAN and NCCEP listservs were returned, or how many responses came specifically from these lists.

2   Sax, L.M., Gilmartin, S.K., and Bryant, A.N. (2003). "Assessing Response Rates and Nonresponse Bias in Web and Paper Surveys," *Research in Higher Education,* 44(4).

ABOUT THE COUNCIL

Established in 1981, the Council for Opportunity in Education is a nonprofit organization, established in 1981, dedicated to furthering the expansion of educational opportunities throughout the United States. Through its numerous membership services, the Council works in conjunction with colleges, universities, and agencies that host TRIO Programs to specifically help low-income students enter college and graduate.

The mission of the Council is to advance and defend the ideal of equal educational opportunity in postsecondary education. As such, the focus of the Council is assuring that the least advantaged segments of the population have a realistic chance to enter and graduate from a postsecondary institution.

For further information contact:

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