

**Massachusetts Department of Higher Education
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**



**Early College Program Preliminary Designation Application
7.31.17**

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Early College—A Vision for Massachusetts

The Promise of Early College

At first glance, the concept of early college is a simple one—a model that includes free standing schools as well as programs within a school, both of which accelerate pathway oriented, well supported college level course taking in high school. Through deep and strategic partnerships between high schools and institutions of higher education, early college programs enable high school students to earn a significant number of college credits on an intentional pathway in a rigorous, highly supportive environment. Early college allows high school students to take college credit bearing courses, as part of a holistic supportive model to ensure student success and seamless progression to higher education. This model offers sea change in the integration and alignment of high school with college.

Early college programs are designed to blend elements of high school and college to provide students with the opportunity to experience and complete college level academic coursework on a clearly articulated pathway and simultaneously gain exposure to a variety of career opportunities. Early college programs also reduce the time and expense of earning a college credential while increasing the likelihood of completion.

While the structure demands significant investment in redesign and alignment, early college is a model that has delivered strong outcomes, creating opportunities for students to go farther and higher than before by helping them develop the courage and knowhow to think differently about their education; while it benefits *all* students, this model has proven to be especially powerful for first generation college students and low income students. For many, early college captures the promise of an early introduction to college course taking, and allows young people who may not have seen themselves going to college the opportunity to rethink what college means, to see themselves as college students, and to build a longer term vision for their career and their lives.

Like many innovations, early college has its roots in Massachusetts—the first known model of early college was developed by Elizabeth Blodgett Hall, who founded Simon’s Rock (later Bard College at Simon’s Rock) in Great Barrington, Massachusetts in 1966. In 1974, La Guardia Community College launched a “middle college high school” to serve at risk students. Both models influenced the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to launch the Early College High School Initiative in partnership with Massachusetts based nonprofit Jobs for the Future. From there, early college grew at larger scale within the public sphere. The learning from these many years of experience with early college models demonstrated that students who had traditionally experienced barriers to higher education were able to thrive in an early college environment.¹

Through the Gates initiative and many others throughout the country, early college has become one of the most successful ways to rethink high school, college, and the pathway through and to both, facilitating growth and development for tens of thousands of students.

This description of the impact of early college is not hyperbolic, but proven.² In a national randomized control study by the American Institutes for Research, students who attended early

¹ American Institutes for Research, *Early College, Continued Success: Early College High School Initiative Impact Study*, January 2014.

² Early college students are far more likely to earn a college degree by high school graduation—30% of early college students earn an Associate’s degree vs. very few students nationally. Early college

college were 5% more likely to graduate from high school, 10% more likely to be enrolled in college within two years of their high school graduation, and 22% more likely to obtain an associate's degree or greater within two years of their high school graduation.³

Early college has demonstrated that when students are given the opportunity to work towards taking and completing college level coursework without regard to assumptions made based on their prior academic performance or their personal background, those students are often able to thrive and achieve academic success in an environment that supports them to surpass their previous achievement and attainment trajectories.

Early College in Massachusetts

Given this, in January 2016, the Boards of Higher Education and Elementary and Secondary Education signaled a desire to prioritize the exploration of early college as a policy priority that could have significant impact on improving outcomes at core to the mission of both bodies. This effort was conceived to achieve the promise made to our students and to the Commonwealth—to ensure that students graduate high school prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education and go on to attain valuable postsecondary credentials and degrees. The boards are also charged with ensuring that the promise of higher education is available and accessible to all students, and that those students understand their educational alternatives and implications by being prepared to make informed choices about their careers and their futures.

Ultimately, based on outcomes achieved by early college in other states as well as some successful examples in Massachusetts, both boards anticipated that early college might be a way to provide students a model proven to increase high school graduation rates, college going rates, persistence in higher education, and completion of associate's and bachelor's degrees. In a time when there is a drastic gap between the number of Bachelor's degrees awarded in Massachusetts and the demand of our economy for those with Bachelor's degrees⁴, the promise of early college is not only of potentially great benefit to individuals who thrive both within and beyond high school and postsecondary education, but it also symbiotically serves to ensure the economic health and prosperity of the Commonwealth.

Furthermore, both boards recognized that in order to successfully promote early college and better support students more broadly, it would be imperative to break down the traditional silos of K-12 education as distinct from postsecondary education, both at a statewide and a local level. Doing so would help bridge the chasm students often experience between their completion of high school and the educational opportunities available to them afterwards. The boards recognized that to most effectively support our students, Massachusetts would need to think differently and more broadly about the continuum of education and eliminate structural and cultural barriers to postsecondary education, particularly the barriers faced by students traditionally underrepresented in higher education.

students are also more likely to earn substantial college credit in high school (94% v. 10% nationally). These students are more likely to enroll in college immediately after high school (71% vs. 54%), and return to college for a second year (86% v. 72%). Jobs for the Future, *Early College Expansion: Propelling Students to Postsecondary Success at a School Near You, Executive Summary*, 2014.

³ American Institutes for Research, *Early College, Continued Success: Early College High School Initiative Impact Study*, January 2014.

⁴ Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, *The Degree Gap: Honing In on College Access, Affordability & Completion in Massachusetts*, June 2016.

Within this context, the Barr Foundation generously partnered with the Commonwealth to sponsor an independent report to explore the landscape of early college statewide and nationally, and to determine the potential to expand early college opportunities in Massachusetts. For this task, Barr engaged Parthenon-EY to conduct a review with the support of a steering committee of state leaders and a working group of department staff and leaders in public K-12 and higher education. In December 2016, Parthenon produced a report entitled, “Breaking Down Silos to Put Students on the Path to Success.”⁵

That report confirmed the thinking of the educational leadership in the state: that early college is a promising model which could be a critically important way to narrow educational opportunity gaps across groups of students; that aligning state policy goals with the promotion of early college could have a deeply meaningful impact on scaling improved outcomes in postsecondary completion; and that existing early college programs within community colleges and high schools in Massachusetts were a powerful base from which to build a broader statewide early college initiative.

The report highlighted previous work in early college, and identified critically important elements to the success of early college. Distilling in depth evaluative research in this space, the report articulated the most important elements of early college based on evaluation of and expert opinion on early college over the last decade. At core, the report found that early college works by increasing the expectations and progression of academic performance while simultaneously providing academic and social supports to make that possible.

The report identified, these are principles essential to successful early college design and those principles have become the framework for the designation criteria. They are:

1. Equitable Access
2. Guided Academic Pathways
3. Enhanced Student Support
4. Relevant Connection to Career
5. Deep Partnerships

Following on these findings, in January 2017, the Boards of Elementary and Secondary Education and Higher Education jointly launched an Early College Initiative, intended to support the expansion of early college in Massachusetts and establish an Early College Program Designation. At that time, the boards jointly approved the five guiding principles for Early College Programs, based on findings in the research described above. The Boards also created a five-member Early College Joint Committee (ECJC), which includes the Chair of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Chair of the Board of Higher Education, one additional member from each board, and the Secretary of Education. The Commissioners of Higher Education and Elementary and Secondary Education serve as non-voting members of the committee as well. The ECJC was charged with developing this early college designation process for the Commonwealth and catalyzing the successful growth of high quality early college programs in Massachusetts. The ECJC will also issue final approval for all Massachusetts Early College program designations.

In May of 2017, the ECJC moved to approve and recommend the Massachusetts Early College Program Designation Process and Criteria (on which this application is based) for final board

⁵ Parthenon-EY, *Breaking down silos to put students on the path to success: The promise early college in Massachusetts*, December 2016.

approval, and in June of 2017, both the Board of Higher Education and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted to approve the designation as recommended by the ECJC.

Designation Process

The goal of this designation process is to ensure that as early college expands within Massachusetts, the effort will benefit from successful local and national models. This effort also aims to simultaneously promote innovation in the development of early college programs and to establish clear, coherent, and unifying expectation as to the most effective structure for early college. Furthermore, the intention of this designation process will be to support collaboration among early college programs across the state and to facilitate collaboration between them.

As such, in order to receive designation as a Massachusetts early college program, applicants must demonstrate, with evidence, a capability to effectively implement the guiding principles. Embedded within this framework are the core components of a Massachusetts high quality career pathway more broadly: advising, work-based learning, postsecondary linkages, integrated instruction, credential attainment, and alignment with labor market data.

The designation process and opportunity is designed to encourage the growth of the early college model, and to support policies such that more students might benefit from the opportunity to participate in early college. Furthermore, the early college designation process is intended to be the mechanism by which the Commonwealth directs and prioritizes state level financial investment in this field.

More broadly, the Early College Initiative will prioritize alleviating the barriers to success of early college in Massachusetts. As articulated in the Parthenon report, these strategies include increasing awareness of early college, developing a community of practice, supporting the alignment of high school curricula to existing postsecondary pathways, designing appropriate staffing, and funding supports for scaling up programs as well as sustainable funding for students.

This first year of designation marks a new process for Massachusetts and inaugural applicants will be part of a critically important stage as the Boards of Higher Education and Elementary and Secondary Education seek to expand early college in Massachusetts. We expect to receive applications from existing early college programs as well as new programs, and we welcome both. We hope that both existing and new programs will see value in the Massachusetts Early College Program designation as an indicator of high quality and alignment with larger statewide goals. Designation will serve as a way to determine funding eligibility with regard to any new funding appropriated for the purposes of supporting early college in Massachusetts. Additionally, we are pleased to see that private philanthropy also values early college and we expect foundations and donors to consider the designation process as a factor in their approach to deciding which planning and implementation efforts to support.

Flexibility will allow for learning during the first years of this designation process. While each element of the designation criteria was developed with intention and purpose, we understand that parts of this process will evolve and it is likely that we will revisit and revise the criteria after we have experienced one cycle of early college designation. We intend to be part of a learning community alongside the districts, high schools and higher education institutions that develop and refine the Commonwealth's early college programs.

Early College Program Designation Overview

In order to ensure a measured and thoughtful process for Massachusetts Early College Program applicants, the designation process will be in two stages: Preliminary Designation and Final Designation.

There will be two stages of official designation by the Commonwealth for Early College programs. All programs seeking this designation must first apply for a **Preliminary Designation**. A Preliminary Designation will recognize an Early College Program for having completed sufficient planning and design in alignment with the Preliminary Criteria as framed by the Guiding Principles. Receiving a Preliminary Designation will allow the applicant to apply for a Final Designation.

A **Final Designation** will require that the applicant has fulfilled essential elements of early college program design and provide sufficient evidence that the program has enrolled students as defined by the Designation Criteria, or that the applicant has developed all necessary infrastructure to begin enrolling students by Fall 2018 [FY19]. An applicant may not apply for a Final Designation unless it has already received a Preliminary Designation.

In this first year of the early college designation process, we anticipate that both existing early college programs as well as new programs will apply for designation, and we will review both types of applications similarly. The Final Designation application will be due in February 2018 for eligible applicants.

Final designations will be issued as five year performance contracts, with annual reporting obligations, participation in technical assistance, and a review/check-in after the first three years.

Applicant Criteria

Applicants for designation must be structured partnerships between at least one institution of higher education (IHE) and one K-12 partner, and both/all partners must apply jointly under the signature of the college or university president and the district superintendent/charter school leader. Applicant partners must be a Massachusetts public high school, a Massachusetts public institution of higher education, or an independent institution of higher education, provided that such an institution is based in Massachusetts and has degree granting authority in Massachusetts. A formal memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the applicant partners will be required as a component of the Final Designation Application process. Applicants may apply for a cohort program within a larger school, or an entire early college high school. The Commonwealth aims to build programming that serves larger cohorts of students in order to build strong and efficient pathways for student groups who may have been traditionally underserved in higher education.

Based on research, it is clear that the most effective early college models are those that are either a self-contained school, or those with a critical mass cohort size, to allow for growth and exploration of students and prioritization of program priorities within respective institutions. One aim of this initiative, therefore, is to support this larger cohort model as well as the expansion of existing programs. That said, at this stage of early college growth in Massachusetts, we appreciate that some programs are in nascent and startup stages, and in other cases,

expansion is challenged by concerns about feasibility. This question of cohort size, however, remains critically important to the Early College Joint Committee, and will be an issue both the Department of Higher Education and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will continue to explore in the coming year. Therefore, while there will be no minimum initial cohort size requirement for applicants, the ECJC is likely to prioritize proposals with credible initial or target critical mass and may defer approval for plans it judges unlikely to be sustainable or cost-effective due to small size.

Early College Program Designation Application Timeline

To assist the Commonwealth in planning technical assistance, interested applicants are required to submit a nonbinding Letter of Intent by September 8, 2017.

The application for a Massachusetts Early College Preliminary Designation is due no later than 5pm on September 27, 2017.

Review of Preliminary Designation Applications will be completed by November 1, 2017, at which time applicants will be notified of Preliminary Designation status.

Those applicants who have received Preliminary Designation will be eligible to apply for Final Early College Designation early in Spring 2018. Departments will provide technical support as qualified applicants prepare materials for submission.

The Early College Joint Committee will award Final Designation to applicants who have met all requirements in the spring of 2018, with the expectation that designated programs would launch in the fall of 2018.

Frequently Asked Questions

If you are seeking additional information on the designation process, please email pathways@doe.mass.edu.

Early College Preliminary Designation Application

PLEASE NOTE:

Below you will find the information required to achieve Massachusetts Early College Designation. This form is offered for working and printing convenience, but we ask that you submit your official application via WizeHive, our online platform, at this link:

https://webportalapp.com/appform/early_college

I. Applicant and Partner Information

Applicants for designation must be structured partnerships and a joint application between at least one institution of higher education (IHE) and one K-12 high school partner both/ all applicants must apply jointly under the signature of the college or university president and the district superintendent/charter school leader.

Institution of Higher Education Applicant(s)			
K-12 School Applicant(s)			
Institution of Higher Education Applicant(s) primary contact:			
	<i>Name</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Phone</i>
Mailing Address:			
	<i>Street Address</i>		
	<i>City</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>ZIP</i>
Phone/Email:			
	<i>Preferred Phone</i>	<i>Email Address</i>	
K-12 School Applicant(s) primary contact:			
	<i>Name</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Phone</i>
			<i>Email</i>
Mailing Address:			
	<i>Street Address</i>		
	<i>City</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>ZIP</i>
Phone/Email:			
	<i>Preferred Phone</i>	<i>Email Address</i>	
Please indicate whether you are applying for designation of an existing program, an entirely new program, or for the enhancement of existing programming to reflect a new Early College designation.			

<p>Indicate if you are applying for competitive funding:</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p>		<p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>		
<p><i>The Departments will award designation to all applicants who fulfill essential elements of early college program design and provide sufficient evidence that the program has enrolled students as defined by the Early College Designation Criteria, or that the applicant has developed all necessary infrastructure to begin enrolling students upon designation. Note that this is not a competitive process as there is no cap on the number of designations. In contrast, funding will be awarded competitively in accordance with the requirements articulated within this competitive funding section of the application.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Assurance</u> Please check the corresponding box to confirm agreement. <input type="checkbox"/></p>				
<p>How many students do you seek to enroll in the program, and by what date?</p>		<p>FY18</p>	<p>FY19</p>	<p>FY20</p>	<p>FY21</p>
	<p>Existing Students</p>				
	<p>Projected New Students</p>				
	<p>Total</p>				
<p>Does the secondary or postsecondary institution currently receive Perkins funding?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p>		<p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>		

II. Introductory Narrative

Please provide an introductory narrative describing your partnership, your vision for this Early College Program, and the desired impact of the program. Describe the potential and vision for Early College for your students, your school and campus, and your region.

Field limited to 1,000 words.

III. Adherence to Guiding Principles

The following pages describe the Guiding Principles that are the framework of the Massachusetts Early College Preliminary Application Criteria. Please review the description of each of the Guiding Principles, and respond to questions that correspond to the criteria. **Each field limited to 500 words.**

1. Equitable Access

Designated programs should prioritize students underrepresented in education enrollment and completion. To facilitate this, programs should be structured to eliminate barriers to student participation. Design might therefore include, but not be limited to, tuition-free participation, open enrollment without regard to prior academic performance, student supports to promote success, scalability, multiple entry points for students, and student supports to prepare students for entry into the program.

Preliminary Designation Criteria to demonstrate Equitable Access:

1. *The program is designed and funded such that it will be offered free for all student participants—including tuition, fees, and other related expenses.*
2. *Should student applications exceed program capacity, participation should be determined by a lottery among applicants, or by another method intended to ensure equitable access to the program.*
3. *Initial enrollment in early college should be made without regard to past academic performance.**
4. *The program will present an effective plan for outreach and recruitment of students who are traditionally underrepresented in higher education, including students of color, low income students, English language learners and students with disabilities. The program leverages the work of existing college access programming to identify students who would benefit from the program. Programs are encouraged to utilize the postsecondary Early Warning Indicator System (EWIS) to identify and target eligible students.*
5. *Program design aims to reflect an admissions and placement policy that ensures that the highest number of first-generation and other underrepresented students are able to participate successfully in early college programming.*

6. *Data are presented about the current number and percent of students in the high school or district that are low-income, students of color, and/or first generation who would be targeted for inclusion.*

The designation criteria pursuant to this guiding principle are designed to focus on the goal of closing achievement gaps and offering educational models to leverage students' own personal assets and help them thrive. Research of early college models nationally has demonstrated the effectiveness of designing early college to ensure equitable access. As such, the Massachusetts Early College designation is designed with the goal of broadening access to college through this model.

Therefore, this portion of the application is aimed towards keeping entry into early college pathways as open as possible, particularly with regard to prior academic performance. It is also focused on prioritizing program design and enrollments for students who have historically been underrepresented in higher education. Therefore, designation applicants are encouraged to make real, targeted, and thoughtful efforts to aggressively recruit students who may be the first in their family to go to college, who are part of demographic groups historically underrepresented in higher education, who may be English language learners, or who may otherwise not yet possess a perception that they may be a college going student.

Given this, please respond to the questions below:

Applicant Questions

- A. Provide the **demographic data** for the applicant high school, including but not limited to: (1) student population as broken down by race and ethnicity, (2) students who are economically disadvantaged/low income, (3) English language learners (ELL), and (4) students with disabilities (SWD). *(See Criteria 6)*

- B. Describe your **plan for identification, outreach, recruitment and enrollment of students in your** proposed program(s). This specifically includes the target audiences identified above as well as any students who may be first generation college-goers. Include, if applicable, how the program will leverage the work of existing college access programming to identify students who would benefit from the program. *(See Criteria 4 and 5)*

- C. Describe how you will ensure equity of program access and determine participation in the event that student applications exceed program capacity. *(See Criteria 2)*

- D. Provide any information you'd like to share regarding your program's commitment to Equitable Access.

Assurances

Please check the corresponding boxes to confirm agreement.

a. The program is designed and funded such that it will be offered free for all student participants—including tuition, fees, and other related expenses.	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Initial enrollment in an Early College program should be made without regard to past academic performance.*	<input type="checkbox"/>

* This aspect of program design is subject to and may account for appropriate processes to address suitability for special populations of students, such as those with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Programs may also be designed to require students to meet reasonable benchmarks of participation, engagement, and performance to continue participation.

2. Guided Academic Pathways

Designated programs should be structured around clear and detailed student academic pathways from secondary and post-secondary education with regard to coursework, sequencing, and experiences beyond the classroom. In the Early College pathway, students should be expected to complete at least twelve college credits that count towards a postsecondary credential. Programs should also offer students substantive exposure to career opportunities in high demand fields, allowing them to make an informed decision about which career pathway to pursue. Students should also be exposed to the authentic experience and academic rigor of postsecondary education. This would require validating that courses are as rigorous as college level courses offered on campuses. Further, programs should prioritize allowing students to take courses on college and university campuses where possible, and otherwise offer experiences intended to acculturate students to the post-secondary experience.

Preliminary Designation Criteria to demonstrate Guided Academic Pathways:

For a Preliminary Designation, the applicant must meet the following criteria relevant to Guided Academic Pathways:

1. The program design has clearly articulated, thoughtfully designed, and fully integrated pathway(s) for students, including:
 - a. pathway(s) are designed to prepare students in earlier grades for later college level coursetaking;
 - b. inclusion of early career development and postsecondary education exploration, grounded in employability skills and labor market information;
 - c. program design reflecting an integration of coursetaking and career awareness exploration and/or work based learning experiences, informed by and offered in partnership with area employers;
 - d. course taking is linked with the broader college going experience, such that where feasible, at least some academic courses are taught on the campus of the postsecondary partner institution;

- e. program is designed such that during high school, students will have gained a clear understanding of the postsecondary pathways and courses of study available to them, and how those courses of study will help facilitate their career aspirations; and
 - f. program is designed such that upon completion, students will have at least 12 transferable college credits, and students will also fully understand the range of postsecondary institutions available to them, how to matriculate at those institutions, and how to pursue the financial aid necessary to pay for those opportunities.
2. The program outlines a basic plan for scope and sequence of high school courses to enable participating students to prepare for and later access college-level coursework in a cohort of their peers.
 3. The range of college credits available to be completed (with a minimum on-plan target of 12) should be stated. To the extent possible, these courses should fall under the MassTransfer Gen Ed Foundation and align with established “A2B Mapped” Degree Pathways.*
 4. The program includes a description of when and where college coursework will be completed and how it is articulated with a high school’s graduation requirements
- * The Department of Higher Education, in collaboration with the three segments of public higher education, has developed “A2B Mapped” degrees in specific disciplines and metamajors that seek to create a seamless transition from two-year to four-year institutions. To the extent possible, high school pathways and course offerings should be aligned with the “A2B” mapped degrees, and these pathways should be an essential part of the consideration of any Early College program design process.

Guided academic pathways ensure that students experience coherence, clarity and connection as to their path, but flexibility as to their exploration. And these pathways also ensure that young people develop identities as college going students. As a corollary, we hope for a similar combination of innovation and structure with regard to early college program design itself. Early college designation will not require that a pathway be in a specific field (nor is such specificity precluded), although designation expectations require that students will, at a minimum, be educated as to their postsecondary education *and* career options and the connection between both.

More specifically, designation will prioritize the valuable work of our public campuses to develop Associate’s to Bachelor’s degree pathways between the public two and four year institutions. Applicants should, at the program design phase, think deeply not only about the pathway within the early college program itself, but also the value of the courses and credits achieved by students who successfully complete early college and how they would transfer to degree programs.

Understanding that some applicants may include postsecondary partners who are not public higher education institutions, we appreciate that there will necessarily be exceptions to this preference. Furthermore, we understand that there may be programs that are designed as intentional pathways, but not aligned with a major or course of study that is currently mapped. Ultimately, however, the designation will require a demonstration that the course taking in early college is intended to support relative flexibility for students as well as credit attainment that will be of value as the student continues on the pathway in pursuit of an associate’s and/or a bachelor’s degree.

Applicant Questions

- A. For each proposed Early College program, provide as an attachment a **scope and sequence** of high school and college-level courses to enable students to participate in college level coursework in a cohort of their peers. In your scope and sequence, be sure to provide the name of the course, the local course codes, the number of college credits to be completed (minimum on-track target of 12), how the college coursework will be articulated with MassCore and the **high school's graduation requirements**, and **where** the courses will be taught. *To the extent possible, these courses should fall under the MassTransfer Gen Ed Foundation and align with established "A2B Mapped" Degree Pathways. (See Criteria 1a,1d, 1f)*

Upload document into WizeHive (Attachment)

5. Describe how **labor market information (LMI)** and input from **area employers**, including information gained from ongoing [regional LMI data planning efforts](#) to the extent possible, will be used to inform the program design so as to reflect an alignment of course taking to credentials desired in the region (e.g. associate's degrees, bachelor's degrees). Include description of program design plan to reflect integration with career exploration and/or work based learning experiences. (See Criteria 1b, 1c)

6. Describe the plan for providing student participants exposure and clear understanding of their postsecondary pathways beyond high school, the courses of study that are available to them after high school, and how those courses of study will help facilitate their career aspirations. Plan should also include education for students on mechanics of matriculation and financial aid options. (See Criteria 1e, 1f)

7. Provide a brief description of the LEA's approach to **individualized student college and career planning**, (commonly known as individual learning plans (ILPs)) and specify which on-line platform will be used to manage those plans, including:
- MEFA Pathways (*formerly known as Your Plan for the Future*)
 - Naviance
 - Career Cruising
 - MassCIS
 - Other

3. Enhanced Student Support

Designated programs should incorporate sufficient wraparound services to promote academic success and completion, taking into consideration the needs of diverse populations of students.

Preliminary Designation Criteria to demonstrate Enhanced Student Support:

1. The program plan identifies potential academic and nonacademic challenges for potential student participants.
2. Plans include supports for academic, nonacademic, and career purposes. These plans should incorporate evidence-based strategies and consider the supports offered by existing college access programming, e.g. scaffolding of curricula and student learning outcomes.
3. Program design includes an outline of potential academic supports, including but not limited to counseling/advising and tutoring, both at the high school and college levels.
4. An appropriate contact for student support is named in the application. Contact information for this individual is provided, along with a description of the role. If the role requires staff to be hired, a proposed job description is included.
5. Appropriate behavior, health and safety procedures for students on college campuses are addressed.

Early college should be designed not as a boutique program, but should reflect a holistic program design in contemplation of the lived experience of the target student population. Specifically, programs are encouraged to develop student support in consideration of a whole student, in contemplation of student development broadly, development of academic proficiency and support related to barriers faced both externally and with regard to academic course taking.

Applicant Questions

- A. Identify the **academic and nonacademic challenges** that may arise for students in the proposed early college pathway(s). *List any data mechanisms that will be used for these purposes.*

- B. Identify how the challenges listed above will be addressed, including an outline of **potential supports**, naming those that exist and those that need to be developed. The plans should include supports for academic, nonacademic, and career purposes. These plans should incorporate evidence-based strategies and consider the supports offered by existing college access programming, e.g., scaffolding of curricula and student learning outcomes. *Supports must address counseling, advising, and tutoring needs both at the high school and postsecondary levels.*

- C. List the **position** for the individual(s) responsible **for student supports** at both partnering entities, along with a corresponding description of the role. If the role requires staff to be hired, a proposed description should be included.

<u>K12 student supports contact info.</u>	<u>IHE student supports contact info.</u>
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- D. Explain how the program will document appropriate behavior, health and safety procedures on college campuses. Outline whether these will be addressed by a student handbook or an addendum to an existing handbook.

4. Connection to Career

Designated programs should expose students to a variety of career opportunities including greater depth in careers relevant to their selected pathway, for example, by providing opportunities for targeted workforce and career skills development, career counseling, and elements of experiential and workplace learning.

Preliminary Designation Criteria to demonstrate Connection to Career
1. Career Development Education (CDE) is integral to the early college program design, with career awareness, exploration and/or immersion activities included in the program across the four years of high school.*
2. Program is designed to incorporate in depth and comprehensive college and career counseling that aligns to the necessary elements of individual learning plans (as defined by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education).
3. College and career counseling and education incorporates relevant regional and statewide labor market data as a method to inform students about career opportunities beyond college and supports students to make the connection between that information and their potential pathways.
4. Specific career and college counseling will be part of the early college program plan, including the guided use of individualized learning plans beginning in 9 th grade.
5. Program will engage area employers to support connections between education and career.
6. Courses offered as part of the early college program will be aligned with multiple postsecondary and degree pathways (see Guided Pathways).

This guiding principle dictates that designated early college programs should be designed to support college and career readiness such that students are expected to develop awareness of their educational growth and development while understanding the manner in which their

educational path is connected to career opportunities. This connection should be framed broadly, to allow students to explore career possibilities and to more generally develop foundational employability skills necessary to thrive in any work environment.

Applicant Questions

- A. Describe how the proposed early college pathway(s) will expose students to a **variety of career options** including greater depth of exposure to careers relevant to their selected pathway as well as awareness of labor market trends. *(See Criteria 1 and 2)*

- B. Provide a brief description of the early college program’s approach to **career considerations related to individualized student college and career planning (individualized learning plans or ILPs)** beginning no later than 9th grade. *(See Criteria 4)*

- C. Provide **examples** of career awareness, exploration and/or immersion activities that will be included in the program across the four years of high school. *(See Criteria 1 and 3)*

- D. Identify any **area employers** or workforce development boards who will potentially support connections between education and career in support of the proposed program(s). *(See Criteria 5)*



5. Effective Partnerships

Designated programs should be a partnership between at least one institution of higher education and one public secondary school and/or district, and may include one or more employers. Partnerships should present evidence that the program is consistent with collective bargaining agreements and memoranda of understanding detailing the nature of governance, budget, sustainability, scheduling, respective responsibilities, and performance measures. Programs should be sufficient in size to capture economies of scale goals and to ensure long-term sustainability.

Preliminary Designation Criteria to demonstrate Effective Partnerships

1. *The K-12 school district(s) and postsecondary institution outline plans to be fully integrated partners in the program. Roles and responsibilities of each partner during the planning process are clearly identified, including which entity will be the fiscal agent.*
2. *Where there is a requirement for local bargaining relating to any aspect of the pathway, local requirements must be followed. The proposal outlines plans to have discussions concerning collective bargaining agreements, at both the K-12 and higher education level, as needed.*
3. *Each partner has identified personnel empowered with the authority to enter into memoranda of understanding discussions.*
4. *Application details the leadership at each partner institution empowered to make decisions around early college at the K-12, higher education, employer, and community level.*
5. *Plan will detail initial plans identifying key costs associated with the program for both institutions, including—but not limited to—per credit student support and student transportation. Applicant partners have realistic plan to sustainably support a high quality program across all partners, and have identified a necessary funding structure to achieve that goal.*
6. *Applicant has provided preliminary outlines and a clear plan to complete detail regarding graduation requirements, college course taking, and pathways to credentials including certificates, associate, and bachelor's degrees.*

Fundamentally, an effective and sustainable early college program necessitates a fully integrated partnership between the school, district, and postsecondary institution. Tacit agreement to collaborate is not sufficient—deep commitment to partnership and continued full collaboration on both sides is imperative. While designation purposes therefore require substantive evidence of these partnerships in the form of a MOU, what will be most important to maintain these partnerships will be clear and respected relationships between instructors and leadership at both institutions.

Applicant Questions

- A. Describe the proposed partnership between the school/district and postsecondary institution. Please detail the **roles and responsibilities** of each. (See *Criteria 1 and 6*)

- B. Identify the personnel at each partnering entity who have been or will be **responsible for developing the MOU** between the two partners that will be required for final designation. (See *Criteria 3*)

<i>K12 partner contact info</i>	<i>IHE partner contact info</i>
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- C. Describe how **local collective bargaining/labor relations issues**, if relevant, have been or will be addressed concerning responsibilities of faculty and staff for classroom instruction, student support, etc. (See *Criteria 2*)

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- D. Identify key costs associated with the program for both institutions, including—but not limited to—per credit student support and student transportation. *The partners must have a realistic plan to sustainably support a high quality program across all partners, and have identified a necessary funding structure to achieve that goal. Note that a full budget will be part of the Application for Final Designation. (See Criteria 5)*

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- E. Include a **letter of intent to partner** identifying leadership empowered to make decisions and outlining how the institutions will be fully integrated partners in the program. *This letter must be signed by the President of the higher education partner, and on behalf of the K12 partner, the Superintendent/Charter School Leader and the Principal/headmaster of the respective district and school partner. (See Criteria 1)*

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Assurances

Please check the corresponding boxes to confirm agreement.

The applicant confirms that the partners have a realistic plan to fund the proposed program. (See <i>Criteria 5</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/>
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IV. Overview of Massachusetts High Quality College and Career Pathways and Early College Competitive Grant Application

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is committed to ensuring that all of its students complete high school ready for college and career, and that they have well-designed postsecondary plans that enable them to become active citizens prepared to earn a family-sustaining wage.

To that end, the Commonwealth has identified powerful structures for student pathways to college and career that can be implemented in its high schools. These include Early College Programs, as well as Innovation Pathways, Career Technical Education, and Adult Basic Education Pathways. These pathways provide a rigorous program of study that offers contextualized learning. Programs approved for designation as one of these Massachusetts High Quality College and Career Pathways include all six components of a high quality pathway: career advising, work-based learning, postsecondary linkages, technical coursework, credential attainment, and alignment with labor market data.

The Commonwealth is launching this Early College Designation process, as well as the designation process for the Innovation Pathway in July 2017. For information on the Innovation Pathway, please follow [this link](#).

Developed collaboratively by the Executive Office of Education, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Department of Higher Education, the high quality college and career pathway designation processes were designed to provide students in the Commonwealth with supportive, rigorous, and career-relevant academic experiences. The vision for these pathways is that they are coordinated efforts to provide students with equitable access to a pathway deemed a strong individualized fit and to graduate with a robust knowledge of the Commonwealth's workforce opportunities and realities for employment.

In order to support the development of Early College Programs as well as Innovation Pathways the Commonwealth is providing a competitive funding opportunity to interested applicants simultaneously with the Designation process. This funding opportunity has been designed to dovetail this Designation Application for those who elect to pursue it. It is important to note that the receipt of a Preliminary Designation does not trigger an award of planning funding. We anticipate that the number of applicants for Preliminary Designation who receive the designation may well exceed the number who can be awarded funding, as the Commonwealth anticipates funding approximately 10 districts with planning funds. Applicants may also elect not to compete for funding while seeking the Preliminary Designation.⁶

The funding available will be offered in two stages: planning grants to support the work of competitively selected applicants who receive Preliminary Designation, with a second stage for implementation funding, which will be offered to selected applicants who receive final designations.

⁶ The Departments will award designation to all applicants who fulfill essential elements of early college program design and provide sufficient evidence that the program has enrolled students as defined by the Early College Designation Criteria, or that the applicant has developed all necessary infrastructure to begin enrolling students upon designation. Note that this is not a competitive process as there is no cap on the number of designations. In contrast, funding will be awarded competitively in accordance with the requirements articulated within this competitive funding section of the application.

The state will fund approximately ten applicants with planning awards of up to \$10,000, to be spent between notification (in or around November 1, 2017) and the end of FY2018 (June 30, 2018). They will use the funds to prepare for the Final Designation application and complete related planning work needed for their program(s) in FY18. In conjunction with the application for Final Designation, applicants will be offered an opportunity to apply for implementation funding.

The planning grants will be awarded competitively to applicants who receive a Preliminary Designation that make the strongest showing regarding how they will use the planning funds to support their effort.

To qualify for competitive funding, applicants must:

- Successfully obtain preliminary designation during this application cycle (fall 2017.)
- Be an application that includes a Massachusetts public higher education institution.
- Plan to have students enrolled in the designated pathway either immediately upon designation or in the fall of 2018.
- Demonstrate in their responses below how planning funds from the state will help the applicants execute on their plan outlined in the application above, such that the pathway meets all of the criteria for final designation.

Applications for competitive funding will be scored based on the degree to which a) the program meets and/or exceeds the criteria for preliminary designation above and b) the quality of the applicants' plans for the use of the requested funds to support the pathway in meeting criteria for final designation.

Funding priority may be given to applicants 1) with high percentages and numbers of students who are historically underrepresented in higher education and/or the targeted industry sector, including students of color, low income students, English learners, and students with disabilities, and 2) who present plans to increase the number of seats available above any that now exist.

Please Note: This funding source represents an initial stream of available dollars for development of Early College programs. The Departments will continue to inform existing Early College programs and potential applicants of future funding sources, including those appropriated by the legislature and those available through private sources. Please also note that the Department of Higher Education Commonwealth Dual Enrollment Program FY18 RFP prioritizes the use of dual enrollment funds as part of the development of an Early College program.

Application for Competitive Funding

- A. As you review the Early College designation criteria, what do you anticipate will be the greatest challenges in creating an Early College program or adapting any current Early College programming to meet these criteria? Please describe at least 3 challenges.

- B. How will this funding from the state help you address these challenges and ensure that your early college program will enroll students by fall 2018.

- C. Are you currently funding any of the required Early College elements, and if so, how?

- D. How will award of funds enable you to increase the number of seats for students who are targeted (i.e., students who are historically underrepresented in higher education, including students of color, low income students, English learners, and students with disabilities), or better serve students who are targeted for access?

- E. For each line item in the budget below, please indicate how these funds will support the early college program/school in meeting the early college designation criteria.

- F. What outcomes/deliverables will you see at the end of the grant period (June 30, 2018)? Who will be in charge of ensuring that these outcomes are met?

V. Budget for Competitive Funding

Applicant Name:			
A. Salaries and Benefits	Rate \$ per Hour	# of Hours	Total
Administrator			
Project Coordinator			
High School Teacher Stipends			
Postsecondary Faculty Stipends			
Support Staff			
Fringe Benefits			
Total Salaries and Benefits			\$ -
B. Contractual Services	Rate \$ per Hour	# of Hours	Total
describe			
describe			
describe			
Total Contractual Services			\$ -
C. Other*			Total
Travel			
Instructional Related Supplies and Materials			
Other Supplies and Materials			
describe			
describe			
describe			
Other Total			\$ -
Grant Request Sub Total (Section A + B + C)			\$ -
Indirect Costs (10% Maximum)			
Grant Request Total (Not to exceed \$10,000)			\$ -

Narrative (if needed)

*Please note equipment may not be funded by this planning grant.

Appendix A: Intent to Apply for Early College

Parties planning the submission of an application for an Early College Preliminary Designation should complete a **non-binding** Letter of Intent to Apply via Google Form found [here](#). A Letter of Intent initiates technical assistance to help the applicant in all stages of the process, beginning with the Preliminary Designation Application completion. A sample of the Google Form content can be found below.

[Date]
[Postsecondary Lead Name, Email, Phone Number]
[K-12 Lead Name, Email, Phone Number]

We are writing as duly authorized representatives of [Name of Postsecondary Applicant] and [Name of K-12 Applicant] with respect to the application for an Early College designation program approval. We intend to partner to provide students an Early College program inclusive of the design principles articulated in the Massachusetts Early College Program Preliminary Designation Application [INSERT HYPERLINK].

Title _____
Name: _____ Date: _____

Title _____
Name: _____ Date: _____