

Multi-College Access to Postsecondary Project Snapshot



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March 12, 2020

Hamilton

ONCAT Project Number: P1910

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Overview

Executive Summary

The Multi College Access to Postsecondary (MCAP) project supported Mohawk College's Centre for Community Partnerships and Experiential Learning (CCP&EL), which provides community-based, tuition-free courses for adults facing barriers to postsecondary education through City School by Mohawk, and the Dual Credit program (i.e., School College Work Initiative or SCWI) for high school students. City School's flagship course, College 101, is a course recognized as a General Education Elective at Mohawk College, and is offered on a regular basis through both City School and Dual Credits/SCWI. The course focuses on essential skills for success and pathway planning for postsecondary education, providing students with a transitional stepping-stone to college through skill building and support.

The MCAP project has facilitated access to more options for students participating in College 101 to transfer their credit to participating institutions other than Mohawk College, enhancing their academic mobility and opportunity for academic success in colleges throughout the Golden Horseshoe region. These pathways are important as the City School initiative continues to grow outside of the City of Hamilton, and as College 101 continues to be offered in Dual Credit programming throughout the region. Students should have the freedom to choose the postsecondary institution that best meets their needs, unencumbered by geographical limitations. By bringing free credit-based programming directly into underserved communities and neighbourhoods, City School can leverage the institutional support of Mohawk College's Access Strategy to serve more individuals, while now offering clear and navigable pathways to the students' institutions of choice.

Partners

The sending institution for this project was Mohawk College.

The receiving institutions included: Lambton College, Fanshawe College, Niagara College, and Canadore College. Six Nations Polytechnic was also included in this project as a partner in the development of one of the courses involved, and facilitated the connection to Canadore College.

Pathways

Pathways developed vary among the colleges. The courses at Mohawk College involved in this project are collectively referred to as "College 101" and are all approved General Education Elective credits, but it is important to note that there are slightly different versions of the course as it has gone through redevelopment and adaptation over the last five years. The course codes and titles at Mohawk College are:

SSCI 10057 – Introduction to Postsecondary Experiences (original Gen. Ed. course offered through School of Liberal Studies)

SSCI 10075 – College 101 (updated title and ownership under the Centre for Community Partnerships and Experiential Learning, the delivering department)

SSCI 10071 – Bundled Arrows College 101 (developed in partnership with Six Nations Polytechnic)

SSCI 10073 – College 101: Indigenous (Intellectual property and traditional knowledge contributed by Six Nations Polytechnic removed, and new content redeveloped for Hamilton's Urban Indigenous community)

The receiving institution and their respective courses are:

Fanshawe College

SSCI 10057 -> College Orientation Skills, SKLS 1024, Human Services Foundation Certificate

SSCI 10075, 10071, 10073 -> General Education Elective

Lambton College

SSCI 10057 -> General Education Elective

SSCI 10075, 10071, 10073 pending, projected deadline April 30, 2020.

Niagara College

SSCI 10057, 10071, 10073, 10075 -> Academic and Career Preparation, STDV 1180, General Arts and Sciences

Canadore College

SSCI 10057 -> TBD

SSCI 10071 -> GED185

SSCI 10073 -> GED180

SSCI 10075 -> GED175

Challenges

A project such as this one necessitates open, collaborative relationships between individuals and institutions. Such relationships can take time to develop and evolve. When there are staffing changes and turnover, especially among multiple partners, it can take time to re-establish relationships of trust and collaboration. This challenge was experienced in the course of the MCAP project, which caused some minor delays. Going forward, we would recommend ensuring that there are multiple contacts at each institution who are apprised of projects and players and thus should there be turnover there will still be a level of connection and continuity.

Another specific challenge encountered in this project involved the changing nature of course content, naming, and ownership over time. Curriculum is not static and changes are made to reflect real-world needs and circumstances. After initial contact had been established with the receiving colleges about one specific course code, a new course code was created to reflect an internal shift of ownership for the course from one academic area to another. This change resulted in the need to revisit the initial agreements with the receiving colleges to add another course code to their respective agreements. The same process was required regarding the Bundled Arrows course after the above-mentioned reconnection to SNP. These requirements resulted in some delays, as we were requesting that receiving institutions revisit our request with new versions of the course(s).

The final challenge experienced by the project team resided in our own difficulties navigating internal college processes, given that our access team is connected to but operates somewhat independently of (or parallel to) the full-time post-secondary programs at the college. In some cases, it is reasonable and appropriate for the access team to develop our own policies and processes that are unique to our programs and learners; however, in this instance, we did not need to do so and could have simplified our activities had we known about and understood existing college policies and procedures pertaining to credit transfer activities. As such, this project proved to be an important learning experience and going forward we will be much better positioned to undertake similar initiatives.

Impact

Students

Credential

The credits earned through City School by Mohawk's College 101 course can now be more easily applied to pathways at other colleges throughout the region. This outcome is significant as Mohawk's Access Strategy evolves to serve other communities outside of Hamilton, including Haldimand County, Brantford, and Burlington region. Each of the students who have earned a College 101 credit through City School or Mohawk's Dual Credits could now, in theory, transition to the institutions involved in this project with a transfer credit already on their transcripts. To date, 71 students have earned Mohawk College general education elective credits through their participation in College 101 through City School, and 138 through Dual Credits.

Time

The time saved by students through this program is not easily measured, given that each individual student's pathway to and through postsecondary education is unique. However, we have heard from many students that the College 101 course prepares them well for further studies, and assists them with making important decisions about their future about which they otherwise would have not felt prepared to make. As such, participation in the College 101 course has helped some students avoid enrolling in a program that does not necessarily meet

their needs. That is, we know from broader research that some students report enrolling in a program only to leave that program part-way through because it is not what they expected or is not a good fit, possibly transferring to another program or institution, and in some cases leaving postsecondary altogether. As such, this outcome can result in a delay in the individual's movement forward as they reassess their academic and employment goals after a potentially negative experience. The time they invest in themselves through College 101 can mitigate this possible outcome and ultimately be a time saver for students in their post-secondary journey, giving them the chance to access support and develop skills that are essential for informed decision making and later success.

Money

Similarly, the money saved by students as a result of this project is not easily measured given individual life circumstances and post-secondary options and various costs associated. If the average tuition for a year of college is \$2400 (see for example, <https://www.ontariocolleges.ca/en/colleges/paying-for-college>) and a student, having participated in College 101, requests a transfer credit exemption, they could, in theory, save approximately \$240 if they have a 10 course load each year.

Flexibility

The flexibility made possible for students by project outcomes is key. City School and Dual Credit/SCWI students participating in College 101 now have clear and tangible options for transfer pathways to other colleges outside of Hamilton. Now that the CCP&EL has a fulsome understanding of internal and external transfer processes, we can continue to build more transfer options for students and articulate more detailed and robust pathways.

Work

The goal of all City School programming is to contribute to economic prosperity through providing free, community-based education and vocational training. As such, this project provides more options for marginalized communities to participate in postsecondary education where they may not have previously considered it, in turn providing more pathways toward employment opportunities that may have been previously unattainable without a college education.

Institutional

As the CCP&EL, a newer department of Mohawk College, continues to build its suite of credit courses to be offered through City School and Dual Credit/SCWI programming, and interest among community partners to host City School activities in their spaces and neighbourhoods continues to grow, a clear and articulated transfer process had become increasingly important. As a result of this project, the CCP&EL team is properly equipped with the institutional knowledge and resources required to guide our students through the transfer process, and are prepared with the knowledge required to establish new and innovative pathways between Mohawk College and other institutions.

Sector

The MCAP project was a small-scale project, primarily focused on a specific team at a single college. However, we have already benefitted from the learnings of this project through our deepened understanding of transfer agreement processes already established among Ontario's colleges, and will continue to utilize those processes to establish transfer pathways for students. The impacts on the transfer system in Ontario may only be realized at a larger scale if all colleges are able to highlight their desire to collaborate with other intuitions, and the process for those collaborations are clearly articulated, promoted, and streamlined to encourage inter-college and sector-wide initiatives.

Tips & Tools

Tips

1. Invest in Access
Access programming can be implemented in a way that meets marginalized students' needs, while maintaining rigorous academic standards. These gradual entry points to postsecondary education can build skills and confidence in prospective students who can now visualize themselves participating in college life. To learn more about how Mohawk College reduces barriers to postsecondary education, visit the City School by Mohawk website at www.mohawkcollege.ca/cityschool
2. Clearly articulate institutional policies and practices for establishing credit transfer agreements, including staff contacts, in order to facilitate seamless inter-college transfer requests. Through this project, student-facing processes and guidelines were easily located as a starting point for students to understand how to request transfers from previously earned credits, however it was much more difficult to identify the appropriate process or contact person for other college staff to connect with to discuss transfer agreements or opportunities to collaborate. By encouraging college-to-college communication, opportunities for joint initiatives could be more easily requested.

Tools

This project facilitated the creation of a department-level guiding document to support staff in the CCP&EL with a starting point for consideration when 1) developing a new course or program; 2) working in a community traditionally served by another institution; and, 3) seeking the creation of a transfer credit agreement.

Visuals

This project facilitated the development of a promotional banner for use when City School is working in communities typically served by colleges other than Mohawk College (e.g., Brantford, Haldimand County, Norfolk County, Burlington, Halton region). Since College 101 is a course frequently delivered in community-based locations, when promotional activities are taking place we will more easily be able to highlight the pathways College 101 could lead to at other colleges, encouraging participation in our entry-point to college. Students in Brantford, for example, may be less inclined to consider Mohawk College in favour of an institution closer to their home – such as Conestoga or Six Nations Polytechnic – so may not see the relevance of

participating in a Mohawk College course unless these opportunities are clearly articulated. This banner will facilitate those conversations.

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