College Summit National Capital Region Evaluation

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Executive Summary

College Summit is a nonprofit organization that aims to improve the college-going culture and college enrollment rates in high schools nationwide, particularly in schools serving large numbers of low-income, minority, and first-generation college-going students. This National Capital Region (NCR) exploratory school outcomes report focuses on findings for the College Summit *Launch* program, geared for students in Grades 9–11 in school districts located in the NCR territories of Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. It is important to clarify that all schools that implemented *Launch* typically also implemented College Summit's flagship program, called *Navigator*, which is geared toward high school seniors.

Through program activities such as the use of Peer Leaders, who are trained high school seniors charged with helping their classmates through the college application process, College Summit seeks to promote beliefs and behaviors among students and staff that transform the school climate into a college-going culture. Peer Leaders are aided by trained school-based College Summit advisors or teachers. Informed by key findings from AIR's earlier evaluation of the College Summit program, the new PeerForward initiative, which launched in 2015 and is not included in this evaluation, utilizes the influence and power of Peer Leaders and advisors to guide high school students to and through college. The 10-year (2015 to 2025) plan for this initiative is to deploy 500 Peer Leader teams in 500 low-income high schools by 2020 and an additional 1,000 Peer Leader teams in 1,000 high schools by 2025

Evidence of a college-going culture means, "ensur[ing] that all students receive the positive message that they have choices and options for their future…" according to College Summit (College Summit, 2013, p. 15). Embedding this culture within a school is defined by the regular use and engagement of the following four indicators: (1) Research-based curriculum materials; (2) CSNav, the online system that each student can log into and use to search for colleges (or careers) as well to compile their college applications and CSNav ProCenter, the online portal that allows teachers and school administrators to track student progress; (3) Milestone Reports such as the Student Milestone and Annual College Enrollment Rate Reports, and (4) professional development and support for teachers.

American Institutes for Research (AIR)[1] was contracted by College Summit in 2011 to conduct a five-year[2] independent and external evaluation of the College Summit *Launch* and *Navigator* programs in the NCR region (i.e., Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia). This study used a multimethods approach to study program implementation in 17 out of 19 participating

[1] The evaluation of NCR was conducted jointly by AIR and Policy Studies Associates, Inc.

[2] On June 15, 2016, AIR received official approval from College Summit and its partners on June 15, 2016, to move from a student- to school-level outcomes analysis because of extended delays in receiving school-level data from multiple school districts nationwide. We faced the following four primary challenges in securing student-level outcomes data: (1) Many of the original memorandum of understandings (MOUs) between AIR and school districts had expired and many of the original staff at the district who agreed to provide AIR with the data at the start of the contract left or retired; (2) due to changes to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, districts now required parental consent for *every student* spanning 10 years; (3)The National Student Clearinghouse required AIR to provide written proof of approval for all districts before they could release college enrollment data; (4) a review of College Summit's own MOU agreements with districts prohibited them from sharing their data with a third party (i.e., AIR).

schools in the NCR region that, according to participation data provided by College Summit, served as few as 1 percent of students at one high school to as many as 100 percent. Of the 19 NCR schools that participated in the College Summit program, six NCR schools participated in the site visits,[3] and 11 participated in the survey. In addition, 16 NCR schools participated in a school-level outcomes analysis that used a quasi-experimental design to ascertain whether the *Launch* program in particular, which is geared primarily at underclassmen, has had a school-level effect on ninth- to 10th-grade persistence, high school graduation, college enrollment, and college persistence rates. Specifically, researchers examined whether schools offering the *Launch* program had significantly higher rates of students who graduated, enrolled, and stayed in college than similar schools that did not have the program.

This evaluation is guided by the following five research questions, the first four of which address the implementation of the core components of the College Summit program. The fifth explores initial school-level outcomes on students.

Research Questions

1. To what extent are the core components of College Summit *Navigator* and *Launch* (College Summit curriculum, CSNav or CSNav Pro Center, Milestone Reports, and professional development and support) implemented as intended by the developer (i.e., College Summit) and partner schools? (**Implementation**)
2. Which factors do educators identify as facilitating or impeding implementation of College Summit and *Launch*? (**Implementation)**
3. How do educators involved in implementing College Summit and *Launch* rate the quality and utility of program materials and the training and support provided by College Summit staff? (**Implementation)**
4. How do school staff members involved in implementing College Summit and *Launch* describe the relationship between program implementation and the development of a college-going culture? (**Implementation)**
5. What is the difference between College Summit *Launch* schools and their matched comparison schools on the following: (a) ninth- to 10th-grade persistence rates, (b) high school graduation rates, (c) college enrollment rates, and (d) college persistence rates? (**Exploratory School Outcomes)**

Key Findings

This Executive Summary and corresponding report include the findings from a spring 2015 survey of 11 participating schools, site visits with six schools that consisted of interviews with school-based staff and focus groups of students participating in the College Summit *Launch* and *Navigator* programs, and a school-level outcomes analysis using extant data from 16 schools. Following is a summary of the key findings from the implementation and student outcomes analysis, organized by research questions.

[3] Six schools across Maryland and the District of Columbia were selected to participate in site visits in spring 2015. For the sixth school, located in the District of Columbia, the evaluation team conducted an extensive phone interview with the principal only and did not conduct student focus groups.

To what extent are the core components of College Summit and *Launch* (College Summit curriculum, CSNav or CSNav ProCenter, Milestone Reports, and teacher professional development and support) implemented as intended by the developer (i.e., College Summit)?

- Participating schools in the NCR implemented certain core elements of the College Summit *Launch* and *Navigator* programs with fidelity. The elements implemented with fidelity included offering credit-bearing courses, having counselors who engaged in discussions and set expectations with their students about college and career preparation (an indication of the presence or development of a strong college-going school culture), and utilizing Peer Leaders. For example, of the five schools selected to be a part of the spring 2015 site visits, all offered the College Summit course as a credit-bearing class. Students enrolled in these schools earned either a half or a full credit after the completion of the course. Students generally self-selected into the course; approximately 10 focus group students (of 35) reported that a teacher or friend recommended that they participate.

- Ninety-three percent of surveyed NCR respondents (i.e., teachers) reported having discussions on the topic of college and career preparation with students during their College Summit course or during one-on-one advisement periods. Of those who responded,100 percent reported discussing with their students study skills they need in college, how to prepare for college-level coursework, the different ways for paying for college, choosing a career path, and tests they need to take to get into college. However, surveyed counselors, particularly those working in large, urban high schools, noted fewer opportunities to have these conversations with every single student.

  Students who participated in focus groups reported that they had benefitted from participating in College Summit programs. In particular, 23 of the 25 focus group students who responded to the question about the benefits of the College Summit *Launch* and *Navigator* programs reported that they gained knowledge about the importance of college, they had participated in concrete activities such as college search, and were kept aware the different milestone activities and the timeline for the college search and enrollment processes.

- All NCR schools are required to have Peer Leaders. However, only 83 percent of surveyed NCR respondents reported having them at their school. This may indicate that not all survey respondents are aware of who their Peer Leaders are.

- Five out of six site-visit schools reported use of Peer Leaders in some capacity, and most teachers and coordinators collectively identified the positive role that these students played in their schools. Three program coordinators from three schools and as well as one teacher reported strategies for maximizing the impact of Peer Leaders by including students who mirrored the characteristics of the larger school population or had either apparent or potentially "hidden" leadership potential. A teacher from another school reported having Peer Leaders assist in classes.

- Peer Leaders served in multiple roles in site-visit schools. Activities included meeting with students; helping in the College Summit classes; and leading or taking part in schoolwide, college-focused activities, such as SAT preparation and completion of financial aid forms.

- Use of the CSNav ProCenter and its reporting functions was limited among teachers and school administrators. In particular no school coordinators or principals interviewed reported extensive use. Specifically, none of the teachers interviewed from five (out of six) site-visit schools reported widespread use of the CSNav ProCenter. However, three of six principals reported knowledge of the reports but did not report using them. Two additional respondents from a fourth school reported use of the online tool, Naviance.

  In comparison, students reported mixed use of the CSNav online portal. For example, student focus group respondents reported using CSNav as few as "a few times a semester" to as frequently as "once or twice a week."

However, the extent to which schools continually engaged in or provided support to all students, varied.

- Four site-visit schools in Maryland and the District of Columbia offered the *Launch* program to a subset of all students enrolled in targeted grades, while two schools offered the program to only juniors. Despite its reach, implementation across site-visit schools was not standardized. One school offered the *Launch* program (but not the *Navigator* program) to all ninth- and 10th-grade students in its school, whereas a second school enrolled only a subset of students within Grades 9 through 12 in the *Launch* or *Navigator* program classes. The remaining four schools enrolled both 11th graders and a smaller subset of 12th graders into classes from both programs.

What factors do educators identify as facilitating or impeding implementation of College Summit and *Launch*?

College Summit administrators, teachers, counselors, and students noted that having dedicated teachers in place as critical component to the general success of the *Launch* and *Navigator* programs. More specifically, having principal buy-in of the goals of both programs was deemed the most crucial to fostering increased college awareness among both students and staff respondents. This buy-in set the foundation for the long-term success of the programs.

- Eight teachers and coordinators (out of 49) who responded to an open-ended survey question about successes in their school as a result of implementing College Summit reported that teacher training and individual passion for helping students was key.
- Through open-ended responses on the survey, NCR College Summit advisors, counselors, and administrators reported increased college awareness as ninth and 10th graders as the primary evidence of the College Summit *Launch* program success.

NCR schools identified the following challenges to program implementation:

- From the perspective of both surveyed and interviewed teachers, counselors, and school administrators, the primary barriers to implementation of the *Launch* and *Navigator* programs in their schools centered on the adequacy of resources to support the program. Limited resources related to scheduling, funding, access to technology, and the additional time needed to further tailor the curriculum to student needs were identified as major barriers to implementation across all NCR school sites. Other examples of challenges

mentioned across both surveys and interviews included minimal buy-in from students and infrequent communication and training of school staff by College Summit.

- Through open-ended survey comments, respondents provided several recommendations for program improvement. These included providing a rubric or guide for students when they participate in peer presentations, having College Summit staff provide frequent follow-up with students during the summer, and providing stipends to teachers.

How do educators involved in implementing College Summit and *Launch* rate the quality and utility of program materials and the training and support provided by College Summit staff?

Teachers, school administrators, and counselors in NCR schools who reported utilizing the College Summit program materials (i.e., the curriculum materials, CSNav, and the Annual College Enrollment Rate and Student Milestone Reports, and College Summit support staff external to their schools) found them to be useful.

- A majority of respondents (78 percent) reported that the College Summit *Launch* curriculum was extremely useful. In addition, 86 percent of surveyed respondents who reported using the College Summit CSNav or Naviance online programs found them to be *moderately* to *substantially useful*.
- Program coordinators and teachers from all site-visit schools reported that curriculum materials provided a solid framework for postsecondary planning. Interview respondents gave high ratings around the quality and comprehensiveness of the curriculum materials and activities and noted consistent use of the materials to structure classroom activities.
- Although interview participants did not participate in any new training offered by College Summit the year site visits were conducted, several respondents noted that they had regular, but informal contact with College Summit staff. For example, all three College Summit coordinators and five of six principals reported that College Summit staff were available to help whenever asked.

Notwithstanding, many NCR schools reported that they had to tailor the College Summit *Launch* and *Navigator* curriculum to better suit the unique needs of their students. In addition, some staff within the site-visit schools were unaware of how their colleagues within their school used the Student Milestone and College Enrollment Rate reports to inform school-level decisions.

- Nearly all teachers from five site-visit schools and the principal from the sixth site-visit school reported tailoring materials to better meet the circumstances, strengths, and weaknesses of the students served. One principal requested the ability to purchase just the workbook rather than the entire suite of College Summit materials.
- Moreover, 41 percent of surveyed respondents reported that they were unaware of how the Student Milestone and College Enrollment Rate reports influenced school-level resource and scheduling decisions. Of those who reported using the Milestone reports, nearly one third reported that both the Annual College Enrollment Rate and the Student Milestone Reports made a *moderate* or *substantial impact* on school-level decisions.

How do school staff members involved in implementing College Summit and *Launch* describe the relationship between program implementation and the development of a college-going culture?

From the perspectives of participating NCR schools, having staff knowledgeable about College Summit and involved in implementing the College Summit *Launch* or *Navigator* programs is a key driver in setting the expectation that college is attainable for all students and creating a grassroots effort around establishing a college-going culture within their school.

- Interview respondents noted that having more school staff involved with and knowledgeable about College Summit program goals has facilitated implementation of the program and overall efforts to build a college-going culture.
- All 55 surveyed NCR respondents reported that all educators in their schools expected students to get good grades and graduate from high school. One hundred percent of respondents also reported that their schools provided a venue for their seniors to share their college acceptance letters with their peers or school staff.
- Moreover, 92 percent of NCR respondents noted that their schools had banners and other college materials visible throughout their schools.

However, the reach of the College Summit *Launch* and *Navigator* programs in building a college-going culture beyond students enrolled in the credit-bearing course is limited in participating NCR schools.

- The extent to which a school's participation in College Summit has helped it to build a strong college-going culture is ambiguous. The findings from interviews with both teachers and school administrators across all six site-visit schools suggest that the reach of the program beyond the students currently enrolled in the class is limited. Enrollment in spring 2015 ranged from as few as 30 students to as many as 400. However, student focus group respondents reported that they often helped their friends with some aspects of the college application process. Despite these efforts, there was no evidence of a concerted schoolwide attempt to expand the focus of College Summit activities outside of the scheduled classes.
- Around one third (31 percent) of NCR respondents indicated that their school organized the ideal number of college visits (five visits or more). Ninety-six percent reported that their school had organized at least one college visit, while a small number of respondents (4 percent) reported that their school never organized a single visit.

What is the difference between College Summit *Launch* schools and their matched comparison schools on the following: (a) ninth- to 10th-grade persistence rates, (b) high school graduation rates, (c) college enrollment rates, and (d) college persistence rates?

The exploratory outcomes analysis regarding differences between school-level outcomes in College Summit and comparison schools was *limited by the availability of data and the ability to detect meaningful differences between the groups given the small sample size.*

- Ninth- to 10th-grade persistence rates followed a similar trajectory as comparison schools prior to and after the start of College Summit. In the two years prior to usage, College

Summit schools had a persistence rate of 88 percent and comparison schools had a persistence rate of 87 percent. In the three years after the start of the program, the average persistence rate was 86 percent in the College Summit and 84 percent in the comparison schools.

- High school graduation rates followed a similar trajectory as comparison schools prior to and after the start of College Summit. In the two years prior to usage, College Summit schools had a graduation rate of 86 percent and comparison schools 83 percent. In the three years after the start of the program, the average graduation rate was 83 percent in both the College Summit and comparison schools.
- College enrollment rates in any college (i.e., enrolled in a two- or four-year college) followed a similar trajectory as comparison schools prior to and after the start of College Summit. In the two years prior to usage, College Summit schools had an enrollment rate of 55 percent and comparison schools 56 percent. In the three years after the start of the program, the average college enrollment rate was 58 percent in the College Summit and 59 percent in the comparison schools.
- College enrollment rates in *four-year* colleges followed a similar trajectory as comparison schools prior to and after the start of College Summit. In the two years prior to usage, College Summit schools had an enrollment rate of 32 percent and comparison schools had an enrollment rate of 33 percent in both years. In the three years after the start of the program, the average college enrollment rate was 34 percent in the College Summit and 33 percent in the comparison schools.

We could not conduct the school-level outcome analysis on college persistence rates because these data were not available for any of the College Summit schools in the NCR.

Results from the spring 2015 survey and site visit data indicate that the extent to which the College Summit *Navigator* and *Launch* program was implemented as designed by College Summit and the depth and breadth of its resulting college going culture within participating NCR schools varied both within and across schools. Moreover, given the small number of participating schools included in our school-level outcomes analysis, readers are urged caution when interpreting results.

Overview of the College Summit *Launch* and *Navigator* Programs

Research has indicated that the development of a college-going culture and the delivery of explicit, intentional support and guidance to students throughout the college search, application, and enrollment process can boost college enrollment rates (Corwin & Tierney, 2007; Radunzel & Noble, 2012; Roderick, Coca, & Nagaoka, 2011). One study showed that students enrolled in high schools with a strong college-going culture are more likely to pursue postsecondary education than are students who attend high schools with a weaker college-going culture (Roderick et al., 2011).

Piloted in high schools located in the National Capitol Region (NCR) territories of the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia, the College Summit *Launch* program aims to provide students in Grades 9–11 with greater knowledge of the college search and admissions process and with the support and tools they need to begin the early process of understanding how to navigate the college selection and enrollment process.

The Four Main Components of the College Summit *Launch* Program

Curriculum materials. Course materials include a teacher's guide and consumable workbooks for each student.

CSNav and CSNav ProCenter. Each student receives a CSNav electronic account that can be used to search colleges and careers and to keep all the pieces of his or her applications together. The CSNav ProCenter is the digital portal that teachers and school administrators use to manage the program.

Milestone Reports. These reports include the Student Milestone and the Annual College Enrollment Rate Reports. Reports can be used to make decisions around resource allocations, school and student scheduling, and postsecondary planning support for students.

Professional development and support. Teachers receive professional development from College Summit in advance of teaching the program. College Summit also assigns a school partnership manager to each school to provide program support (either in person or by phone or e-mail).

The 12th-grade *Navigator* programs strives to accomplish the same goals as the *Launch* program by offering similar but more focused and targeted supports to high school seniors around selection, enrollment, and financial aid.

The Three Main Components of the College Summit *Navigator* Program

Influential students. The College Summit model focuses on the development of Peer Leaders within the high school population. Influential students are drawn from rising 12th-grade students, and they attend a four-day workshop at a local college campus where they are trained in critical college-related tasks such as completing college applications, accessing financial aid, and developing self-advocacy skills. The Peer Leaders then use this knowledge to help motivate and support other students in these areas.

Tools and professional development. College Summit staff work with school staff to weave postsecondary discussions, planning, and resources into ongoing school operations. College Summit provides access to a college planning and preparation curriculum, teacher trainings in postsecondary education planning, and online tools for use by both school staff and students to complete and track progress on key college enrollment measures. Twelfth-grade students enroll in a regular, for-credit course, and both students and advisors also have access to CSNav and CSNav ProCenter.

Measuring results. College Summit staff share with educators and administrators a suite of reports on progress toward postsecondary planning milestones, as well as verified college enrollment of high school graduates. These reports are used to establish performance goals and review progress toward them, to identify program components or student subgroups in need of additional resources, and to motivate students and educators.

By supporting implementation of the *Launch* and *Navigator* program activities at these NCR schools, College Summit seeks to promote beliefs and behaviors among students and staff that transform the school climate into a college-going culture.

Organization of the Report

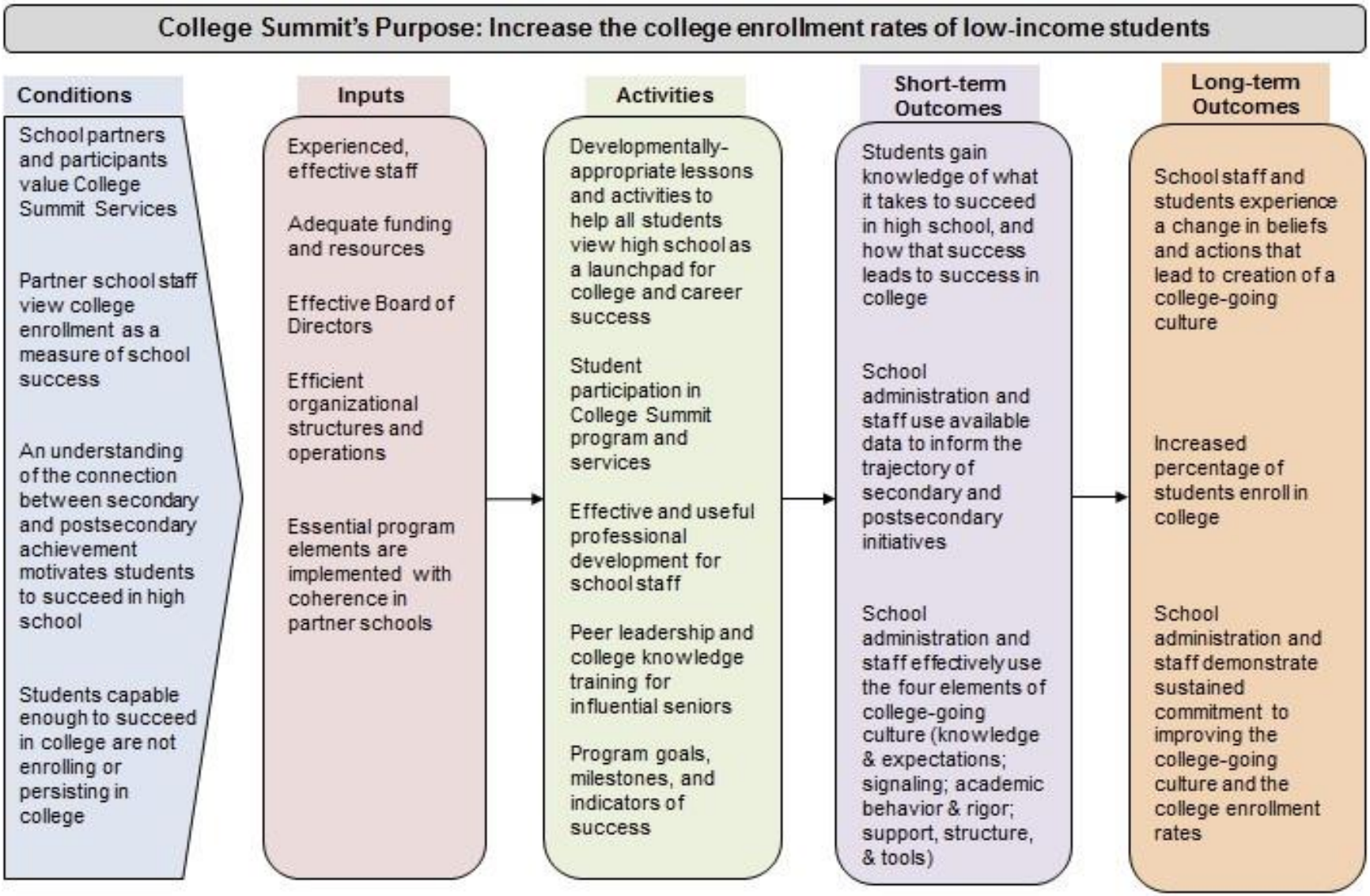
This report describes the implementation of the College Summit *Launch* and *Navigator* programs in high schools located in the NCR. The report also examines how student outcomes (Grades 9 to 10 persistence, graduation rates, college enrollment, and college persistence) for 16 participating schools compared with student outcomes for similar schools that never participated in College Summit. It begins with an overview of the College Summit logic model, followed by a description of American Institutes for Research's (AIR's) program evaluation, including the five research questions, the analysis design, and study limitations. Key findings, organized by research questions, follow. The report concludes with a synthesis of the findings from both the implementation and school-level outcomes components of the *Launch* and *Navigator* programs.

College Summit Logic Model

The College Summit logic model,[4] which both the *Navigator* and *Launch* programs operate, is presented in Figure 1.

[4] A logic model describes the program inputs and activities intended to bring about the desired results. Logic models allow stakeholders to explain change processes and their evolution over time, and they provide researchers guidance on the connection between program components and intended outcomes.

Figure 1. College Summit's Logic Model at the School Level



The logic model in Figure 1 begins with the purpose of College Summit's partnership with high schools, which is to increase the college enrollment rates of students from low-income families. This purpose is the foundation of the program model. The model then describes conditions necessary for programmatic success: Schools and participants value the services of College Summit, school staff use college enrollment as a measure of school success, an understanding of the connection between secondary and postsecondary achievement will motivate students to perform well in high school, and participating students who are capable enough to succeed in college are not enrolling.

Next, key inputs essential to the change process are discussed. Examples of key inputs include the experience of College Summit staff, adequate funding and resources, an experienced board of directors, efficient organization and operation, and the coherent implementation of program elements by high schools. With these inputs, College Summit and partner schools implement essential activities that include developmentally appropriate lessons and activities to help all students view high school as a launchpad to college and career success; tailored professional development for teachers and counselors; peer leadership and college knowledge training for influential seniors; and the establishment of goals, milestones, and indicators of program success.

The expectation is that if these activities are implemented with fidelity within a school, it will lead to the following immediate short-term outcomes:

- Participating students will learn what it takes to succeed in high school and how that success leads to success in college.
- School administrators and staff will use data to inform the trajectory of secondary and postsecondary initiatives.
- School personnel will become increasingly effective in their use of the four elements of a college-going culture (i.e., knowledge and expectations; signaling; academic behavior and rigor; and support, structure, and tools).

Across time, these outcomes should lead to long-term and sustained changes in students' and staff members' beliefs and behaviors and lead to the creation and sustainability of a college-going culture and a greater proportion of students enrolling in college.

Overview of the Evaluation

AIR, in partnership with Policy Studies Associates (PSA),[5] conducted a four-year (2011–12 to 2014–15) evaluation of the College Summit *Launch* and *Navigator* program implementation in schools located in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. Our evaluation[6] is designed to provide a comprehensive picture of how participating schools tailor and implement the *Launch* and *Navigator* programs. In addition, it seeks to examine the extent to which College Summit program implementation improves Grade 9 to 10 persistence rates and college enrollment and persistence rates compared with those in similar nonparticipating schools.

This section of the report summarizes the five research questions: four about implementation and one about school outcomes. Researchers chose the following research questions to supply College Summit with formative and summative data on program performance and student outcomes. As noted, College Summit seeks to build the capacity of schools and districts to support students through the college planning process and to create an expectation of postsecondary education within the schools.

College Summit Implementation Research Questions

1. To what extent are the core components of College Summit and *Launch* (lessons learned and activities; student participation; professional development; peer leadership; and program goals, milestones, and activities) implemented as intended by the developer (i.e., College Summit)?
2. Which factors do educators identify as facilitating or impeding implementation of College Summit and *Launch*?
3. How do educators involved in implementing College Summit and *Launch* rate the quality and utility of program materials and the training and support provided by College Summit staff?
4. How do school staff members involved in implementing College Summit and *Launch* describe the relationship between program implementation and the development of a college-going culture?
5. What is the difference between College Summit *Launch* schools and their matched comparison schools on the following: (a) ninth- to 10th-grade persistence rates, (b) high school graduation rates, (c) college enrollment rates, and (d) college persistence rates?

[5] In 2015, PSA conducted site visits at six NCR high schools that were implementing the College Summit *Launch* program specifically. A separate report on the site-visit findings was delivered to College Summit in August 2015.
[6] The AIR evaluation consists of two separate but complementary studies: (1) This current study that focuses on the College Summit *Launch* and *Navigator* programs in schools located only in the NCR and (2) a national study that examines the implementation and school outcomes of the College Summit 12th-grade *Navigator* program.

Methods and Analytic Approach

The purpose of AIR's analysis is to understand the extent to which the College Summit *Launch* and *Navigator* program was implemented with fidelity across participating schools located in the NCR and to document, where applicable, any differences in both program participation and school outcomes.

Researchers employed a mixed-methods design that relied on multiple sources of data collected in 2014–15 and 2015–16 academic years. Data collected in spring 2015 included surveys of participating College Summit teachers or advisors and their school administrators, as well as site visits that consisted of in-person[7] interviews and focus groups. Between summer 2015 and summer 2016, we also collected high school and college enrollment data from seven districts in the NCR. More information about data collection for the implementation component of the evaluation is discussed in greater detail next. A discussion of the methods and approach used for school-level outcomes analysis can be found in the section, "Methods for School Outcomes Analysis."

Methods for Implementation Analysis

Survey Administration

To measure college-going culture in participating schools, we developed and administered an electronic survey in spring 2015[8] to administrators, counselors, and advisors in 12 schools and charter management organizations (CMOs) located in three districts across Virginia and Maryland and two CMOs from the District of Columbia.[9] The survey covered the following four overarching constructs:

- Implementation of College Summit activities
- School culture
- Institutional factors[10]
- College Summit supports

At the conclusion of the survey window, data from 55 respondents[11] from 11 schools in three districts and one CMO from the District of Columbia comprised the final analytic data set. Table 1 shows the final response rates, by position, for eligible staff in these schools. Eligible staff included College Summit teachers or advisors, counselors, and school administrators. Because of the low overall response rates for NCR schools, results should be interpreted with caution.

[7] In cases where in-person interviews could not be conducted, PSA conducted phone interviews.
[8] The spring 2015 survey window was between April 1 and May 22, 2015.
[9] The same survey administered to the NCR region was also administered to all College Summit schools nationwide during the same period.
[10] Institutional factors include, for example, assessing the extent to which the schools involved parents and celebrated student college admissions.
[11] The NCR survey was initially administered to 89 NCR respondents. However, at the request of College Summit, AIR created and disseminated a general survey link. This allowed for other school-level staff that were not in included in the original list provided by College Summit to complete the survey. Using the generic link no longer allowed researchers to accurately calculate a final response rate because AIR could no longer individually track who was invited and who took the survey.

Table 1. NCR Response Rates by Position

Survey	NCR Response Rate (*n* = 55)
College Summit advisor or teachers	52.7% (29 respondents)
College Summit counselors	36.4% (20 respondents)
College Summit administrators (e.g., principal or assistant principal)	5.5% (3 respondents)
Other	5.5% (3 respondents)

School Site Visits

To better understand how schools implement both the 12th-grade *Navigator* and the Grades 9–11 *Launch* program for the 2014–15 school year, researchers[12] conducted one-day site visits in spring 2015[13] with three schools in the District of Columbia and two schools in Maryland. For a sixth school (located in the District of Columbia), the evaluation team was only able to conduct an in-depth phone interview with the principal but did not conduct any student focus groups.

In advance of each visit, College Summit coordinators at each school were asked to identify staff and students both involved in and not involved in the program to meet with PSA staff during the visit. Key staff included the school's program coordinator, course teachers, and the school's principal or other knowledgeable administrator.[14] The evaluation team interviewed 17 principals, coordinators, and teachers, and they conducted 10 focus groups with a total of 51 high school students (35 participating and 16 nonparticipating) representing Grades 9 to 12 from five schools. All site-visit schools served predominantly African American or Hispanic students; total school populations ranged from as few as 200 students to more than 2,000. Table 2 displays the number of participants by respondent type and school site.

Table 2. Number of Participants by Respondent Type and Site

State or Federal District	School	Interviews			Focus Groups	
		Principal or Administrator	Coordinator	Teacher	Participating College Summit Students	Nonparticipating Students
District of Columbia	A	0	0	4	8	0
	B	1	1	2	9	5
	C	1	0	0	0	0
Maryland	D	1	1	0	5	5
	E	1	1	1	6	0
	F	1	0	2	7	6
Total		**5**	**3**	**9**	**35**	**16**

Site visits consisted of interviews with school administrators, teachers, and counselors focused on College Summit implementation across all participating grades and included discussion of

[12] Data collection and analysis for the 2015 site visits were led by PSA.
[13] The window to conduct site visits was between April 1 and June 30, 2015.
[14] In one school, researchers interviewed the director of postsecondary education.

both the 12th-grade *Navigator* program and the *Launch* program for students enrolled in Grades 9–11. The purpose of the focus groups were to talk with students about the benefits of College Summit and its curriculum.

The goal of the qualitative analysis was to compare, contrast, and synthesize findings and to identify both common and unique aspects of program implementation across schools. To ensure the accuracy of findings, interviews and focus groups were recorded with the consent of school staff and students. All audio recordings were then transcribed, and site visitors wrote brief analytic summaries that identified key characteristics and themes related to the extent of each school's program implementation immediately after each visit. Next, we used a coding framework in Dedoose, an online qualitative data analysis platform, to analyze transcripts and memos for themes. Once the data were coded, a team member summarized the major themes that addressed each research question into summaries. The resulting summaries provided an overview of College Summit implementation at the school, identified confirming and disconfirming evidence for the site-visit themes, and defined new themes when applicable.

Additional information describing the site visits, survey administration process, and response rates can be found in Appendix B.

Methods for School Outcomes Analysis

To explore school outcomes in the College Summit schools, AIR conducted a series of descriptive analyses for a set of College Summit schools and a set of similar nonparticipating schools. The purpose of the analysis was to describe how school-level ninth- to 10th-grade persistence, high school graduation, and college enrollment changed in schools that implemented College Summit *Launch* or *Navigator* programs for at least three years.

It is important to note that in December 2015, AIR proposed an amendment to the original scope of work from a student-level data analysis to a school-level data analysis to address the outcomes of the College Summit program. This change was proposed because of difficulties obtaining student-level data for various reasons, including expiration of original memorandum of understandings (MOUs) between AIR and district-level staff and no relationship with new staff; stricter district data climates leading to more than half the districts requiring parental consent for every student going back a decade; and limitations in the MOUs between College Summit and partnering districts to share data with a third party (i.e., AIR)[15].

This section provides an overview of the treatment and comparison sample, followed by a discussion of the four school outcome measures used in this component of the analysis. It concludes with details of the analytic approach.

Study Sample

Treatment Schools. The treatment school sample ("College Summit schools") included all schools that started the College Summit *Launch* program in 2006 or later in the NCR (i.e., Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia) and participated in College Summit for at

[15] In June 2015, AIR's request to use school-level data in lieu of student-level data was approved by College Summit and partners.

least three continuous years. Table 3 shows the total number of College Summit schools by state, the year (grouped as cohorts) these schools began College Summit, and the range of participation years.

Table 3. Number of Treatment Schools by State

State or Federal District	Number of Schools	College Summit Cohorts	Range of Participation Years
Virginia	4	2006, 2007, 2008, 2012	3 to 10 years
Maryland	9	2006, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012	3 to 10 years
District of Columbia	3	2007, 2013	3 to 8 years

Because the data availability varied by outcome measure, the final number of treatment schools used in each analysis also varied. Table 4 shows the data availability by school and total treatment sample size per outcome variable. Three College Summit schools with incomplete data for all outcomes were excluded from the sample.[16]

Table 4. Treatment Schools Included in Each Outcome Analysis (*N* = 16)

State or Federal	District	School	Year Started College Summit	Data Available for Outcome			
				College Enrollment, Any School	College Enrollment, Four-Year School	Graduation Rate	Ninth- to 10th-Grade Persistence Rate
Virginia	District A	School A	2006				x
	District B	School B	2007				x
	District B	School C	2008				x
	District C	School D	2012	x	x	x	
Maryland	District D	School E	2006			x	x
	District D	School F	2006			x	x
	District D	School G	2006			x	x
	District D	School H	2008	x	x	x	x
	District D	School I	2008	x	x	x	x
	District D	School J	2009	x	x	x	x
	District D	School K	2009	x	x	x	x
	District D	School L	2010	x	x	x	x
	District E	School M	2012	x			

[16] Two schools in the District of Columbia closed within two years of starting College Summit and did not have any postintervention data. One school from Maryland started College Summit in 2013 and did not have available postintervention data for the most recent school year.

State or Federal	District	School	Year Started College Summit	Data Available for Outcome			
				College Enrollment, Any School	College Enrollment, Four-Year School	Graduation Rate	Ninth- to 10th-Grade Persistence Rate
District of Columbia	District F	School N	2007				x
	District G	School O	2007				x
	District G	School P	2013			x	
Total Treatment Sample by Outcomes				**7**	**6**	**10**	**13**

Note. *N* = 16.

Comparison Schools. To help explore patterns in the changes in each school outcome after the start of the College Summit program, researchers selected a set of comparison schools similar to the College Summit schools. These schools were selected from high schools located in the same school districts as the NCR College Summit treatment schools and never participated in the College Summit program. By district, each treatment school was assigned up to two comparison schools based on similarities in school demographics (i.e., school size, percentage of non-White students, and percentage who receive free or reduced-price lunch).[17] When a similar school within a district was not available, a comparison school from a district within the state was assigned. Each comparison school was then assigned a "start" year consistent with the start year of its matched treatment school. For more information about the number of comparison schools assigned to each treatment school for each outcome, see Appendix C.

Table 5 compares the demographic characteristics of the treatment and comparison schools used to complete the descriptive analysis. As shown in Table 5, the overall treatment and comparison samples were similar across the three demographic characteristics of interest. Schools on average were large with approximately one third of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and had a high proportion of non-White students. More information about treatment and comparison schools by state are available in Table C2 of Appendix C.

[17] Given the small pool of comparison schools available within the six districts, we used the following matching process to identify comparison schools most like the treatment schools in a particular district. Schools were matched on the following three demographic characteristics: school size, percentage eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and percentage non-White students. All three school demographics were considered when identifying the best matched school. The matching process began with the consideration of the school size (e.g., some of the College Summit schools were small with enrollment rates around a few hundred students and others were large, with enrollment rates well exceeding 1,000 students). Although we did not preidentify specific student cutoffs, we aimed to identify a few schools similar within district. In the case that no schools within a district were similar to a treatment school, we looked at schools in neighboring districts within a state. Researchers then considered the most similar schools relative to the percentage eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and percentage non-White status, considering the most closely matched schools both above and below each of the demographic characteristics.

Table 5. Demographics of the Treatment and Comparison Schools

State or Federal	Treatment Schools	Comparison Schools	*P*-Value
Number of schools	16	30	—
School size	1,636.44 (717.95)	1,530.46 (700.19)	$p = 0.63$
Percentage eligible for free or reduced-price lunch	33.07 (15.99)	36.80 (16.91)	$p = 0.47$
Percentage non-White	85.28 (22.80)	83.71 (19.84)	$p = 0.81$

Note. Standard deviation presented in parentheses

Source: Common Core of Data, 2005.

School Outcome Measures

The student outcome measures were based on data sources that only provided data aggregated to the school level. The following data sources were used:

- **District-provided data.** We submitted data requests[18] for 19 College Summit schools in the NCR and for all additional high schools in those districts for comparison purposes.[19] For eight schools from one district, researchers obtained college enrollment and high school graduation rate directly from the school districts. Complete college enrollment data were not available for three schools. To clarify, AIR received data only for those districts that approved our data requests and had the staffing capacity to provide these data.
- **State publicly available websites.** For three schools that could not provide data, we searched for school-level graduation rate, college enrollment, and college persistence data from the state education agency websites. This approach was used to supplement data when data provided by a district was incomplete.
- **National Center for Education Statistics' Common Core of Data (CCD).** For all schools, we obtained CCD for school-level demographic information from the 2004–05 school year. Ninth- and 10th-grade school enrollment data were obtained to calculate ninth- to 10th-grade persistence rates for the 2003–04 to the 2013–14 school years.

These data sources were used to calculate the following outcomes:

- **Ninth- to 10th-grade persistence rates.** One early indicator a school's college-going culture and the likelihood a student is to go on to college is the support for student's transition from ninth to 10th grade. Ninth grade, in particular, is considered a critical time point for whether a student will complete high school or drop out (Allensworth & Easton, 2005; Allensworth & Easton, 2007). To estimate each school's persistence rate, AIR used

[18] Data requests also included Memorandums of Understanding and Institutional Review Board applications.
[19] We also requested and received district data for one district that participated in the College Summit program but not with *Launch.* The three College Summit schools from this district were not included in the sample, but seven schools from the district were selected for the comparison sample.

2003 through 2013 CCD enrollment data and divided the number of 10th-grade students enrolled each year by the number of ninth graders enrolled in that high school the previous year. This measure provides a proxy for the proportion of students who progressed from ninth grade to 10th grade from one year to the next, although it should be noted that this rate does not consider students who may have transferred into or out of a school in a given year (versus dropped out).

- **High school graduation rates.** Another indicator that a school may be better positioned to increase the percentage of students enrolling in college is if more students graduate from high school. To track high school graduation rates over time, AIR used publically available state and district-level extant data files for graduation rates for most schools. Each data source varied slightly in how the graduation rate was defined. Because the school-level analysis focused on changes in trends of the school-level data and College Summit schools were matched to schools within district, no additional changes were made to the data when aggregating these data sources despite variations in how states calculated high school graduation rates. Table 6 lists the data source and the high school graduation rate definition.

Table 6. Data Sources and Definitions of Graduation Rates

State or Federal District	District	Data Source	Definition of High School Graduation Rate	Years of Available Data
Virginia	One district	Virginia Department of Education Public	Four-year adjusted-cohort graduation rate	2008–15
Maryland	Two districts	Maryland Department of Education Public	High school graduation leaver data[a]	2003–13
District of Columbia	One district[b]	District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education	Four-year adjusted-cohort graduation rate	2011–15

[a] ≥95.0 and ≤5.0 were replaced with 95 percent and 5 percent.
[b] Graduation rates were not available for the other District of Columbia school district included in this study.

College Enrollment Rates. To compute college enrollment rates, we used publically available school-level college enrollment data collected from state department of education websites to create two different variables used to define college enrollment. NSC data were also used for seven schools from one comparison district. Similar to the challenges of not having one common definition for high school graduation across all states, the evaluation team created two variables (i.e., *college enrollment in any college, including two and four year colleges,* and *college enrollment in any four-year college*) based on the different definitions used by Maryland and Virginia. Table 7 lists the data source and definition used for the schools by state. No college enrollment data were available for the District of Columbia; thus, researchers could not calculate college enrollment rates for this area.

Table 7. Data Sources and Definitions of College Enrollment

State or Federal District	District	Data Source	State Definition of College Enrollment	Years of Available Data
Virginia	All	Virginia Department of Education Public	Students who enrolled in any institution of higher education within 16 months of earning a federally recognized high school diploma	2008–15
			Students who enrolled in a four-year institution of higher education within 16 months of earning a federally recognized high school diploma	2008–15
Maryland	District D	District provided data	Number of graduates enrolled in a four-year college or any college by fall immediately after high school	2004–14
			Number of graduates enrolled in a four-year college or any college within two years after high school	2004–10
	District NA (comparison schools only)	District provided data	Number of graduates who enroll in a four-year college or any college within the first year after high school	2007–14
			Number of graduates who enroll in college in a four-year or any college the first year after high school and enroll in the second year after high school	2007–14
District of Columbia	No data available	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable

College Persistence

No college persistence data was provided by NSC for College Summit districts or schools. In addition, no data were provided directly by NCR districts or available through publicly available websites. Therefore, researchers could not analyze these school outcomes.

Other School-Level Demographic Measures

Researchers used publically available school-level data files from the National Center for Education Statistics' CCD for the 2004–05 school year to calculate the following school-level characteristics:

- Student enrollment
- Percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch
- Race and ethnicity distribution
- Locale

Analytic Approach

Prior and postintervention years are included in this descriptive analysis to show patterns of schools' outcomes prior to and after the start of the College Summit program. With this method, the College Summit schools' outcomes are compared with their own performance as well as with the performance of comparison schools that did not participate in College Summit during the same time frame. The inclusion of pretreatment and posttreatment data for the College Summit schools shows any changes that may have occurred after the start of the program, whereas the inclusion of the comparison schools allows the research team to consider whether any changes in outcomes may be attributed to participation in the College Summit program or external factors. In essence, evaluators may expect the College Summit schools to follow a pattern of outcomes similar to the comparison schools in the absence of the College Summit program.

Table 8 shows an example of the data used to explore changes in college enrollment for two schools, one that began in 2005–06 and another in 2006–07. Because College Summit schools varied in the year they started the program, the years of baseline and postintervention data differ based on the year a school began College Summit. To the extent that data were available for each College Summit school, researchers included two years of data prior to the start of the program and three years of data after its start.

Table 8. Time Frame for College Enrollment Data

School	Year Started College Summit	Data Included				
		Pre Year 2	Pre Year 1	Post Year 1	Post Year 2	Post Year 3
School A	2005–06	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08
School B	2006–07	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09

Limitations of the School Analysis

It is important to consider the limitations of the school analysis when interpreting the findings. Because schools were not randomly assigned to use College Summit, one cannot solely attribute school outcome differences between the treatment and comparison schools to the use of College Summit. In addition, participating College Summit schools had leeway in their ability to implement some or all components of the *Launch* and *Navigator* program in their schools, which limits the ability to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the programs or their specific components. As a result, AIR recommends that the results be interpreted and generalized with caution. A summary of the study's limitations is as follows:

- **Limited availability of data and small sample size.** Under ideal circumstances, having access to complete and consistent school-level measures for all NCR schools and all years of interest (2003–04 to 2014–15) would allow us to delve deeper into the data. With complete data, we could more accurately calculate pre- and postintervention year outcomes for each measure (e.g., ninth- to 10th-grade persistence, high school graduation, college enrollment, and college persistence). During a two-year period, AIR, in partnership with College Summit, attempted to obtain data from all participating College Summit districts. However, in many cases our data requests were unanswered or denied; occasionally, if approved, the data provided were limited or incomplete. As a consequence, only six to 10 College Summit schools, depending on the outcome of interest, had enough data (i.e., a minimum of two years preintervention and two years postintervention) to be included in the analysis. After considering the year in which schools entered the College Summit program, the state in which the school is located, and the availability of data, the sample sizes were too small to allow for any rigorous analyses and statistical testing. Therefore, the findings are limited to descriptive information for a small number of schools. Although the descriptive findings can illustrate whether patterns of change emerge prior to and after the start of the College Summit program, there is no statistical power to determine whether these changes are statistically significant.
- **College Summit was not randomly assigned to schools.** As part of its design, College Summit is adopted into high schools with student populations that traditionally have struggled to make the transition from high school to college successfully. Districts must pay for each school to participate in the program. As a result, the program is initially offered to a smaller subset of high-need schools within a district before it is often scaled up and offered to other schools in the same district. Moreover, schools (and districts) may opt out (or elect to participate) at their own discretion. As a consequence, there may be meaningful differences between the College Summit and comparison schools that are not attributable to College Summit implementation.
- **The influence of College Summit on school outcomes may have changed over time.** In this analysis, school outcomes are aggregated based on the year in which a school began College Summit. The 16 College Summit schools represented began the program between the 2005–06 and 2012–13 school years. Given the small sample size, researchers cannot account for the point in time in which a school began College Summit in these comparisons (e.g., as an early adopter or a late adopter). However, it is likely that the program evolved over the eight school years represented in this sample as the program

received more feedback about program implementation. In turn, these changes could have led to a greater influence on school outcomes in the later cohorts.

- **Observed pre- and postintervention changes in a school's outcomes may be due to other, nontreatment changes that occurred at the same time that College Summit was adopted**. For example, the adoption of College Summit *Launch* program might occur at the same time a state changes high school graduation requirements. If this is the case, then researchers cannot determine whether observed pre- and postintervention changes in the school's outcome are due to the adoption of College Summit or the new graduation requirements (i.e., history bias).
- **Different state-level definitions of key outcomes.** A final limitation was each state and district varied in their definitions of each of the key outcomes. In some cases, the definition changed during the tenure of a school's enrollment in College Summit. For example, the federal reporting guidelines for graduation rates changed in 2008. For this reason, we could only conduct within-state (as opposed to cross-state) comparisons to account for these definitional changes.

Implementation Findings

This section addresses the four research questions that assess the extent to which the key components of the College Summit *Launch* program were implemented as planned. These findings come from both the site-visit interviews and focus groups, as well as the survey administered in spring 2015. As a reminder, College Summit designers intended implementation of the program to begin as a partnership with high schools, based on the conditions that schools value and use the services of the program. College Summit provides tailored professional development to school staff, a sustainable model of peer leadership, and lessons and activities that if implemented as designed, can lead to changes in the school's college-going culture.

To what extent are the core components of College Summit *Launch* (lessons learned and activities; student participation; professional development; peer leadership; and program goals, milestones and activities) implemented as intended by the developer (i.e., College Summit)?

According to College Summit staff, the joint *Launch* and *Navigator* program is designed to be implemented with a subset of students spanning Grades 9 to 12. When all components of the programs are implemented, schools as a whole will develop and foster an organic growth of college-going culture schoolwide, have more engaged faculty and staff, and higher rates of students graduating high school and enrolling in college. Interview findings reveal that although many core elements (College Summit curriculum, CSNav and CSNav Procenter, Milestone Reports, and teacher professional development and support) of both the College Summit *Launch* and *Navigator* programs were present in NCR schools, the frequency and use of certain components of these programs and the number of grades participating within schools varied. Variation in student enrollment and grade-level participation was due in part to schools having limited funds to pay for every student to participate in the program or not enough available teachers to teach the courses.

Grade Levels Served and Student Participation in the Launch *Program*

Across the six selected College Summit site-visit schools, all served high school students in two or more grades (Tables 9 and 10). Only two schools (one from the District of Columbia and another from Maryland) enrolled ninth- and 10th-grade students in College Summit. The remaining four schools offered the *Launch* and *Navigator* program to juniors and seniors.

Table 9. District of Columbia Site-Visit Schools: Facts About College Summit Implementation

	District of Columbia		
	School A	**School B**	**School C**
Grades served	Grades 9 and 10	Grades 11 and 12	Grades 11 and 12
Number of College Summit classes operated	Eight classes for freshman and seven classes for sophomores	One class for juniors and two classes for seniors	Nine classes for juniors and one class for seniors
Number of students	240 freshman and 160 sophomores	12 juniors and 40 seniors	270 juniors and 30 seniors
College Summit course credits earned	Both freshman and sophomores earn a half credit	Juniors earn a half credit while seniors earn a full credit	Both juniors and seniors earn a full credit
Number of College Summit teachers	10 College Summit teachers	Two College Summit teachers	10 College Summit teachers

Table 10. Maryland Site-Visit Schools: Facts About College Summit Implementation

	Maryland		
	School D	**School E**	**School F**
Grades served	Grades 11 and 12	Grades 11 and 12	Grades 9, 10, 11, and 12
Number of College Summit classes operated	Two classes each for both juniors and seniors	Two classes each for both juniors and seniors	One class each for freshman and sophomores, and two classes each for juniors and seniors
Number of students	50 juniors and 50 seniors	50 juniors and 50 seniors	30 freshman, 30 sophomores, 30 juniors, and 30 seniors
College Summit course credits earned	Juniors earn one full credit and seniors earn a half credit	Juniors earn a half credit and seniors earn a full credit	With the exceptions of juniors who earn a half credit, freshman, sophomores, and seniors earn a full credit
Number of College Summit teachers	Two College Summit teachers	One College Summit teacher	Two College Summit teachers

The results from the site-visit interviews reveal that school A served all ninth- and 10th-grade students as part of its extended-day program in a 45-minute period prior to the beginning of the official school day. However, none of their 11th- or 12th-grade students participated in the program in the 2014–15 school year. In contrast, a second District of Columbia school (i.e., school C) enrolled all 11th-grade students and a subset of their 12th-grade students. The school's principal noted that the school's master schedule did not allow for more than one class in the schedules of upperclassmen. Only one school located in Maryland (i.e., school F) served a subset of students across all grades.

The remaining four schools (e.g., schools B, D, E, and F) offered enrollment to a subset of students enrolled in the targeted grades. Teachers and coordinators in the remaining four schools reported that students primarily self-selected into the College Summit as part of the process of developing their schedule for the upcoming school year. Ten (of 35) focus group students from all schools reported that they selected the class based on a counselor's recommendation or because they had a friend or family member who had previously participated in the program who recommended it. No teachers, principals, or coordinators reported targeted recruitment of students into the College Summit program. However, 13 (of 17) interview respondents from five (of six) schools reported that because College Summit is offered as a regular class, it was sometimes a challenge to align enrollment limits with student interests or schedules. Schools had to cap enrollment because of the number of students allowed according to their College Summit contracts, because they did not have enough available and trained teachers, or because they needed to reduce teacher–student ratios.

Course Credit and Class Sizes

In alignment with the College Summit model, all participating site-visit schools offered the College Summit program as a credit-bearing, elective course. Participating students earned either a half or a full credit after course completion. Reported class sizes averaged approximately 30 students per class across each of the participating schools. Depending on the size of the school and number of students enrolled in the *Launch* and *Navigator* programs, from two to as many as 10 teachers were assigned to teach the College Summit classes in each school (see Tables 9 and 10).

Although offering College Summit during a regular class period was a challenge for all six schools, interview respondents highlighted the importance of having a dedicated time for teachers and students to work together as suggested in the College Summit model. In most schools that participated in the site visits, staff identified clear benefits for the students who enrolled in the class.

Teacher and Student Discussions Around College Planning and Postsecondary Options

By senior year in high school, a general expectation is that most students would have had at least one or more crucial conversation with a counselor, teacher, parent, or guardian about the necessary steps needed to ensure their college enrollment after high school. Class discussions on certain topics, such as Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) submittal and application submission processes, may occur less frequently throughout the year but are just as essential as the more frequent conversations around course selections and stress management techniques. The expectation of College Summit is that the necessary steps needed to be prepared for college and career are explicitly defined, communicated, and are a part of daily school culture. More than 90 percent of NCR survey respondents reported discussing the following topics with seniors: the importance of obtaining information about multiple colleges, the importance of finding the right college to attend, which classes students must take in order to enroll in college, how to prepare for college-level coursework, identifying which tests students need to take to get into college, and how to pay for college. However, when asked how

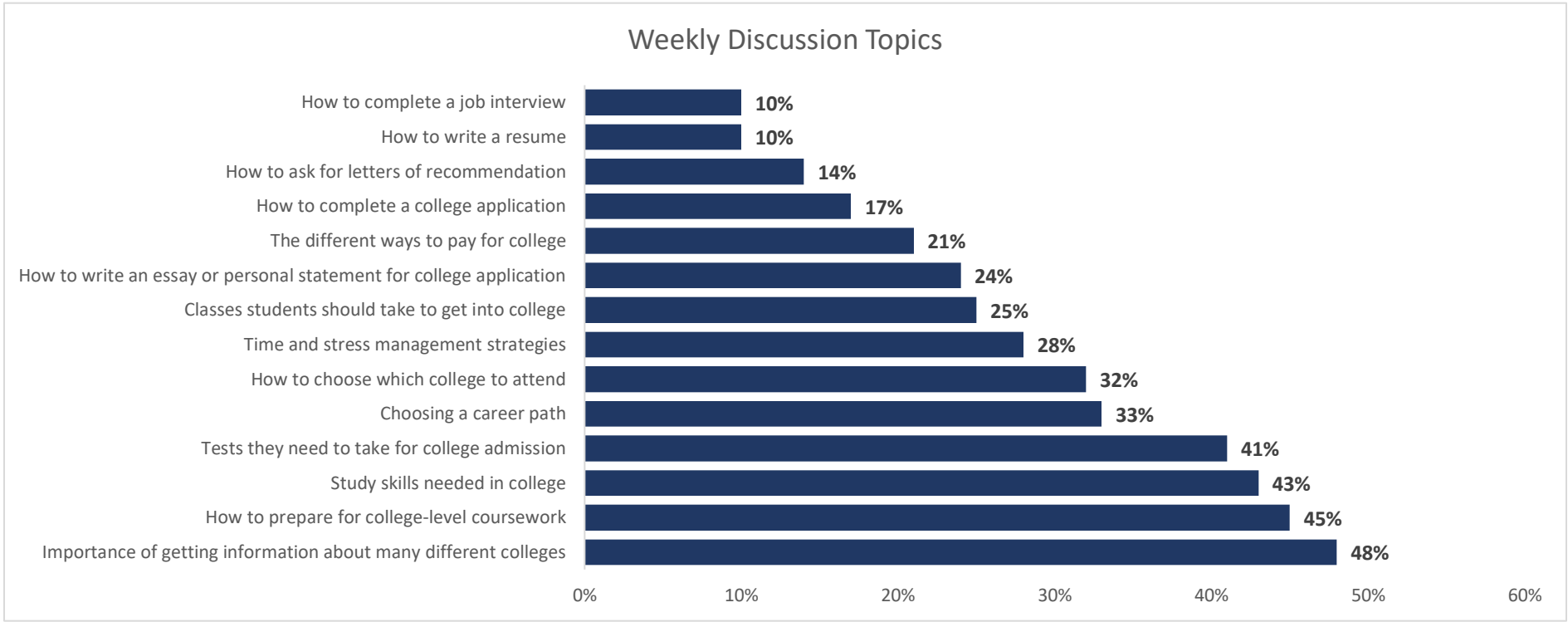
frequently they engaged in these discussions, responses varied from *once or twice a year* to *weekly*.

According to NCR respondents (Figure 2), the four most commonly discussed topics that occurred at least on a *weekly* basis were as follows:

1. The importance of getting information about many different colleges (48 percent)
2. How to prepare for college-level coursework (45 percent)
3. The study skills students need in college (43 percent)
4. The tests needed to get college admission (41 percent)

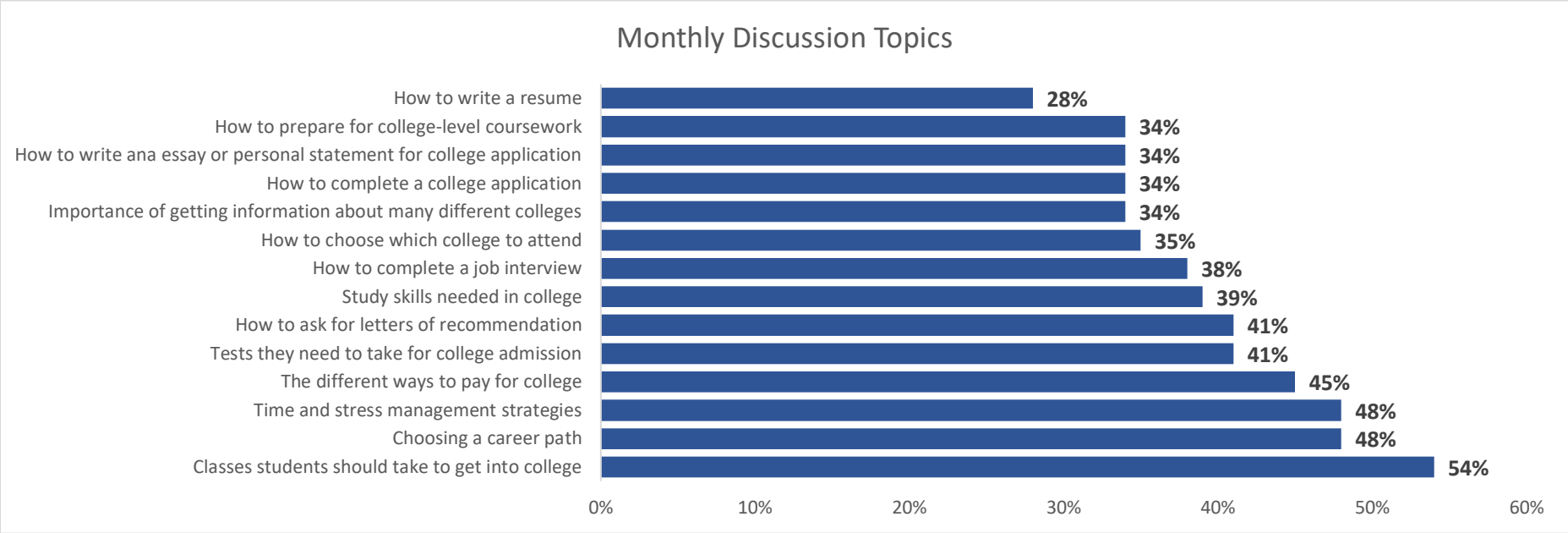
In contrast, 55 percent or more of NCR respondents reported having at least *monthly* discussions with students about the classes they should take to get into college, time and stress management strategies, choosing a career path, the different ways to pay for college, how to ask for letters of recommendation, and the tests students need to take to get into college (see Figure 3). Although most surveyed College Summit advisors and counselors reported working as thought partners with their students on these topics, 7 percent of NCR respondents noted that they never helped their students write a personal essay or personal statement.

Figure 2. Weekly Discussion of College-Related Topics at NCR Schools



Note. N = 29. Responses may not add up to 100 percent because respondents had the option of answering (or skipping) items on the survey.

Figure 3. Monthly Discussion of College Related Topics at NCR Schools



Note. N = 29. Responses may not add up to 100 percent because respondents had the option of answering (or skipping) items on the survey.

The principal at one high school noted that the College Summit program fosters individual, intentional conversations and sets expectations between teachers and students around the importance of college planning and preparation. He noted that in his large, comprehensive high school, it was more difficult to have these conversations with a significant proportion of the student body. He emphasized the importance of developing specific structures, processes, and practices that helped to ensure that College Summit-like conversations were happening with all students. He discussed the importance of doing active outreach to the "student who's college material, but isn't necessarily thinking along that line, and really they just needed that support to get them moving down the line."

College and Career Preparation Tasks

Survey respondents were asked whether and how often they helped a typical student with specific college and career preparation tasks. The expectation of College Summit is that school-based teachers and advisors in partnership with school counselors will provide frontline counseling support to students about the necessary steps and activities needed to get into college. Although most respondents reported helping their students with a host of activities (such as completing college applications and submitting the FAFSA), the frequency with which they worked with students to complete these activities varied dramatically. The most popular tasks with which NCR respondents helped students were making an academic plan and signing up and preparing for standardized tests (97 percent). The least popular tasks were making a financial plan or personal budget and choosing college-prep classes (83 percent).

College Summit's Implementation Goal 1

Clear Expectations ensure that all students are prepared for a full range of postsecondary options. The goals of what it takes to be prepared for college and career are explicitly defined, communicated, and part of daily school culture. Students, families, teachers, administrators, and staff recognize the role that each plays in preparing students for college. Decisions about coursework and career options are made with all postsecondary opportunities in mind. School leadership conveys and acts on the belief that high schools must be a Launchpad for college and career success. [Knowledge & Expectations]

Source: College-Going Culture Assessment, p. 1.

Although making an academic plan and signing up and preparing for standardized tests were popular tasks for NCR respondents, these tasks happened less frequently. Twenty-eight percent of NCR respondents indicated they only helped students with these tasks once or twice a year. From an implementation standpoint, this is fine considering that these activities only occur at a certain point in the school year. Notwithstanding, 69 percent of NCR respondents indicated that they help student complete college application essays or personal statements on at least a monthly basis.

College Summit's Implementation Goal 2

Comprehensive Counseling for the postsecondary pathway is routinely available for every student, primarily from counselors, and is supported by outreach staff, teachers, and resource personnel. Each counselor who works with students is well informed about postsecondary planning and has access to college training. All students are expected to set postsecondary goals and to plan their path for achieving them. [Support, Structure, & Tools]

Source: College-Going Culture Assessment, p. 1.

Peer Leader Involvement and Engagement

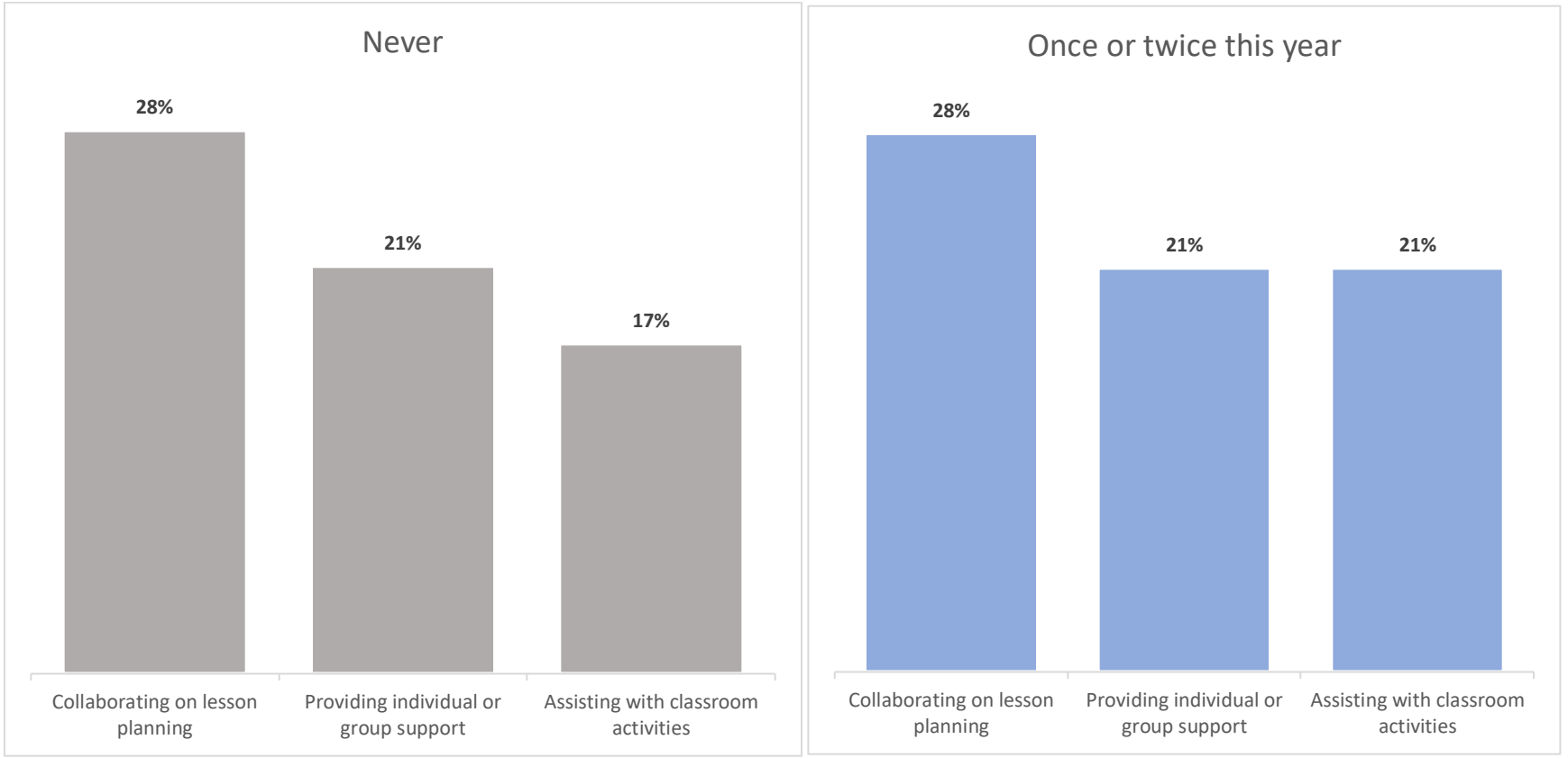
College Summit's Implementation Goal 3

Peer Leaders, Role Models, and Mentors who are positive, relevant, and college savvy are available for all students and play an active role in conveying the importance of postsecondary attainment. [Signaling/Support, Structure & Tools]

Source: College-Going Culture Assessment, p. 1.

Survey respondents had a chance to report on the frequency with which Peer Leaders—specially selected and trained seniors—completed critical tasks related to their position in College Summit and responsibilities in terms of supporting their peers. According to College Summit staff, all schools have Peer Leader on site; however, only 83 percent of surveyed NCR respondents reported having Peer Leaders, indicating that that not all school staff were aware of their existence on campus. According to College Summit advisors and counselors, Peer Leader involvement in NCR schools was nearly evenly spread between weekly engagement, to once or twice a year, to not at all, depending on the activity (Figure 4). Seven percent of NCR advisors and counselors reported engaging their Peer Leaders on a monthly basis (figure not shown).

Figure 4. Peer Leader Engagement and Frequency for Respondents Reporting Having Peer Leaders



Note. n = 29. Responses may not add up to 100 percent because respondents had the option of answering (or skipping) items on the survey

In addition, 51 percent of NCR survey respondents reported that their Peer Leaders had collaborated at some point in lesson planning. Nearly one third of those who reported collaborating on lesson planning did so once or twice in 2014–15. Specifically, 17 percent of NCR respondents noted that their Peer Leaders worked on lesson planning on a *weekly* basis, whereas only 3 percent did so on a *monthly* basis.

Regarding involvement in classroom activities, it is expected that Peer Leaders support their teachers as necessary and assist their peers, when called upon, by providing one-on-one or group support with such activities as filling out college applications or reviewing essays. Sixty-two percent of College Summit advisors surveyed in the NCR reported that their Peer Leaders assisted them in the classroom. However, 21 percent reported this assistance occurred only once or twice a year, 7 percent reported it occurred on a monthly basis, and 28 percent reported it occurred on a weekly basis. Moreover, NCR advisors and counselors used Peer Leaders to provide individual or group support to their peers on a weekly basis (28 percent) or not at all (21 percent).

Campus Visits

The ability to take students on college tours is another avenue to allow students to assess the accessibility and reality of college. Thirty-one percent of NCR respondents noted that their school has scheduled five to 10 campus visits as of spring 2015; 4 percent reported that their school did not organize any campus visits.

College Summit's Implementation Goal 4

Clear Partnerships are strong, facilitating college-related activities, such as field trips to college campuses and fairs, academic enrichment programs, and raising awareness of and aspirations toward college. [Support, Structure, & Tools]

Source: College-Going Culture Assessment, p. 1.

CSNav

Most student focus group respondents reported some level of use of the CSNav website. Students from all five site-visit schools where student focus groups were conducted noted that they used the website to search and identify potential colleges, identify sources of financial aid, and complete personal statements or college essays.

Which factors do educators identify as facilitating or impeding implementation of College Summit and *Launch*?

This section explores the factors interview and survey respondents described as enhancing or limiting successful implementation of College Summit. The first section explores the facilitating factors to program implementation, such as devoted College Summit teachers and coordinators and principal buy-in. The second section discusses the challenges and limiting factors to successful *Launch* and *Navigator* program implementation as described by interview participants. Examples of barriers included the limited availability of sufficient resources such as student access, scheduling, time, money, and technology. Fifteen interview participants identified several challenges to College Summit implementation. The third section summarizes key program successes and challenges as described by survey respondents.

Factors Facilitating College Summit Implementation

Interviewed teachers, principals, and coordinators reported that "soft resources" facilitated College Summit implementation of both programs. These resources include College Summit teacher enthusiasm for working with students around postsecondary planning and schoolwide buy-in of College Summit goals. Next, additional details surrounding these facilitating factors are provided.

Importance of the College Summit Teacher and Coordinator

Eight interview respondents from four site-visit schools highlighted the important role that the College Summit teacher plays in the success of the *Launch* and *Navigator* programs. For example, one coordinator stated that the College Summit teacher must have a "passion for investing in children's future." A principal from another school discussed the importance of having a coordinator who could devote sufficient time to planning and monitoring College Summit activities. The principal noted that the coordinator taught a full class load in addition to managing some afterschool activities and could not devote significant additional time to manage some aspects of the College Summit program. She linked a dedicated coordinator with greater buy-in schoolwide, and she stated:

> Just having someone specifically in that role to really push and monitor because she [the coordinator] has other things that she has to look at too but she does a really excellent job. Just having more staff that understand the process and I don't think as many people have bought into it as she has.

Schoolwide Buy-In

Interview participants from four (of six) schools highlighted schoolwide buy in to College Summit's goals, particularly by the principal, as an important factor that could maximize the success of the program. A coordinator from one school stated:

> I think if the school is putting in College Summit, the principal is already on board, but I think that those teachers need to have a good conversation with the principal in terms of what the principal's expectations are and what the county, whatever the school's jurisdiction wants.

The principal from the same school discussed his plans for improving the school's college-going culture and linked those plans with factors in the school that can increase the impact of programs such as College Summit. He discussed the "courageous conversations" he was beginning to have with teachers about the school's strengths and weaknesses and changes needed to help improve the school's preparation of students for life after college. By focusing on the school's goals, different strategies to reach them, and the extent to which those strategies were successful, he indicated that the school could maximize the impact of College Summit and other postsecondary planning activities in the school.

Barriers to Implementation

The most frequently cited barriers, ordered by the number of site-visit schools that reported experiencing them, included identifying time in the schedule for students to participate in a credit-bearing class (six schools), having regular access to technology (five of six schools), limited funding (four of six schools), and depth and breadth of the curriculum (three of six schools).

Student Access to Classes and Student Scheduling Challenges

Providing access to College Summit classes was a challenge in terms of funding (schools could only enroll the number of students included in their contracts) and time in students' schedules.

In addition to having not enough slots for College Summit classes, interview participants also discussed the challenges associated with fitting College Summit into students' schedules. For example, one coordinator from one Maryland school (i.e., school E) reported:

> There are so many electives that are offered. Kids have a request that they put in for registration and they request College Summit and then there's two periods that it's [College Summit] offered. If you're [choosing from] the AP class or College Summit, you're going to go to the AP class.

Similarly, an administrator from a school from the District of Columbia (i.e., school B) commented:

> There were 10 [seniors] that were not enrolled because they didn't have room in their schedule based on some of the other academic requirements they needed to graduate. Of the 50 that were enrolled in the class, all of them would use the College Summit *Navigator*…. The other challenge is, how do we provide the programming that's needed for juniors if they have other academic needs that take precedent?'

One school enrolled all of its juniors in an advisory period as part of its *Launch* program; however, the master schedule did not allow a common meeting time for seniors. The principal noted that the school used the junior year to help students develop a solid foundation for the college search and selection process they would undertake as seniors in the *Navigator* program. She noted that 11th-grade students focused on key activities such as drafting a personal statement "so that by senior year, they have a very clear game plan."

Access to Technology

Regular access to technology to complete program activities was a challenge as identified by five of the six site-visit schools. For example, a teacher from one school noted that because so many College Summit classes meet at the same time, it was very difficult for her students to have regular access to the computer lab, and she did not have computers for student use available in her classroom. She noted that the online component, CSNav, was such an important part of the curriculum that she felt that her students were unable to "reap the full benefits" because of the lack of access to technology. At another school, one teacher reported that her ninth-grade students primarily used their personal cell phones to access the CSNav website. Another teacher at a third school noted that her classes had trouble gaining access to computers during the early

part of the year. Eventually, she obtained regular access to tablet computers by the end of that school year, which finally enabled students to complete their milestone activities.

In addition, staff from three schools noted that their schools now had access to other, more comprehensive online college search tools. For example, three teachers noted that students could find more up-to-date information on individual school websites or on College Board maintained websites. In addition, the principals at two different schools noted that their schools were currently using the Naviance Web-based tool for college searches.

Funding

Principals from four of the six schools identified having access to sufficient funding to pay for the full College Summit program as a challenge. Of these four schools, only one was considering completely severing the relationship with College Summit at the time of the spring 2015 site visit because of a lack of funds. Both coordinators and school administrator believed that the loss of the partnership would likely not have a severe negative impact on overall class operations because the school had already integrated College Summit activities into a broader postsecondary course. This rationale was explained by the school administrator, who stated:

> I think [it has] been beneficial [for] us [to] not having our entire college prep or college awareness programming rest on College Summit. [It] is [because] we've always had these other resources that have helped us do the work. If we don't use College Summit, it wouldn't be that we would be totally lost. We would still have a large space to fill, but I think we've been doing pretty good having College Summit as a piece of the puzzle for us rather than the whole puzzle in that area. It would just be a challenge for us to figure out how we fill in the space that we generally have with College Summit.

A second school decided to discontinue its partnership, not because of lack of funds, but because they felt they were paying for more of the program than was actually used. The principal noted that the school now has access to the Naviance college-planning site for the first time and did not make use of CSNav at all during the 2014–15 school year because Naviance was "redundant" with CSNav. She also noted that even though her counseling staff invested "significant time" tailoring the *Launch* curriculum to better meet the needs of teachers and students, she believed that the College Summit staff did not provide enough "new or innovative ideas" about how to implement the program to justify its cost. She went on to explain:

> It really felt more like we were just paying for the [student] workbooks. If there had been an option to just continue with a much cheaper version [of College Summit] where we were really purchasing the [College Summit student] workbooks, because that's a resource that can't really be replicated [by school staff]. It gets used; every student gets one. We were putting so much of our own pieces on how those pieces in the workbook were brought to life and everything else. I don't think we were taking advantage of a lot of the other resources that come with the package, so it also didn't seem like an efficient expenditure.

In contrast, the three other schools remained committed to the program but planned to reduce the number of students enrolled rather than discontinue the program completely. This may be due in part to College Summit's pricing model which requires schools to pay for each student enrolled

in the program. As schools and districts face continued budget cuts, one can theorize that school administrators are forced to choose or prioritize which programs, or in this case students, would benefit the most. For example, one school in Maryland (which served students in Grades 9–12) planned to limit the program to Grades 11 and 12 for the 2015–16 school year. The continuation of the College Summit partnership despite funding challenges speaks to the value that some school leaders place on maintaining the College Summit partnership but limiting enrollment beyond the subset of students enrolled in the College Summit course.

Misalignment With the Depth and Breadth of the College Summit Curriculum

Although teachers and coordinators from five site-visit schools [20]had generally positive ratings of the content of College Summit curriculum materials, teachers from three schools where College Summit was being implemented as a yearlong course identified two key shortcomings of the curriculum. These shortcomings pertain primarily to the depth of the curriculum and the extent to which teachers had to tailor the written materials to better meet the needs of students. For teachers from the three schools, they noted that the College Summit curriculum materials for the *Launch* program in particular, were not sufficient to fully support a class throughout the school year. One teacher of both ninth- and 10th-grade classes stated:

> We're done. We passed that book a long time ago, so this fourth quarter, I'm going to bring in speakers, but towards the end of third quarter these [classes] became study halls, because there is nothing left in the book. Now, I've decided to turn it into a speaker forum for things that we write in the book, but I had to actually sit and get that together, so that took some time.

Another ninth-grade teacher from a different school noted that she had to develop strategies to remove some of the redundancies in the curriculum in order to help maintain student engagement in the class. She discussed how the ninth-grade curriculum focused "very heavily" on goal setting. She stated that although there were "subtle" differences in the specific lessons about strategies to achieve goals and changes in goals over time, her students perceived it as asking them to do the same things over and over. She added that it was very difficult to stretch the ninth-grade program into a full year of coursework.

Moreover, program coordinators from two other schools reported that they combined the College Summit *Launch* program with another postsecondary preparation program. For example, one school offered a combined SAT prep/College Summit program for its 11th-grade students. Another school developed its own postsecondary preparation program and integrated College Summit materials into a more comprehensive program.

An administrator from a school that decided not to continue the school's College Summit partnership identified the need to supplement the curriculum as one of the school's primary reasons for ending the formal partnership with College Summit. She explained:

> The lessons were kind of prepackaged, but they still required more context and planning, then just "open to page 46," as I think any curriculum would. It's no criticism of the

[20] Teachers and coordinators were not interviewed at the sixth site-visit school.

> curriculum, but it was such a lift of a part of our school counselors that I just don't know.... It really felt more like we were just paying for the workbooks.

The same principal explained that the school's counselors developed the scope and sequence for the class each week and shared this information with the teachers who taught the class during the school's 40-minute advisory period. Although all of the topics were relevant, the school counselors had to spend more time each week identifying strategies for teachers to increase student engagement. She stated that because teachers had other significant responsibilities to tend to other classes, they were not spending "sufficient time" focusing on College Summit. The counselors, in her perspective, were necessary for "breathing life" into the curriculum and ensuring instructional quality.

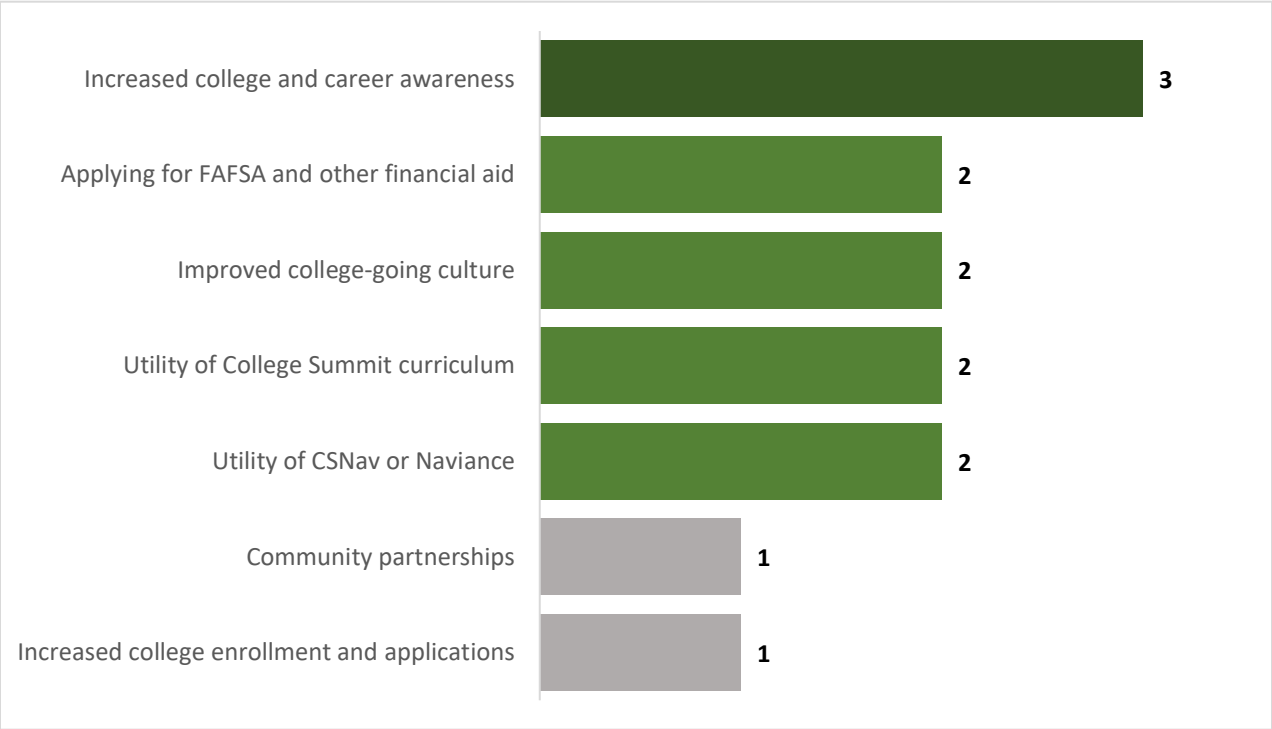
Notwithstanding, two teachers from one school mentioned that the College Summit materials for both the *Launch* and *Navigator* programs were not designed to fully address the needs of the high-risk population the school served. They had to supplement frequently to better align with student needs and interests. For example, these teachers noted that many of their students needed postsecondary preparation and guidance that required a broader focus beyond enrolling in a four-year college. They explained that because many of their students were overage and undercredited, it was necessary to spend class time "just explaining the benefits of college and convincing students that having a postsecondary plan was important," according to one interview respondent. The teachers added that they also talked with these students about community college and other opportunities, such as the military.

Program Implementation Successes

On the survey, two open-ended questions provided an opportunity for respondents to offer their opinions on the successes and challenges to implementing College Summit. Twenty-one NCR respondents[21] provided a response to these questions.[22] The most cited achievements that emerged from 12 respondents were increased college applications and enrollment, improved college-going culture, increased college and career awareness, and increased applications for the FAFSA and other forms of financial aid. Figure 5 provides a breakdown of the most common themes that emerged from the open-ended responses about program implementation successes.

[21] Because the open-ended questions were optional, response rates varied significantly for the questions.
[22] The two open-ended questions were as follows: (1) "Please describe any successes your school has had when it comes to implementing College Summit" and (2) "Please describe any challenges or barriers your school has faced when it comes to implementing College Summit."

Figure 5. Open-Ended Responses on Successes in Implementing the College Summit Program



Note. *n* = 12. FAFSA = Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

Of the 12 NCR administrators, counselors, and advisors who answered the open-ended question about program implementation success, three respondents indicated that increased college and career awareness was the most notable success in their schools. As one NCR College Summit coordinator stated, "College Summit has played a vital role in creating the idea that college is accessible for all students, which has driven our students to not only graduate, but to achieve the academic standards necessary to enroll in a college of their choice." Four NCR respondents also commented on their success in using College Summit curriculum (*n* = 2) and tools such as CSNav or Naviance (*n* = 2). This is evidenced by the following comment from a NCR College Summit coordinator:

> My school has been successful at using College Summit materials as a support tool for things going on within our academy and in helping with the freshman transition [which includes such activities as] test taking skills, PSAT prep, and identifying resources.

Although most of the open-ended respondents recognized the influence of the College Summit *Launch* and *Navigator* program, three specifically commented that the Peer Leadership component was implemented successfully at their schools. Comments revealed that Peer Leaders were trained by College Summit to learn from and model skills for students. Peer Leaders also were seen as mentors on their campuses and, in one comment, were well received by students. One advisor expressed:

> I know the students who were Peer Leaders received a lot of helpful experience… they also attended workshops… to write stronger essays for scholarship applications. This is something that is rarely covered so I know it will be a big help to those students.

A College Summit coordinator remarked, "College Summit Peer Leaders have been able to assume roles as mentors to classmates and underclassmen." Last, a teacher commented, "My students enjoy the visits made by the senior College Summit Peer Leaders."

Program Challenges

Through open-ended responses, respondents identified several challenges to implementing College Summit. The most common barriers identified by NCR respondents included being challenged with limited buy-in from students, limited technological resources, and infrequent communication and training from staff within their respective schools (Figure 5). Speaking on the issue of technology, one NCR advisor commented, "We've often lacked full use of [the] computer labs [as well as] issues rang[ing] from testing and computer malfunctions." It is noteworthy to note that few surveyed respondents specifically identified time and scheduling as a major barrier in their schools (Figure 6). However, this was found to be a challenge in schools that received site visits.

Creation of College Summit PeerForward Model

Launched in 2015 and informed by AIR's earlier evaluation of the College Summit program, College Summit's PeerForward initiative is designed to utilize the influence and power of teams of eight high school juniors and seniors (who are referred to as Peer Leaders) and their PeerForward advisor to guide their classmates to and through college. The PeerForward model comprises three campaigns, each tied to an outcome that has been proven to boost college enrollment: applying to three or more colleges, filing early for financial aid, and connecting academics to college and career. Through PeerForward, College Summit partners with schools to identify, train, and support these Peer Leaders and an advisor to plan and execute the model. There is a particular emphasis on high schools in low-income communities, where participating College Summit students would be the first generation of college graduates in their families, and on schools in which the counselor-student ratios exceed 1:500.

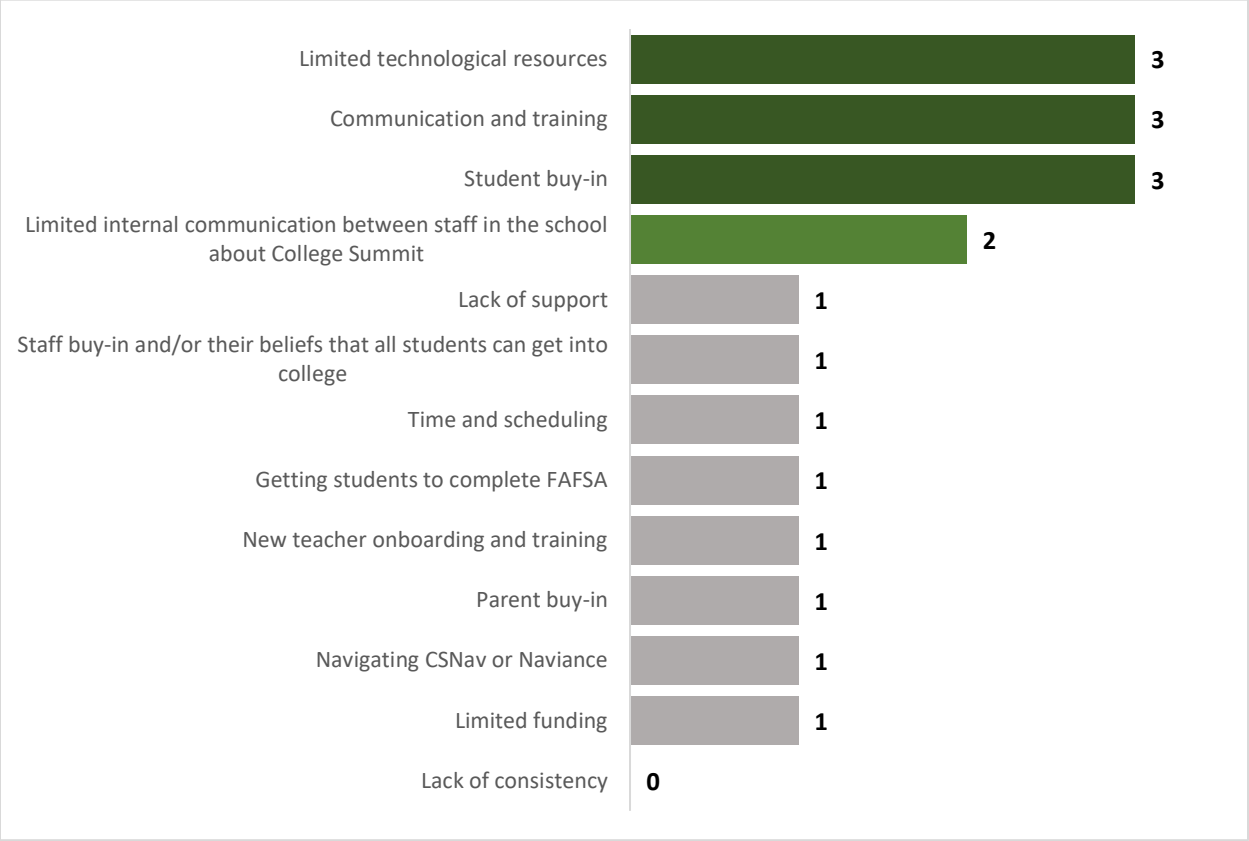
This model returns College Summit to its roots of student-driven change through the use of Peer Leaders and builds upon College Summit's experience of key factors that actually increase college enrollment and persistence. It is important to note that AIR's current evaluation did not monitor or evaluate the implementation or school outcomes of this new initiative. A copy of the PeerForward logic model can be found in Appendix A

College Summit's Implementation Goal 5

Time is set aside in the schedule for students to learn to plan their postsecondary path and to receive coaching as necessary. College Summit is delivered through a regularly scheduled, credit-bearing school day period or through a regularly scheduled advisory period. [Support, Structure, & Tools]

Source: College-Going Culture Assessment, p. 1.

Figure 6. Open-Ended Responses to Challenges to Implementing College Summit Program



Note. *n* = 12. FAFSA = Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

How do educators involved in implementing College Summit swand *Launch* rate the quality and utility of program materials and the training and support provided by College Summit staff?

This section addresses the third research question from the perspective of interview and survey respondents about the utility of the following materials, training, and supports provided by College Summit staff. These materials and support services included the following:

- College Summit CSNav or Naviance
- College Summit curriculum and Common Core State Standards Alignment Guides
- Peer Leaders
- College Summit professional development activities, which include attendance at the Educator's Academy
- College enrollment rate and student milestone reports
- Involvement of College Summit alumni

Staff Perceptions About the Utility of the College Summit Curriculum Materials

Fifteen teachers and coordinators from five NCR schools[23] reported that the College Summit curriculum provided a solid framework for helping guide students through the college application and enrollment process. Teachers and coordinators from these schools highlighted the usefulness of the timeline and milestone activities in keeping students on track. One teacher commented:

> I would say that the College Summit curriculum does support what we like to do. We know there are things that need to happen. We know that there are things we have to do. The College Summit curriculum helps us create an outlet of timing, and gives us ideas about how to distribute the information to students and help them get more engaged in a classroom setting.

CSNav and the CSNav ProCenter

Interviewed teachers reported some level of use of the CSNav website. Notwithstanding, interview respondents noted that staff time to fully use the CSNav ProCenter was limited, and no respondents reported extensive use of the reports generated. Moreover, although five of the six interviewed principals were generally aware of the milestone reports from CSNav, none reported regular or extensive use of them in tracking student progress.

When asked about the usefulness of the CSNav or Naviance online college-planning program and the College Summit curriculum, 86 percent of NCR respondents found CSNav or Naviance *moderately or substantially useful*, and more than three fourths found the curriculum *moderately* to *substantially useful*.

[23] Teachers and coordinators were not interviewed at the sixth site-visit school.

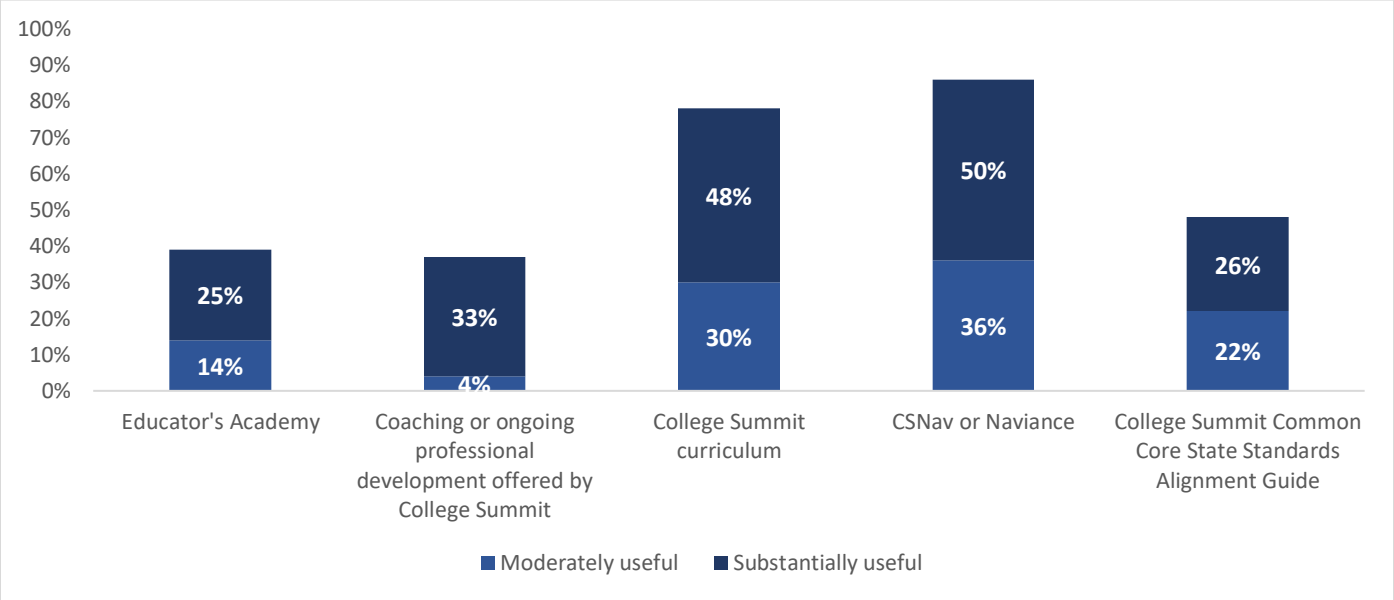
College Summit's Implementation Goal 6

Data-Driven Processes are in place to identify and support students at risk for not enrolling in postsecondary opportunities and to activate effective practices. College enrollment is an important school metric that is regularly examined by school leadership and staff. Students or school staff routinely enter student milestone data into CSNav, and staff uses milestone data to improve postsecondary planning and instruction. [Support, Structure, & Tools]

Source: College-Going Culture Assessment, p. 1.

When asked whether they had used or participated in different College Summit activities, surveyed respondents noted that they had *not* participated in the Educator Academy (39 percent), used the College Summit Common Core State Standards Alignment Guides (33 percent), or engaged in the College Summit professional development (30 percent). The professional development was found to be not at all useful for 15 percent of NCR advisors and counselors (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Utility of College Summit Resources: Surveyed NCR Respondents



Note. *n* = 28.

Peer Leaders

All six site-visit schools (compared to 86 percent of NCR survey respondents) noted use of Peer Leaders to support College Summit implementation. Specifically, three site-visit schools were able to identify the specific roles or activities held by their Peer Leaders. The number of Peer Leaders varied from as few as two to as many as eight (Figure 8).

Although teachers and coordinators varied in the extent to which they deployed Peer Leaders as effectively as they would have liked, 15 interview respondents (of 17) noted that Peer Leaders made positive contributions to their school. In addition, program coordinators in particular reported attempts to be strategic in selecting Peer Leaders who could maximize the benefit for both the selected student and for the school as a whole. For example, the coordinator from one school that served a large number of Hispanic and undocumented students stated:

> They have to be willing to work. They have to be outgoing. They have to be willing to ask questions and they have to be willing to deal with, to a point, some of our difficult students because we will have some students that will fight back and I need their backup. A teacher telling you, "No, you've got to do this because …." They won't listen to you. Their friend who keeps saying, "I know this is how you're feeling, but ...." Those are the big qualities I try to find. A well-spoken student who can definitely present the program.

Schools continued to use Peer Leaders in many ways to help efforts to build a college-going culture both within and outside of College Summit classes. Three of the six schools specifically identified activities engaged in by Peer Leaders: participating in schoolwide events (three schools), helping the College Summit teacher in class (two schools), helping with schoolwide activities such as talking to students about the SAT (one school), and working with other college preparation programs operated by the school (one school).

Usefulness of the College Summit Provided Support, Professional Development Training, Academy, and Guides

Interview respondents noted regular but informal contact with College Summit staff. Both coordinators and principals from four schools and the principal from a fifth school reported that the College Summit staff were available to answer questions when asked and were generally very supportive of the school's work.[24] For example, the coordinator from one school reported that regional College Summit staff provided useful information on helping support undocumented students through the college search and enrollment process.

When it comes to support and training, none of the 11 teachers or five principals interviewed in spring 2015 reported receiving any formal training in 2014–15 from College Summit staff. Two teachers from one school reported that a College Summit staff person had recently participated in a résumé workshop at the school.

Use of College Summit Reports in School Decision Making

Survey respondents were asked about the extent to which two reports—the Student Milestone and the Annual College Enrollment Rate Reports[25]—influenced their schools' decision-making process on three topics: the allocation of resources, informing curriculum, and school scheduling. For all three measures, nearly one third of respondents reported that both of these reports had a *moderate* or *substantial impact* on decisions. However, 41 percent of NCR respondents reported that they were unaware of how the Annual College Enrollment Rate Report influenced school-level decision making, and one third stated they were unaware of how the Student Milestone Report was used.

[24] PSA could not interview the coordinator or principal in one school.

[25] The Student Milestone Report provides a detailed school and classroom-level look at students' progress toward achieving major milestones, such as taking the ACT or SAT exams, the number of college applications sent, and whether FAFSA applications have been completed. The Annual College Enrollment Rate Report includes data from the National Student Clearinghouse about the number of college enrollments and persistence of their high school graduates at two- and four-year institutions.

Use of College Summit Alumni

A key element in the success of the College Summit program is having a strong network of student graduates from the program who can be tapped to recruit and support not only current Peer Leaders but also other high school students. Although not a core element of the *Launch* or *Navigator* program, surveyed respondents were asked how often their program utilized their student alumni. The extent to which NCR schools involved their alumni of the *Navigator* program varied dramatically; 7 percent of NCR respondents reported that their alumni were involved to *a great extent,* and 37 percent reported that they do not use their alumni at all.

How do school staff involved in implementing College Summit and *Launch* describe the relationship between program implementation and the development of a college-going culture?

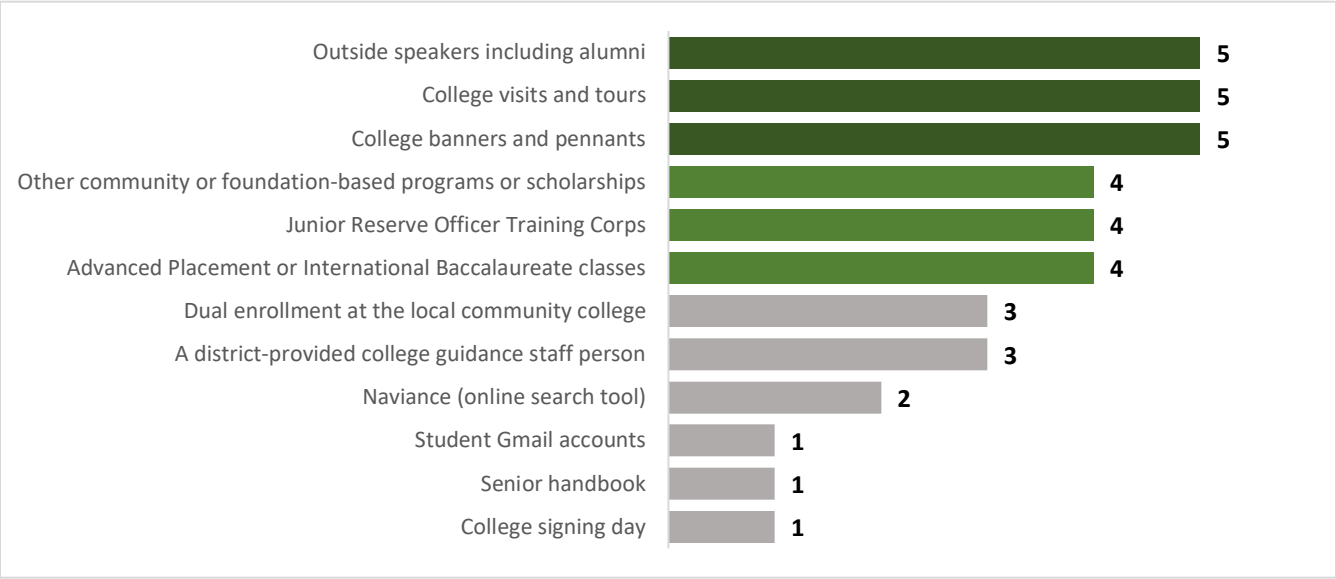
In addition to getting students to apply for, enroll in, and persist in college, another major aim of the College Summit program is to create or further enhance a school's college-going culture. This goal is defined as "ensuring that all students receive the positive message that they have choices and options for their future…" (College Summit, 2013, page 15). This effort can include a variety of activities in the school, such as signaling, which is defined as the "posting of banners, pennants, and other unique visual materials that signal postsecondary purpose" (College Summit, 2013, p. 15), and the expectation of all adults in the school that all students can graduate high school and attend college.

Interview respondents were asked about the factors that facilitate or impede full implementation of College Summit and *Launch* programs and the development of schoolwide college-going cultures.

Building a College-Going Culture

Schools emphasized the importance of postsecondary planning and building a college-going culture using several strategies. Figure 8 displays the number of site-visit schools that implemented various activities in addition to College Summit.

Figure 8. Count of Schools That Implemented Additional Activities to Support College-Going Cultures



Two school administrators emphasized the importance of school leadership being intentional and systematic when conveying messages about college going and developing a college-going culture. For example, one principal said:

> It has to be intentional. It can't be optional; it can't be something. Frankly, I don't believe it should be something that happens after school. Many of our kids have responsibilities. Many of our kids run out of here because they have to pick up brothers and sisters or they help out at home or some of those things. If you don't make these things [college preparation activities] intentional and integrated, then there are always going to be students who can probably benefit [who won't receive the services].

Another principal discussed his efforts to get a sense of the breadth and depth of the school's college-going culture. He noted that it was important for the school to develop standard, consistent processes and structures that would help translate the general expectation that students would go to college into specific student activities that enable a successful transition from high school to college. He identified plans to change how teachers were assigned to AP classes and to increase outreach to parents. Teachers and coordinators from three other schools highlighted the need to get parents more involved, especially in the area of paying for college.

Coordinators and administrators from four site-visit schools noted that the relatively small number of students who participated in College Summit each year limited the extent to which the program helped build the school's overall college-going culture. The coordinator at one school that enrolled 11th- and 12th-grade students stated, "It's a very small program. How do you make it reach the entire school when you're talking two teachers?" Although enrollment in College Summit was limited to 100 students in a school of enrollment of more than 2,000, this coordinator went on to state that College Summit was useful because it reached students who would not necessarily participate in a college preparation program.

College-Going Culture Visibility in Schools

College Summit administrators, counselors, and advisors were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following statement: "College expectations are made visible throughout the school through signs, banners, college-positive conversations with adults, and other resources." Ninety-two percent of NCR school respondents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with the statement.

College Summit's Implementation Goal 7

Information and Resources about postsecondary education are regularly updated and readily available in centralized places such as the media center, lunchroom, career/college center, main office, library, websites, and/or college corners in classrooms. These areas are easily accessible to students, families, faculty, and community members. [Knowledge & Expectations/Support, Structure, & Tools/Signaling]

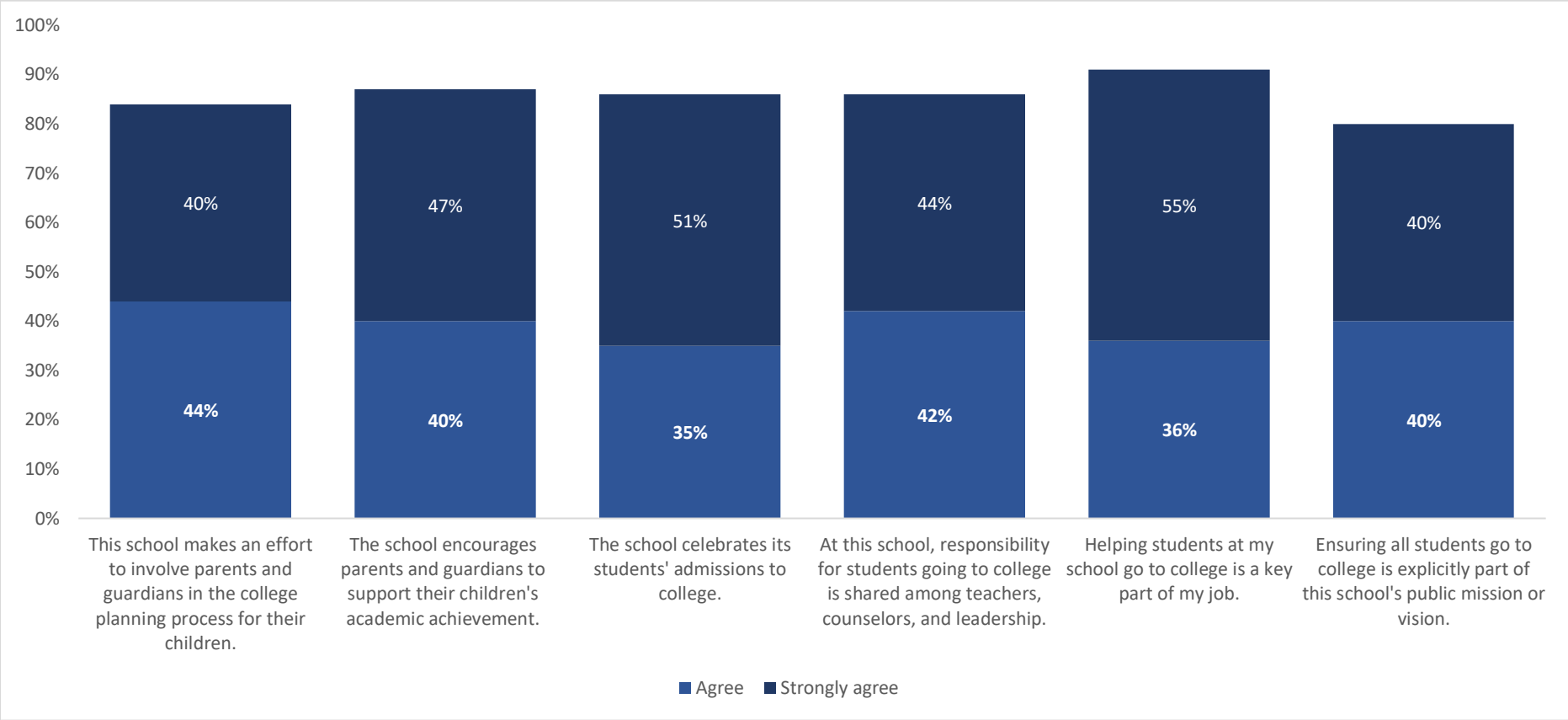
Source: College-Going Assessment, p. 1.

Effects of Institutional Factors

As noted previously, institutional factors are defined by College Summit as the structures in the school that guide staff and student behavior, such as rules, norms, and routines. For example, a school's mission or vision statement that explicitly states the value of ensuring all students go to college can be considered an institutional factor. Other examples of institutional factors that can be used to promote a school's college-going culture include staff members' individual and shared responsibility to help students go to college; encouraging and involving parents to support college readiness, planning, and attendance; and celebrating college admissions. In the survey, we asked all advisors, counselors, and principals to rate their level of agreement on the extent to which these institutional factors exist in their schools since implementing College Summit.

Individual responsibility received the greatest level of agreement: 91 percent of NCR respondents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that, "Helping students at my school go to college is a key part of my job" (Figure 9). Most NCR respondents (86 percent) reported that they *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the "responsibility for students going to college is shared among teachers, counselors, and leadership." Similarly, most respondents (86 percent) *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with the following statement: "This school celebrates its students' admission into college." The institutional factor that received the lowest level of agreement was related to the school's mission or vision. For example, when respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with the following statement: "Ensuring all students go to college is explicitly part of the school's mission or vision, since implementing College Summit," 20 percent *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed*.

Figure 9. NCR Institutional Factors



Note. $N = 29$.

Importance of General Postsecondary Planning

Interviewed principals, coordinators, and teachers from all six schools noted that developing a schoolwide college-going culture was a "work in process" and that it was challenging, especially given that both teachers and students interviewed recognized that not all students could go or wanted to go to college. They explicitly linked the development of a college-going culture with a broader focus on postsecondary planning. Against this backdrop, interview respondents emphasized the importance of helping students develop postsecondary plans prior to graduation, even if these plans did not necessarily include college enrollment. Administrators in particular, discussed the challenges of having all students and teachers fully embrace the need for all students to develop postsecondary plans. One principal stated:

> I don't think we yet have a schoolwide culture that really puts the emphasis that it needs on postsecondary planning for every student. I think depending on which instructor or staffer you talk to, and I also think it depends on what student you're talking to. We're talking to certain students. I think we have an expectation that they are going to do something postsecondarily when they graduate. I think for some of our more difficult students, I think people are probably not as focused on their longer term planning, and I think those are some things that we're working very hard to change. Every one of our students has to have a plan when they graduate high school. Be it educational, or some work readiness, or career development, but you have to have some type of planning. It's not enough to leave high school, not in this job market with just a high school diploma or GED. It's just not going to get our students anywhere.

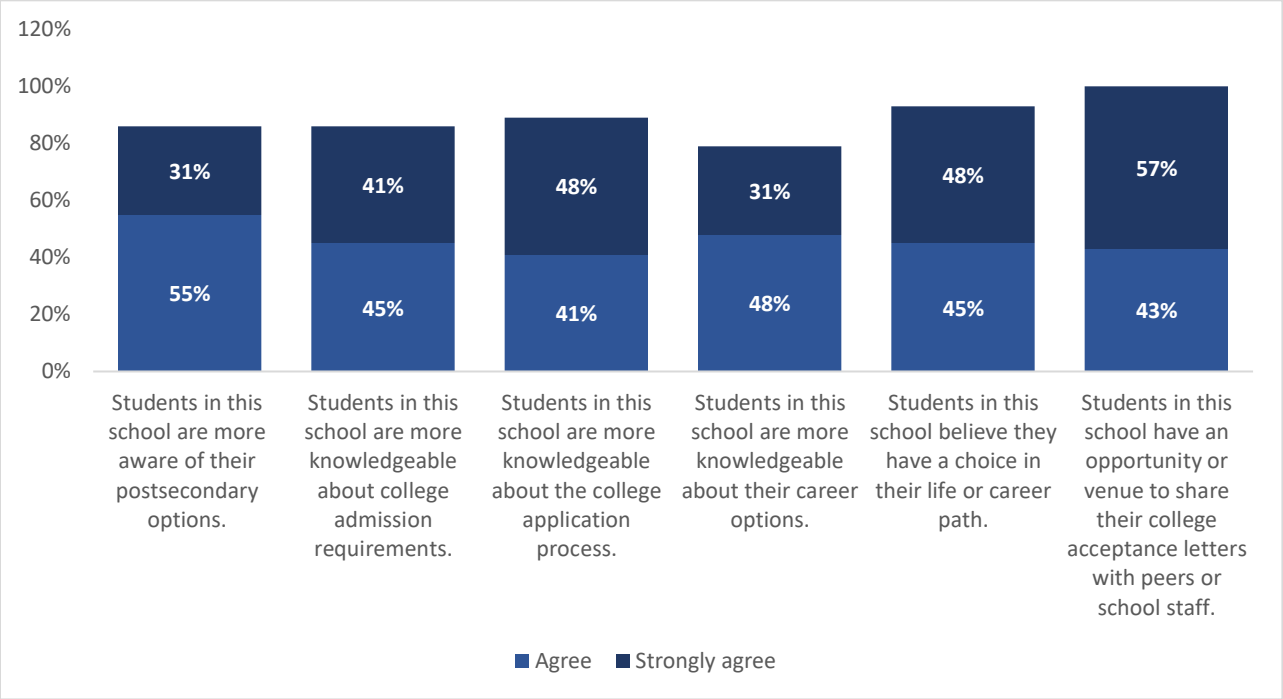
This sentiment around the importance of getting students thinking about their lives after high school early at the beginning of their high school careers is captured by a ninth-grade teacher who stated:

> A situation like College Summit should be mandatory for ninth graders. It's important for them to recognize that, you don't necessarily have to go to college, if that's not what you want to do, but we have to show what the[ir] other options could be, and also provide ideas of [what] you could be if that's not [college]. Everybody's not going to go to college, and some people really don't need to go to college, but what, then, is the flip side of that?

Students' Awareness and Knowledge of Postsecondary Options

Survey respondents were asked whether their students were more aware and knowledgeable about postsecondary options, college admission requirements, the college application process, and career options, since implementing College Summit. Respondents were also asked whether their students had a venue for sharing their acceptance letters with peers or school staff. Seventy-nine percent or more of NCR respondents (Figure 10) *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with most statements. For example, 100 percent of NCR respondents *agreed* or *strongly* agreed that students have a venue to share their college acceptance letters. In contrast, 14 percent *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* with the statement that their students were knowledgeable of the college admission process, and 13 percent *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* that their students were aware of either their postsecondary options or career options.

Figure 10. NCR Educator's Perspectives About Student Awareness and Knowledge About Postsecondary Options Following the Implementation of College Summit

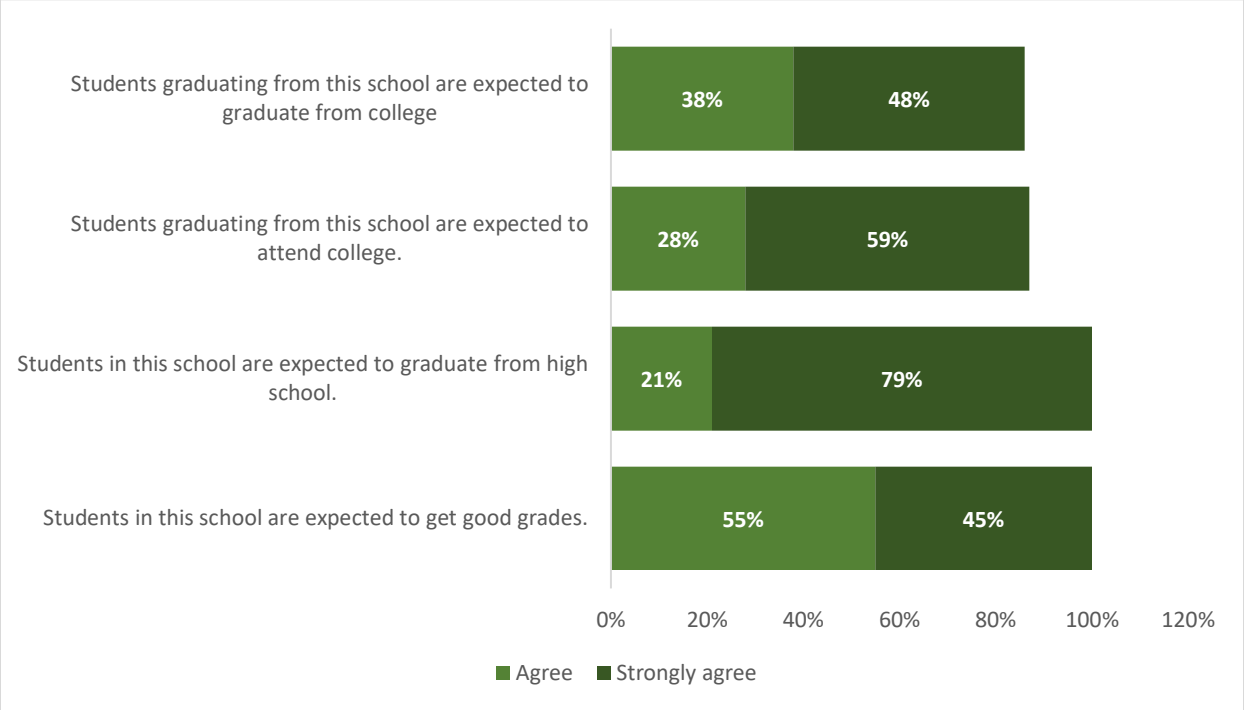


Note. N = 29.

Educators' Expectations for Student Academic Performance and College Persistence

On the survey, administrators, advisors, and counselors were asked about their school's expectations for students' academic performance, college readiness, and college persistence. All NCR respondents (Figure 11) *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that students in their schools were expected to get good grades and to graduate from high school. When asked whether students who graduate from their school are expected to attend college, more than 14 percent of NCR respondents *disagreed* with this statement, compared with slightly less (13 percent) who did not agree with the sentiment that students who graduated from their high school were expected to graduate from college.

Figure 11. NCR Respondents' Expectations About Student Academic Performance and College Persistence



Note. N = 29.

What is the difference between College Summit *Launch* schools and their matched comparison schools on the following: (a) ninth- to 10th-grade persistence rates, (b) high school graduation rates, (c) college enrollment rates, and (d) college persistence rates[26]?

To address the research question about the difference between College Summit schools and comparison schools, AIR conducted a series of descriptive analyses before and after treatment schools started College Summit. The analyses examined three school outcomes: ninth- to 10th-grade persistence rates, high school graduation rates, and college enrollment rates. Each outcome was measured using annual data reported as school-level aggregates.

Based on data availability, the analyses focus on six to 10 treatment schools that began College Summit between 2006 and 2013, and their comparison schools (see Tables 13 and 14). Given the small sample sizes, limitations should be considered in interpreting these findings (see Limitations section).

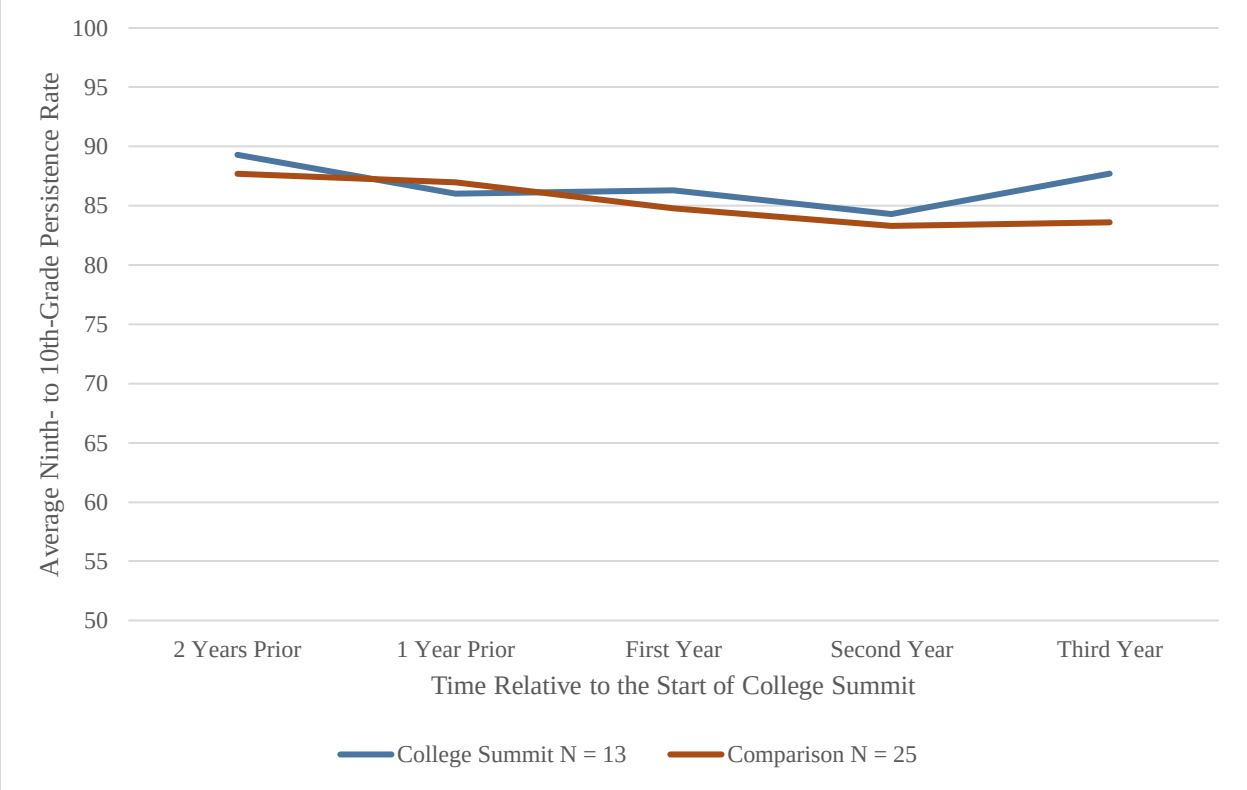
[26] As noted earlier, because no college persistence data was available or provided by NSC or from participating College Summit districts or schools, researchers were unable to analyze these school outcomes.

School Outcomes Findings

Ninth- to 10th-Grade Persistence Rates

Figure 12 shows the change in ninth- to 10th-grade persistence rates between the College Summit and comparison schools prior to and after the start of the College Summit program. In the two years prior to implementing the College Summit program, College Summit schools had a persistence rate of 88 percent and comparison schools had a persistence rate of 87 percent. In the three years after the start of College Summit, the average persistence rate was 86 percent in the College Summit schools and 84 percent in the comparison schools. Although the comparison schools saw a slight decline in the persistence rate over the five-year period, the persistence rate in the treatment schools was relatively stable during this period.

Figure 12. Ninth- and 10th-Grade Persistence Rates

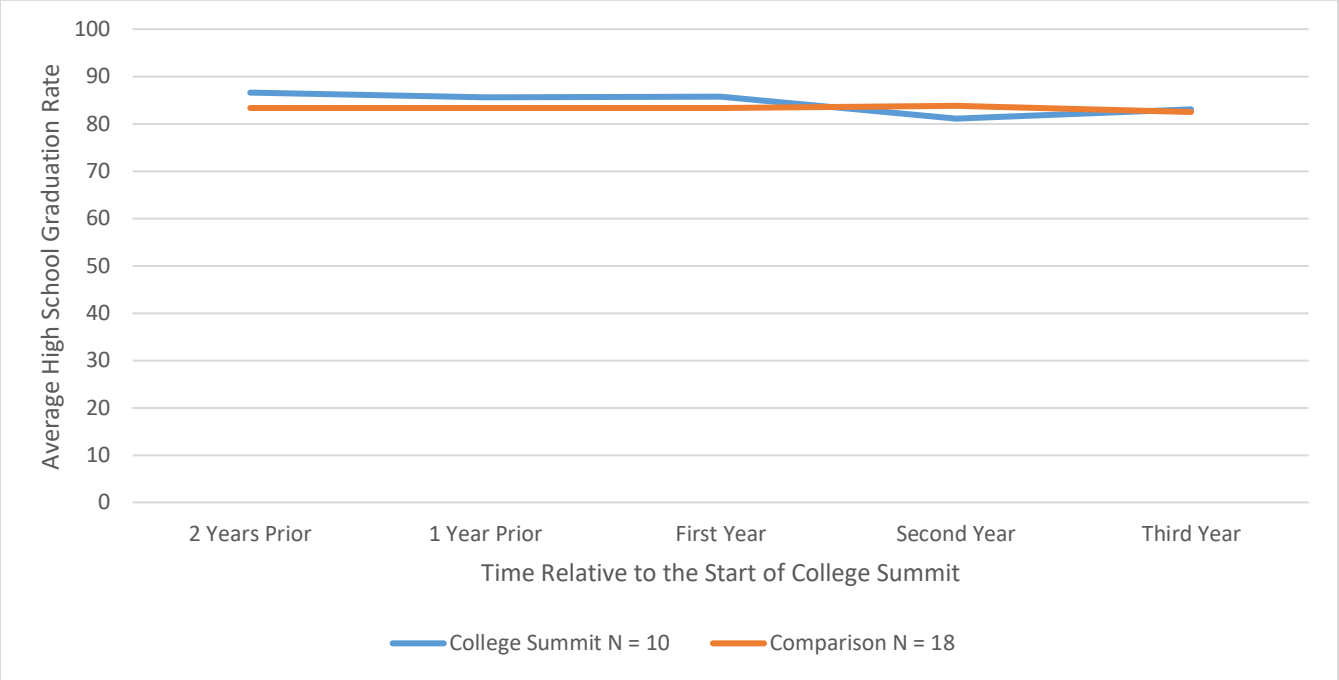


High School Graduation Rates

Figure 13 shows the change in high school graduation rates between the College Summit and comparison schools prior to and after the implementation of the College Summit program. As shown, all schools followed a similar trajectory through the first year of program implementation. The average high school graduation rate was 86 percent across the prior two years in the College Summit schools and was 83 percent across years in the comparison schools. In the three years after the start of College Summit, the average high school graduation rate was 83 percent in the College Summit schools and 83 percent in the comparison schools. These rates are consistent with national averages. Although the College Summit schools had slightly higher

graduation rates prior to the College Summit schools, these schools showed a slight decline two years after program implementation, but an increase three years postimplementation. In contrast, graduation rates for comparison schools remained relatively stable over the same time period. No statistically significant differences were found between treatment and comparison schools.

Figure 13. High School Graduation Rates



College Enrollment Rates

The analysis of student college enrollment rates focused on two enrollment measures: (1) college enrollment in any college (i.e., enrollment in a two- or four-year college) and (2) college enrollment in a four-year college. Figure 14 shows the change in college enrollment rates into any college for College Summit and comparison schools prior to and after the start of the College Summit program. In the two years prior to College Summit, College Summit schools had an enrollment rate of 55 percent and comparison schools had 56 percent. In the three years after the start of College Summit, the average college enrollment rate in any college was 58 percent in the College Summit schools and 59 percent in the comparison schools.

Figure 14. College Entry Rates (Any College)

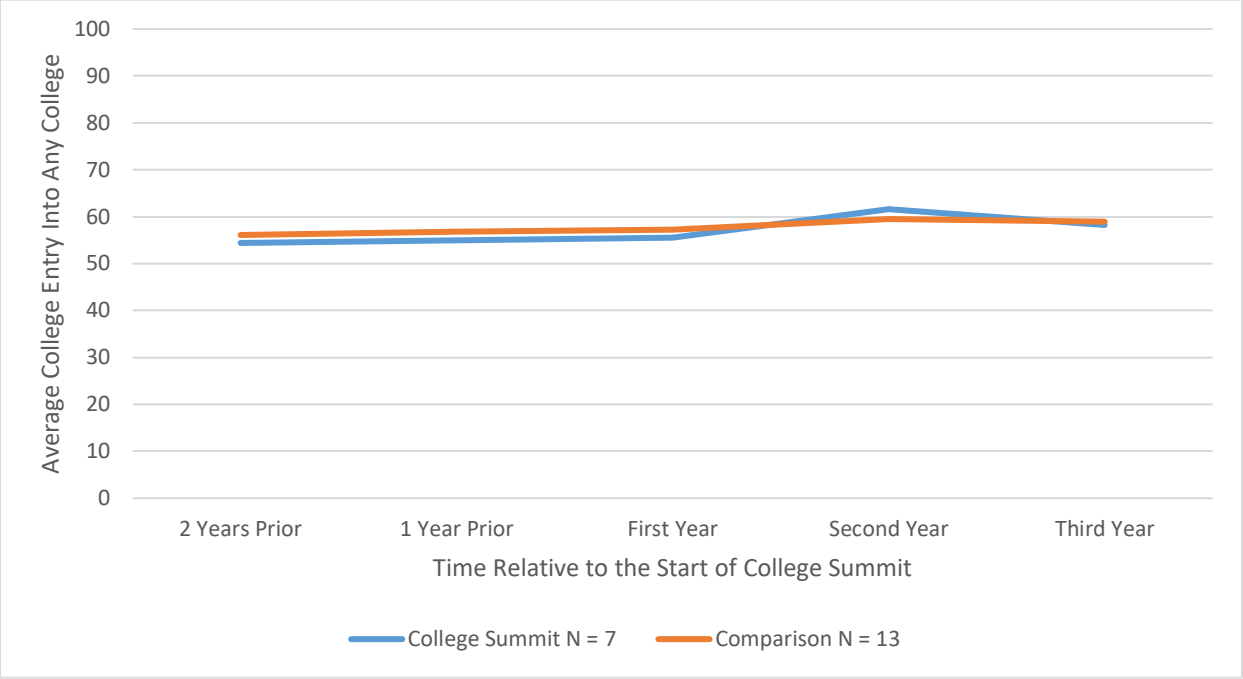
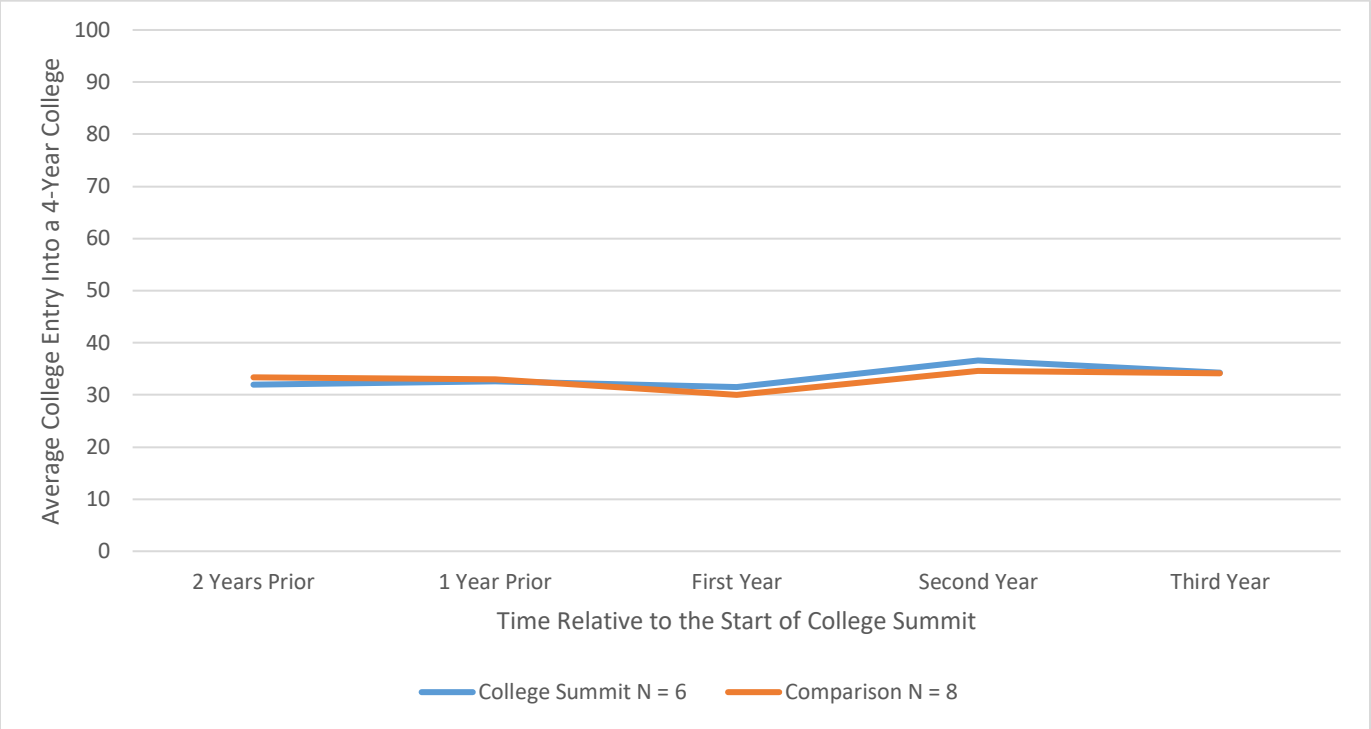


Figure 15 shows the change in college enrollment rates into four-year colleges prior to and after the start of the College Summit program. In the two years prior to starting College Summit, the College Summit schools had a four-year college enrollment rate of 32 percent and comparison schools had a four-year college enrollment rate of 33 percent. In the three years after the start of College Summit, the average college enrollment rate in four-year colleges was 34 percent in College Summit schools and 33 percent in the comparison schools. Overall, there do not to be any meaningful changes in the college enrollment rates in any colleges or four year colleges after the start of College Summit.

Figure 15. College Entry (Four-Year College)



Summary of Findings

Many key elements of the College Summit *Launch* and *Navigator* programs were implemented as designed in the NCR schools; however the number of students and grade levels served and the frequency with which certain resources such as the Milestone reports, was wide-ranging. According to College Summit provided documents, many schools that enroll in the *Launch* and *Navigator* programs often face staffing and resource challenges and need additional support in reaching every student and building and sustaining a college-going culture when their school. Many NCR schools that implemented these programs generally succeeded in establishing a college-going culture, in which staff have high expectations for their students and discuss college and career preparation with their students. Overall, both school staff and students had an increased awareness of college and career options. In addition, most school staff found the College Summit curriculum and the CSNav and Naviance online programs useful.

However, the way schools implemented the program varied. School educators expressed a need to tailor the program to meet the needs of their students. In particular, few schools offered the College Summit course to all students in the target grade levels, and the extent to which school staff were able to engage with students differed across schools. In general, the number of students directly impacted by the program was relatively small compared with the larger student body. This limited reach was driven by a number of factors, including program cost and the need to devote a full class period over a semester or a full school year. Scheduling was especially a challenge for students who struggled to meet basic graduation requirements or who wanted to take other classes (e.g., Advanced Placement coursework).

Additional challenges to program implementation identified by school staff included minimal buy-in from students, limited technological resources, infrequent communication and training from staff within their schools, and ability to provide postsecondary planning support to all students. Some possible ways to overcome these challenges, according to school staff, include providing a rubric or guide for students when they participate in peer presentations, having College Summit staff provide frequent follow-up with students during the summer, and providing stipends to teachers.

NCR schools did not experience meaningful improvements in school outcomes during the first few years of implementing the College Summit program. Persistence rates, high school graduation rates, and college-going rates for the College Summit schools were similar to what one might expect based on the schools' rates before implementing College Summit and based on the rates in comparison schools. The school outcome analysis was limited by the availability of data and inclusion of only a small sample of schools.

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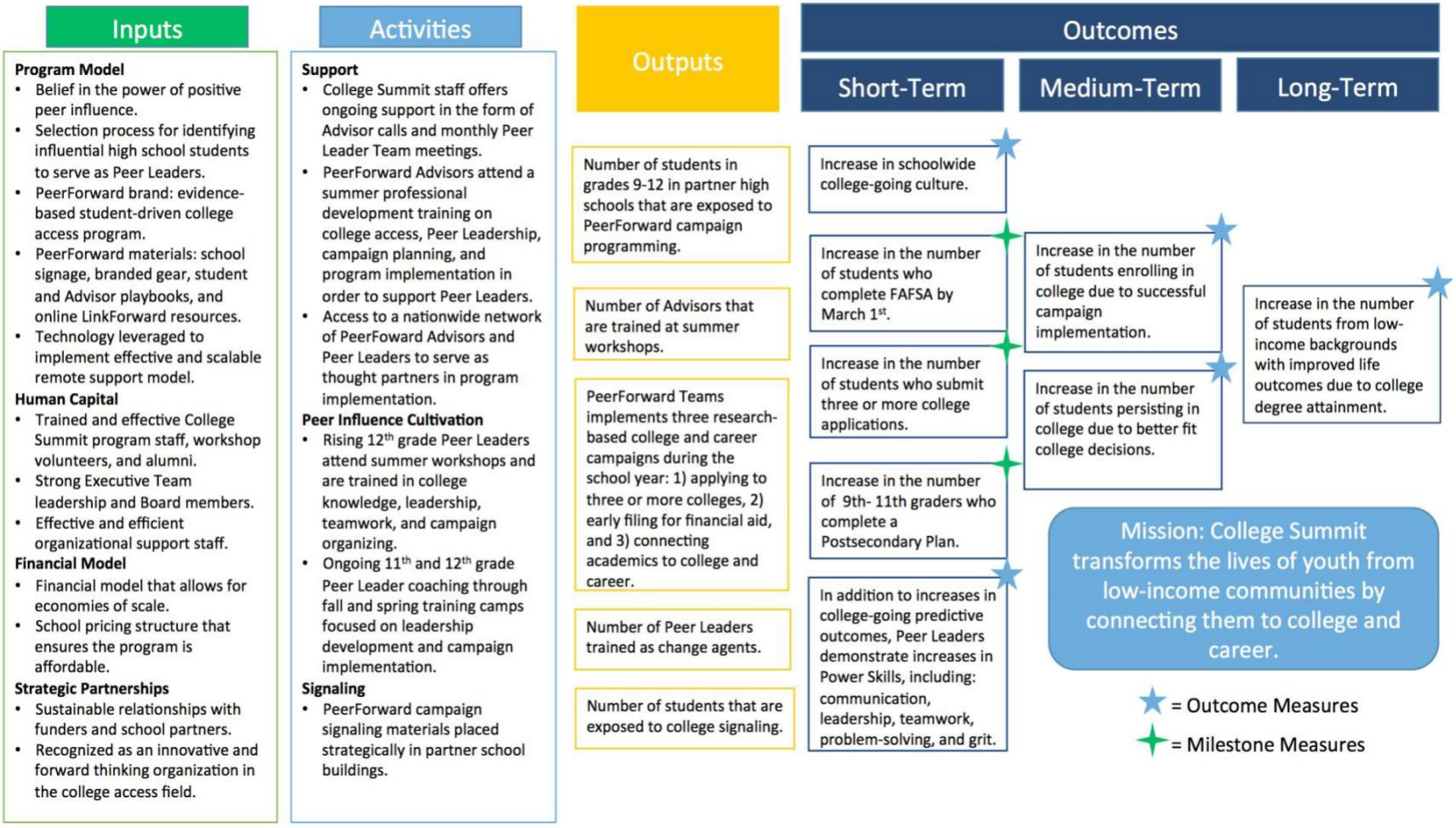
Appendix A. PeerForward Logic Model



Appendix B. 2015 Site Visit and Survey Administration Process and Response Rates

Survey Administration

AIR administered an online survey to 1,413 College Summit administrators, counselors, and advisors, as well as to high school teachers across all participating College Summit districts[27] between April 1 and May 22, 2015. With the support of College Summit staff, multiple attempts were made to boost the response rates, including sending multiple e-mails and follow-up from AIR and College Summit national and regional staff; despite these efforts, response rates were quite low. The findings in this report may not be representative of the experiences and opinions of staff. At the conclusion of the survey window, 481 surveys (34 percent) were completed. Before analysis, AIR excluded any surveys that were partially incomplete. As a result, only 306 surveys, representing 85 schools, were included in the final analysis (Table B1).

Table B1. Survey Response Rates

Survey	Total Invited	Total Responses	Response Rate[c]
Number of invited districts and CMOs	35[a]	27	77%
Number of invited NCR schools and CMOs	12	11[b]	92%
Number of invited non-NCR schools	113	85	75%
Total number of surveys	1,413	481	34%
Final number included in the analysis after cleaning		306	

[a] Of this number, five (three districts and two CMOs) were located in the NCR territories.
[b] With the addition of a general survey link, other College Summit schools that were not in the original data file were surveyed and included because some schools in the original file did not complete their survey.
[c] This table reflects response rates for schools and districts located both in the NCR and non-NCR region.

Site Visits

In advance of each visit, College Summit coordinators at each school were asked to identify staff and students who were involved and not involved in the program to meet with PSA staff during the visit. Key staff included the school's program coordinator, course teachers, and the school's principal or other knowledgeable administrator.[28]

[27] As part of the survey administration, AIR received a data file containing the names, school, district, and positions for staff at all participating College Summit schools. However, because many of the e-mails came back undeliverable, AIR had to create and disseminate a generic link to all respondents, making it difficult to track individual respondents. As a result, the survey was modified to include questions about respondent position and demographics. The total number of surveys administered (1,413) includes all completed surveys collected through both the generic and tracking link.
[28] In one school, we interviewed the director of postsecondary education.

PSA selected school sites in partnership with program staff from the College Summit NCR office. Sites were selected based primarily upon the following two factors: (1) length of participation in College Summit (e.g., a minimum of three or more years' consecutive implementation of *Launch* or College Summit, if possible) and (2) willingness of school administrators to participate in PSA site visits.

Appendix C. Number of Assigned Comparison Schools

A list of comparison schools and the assigned treatment schools is given in Table C1.

Table C1. Comparison Schools Assigned to Each Treatment School

State	District	School	Number of Comparison Schools per Outcome			
			College Enrollment, Any School	College Enrollment, Four-Year School	Graduation Rate	Ninth- to 10th-Grade Persistence Rate
Virginia	District A	School A				2
	District B	School B				2
	District B	School C				2
	District C	School D	2	2	2	
Maryland	District D	School E			2	
	District D	School F			2	
	District D	School G			2	
	District D	School H	1	1	1	1
	District D	School I	2	2	2	2
	District D	School J	2		2	2
	District D	School K	2	2	2	2
	District D	School L	2	1	2	2
	District E	School M	2			
District of Columbia	District F	School N				2
	District G	School O				2
	District G	School P			1	
Total comparison sample by outcomes			13	8	18	19

Table C2 shows the demographics by state for the schools from the initial treatment sample, treatment sample used in the analysis (i.e., treatment schools with a complete series of data for one or more outcome of interest), and the matched comparison schools. As shown, treatment schools from the District of Columbia are small schools with 50 percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and 97 percent non-White students. Schools from Maryland are medium-size schools with 31 percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and 92 percent non-White students. Finally, schools from Virginia are large schools with 30 percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and 62 percent non-White students. Overall, school demographics of the comparison schools are similar to those of the treatment schools.

Table C2. Demographics by State for the Full Treatment Sample, Treatment Schools Used in the Analysis, and Comparison Schools

State or Federal	Full Treatment Sample	Treatment Schools in the Analysis	Comparison Schools
District of Columbia			
Number of schools	5	3	5
Average school size	419.50 (287.34)	478.33 (321.06)	483.20 (218.26)
Average percentage eligible for free or reduced-price lunch	47.76 (21.76)	47.76 (21.76)	47.32 (26.98)
Average percentage non-White	97.69 (4.61)	96.92 (6.33)	94.44 (10.86)
Maryland			
Number of schools	10	9	17
Average school size	1834.60 (521.57)	1802.22 (710.29)	1611.76 (696.52)
Average percentage eligible for free or reduced-price lunch	30.92 (8.49)	29.96 (11.27)	37.88 (15.33)
Average percentage non-White	92.00 (15.04)	91.77 (14.26)	87.41 (17.20)
Virginia			
Number of schools	4	4	8
Average school size	2132 (533.58)	2132 (533.58)	1881.38 (348.90)
Average percentage eligible for free or reduced-price lunch	29.04 (17.39)	29.04 (17.39)	25.20 (14.06)
Average percentage non-White	61.94 (22.09)	61.94 (22.09)	54.12 (18.41)

Note. Standard deviation presented in parentheses

Source: Common Core of Data, 2005.

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