



Minnesota
STATE COLLEGES
& UNIVERSITIES

Access and Opportunity Centers of Excellence

Throughout Minnesota, significantly fewer underrepresented students graduate from high school, attend college, and earn a college degree as compared with peers. The changing demographics of Minnesota's communities and the disparities in the academic performance of students of color and other underrepresented students underscore the need for immediate action. To address this critical shortfall, in 2007, the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees established three Access and Opportunity Centers of Excellence to improve participation and success in higher education among underrepresented groups. The centers were established through a competitive process among the 32 Minnesota State Colleges and Universities at a cost of \$3.4 million.

Century College and Inver Hills Community College – Access and Opportunity Center of Excellence

The center focuses on 1) rigorous programming and intrusive student services, 2) parental and family engagement, 3) teacher collaboration and professional development, and 4) evaluation, research, and dissemination. Underrepresented students receive age-appropriate programs and services. Programming includes college-preparatory and college-level courses, summer bridge programs, college readiness initiatives, tutoring, mentoring, and enrichment experiences. Family members participate in activities that promote the importance of post-secondary education and help them support their student's success. The center also provides translation services for family members and encourages them to explore their own options for postsecondary education.

Minnesota State Community and Technical College – Minnesota Partnership for College Readiness

The partnership provides outreach services to underrepresented students in grades eight through 12 and their teachers by using interactive technologies to form learning communities. Various activities provide students with strategies to become successful at each grade level in college-preparatory and dual-credit courses. One program, Ready or Not Writing, assists students and their high school teachers in diagnosing students' writing abilities to help ensure they are ready for college-level courses when they graduate from high school. Synchronous online instruction includes video and audio interaction. A contextual math program uses real-world, workplace applications, and lab activities to make math practical and relevant. Plans call for expanding these projects to a broader audience in Minnesota. In addition, a reading readiness program and contextual science program are under development. Summer youth programs in science and technology also are offered by college partners.

St. Cloud State University – Research and Demonstration Center for Educational Access and Opportunity

This project uses proven methods, such as intrusive in-school advising, summer bridge programs, culturally sensitive academic enrichment courses, tutoring, financial aid application support, and mentoring to support goal setting and academic achievement of underrepresented students in grades eight through 12 in the St. Cloud Area School District 742. Students are recruited and assigned to in-school Academic Advising Teams. After their academic skills are assessed relative to college readiness, advisors assist students with career and educational planning. Student progress is monitored by team leaders, student mentors, tutors, and a teacher advisor.

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