



RIGOROUS CURRICULUM

College success begins long before students ever apply for admission. In order to be prepared for postsecondary education, students need access to high-quality, rigorous curricula in high school. The rigor of a student's high school curriculum has been identified in numerous studies as a leading predictor of college success—far more so than standardized test results. It makes sense, then, that according to NACAC member surveys, admission officers give highest consideration to students' high school coursework and performance when evaluating applications for admission.

Despite evidence of the importance of a strong curriculum, inequities in access to high-level coursework persist across socioeconomic lines. Low-income students are more likely to attend underfunded and under-resourced schools that do not offer advanced coursework. Increasing equitable access to rigorous curricula will help more underserved students graduate from high school prepared for postsecondary success. NACAC remains neutral on specific curricular models, such as the Common Core State Standards.

In addition to ensuring that all schools are properly funded and that state curricula align with commonly accepted college-and-career-ready standards, NACAC encourages adoption and/or expansion of programs that allow students to earn college credit while still in high school, such as dual enrollment agreements or fee waivers for AP or IB testing. Access to advanced coursework options like these allow students, particularly those from underserved communities, to gain confidence in their academic abilities, encouraging them see themselves as "college material" and to choose to pursue higher education. Accumulation of college credits in high school enables students to enroll with advanced standing, reducing both time to completion and cost of a college degree.

Policy Recommendations

NACAC supports the following efforts to help all students graduate high school college- and career-ready:

- Alignment of high school curricula with widely-accepted college- and career ready standards
- Expansion of course offerings that enable students to earn college credits, such as AP or IB courses
- Creation or enhancement of high school/college dual enrollment partnerships