



# Commonwealth Education Continuum

2022 Annual Report

A COLLABORATION OF KENTUCKY'S EDUCATION AGENCIES

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION | COUNCIL ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION | EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CABINET

## **Commonwealth Education Continuum 2022 Annual Report**

### **Purpose and Overview**

The Commonwealth Education Continuum (CEC) was formed out of the moral imperative to strengthen the education pipeline and provide equitable opportunities for students to transition successfully through their various levels of education. Remaining at the forefront of the CEC is the objective of helping students earn degrees and credentials that lead to sustainable, competitive-wage careers.

The CEC is co-chaired by Lt. Governor Jacqueline Coleman, Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) President Aaron Thompson and Commissioner of Education Jason Glass. The Continuum consists of 28 members who possess expertise ranging from early childhood to the workforce (see Appendix A). The partnership between the CEC and the Education Strategy Group (ESG) provides ongoing support to CEC leadership and members in achieving their goals.

Throughout 2022, CEC members worked together in quarterly meetings to establish objectives, prioritize work, form workgroups and consider implementation of priorities. The CEC's timeline includes milestones such as establishing annual objectives, workgroup implementation, data collection, legislative and policy recommendations, progress reporting, and priority setting for the following year. This structured approach helped guide the CEC's activities and ensured accountability in its efforts to enhance Kentucky's education system.

To gain an understanding of the state's diverse educational needs and identify areas of improvement, the CEC created three workgroups at its March meeting. The workgroups included the following specific focus areas: 9th Grade on Track, Early Postsecondary Opportunities and First Year Postsecondary Success. Each workgroup met monthly to develop recommendations, implementation plans, key inputs and strategies, and viable policy proposals to present to the CEC in consideration of its efforts. The workgroups were co-chaired by leaders from various educational organizations:

- 9th Grade on Track– Jan Sellers, Kentucky Department of Education (KDE);
- Early Postsecondary Opportunities – Harmony Little, Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) and Robin Hebert, CPE;
- First Year Postsecondary Success – Robert Hayes, University of Kentucky and Lilly Massa-McKinley, CPE (see Appendix A).

Recognizing the importance of data-informed decision-making, the CEC also established an ad hoc workgroup dedicated to addressing the data needs of the Continuum. This workgroup comprised data experts from CPE, KDE and the Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYStats). Their role is to ensure that the CEC's efforts are supported by accurate and timely data, allowing for an informed approach to addressing the state's real-time education-related challenges.

## Implementation of the 2021 Prioritized Recommendations

During the January and March meetings, CEC members focused on developing and executing a specific plan to enhance successful student transitions into postsecondary education. The aim was to identify and activate the most effective strategies to achieve this goal and implement the 2021 prioritized recommendations set by the CEC.

The CEC workgroups played a crucial role in refining the objectives and determining how to accomplish them. These workgroups concentrated their efforts on three main focus areas: successful transition to postsecondary, early postsecondary opportunities, and educator workforce and diversity. Within each area, agencies and individuals carefully reviewed the recommendations put forth by the CEC and took steps to initiate or strengthen their existing efforts. Increasing awareness, access and opportunity were key objectives across all three focus areas. Highlights of some of these efforts included:

### Successful Transition to Postsecondary

- Kentucky Advising Academy (KAA): CPE established a team of advising coordinators who, through 2024, continue to provide a free, comprehensive series of face-to-face and virtual professional learning and resources focused on postsecondary advising. Approximately 76% of Kentucky public school districts including school counselors, Family Resource/Youth Service Center (FRYSC) coordinators and other student and family support professionals participated in some type of learning experience.
- Proactive Admissions Pilot: CPE and KDE piloted a proactive admissions notification initiative. High school seniors in participating districts received notifications via Infinite Campus, outlining the postsecondary institutions they may be eligible to attend. The notifications also included important information on postsecondary transition steps and opportunities for that year. This proactive approach aimed to increase awareness and encourage students to consider their options for postsecondary education.
- Statewide Web-Based Hub: KYStats, KDE and CPE collaborated to develop a web-based hub that serves as a centralized resource for targeted audiences. This hub provides access to information and resources related to early postsecondary opportunities, postsecondary institutions, career pathways, financial aid and more. The creation of this hub ensures that students, families and professionals can easily access the necessary information to make informed decisions about postsecondary education.
- Summer Bridge Programming Grants: CPE provided summer bridge programming grants to 27 campuses. These programs were designed to ease the transition to college and support postsecondary success. By participating in summer bridge programs, students gained academic skills and social resources that are essential for thriving in a college environment. Expanding opportunities for more students to participate in these programs helped to enhance their preparedness for postsecondary education.
- Statewide FAFSA Committee: KHEAA chaired and convened the Statewide FAFSA Committee, a group made up of partners from state agencies,

postsecondary institutions, college access organizations and professional organizations who are engaged in supporting Kentucky students with FAFSA completion. The committee met quarterly to discuss FAFSA data, share organizational initiatives and explore opportunities to collaborate to increase FAFSA completion in Kentucky.

- Gates Postsecondary Pathways Project: KHEAA is one of 15 states participating in this project through the National College Attainment Network (NCAN). Participation gave KHEAA and state partners access to NCAN's wealth of resources for college access and FAFSA completion.

### Early Postsecondary Opportunities

- Dual Credit Community of Practice: CPE established a Dual Credit Community of Practice, which served as a platform for campuses to collaborate, learn and strengthen their efforts in successfully transitioning and retaining students through dual credit programs.
- Early Postsecondary Opportunities (EPSO) Toolkit: The EPSO workgroup, in partnership with ESG, initiated the development of a toolkit designed to provide a wide range of guidance and resources for K-12 schools and districts. Its purpose is to help improve advising and promotion of early postsecondary opportunities for students and families.
- Revised Dual Credit Policy and Attainment Goal: CPE, in collaboration with the College in High School Alliance (CHSA), KDE, KHEAA and KCTCS, began the process of revising the Dual Credit Policy. The goal of this revision is to increase participation and diversity among students enrolling in dual credit courses. Additionally, an attainment goal will be established to set targets for increasing student achievement in this area.

### Educator Workforce and Diversity

- GoTeachKY Expansion: Since KDE launched the program in 2019, new priorities were added to address the needs of the state's educator workforce:
  - Encouraging early entry into the teaching profession;
  - Elevating the teaching profession;
  - Engaging in actionable supports for educators;
  - Employing strategies for teacher certification; and
  - Encouraging teachers to stay in the profession.
- GoTeachKY Ambassadors: In 2022, a group of in-service educators from across Kentucky were selected as KDE's GoTeachKY Ambassadors to provide information and promote the teaching profession. These ambassadors played a crucial role in the initiative by interacting with potential educators through social media, digital platforms like Microsoft TEAMS, and in-person interactions at secondary and post-secondary schools.
- Praxis Performance Assessment for Teachers (PPAT): The Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB) approved the PPAT as a means for candidates to fulfill content and pedagogical assessment requirements until December 31, 2023. Feedback on these measures will be solicited from candidates, districts, and educator preparation providers in 2023.

- Support Substitute, Preservice Teacher, and Paraprofessional Engagement and Professional Pipeline (STEPP) Initiative: Funded through ESSER III, EPSB launched STEPP to provide funds to assist schools and districts in developing a program to strengthen their local teacher recruitment pipeline through the purposeful support of paraprofessional, substitute teacher, and/or pre-service teacher professional growth and development opportunities.
- Project Early Entry Plan (P.E.E.P): Funded through ESSER III, EPSB established competitive grants to encourage and support innovative efforts by schools and districts to improve the pipeline of Teaching and Learning career pathway participants by providing access to introductory opportunities into the teaching profession for students.
- Teacher Apprenticeship Working Group: A working group was formed to discuss the feasibility, benefits and potential challenges associated with establishing a statewide teacher registered apprenticeship program. Through discussions, members representative of various state agencies, evaluated the necessary steps, policy considerations and resources to provide alternate pathways for individuals interested in becoming teachers, while incorporating on-the-job training and mentorship.

## **2022 Work Accomplishments**

### **Stakeholder Engagement**

The CEC in partnership with ESG, conducted interviews and focus groups with stakeholders from various communities across the state. The aim was to elevate the voices of those most affected by the work of the Continuum and gather insights to inform the workgroups' efforts. The questions centered on the three workgroup areas: 9th Grade on Track, Early Postsecondary Opportunities and First Year Postsecondary Success.

Further, the workgroup members were charged with the recruitment of participants from schools and districts with economic and racial diversity. A total of 130 individuals participated in the stakeholder interviews and focus groups: 103 participants were from the K-12 sector, representing schools and districts, and 27 participants were from higher education institutions. The insights gathered from these stakeholder engagements played a crucial role in supporting the CEC in developing a set of recommendations. These recommendations were grounded in the interests, needs and challenges expressed by the communities it served. See Appendix B for more detailed information about the participants, interviews, focus groups and key takeaways.

### **Prioritized Recommendations and Actions**

As a result of continued discussions and efforts, stakeholder insights and state agency implementation considerations helped to narrow the list of emerging recommendations developed during the first half of the year. The final, prioritized set of recommendations

for each workgroup is listed below. This list also includes suggested action steps for state agencies as they begin to implement each of the recommendations.

### 9th Grade on Track

#### **Expand school and community capacity to support middle and high school students' postsecondary readiness**

- a. Identify evidence-based practices and pilot within schools through a state-wide community of practice
- b. Launch a statewide professional development and communication plan to disseminate evidence-based practices and resources
- c. Implement comprehensive (meaningful, relevant, conversational, orientation) communication plan to help parents of middle and high school students understand and support postsecondary readiness

#### **Catalyze "bridge" experiences for students transitioning from 8th to 9th grade**

- a. Elevate existing successful 8th to 9th grade "bridge" programs
- b. Promote "bridge" experiences for all students transitioning from 8th to 9th grade

#### **Increase understanding of needs and perspectives of middle school students related to postsecondary readiness and aspirations, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic**

- a. Conduct focus groups with middle school students to further understand and identify their understanding of postsecondary awareness and secondary readiness and the relevance to their lives
- b. Communicate key data points, student perspectives and information related to 8th to 9th grade transitions to support local efforts

### Early Postsecondary Opportunities

#### **Create a culture of access and high expectations by improving communication related to early postsecondary opportunities**

- a. Launch a collaborative state-wide communication system to ensure that all middle school and high school students and parents receive key information about early postsecondary opportunities including the need to:
  - a. Elevate Kentucky's dual credit/EPSO success stories, along with data
  - b. Engage community partners in a communication plan
  - c. Increase the prominence of EPSOs on KYSTATS' report card

#### **Increase access to dual credit courses by incentivizing teachers to acquire required credentialing and teach dual credit courses**

- a. Provide financial incentives for current dual credit teachers (e.g. stipends for teachers who teach dual credit courses, especially in schools with significant gaps in student access/ achievement, renewal of professional certificates/continuing education for career and technical education (CTE) teachers, etc)
- b. Provide financial assistance or scholarships for required coursework aligned to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) accreditation standards for in-service and pre-service teachers
- c. Investigate a dual credit professional endorsement through certification

- d. Promote expansion of Master's degree options for teachers that provide 18 hours of graduate credit in disciplines

### **Define and promote dual credit program quality and alignment**

- a. Improve coordination between secondary and postsecondary partners by clarifying key advising and support roles and responsibilities and providing resources and models that impact student success
- b. Promote the alignment of dual credit courses with the acquisition of competencies in the Core Components (communication, arts and humanities, quantitative reasoning, natural sciences, and social and behavioral sciences) as outlined within the Statewide General Education Core
- c. Research the progress of dual credit students toward pathway degree or credential, especially STEM
- d. Increase funding for postsecondary institutions to run high-quality dual credit programs, especially in providing support for student success

### **First Year Postsecondary Success**

#### **Evaluate and adapt academic placement, pedagogy and support practices to meet the needs of post-pandemic first-year college students and increase success in college-level courses**

- a. Provide professional development on effective instructional practice and embedded academic support services in response to the effects of pandemic
- b. Research and promote best practices in the academic placement of first-year students, including communication with students about financial benefits of placement
- c. Develop a strategic communications campaign focused on high school students and parents to build a culture of high expectations and provide tools to educate parents about academic success indicators along P-20 continuum

#### **Strengthen relationships among students, staff and faculty to foster a sense of belonging, community and support for all students, pre-matriculation through degree completion**

- a. Seek funds to continue and expand high school early college visits and Summer Bridge programs for students transitioning to college
- b. Coordinate a state-wide "Student-Ready" community of practice for faculty in gateway courses focused on belonging
- c. Coordinate partnerships and streamline communication among middle and high schools and postsecondary institutions to promote summer bridge, college visit opportunities, financial aid awareness and other key student success activities and behaviors
- d. Integrate career exploration and decision-making into a student's first year experience to strengthen the bridge between college and career

#### **Increase awareness and support for students and families about postsecondary financial literacy, stability and wellness**

- a. Leverage partnership with KHEAA to provide financial aid resources and support for current college students
- b. Promote administration of Trellis student financial wellness survey; utilize Trellis results, as well as CPE financial aid research, to understand KY trends in financial wellness and address nonacademic barriers through programs and services

- c. Develop elements of the strategic “Higher Ed Matters” campaign related to financial aspects of attending college (i.e., targeted ROI, costs, financial aid process/timeline/award), Work Ready and other college scholarships

### **Looking Ahead**

Based on feedback from workgroup and CEC members, the Continuum will develop an action plan and goals. These will be formulated at the first meeting in 2023 and will be based on the 2021 and 2022 recommendations. The action plan will guide the implementation process moving forward. Workgroups will be established to further explore focus areas identified by the CEC and work towards achieving the annual objective. These workgroups will consist of stakeholders and experts in the relevant areas.

Throughout the year, the CEC will revisit the prioritized recommendations identified in previous years. This review will assess the successes and opportunities resulting from the implementation efforts related to these recommendations. The insights gained from this review will help inform future needs and strategies. The outcomes of the 2023 Kentucky Regular Legislative Session will be carefully monitored by the CEC. Members will carefully consider how any legislative changes or decisions might impact their future efforts and initiatives.

In summary, the CEC will develop an action plan, establish workgroups, assess the progress of previous recommendations and consider the impact of legislative developments to inform their future work in strengthening Kentucky’s education pipeline.



## **Appendix A**

### **Commonwealth Education Continuum and Workgroup Membership 2022**

#### ***Commonwealth Education Continuum Members***

Co-Chair Dr. Aaron Thompson, president of the Council on Postsecondary Education  
Co-Chair Lt. Gov. Jacqueline Coleman, Kentucky  
Co-Chair Dr. Jason E. Glass, commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Education  
Sen. David Givens, Kentucky Senate  
Sen. Max Wise, Kentucky Senate  
Rep. James Tipton, Kentucky House of Representatives  
Luke Mentzer, board chair of the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education  
Dr. Lu Young, board chair of the Kentucky Board of Education  
Dr. OJ Oleka, president of the Association of Kentucky Independent Colleges and Universities  
Gina Crabtree, board president of the Kentucky School Counselor Association  
Diana Barber, interim executive director of the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority  
Eddie Campbell, president of the Kentucky Education Association  
Dr. Rhonda Caldwell, executive director of the Kentucky Association of School Administrators  
Ronda Harmon, executive director of the Kentucky Association of School Councils  
Dr. Jim Flynn, executive director of the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents  
Beth Hargis, associate commissioner of the Office of Career and Technical Education, Kentucky Department of Education  
Dr. Paul Czarzata, president of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System  
Justin Mitchell, board chair of the Education Professional Standards Board  
Kerri Schelling, executive director of the Kentucky School Boards Association  
Robert Hayes, director of the Student Transitions and Family Programs, University of Kentucky  
Charleigh Browning, P-12 student representative  
Amy Neal, executive director of the Kentucky Governor's Office of Early Childhood  
Dr. Dallas Kratzer, grant program manager of the Cyber Security and Workforce Development Outreach, Kentucky Commission on Military Affairs  
Debbie Dennison, deputy director of the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board  
Jenny Sawyer, executive director of admissions, University of Louisville  
Dr. Corinne Murphy, College of Education dean of Western Kentucky University  
Dr. Robert Jackson, president of Murray State University  
Ashli Watts, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce  
Kathleen Christian, president of the 16th District PTA  
Priyadarshini Chandrashekhar, postsecondary student representative

#### ***9th Grade on Track Workgroup Members***

J'Nora Anderson, Simpson County Schools  
Autumn Bishop, GearUp Kentucky  
Nick Brooks, Wolfe County Schools

Susan Cintra, Madison County Schools  
Dede Conner, Kentucky Department of Education  
Suzanne Farmer, Danville Independent Schools  
Beth Kelly, Kentucky Center for Statistics  
Andrea McKeehan, Parent Representative  
Kori Nolcox, Parent Representative  
Mitzi Holland, Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education  
Angela Rowe, Parent Representative  
Dr. Melissa Wainwright, Kentucky Department of Education  
Dr. Lu Young, Kentucky Board of Education

*Early Postsecondary Opportunities Workgroup Members*

Dr. Justin Bathon, University of Kentucky  
Susanne Burkhardt, Shelby County Schools  
Dr. Paul Czarapata, Kentucky Community and Technical College System  
Jennifer Devine, Parent Representative  
Becky Gilpatrick, Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority  
Dr. Beth Hargis, Kentucky Department of Education  
Robin Hebert, Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education  
Stephanie Kingsley, Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board  
Harmony Little, Kentucky Community and Technical College System  
Dean Monarch, Meade County Schools  
Scott Necessary, Campbellsville University  
Julie Pile, Parent Representative  
Logan Rupard, Kentucky Center for Statistics  
Jenny Sawyer, University of Louisville  
Lisa Schmidt, Murray State University  
Leslie Slaughter, Kentucky Department of Education  
Regina Taylor, Woodford County Schools

*First Year Postsecondary Success Workgroup Members*

Dr. Katie Adamchick, University of Louisville  
Phyllis Clark, Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education  
Dr. Dan Connell, Morehead State University  
Nicole Eovino Diebold, C.E. & S. Foundation  
Dr. Marko Dumancic, Western Kentucky University  
Saundra Kimberlain, Elizabethtown Community and Technical College System  
Dr. Thys Meyer, University of Pikeville  
Leah Murphy, Parent Representative  
Dr. OJ Oleka, Association of Kentucky Independent Colleges and Universities  
Asia Payne, University of Kentucky  
Barrett Ross, Kentucky Center for Statistics  
Rachael Wall, Parent Representative

*Data Team*

Dede Conner, Kentucky Department of Education

Dr. Jessica Cunningham, Kentucky Center for Statistics

Travis Muncie, Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education

**Appendix B**  
Stakeholder Engagement Participants and Key Takeaways

**Participants**

A total of 166 individuals participated in the focus groups and interviews. The breakdown of participants was as follows:

*Table 1: K-12 Participants by Role*

<b>Role</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
Counselors	11
Teachers	6
School and District Administrators	10
ATC Regional Supervisor	3
Students	43
Parent	29
Business Owner	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>

*Table 2: Higher Education Participants by Role*

<b>Role</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
Student	9
Faculty	3

Director of Admissions	2
Career and Technical College Administrator	1
Dual Credit Coordinator	1
Program Coordinators and Directors	6
Parent	1
Student Success Coordinators and Directors	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>

**Key Takeaways**

The focus group and interview questions centered on the three workgroup focus areas. The following key themes emerged from the conversations with stakeholders:

**9th Grade On Track**

Data Systems

- An integrated data strategy is key to problem solving and making change at the systems level.
- Early warning systems are a great tool to identify at-risk or off-track 9th graders.
- Districts are tracking course failures, behavior, attendance, grades and credits earned.
- Disaggregated data is key; some districts are able to disaggregate data and drill down to the individual student.
- Data is not always easily accessible for teachers.
- In addition to data, regular meetings of a wide mix of staff are needed to provide interventions to students.

Academic Expectations

- Students feel high school is more strict and rigorous than middle school.
- Students wish they understood the importance of grades earlier.
- Students also have to adjust to a new environment.
- Consistency from middle school to high school (in grading, expectations) is

important.

- Parents want to understand high school expectations.

#### Social and Mental Health

- Adolescents struggle with anxiety and depression and benefit from talking with adults about mental health.
- The pandemic exacerbated mental health issues and impacted social and academic maturity.
- Involvement in extracurriculars and strong friendships were cited as helping smooth the transition for many students.
- Students are lacking the interpersonal skills needed for the workforce.

#### Family Engagement

- Parents feel a shared responsibility (with the student and school staff) for ensuring their student is progressing.
- Parents rely on Infinite Campus to track their students' progress.
- Many parents felt that there was little to no communication from the school.
- Parents were unaware of academic support resources and transition support services.
- Educators expressed a lack of involvement and support from families for the student's educational journey.

#### Postsecondary Goals

- Districts are using pathways and dual credit to help build students' intrinsic motivation and understand their long-term goals.
- Students expressed a desire for more career exposure and opportunities to job shadow.
- Students also felt like the Individual Learning Plan (ILP) was not a useful tool; students don't take it seriously and staff don't use it with their students.
- Educators fear some students are overly focused on grades and not enough on learning the material.

### ***Early Postsecondary Opportunities***

#### Equitable Access and Success

- Counselors, teachers and dual credit coordinators identified academic preparation (in terms of study skills and time management) as an important component of being prepared for college-level courses.
- Many counselors, students and parents associate EPSOs with "high achieving students." First-generation low-income, underrepresented and/or "average" performing students are often not considered for EPSOs.
- Counselors working in schools with large populations of low-income students, first-generation students and students of color identified that grade point averages and ACT requirements for entrance into dual credit courses act as a barrier to students.

#### Capacity and Partnerships

- Teachers, K-12 and higher education administrators described that a shortage in teachers with the proper credentials to teach dual credit courses makes it challenging to scale EPSO programs. In addition, parents reported a high turnover among teachers in EPSO programs.

- Many administrators and counselors discussed the importance of establishing strong partnerships with local institutions to ensure access and student success.
- Some counselors mentioned that the lack of access to student outcomes data makes it difficult to track student outcomes and measure their impact on students.

#### Advising and Communication

- A majority of students and families expressed that their schools did not communicate what EPSOs were available to them.
- Families who are more affluent, white and/or highly educated are more likely to be informed about early postsecondary opportunities.
- Information gaps expressed by students and families include EPSO benefits/risk, articulation of credits, financial aid, pathways, and advising on how EPSOs can align with their postsecondary and career goals.
- Students expressed the importance of having counselor, teacher, family and community support in reaching their postsecondary goals. Many students and parents conveyed the need to increase advising capacity with a primary focus on serving students from underrepresented backgrounds.

#### Family Engagement

- Counselors working in schools with large populations of low-income, first-generation and students of color highlighted the importance of parental involvement in ensuring positive outcomes for their students.
- Students expressed that their parents and family members played a huge role in their understanding of early postsecondary opportunities and informing their educational identity.
- Counselors and bilingual parents reported the need for more accessible information (i.e., format, jargon, language)
- Many parents vocalized that they wanted information about EPSOs earlier in their child's educational career. A common suggestion was to begin informing students and families about EPSOs in middle school.

#### Wraparound Supports

- Some educators expressed that the effects of COVID-19 on students require more wraparound supports. Mental health support and soft skill development courses (related to decision making and stress management) are key areas on which to focus.
- One parent highlighted the importance of uplifting and supporting differently-abled students in EPSOs.
- Students expressed that tutoring hours were not conducive to their schedules. Providing tutoring opportunities at accessible hours to student-athletes and/or working students can help improve student outcomes.
- The potential tuition cost savings was consistently mentioned as the main lever in participating in EPSOs by students, families and administrators. State scholarships and partnerships with institutions to help lower costs are beneficial. However, counselors highlighted that most students only participate in courses covered by the limited scholarships.

## ***First Year Postsecondary Success***

### Academic Preparation

- Some students are not prepared to succeed in college-level reading, writing and math coursework.
- Students also need support with building other “soft” skills that will allow them to persist in college, including time management, study skills, communication and self-efficacy.
- Multiple students expressed that one of the reasons they plan to go to college was to pursue a career, and wished their high schools had provided more career exploration and courses.
- Students who participated in dual credit found it valuable in making the transition.

### Social Capital

- Many students expressed that they didn’t know who to ask for support at their high school or college in navigating the transition to college.
- Nearly all students named “independence” as something they were both most excited for and most worried about college.
- Parents and higher education staff noted the importance of building strong, trusting relationships with students, as well as making them feel that they belong on a college campus.
- Peer mentors were cited as a promising model.

### Financial Aid and Literacy

- Several students expressed concerns about how to pay for college and fear of debt.
- Counselors and higher education staff called for more information and support around financial aid, including the FAFSA and scholarships.
- They also called for financial literacy to be provided to students early and more often to empower them to better understand their financial decisions after high school (e.g. loans, credit, etc.).

### Wraparound Supports

- Many counselors and higher education staff, as well as at least one student, called for increased mental health support for students.
- They also expressed a need to provide more resources and options to address food and housing insecurity for low-income students.
- Many students work to help pay for college; they need access to employment opportunities that pay a living wage.
- One higher education staff member noted that while these wraparound supports were provided in the first year, they seemed to “disappear” in the second year and beyond.

### Partnerships

- Particularly in light of the pandemic, both K-12 and higher education staff are stretched thin for capacity.
- Both sectors expressed a need to strengthen partnerships, both within and across sectors, to provide a warm hand-off for students.
- Higher education staff noted that collaboration between academic support and student affairs departments would be beneficial.