

# BARD HIGH SCHOOL EARLY COLLEGE BALTIMORE

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE KIRWAN COMMISSION: REENVISIONING HIGH SCHOOL AND IMPROVING SECONDARY- POSTSECONDARY TRANSITIONS

The Kirwan Commission presents an important opportunity to improve secondary education in Maryland by creating pathways to postsecondary degrees and credentials during high school. Creating these pathways will significantly improve students' success in high school, college, and the workforce. Bard College, an independent, nonprofit college of the liberal arts and sciences, runs a public early college high school in partnership with Baltimore City Public Schools. This school, Bard High School Early College Baltimore, allows students to earn an Associate's degree and 60 transferable college credits, free of charge, alongside a high school diploma. Bard High School Early College Baltimore is one of a growing number of early college and dual enrollment programs in Maryland that are helping high school-age students successfully transition to, afford, and complete postsecondary education.

To improve secondary education in Maryland, Bard College recommends that the Kirwan Commission:

- Create a statewide funding stream for high-quality early college high schools and dual enrollment programs
- Create a pathway for college instructors to teach in public secondary schools
- Support regulatory changes to encourage college opportunities for high school-age students

### **ABOUT BARD COLLEGE**

Bard College is a four-year independent college of the liberal arts and sciences with a 150-year history of academic excellence and a strong public interest mission. From its home campus in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, Bard operates a network of national and international programs aimed at bringing high-quality liberal arts education to underserved populations. In keeping with its public interest mission, Bard is a national leader in the early college movement and operates one of the oldest and largest networks of public early college high schools in the country, serving nearly 2,500 students. These satellite campuses of Bard College enable students of high school age to earn a Bard College Associate's degree, free of charge, alongside a high school diploma.

### **ABOUT BARD HIGH SCHOOL EARLY COLLEGE BALTIMORE**

Founded in 2015 and located in Baltimore's Mondawmin neighborhood, Bard High School Early College Baltimore (Bard Baltimore) offers students across Baltimore City the opportunity to earn both a Maryland high school diploma and a Bard College Associate in Arts degree, worth 60 transferable college credits, tuition-free and by the end of the 12th grade. In Bard Baltimore's first graduating class (Class of 2017), whose students transferred into the school in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, 71% of students earned an Associate's degree, 92% earned a high school diploma, with an average of 60 transferable credits, and 85% were accepted to over 50 four-year colleges and universities, including institutions such as The University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), Goucher College, and Stanford University. Across Bard's early college high school network, in the Class of 2017, 82% of students earned an Associate's degree and 98% earned a high school diploma with an average of 60 transferable credits.

Bard Baltimore is founded on the belief that many young people are ready and eager for the challenge of a college education at a younger age, and that starting college earlier and free of charge, with appropriate academic and socio-emotional supports, is the best way to ensure students' success in postsecondary education. Bard also believes in the power of a liberal arts and sciences education, with student-centered, discussion-based seminar classes, to engage students, help them develop strong, transferable skills of critical thinking, analysis, writing, and communication, and help them reach their full potential as contributors to their fields, their communities, and civic life.

## **ABOUT EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS AND DUAL ENROLLMENT PROGRAMS IN MARYLAND**

Bard Baltimore is one of a handful of early college high schools operating in the State of Maryland, the first being The Academy of Health Sciences at Prince George's Community College, which opened in 2011. Early college high schools (ECHS) are partnerships between at least one local educational agency and at least one institution of higher education that allow participants to simultaneously complete the requirements for a high school diploma and an associate's degree or equivalent (60 transferable college credits) at no cost to the participant or the participant's family. A newer offshoot of the four-year early college high school model operating in Maryland is the Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) model, a six-year integrated course of study that provides students with high school courses leading to the granting of a high school diploma and college-level courses leading to the granting of a post-secondary degree at a partnering college and career training with a partnering employer, provided at no cost to the participant or the participant's family. Early college high schools and P-TECHs fall under the broader category of dual enrollment, prevalent in Maryland, which refers to a course provided by an institution of higher education through which a student who has not graduated from high school is able to earn postsecondary credit.

Research shows that high-quality dual enrollment programs follow best practices, including 1) a structured program of study with transferable courses (e.g. general education requirements) leading to a degree or credential; 2) academic and socio-emotional support services to help students succeed; 3) college-credentialed instructors, with graduate degrees in the discipline and college teaching experience; and 4) a formal partnership between a local educational agency and an approved institution of higher education. Early college high schools embody these best practices and typically target students who are low-income, first generation college students, and/or underrepresented in higher education. States that have invested in dual enrollment and early college high schools have seen the programs expand quickly. As an example, Texas and North Carolina, which have made significant investments in early college education, have over 200 early college high schools in their states combined.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following are recommendations for how the State of Maryland, through the Kirwan Commission, can improve secondary education by creating pathways to postsecondary degrees and credentials during high school that will significantly improve students' success in high school, college, and the workforce.

- Create a statewide funding stream for high-quality early college high schools and dual enrollment programs
- Create a pathway for college instructors to teach in public secondary schools
- Support regulatory changes to encourage college opportunities for high school-age students

## I. Create a statewide funding stream for high-quality early college high schools and dual enrollment programs

There is currently no statewide funding stream in Maryland to support Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) that seek to offer transferable college courses and degree programs to students of high school age. Research shows that participating in an early college high school or dual enrollment program significantly improves students' rates of college degree completion.<sup>1</sup> For low-income students, access to dual enrollment is particularly limited, as there is no state funding stream to cover the costs of the college education when students cannot pay tuition. State support is needed to allow more low-income high school students to access high-quality early college high schools and dual enrollment programs that allow students to take a college course of study up to an Associate's degree or credential alongside a high school diploma, free of charge.

To expand access to high-quality early college high schools and dual enrollment programs, the State of Maryland should provide a funding allocation to qualifying Institution of Higher Education (IHE) partners to offset the cost of the programs, based on the number of free college credits offered to students. This allocation could be based on a per college credit rate, not to exceed the average in-state per credit cost (in tuition and fees) at two-year colleges in Maryland. To qualify, an IHE would have to 1) be an accredited institution licensed in the State of Maryland; 2) offer a minimum of 12 credits transferable to a degree program; 3) have a formal partnership with a local educational agency; 4) provide support services to help students succeed; and 5) offer the program free of charge to students.<sup>2</sup> To target the investment, funding could be limited to partnerships with schools and/or districts in which at least 40% of students are eligible for Free and Reduced-Price Meals. Applicants could also have to demonstrate that they serve students who are at risk of not completing postsecondary education, including first generation college students and students underrepresented in higher education. Finally, to make the investment as cost effective as possible, payment could be based on credits earned rather than attempted by students. Through either mechanism, this funding stream would ultimately save money for students and for the state, from the higher and faster college completion rates among students and the reduction in spending on remedial courses.

This funding stream would enable more public high schools and school systems across Maryland to offer high-quality early college high school and dual enrollment opportunities for low-income students in particular and to develop meaningful, robust pathways to college and careers for students during the last two years of high school.

## II. Create a pathway for college instructors to teach in public secondary schools

To improve the transition for students between secondary and postsecondary education, the State of Maryland must create greater alignment between high school and college instruction. A key way to accomplish this is to allow college professors to teach in high schools, thereby breaking down the divide between secondary and postsecondary classrooms and teaching professions. Maryland does not currently have a certificate pathway to allow college professors to teach in secondary school settings, including early college high schools. The current Career Technical Education and Specialized Professional Areas certificate pathways do not apply to faculty teaching in core subject areas, including the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, mathematics, foreign languages, and the arts. Bard has created a Maryland

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<sup>1</sup> For a compilation of research studies demonstrating the benefits of early college and dual enrollment, visit the College in High School Alliance research page, available at <https://www.collegeinhighschool.org/new-page-1/>.

<sup>2</sup> IHEs could be approved for funding through the Maryland State Department of Education and/or the Maryland Higher Education Commission.

Approved Alternative Preparation Program in partnership with Baltimore City Public Schools and the Maryland State Department of Education to address the lack of a clear route for college-credentialed faculty to earn a secondary school teaching license, but that program is not a statewide solution.

In order to increase the pool of qualified instructors for early college high school and dual enrollment programs and to fill teaching positions in high needs areas more broadly, the State of Maryland should create a certificate pathway that enables instructors with graduate degrees and college teaching experience in the discipline to be taught to teach in public secondary school classrooms on a full- or part-time basis. To qualify, candidates would need to show evidence of intent to hire on the part of a school or school system.

Increasing the pool of college instructors teaching at the secondary school level would improve the quality of instruction in Maryland secondary schools and increase alignment between secondary and postsecondary education. Furthermore, increasing the number of college faculty teaching at the secondary level will help to expand career ladders and opportunities for instructors at both levels and thereby increase teacher retention.<sup>3</sup>

### III. Support regulatory changes to encourage college opportunities for high school-age students

In addition to funding, there are regulatory changes that would encourage more schools and school systems to offer college programs for high school-age students. These regulatory changes, allowable under the Every Student Succeeds Act, include 1) having college course passage in transferable general education classes automatically fulfill high school graduation requirements in the corresponding subject areas; 2) having completion of an associate's degree automatically fulfill the requirements for the high school diploma; and 3) giving local educational agencies points on report cards and in other assessment systems for students' college course passage and degree attainment. The first two changes would help schools and school systems interested in offering their students college programs of study the ability to fit the college courses into the high school curriculum and would ensure that students are not penalized for taking college courses by having to fulfill additional requirements or duplicate coursework to receive the high school diploma. The third change would reward and recognize schools and school systems for offering rigorous postsecondary opportunities to students, thereby incentivizing them to offer early college programming.

Together, these policies will result in more engaging, rigorous classrooms and educational experiences for Maryland students that will help them succeed in postsecondary education and the workforce.

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<sup>3</sup> Additional policies that can help with retention include more flexible scheduling and sabbatical policies, to allow faculty to stay active in their fields, for example by pursuing their independent research, writing, performance, and creative pursuits.