

EARLY STUDIES PROGRAM

A potential Top Tier community engagement initiative is to increase high school student dual enrollment in the ASC Early Studies Program. The Early Studies Program provides the opportunity for individual Nevada high school students (from any public or private high school and home school program) to enroll as a non-degree seeking student and attend regular UNLV classes for which they meet the prerequisites. These courses tend to be 100- and 200-level courses. As dually enrolled students, Early Studies participants have the opportunity to earn dual credit pending successfully passing their courses and receiving approval from their high school counselors. Early Studies students are eligible to receive ASC student support services such as academic advising, tutoring, supplemental instruction, academic success coaching, and much more.

Although dual enrollment programs are most prevalent in community colleges, they exist in every institutional type (Cohen & Brawer, 2008) and bring a range of benefits to both the institution and the community. Common cited purposes include providing high school students the opportunity to earn college credit and gain a head-start to a college degree without delaying their progress to their high school diploma, be exposed to a collegiate environment (e.g., culture and expectations), be challenged by the rigor of college-level curricula, and create a more seamless pathway from high school to college (Drew, A., 2010; Karp et al., 2007; Venezia, Kirst, & Antonio, 2003). From UNLV's perspective, expanding the Early Studies dual enrollment would serve as an excellent outreach and recruitment tool. After all, the Early Studies Program attracts upper echelon Nevada high school students.

To expand the Early Studies Program, qualifying high school students would need financial assistance – whether through scholarships or waivers – because the cost of tuition and fees have been the most frequently cited challenge for entering the program. By providing financial assistance, the Early Studies Program would be able to open doors for low socioeconomic and first-generation students. In addition student financial assistance, the ASC would need to add an Early Studies Program Coordinator and Academic Advisor. Conclusively, expanding the Early Studies Program may have fiduciary implications; however, it would cast a larger net thus significantly increasing its impact on participating students, the community, and the University.