

# **Process Evaluation of the YMCA College Readiness Program**

**September, 2011 – July, 2012**

Sandra L. Kirkner, M.A.-R.  
Research Associate

Julie O'Donnell, Ph.D., M.S.W.  
Professor and Director of Research

Child Welfare Training Centre  
School of Social Work  
California State University, Long Beach

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## **Introduction**

The YMCA College Readiness Program is funded by the California Community Foundation. There are two components to the College Readiness Program (CRP); the youth component and the parent component. The youth component provides support services to members of the YMCA of Greater Long Beach High School Youth Institute (HSYI). The HSYI is a program that uses technology as an integral mechanism for promoting positive youth development and enhancing the academic success and career readiness of low-income, culturally-diverse high school youth. The CRP helps to prepare these youth for attending college. The CRP consists of information sessions for all YI youth which are usually embedded in both the senior meeting at the start of the school year and the senior dinner at the end of the school year, college campus field trips, and individualized counseling sessions. General program activities include; 1) a senior meeting at the beginning of the school year, where the CRP staff share available college assistance services and inform youth about the various campus tours and workshops, 2) campus visits, and 3) a senior dinner and college information session, where the accomplishments of the senior class are celebrated and college readiness information and workshops are announced for the incoming YI class. This report details the youth activities of the CRP from September, 2011 to July, 2012.

## **Methods**

### **Data Collection**

Data on project activities was collected using the College Preparation Tracking form which was specifically designed by YMCA College Readiness staff and the researchers for this project. The form allows staff to track youth's high school G.P.A., extracurricular activities, which colleges they are interested in, college entrance requirements, college application

checklist, college applications submitted, and final college status. In addition, staff kept attendance on all project meetings and campus visits which they provided to the researchers.

### **Sample**

CRP youth are all current YI or YI alumni participants. Youth were recruited by CRP staff via phone calls, letters mailed to their homes, emails, Facebook and talking to their friends. Sixty-nine (52%) of the 132 HSYI youth who were potentially eligible participated in the College Readiness component during the current time period. The largest percentage of youth were high school seniors (39%) followed by freshmen (32%). The current ages of youth ranged from 14 years to 18 years, with an average age of 16. Males made up 54% of the sample. The majority of the sample was Latino (58%).

An attrition analysis was used to determine demographic differences between the YI youth who did and did not participate in the CRP. There were significant grade differences between the two groups. Freshmen were overrepresented in the CRP group while juniors were underrepresented. There were also significant ethnic differences, in particular, African Americans were underrepresented and European Americans were overrepresented in the CRP sample.

Table 1  
Description of 2011-12 College Readiness Youth Participants  
(N = 69)

	%	N
<b>Year in High School**</b>		
Freshmen	32%	22
Sophomore	23%	16
Junior	6%	4
Senior	39%	27
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	54%	37
Female	46%	32
<b>Ethnicity**</b>		
Latino	58%	40
Asian American/Pacific Islander	12%	8
African-American	10%	7
Bi/Multicultural	10%	7
European-American	10%	7
<b>Current Age</b>		
14	10%	7
15	32%	22
16	16%	11
17	19%	13
18	23%	16

\*\*Significant differences at the .05 level

## Results

### College Readiness Activity Attendance

The number of college readiness activities attended ranged from one ( $n = 48$ , 71%) to four ( $n = 1$ , 1%), with an average of one activity per participant. Twenty-nine percent ( $n = 20$ ) attended two or more of the college readiness activities. As shown in Table 2, campus visits were made to California State University, Long Beach (CSULB), University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH).

Table 2  
College Readiness Activity Attendance  
( $N = 68$ )

Activity	%	N
CSULB Campus Visit	65%	44
Senior Dinner & College Information Session	34%	23
Senior Meeting	16%	11
UCLA Campus Visit	15%	10
CSUDH Campus Visit	10%	7

### Individualized Advising

In addition to the general CRP activities, 17 high school seniors met individually with the College Readiness Director to receive assistance with their college plans. This section details those efforts.

### College Requirements

Youth who received individual services from the CRP varied on the types of colleges to which they applied. Colleges ranged from four-year universities, such as UC Los Angeles, USC, UC Santa Barbara, UC Berkeley, UC Irvine, CSU Long Beach, CSU Los Angeles, CSU Dominguez Hills, CSU San Francisco, CSU Fullerton, Cal Tech, Michigan State University,

Northwestern, Stanford, School of the Arts Institute Chicago, and Berlin University of the Arts; to two-year colleges such as Long Beach City College and Cerritos College.

Table 3 displays the percentage of youth who completed the required high school courses for entrance into a four-year university. The percentages ranged from an 82% completion rate for the college preparatory elective and visual/performing arts, to a 53% completion rate for mathematics and world languages. Five (29%) youth also reported SAT assessment scores. They ranged from 1300 to 1640, with a mean of 1422.

Table 3  
High School Courses and Number of Years Completed for UC/CSU College Admission  
(N = 17)

<b>High School Courses and Number of Years Needed for UC/CSU College Entrance Requirement</b>	<b>% of YI CR Youth who met Requirement</b>	<b>Number of CR Youth who met Requirement</b>
Visual/Performing Arts (1 year)	82%	14
College Preparatory Elective (1 year)	82%	14
English (4 years)	71%	12
History/Social Science (2 years)	65%	11
Laboratory Science (2 years)	59%	10
World Languages (2 years)	53%	9
Mathematics (3 years)	53%	9

### **College Readiness Staff Assistance**

As shown in Table 4, the most frequent assistance provided by CRP staff was assisting with high school course selection and college and financial aid applications. Youth were least likely to receive letters of recommendation or help applying for scholarships. Twelve (71%) of the 17 seniors, who received individualized assistance from the CRP staff, applied to college

(one did not receive CRP staff assistance on his/her college applications). The number of applications submitted ranged from one (50%) to four (21%), with the average of two applications per youth. Out of the 24 applications submitted, 19 (79%) were accepted. All of the nine youth who CRP staff assisted with the financial aid process were awarded financial aid monies to attend college. In addition, two of the seniors were awarded scholarships from their high schools.

Table 4  
Types of College Application Assistance Provided by College Readiness Staff to Seniors  
(N = 17)

<b>College Application Task</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
A-G College Entrance Requirements	76%	13
College Applications	65%	11
Financial Aid Applications	53%	9
SAT or ACT Admission Test	41%	7
High School Transcripts	29%	5
Scholarship Applications	23%	4
Letters of Recommendation	6%	1

### **Outcome of College Applications Submitted**

As shown below in Table 5, 70% of the youth applied to four-year universities and/or to two-year colleges. Twelve percent were undecided about their future plans, while contact was lost with the remaining 18% of the youth.

Table 5  
Outcome of College Applications Submitted  
(N = 17)

College Applications Submitted	%	N
Four-Year University	35%	6
Two-Year College	35%	6
Plans Undecided	12%	2
Lost Contact/Do Not Know Plans	18%	3

### Conclusions

The CRP provided a large number of youth with a variety of college-related services including individual consultation and college field trips. Seniors applied to a broad range of colleges and, for the most part, were successful in being accepted. At the time of this report, 70% had been accepted into a two or four year institution of higher education. While these outcomes are encouraging, the information collected here provides some indication of the need for program enhancement to increase the number of YI graduates attending college.

First, given that a fairly high proportion of these youth had not taken the high school courses required for admission into a four-year university by their senior year, it may prove useful to meet, as a group or individually, with all incoming freshman and sophomores to review the university requirements early. Staff could then help youth to plan to take the classes they need throughout their high school career. This mentoring would then give them more flexibility in their later options and decisions related to higher education. Establishing yearly meetings with grade-specific cohorts may also encourage youth to believe higher education was an option for them and might also establish group support and a shared goal for higher education. It might also be useful to invite YI alumni who are attending or have graduated from college to share their experiences at these meetings or to serve as mentors on college-related issues to YI youth still in

high school. Inviting parents to attend these meetings or providing parent meetings specifically related to course requirements might also be indicated since they could then also monitor their teen's class schedules.

Second, practices related to the retention of those receiving individual services should also be reviewed so youth being served are followed more closely or at least it is understood why youth stop participating. Third, given that an equal percentage of the seniors in the CRP choose to attend a community college, it might prove helpful to have field trips to local community colleges or even art or technical schools as well. Finally, to more fully understand the extent of services provided, it is suggested that the current individual tracking forms be modified to include the dates or number of consultations done with each youth.