



The Alliance for Regional Collaboration to Heighten Educational Success (ARCHES) is a voluntary confederation of collaboratives focused on improving student outcomes and closing the achievement gap through collective action among schools, community colleges, baccalaureate-granting colleges and universities, business, and community and family-centered organizations.

COLLEGE OPTIONS

History

In the early 2000s, a confluence of events led to the creation of College OPTIONS in the North State:

- The Shasta Partnership received an Academic Improvement and Achievement Act (AIAA) grant from the California Department of Education to improve college-going rates. This grant offered the occasion to the educational institutions in Shasta and Siskiyou counties to collaborate in providing a set of services to the area's students; and,
- The University of California, the McConnell Foundation -- a local philanthropic organization -- and the California Postsecondary Education Commission all conducted, or commissioned, studies to identify ways by which to enhance the *college-going culture* in this region and improve the college-going rate in the area.

Based upon recommendations in these reports and the AIAA grant experience, the region's educational institutions and the Office of the President of the University of California proposed a comprehensive plan and set of activities to enhance the *college-going culture* in the region and increase the college-going rate to the McConnell Foundation. Specific objectives were to:

- increase awareness of college opportunities among the residents in the North State;
- offer resources to enable more students to take advantage of these opportunities; and,
- expand academic programs at local schools such that more students would be eligible to attend the state's public universities.

In 2003, The McConnell Foundation awarded a grant of \$1,700,000 for this effort. From that initial grant, this collaborative has grown into a community resource that delivers a range of services that continues to expand and adapt to the needs of this region's students.

Membership

College OPTIONS is comprised of the Shasta and Siskiyou county offices of education, Shasta Union High School District, College of the Siskiyous, Shasta College, California State University, Chico, National University, Simpson University, University of California, Davis, the central offices of the California State University and the University of California, and the McConnell Foundation.

Demographics

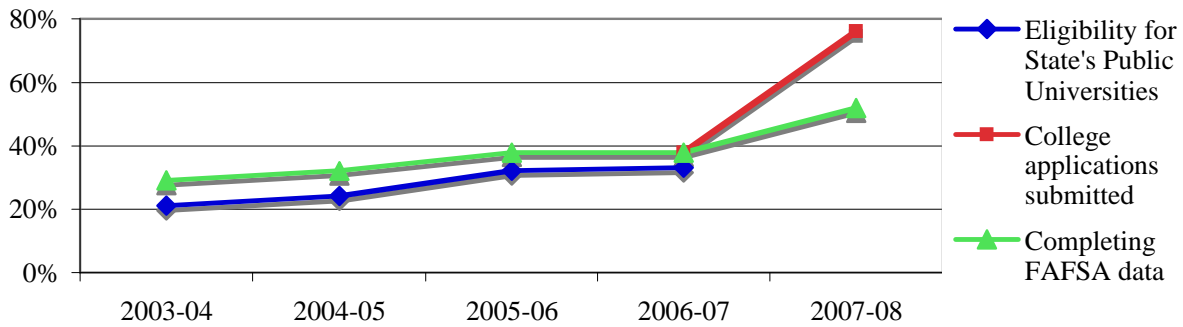
Shasta and Siskiyou counties have approximately 225,000 residents who live in sparsely populated communities that are geographically isolated. White inhabitants constitute over 90 percent of the population in these counties; Latino residents are the second largest racial-ethnic group. The poverty rate hovers around 13 percent and approximately 17 percent of the residents have at least a Bachelor's Degree. Total school enrollment in these two counties is 34,538.

Impact

The research from which College OPTIONS emerged indicated that it should focus on creating a *college-going culture* in these counties. The extent to which this collaborative has been effective in developing and sustaining that culture is manifested in the various student achievement measures that are presented in Display 1 on the next page.

Display 1

Indicators of College Preparation and Intentions of Students from these Counties Over Time

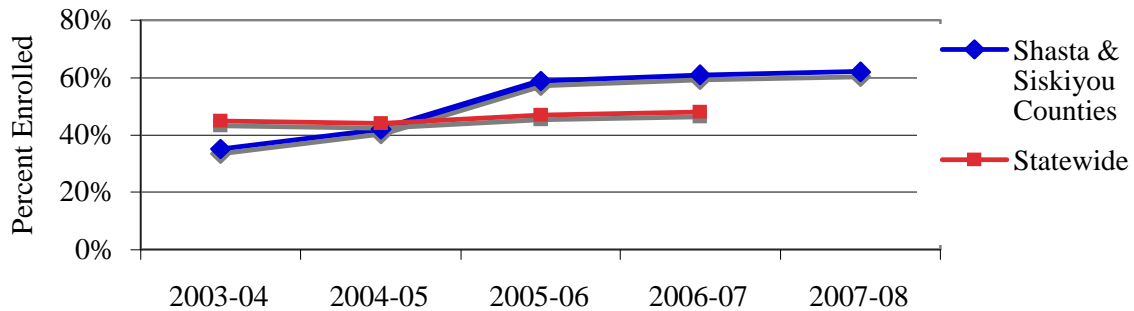


- Eligibility of high school graduates from these counties for the state’s public universities has increased by 12 percent from 2003-04 to 2006-07.
- The number of students completing college admissions applications has risen by 38 percent since the inception of College OPTIONS to a high of 76 percent in 2008-09.
- Over 23 percent more students filed a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in 2007-08 than did so in 2003-04.

The ultimate measure of the effect of creating a *college-going culture* is the change in the number of students who enroll in a higher educational institution. Display 2 presents the growth in the number of students from these counties attending college by educational sector.

Display 2

College-Going Rates of Students in Shasta and Siskiyou Counties Over Time



- Since the 2003-04 year, the percentage of students from these two counties who have enrolled in higher educational institutions has grown by 27 percent. As of 2007-08, 62 percent of the high school graduates in Shasta and Siskiyou counties enrolled that year in a higher educational institution.
- The college-going rate in this area now exceeds the flat trend in the statewide rates over this time period.

Future Initiatives

- Develop two new scholarship programs funded by the College Access Foundation of California in which one component supports community college transfer students and the other component financially assists high school students entering baccalaureate-granting institutions.
- Partner with Shasta College on a new grant by delivering informational services to students interested in Career-Technical Education.