Running Start Pilot Program Background

Honolulu Community College linked with the Honolulu School District high schools to pioneer the development of a dual enrollment (high school/college) program in Hawaii.

A previous report - Out of the Blocks - focused on the initial stages of the Running Start Pilot Program. In the Spring of 2002, Running Start transitioned from a pilot program to a statewide effort that included all high schools and UH campuses that chose to participate.
In brief, the Running Start Program in Hawaii was roughly modeled after Washington State’s Running Start Program. The launch of Hawaii’s RS program involved a three semester pilot program (Spring 2001; Fall 2001; Summer 2001).

The goals of the Running Start Program include:

- Accelerating student educational progress
- Saving taxpayer educational dollars
- Saving family college expenses
- Enriching/expanding educational options for talented high school students
- Improved articulation - linking Hawaii’s high school and college curricula
- Providing an alternative educational environment for talented, but bored, high school students

Hawaii’s RS students will be able to earn high school and college credits simultaneously. Most RS participants will use the program to earn college credits while adjusting to the different expectations of the college classroom. However, if Washington’s experience is any indicator of the direction of the Hawaii program, increasing numbers of high school students will eventually be full-time college RS students and many will earn enough college credits before high school graduation to qualify for junior status at the college at which they are admitted after graduation.

**STUDY DESIGN**

While the researchers originally intended to complete a study of Spring 2002 RS students, conflicting demands at the end of the Spring semester resulted in a low return rate of RS assessment questionnaires. However personal contacts with all HCC Summer Session 2002 faculty and students resulted in a very high response rate from RS Summer ‘02 students. These data were then merged with the responses of Spring 2002 RS students and faculty to provide an updated program assessment.

**RESPONSE RATE = 85% of Summer 2002 RS Students responded (47 total responses from Spring and Summer 2002 RS students).**

**FINDINGS**

Respondent Demographics

**GENDER - MORE Running Start FEMALE RESPONDENTS**

During the Spring/Summer 2002, a total of 59 students were enrolled in the RS Program (15 Spring and 44 in the Summer). 52% of these RS students were female and 48% were male; however, females are somewhat over-represented in the sample (63% female/37% male).
ETHNICITY - IMPROVEMENT, BUT GREATER MINORITY PARTICIPATION NEEDED?

Almost half (43%) of respondents identified themselves as of Chinese ancestry; while another 21% were Japanese. While HCC continues to have difficulty recruiting under-represented minorities, the presence of some Hawaiian/Part Hawaiian, Filipino, and “Other Pacific Islander” RS students is encouraging.

AGE - PATTERN IS UNCHANGED - MEAN = 16.5

The mean age of RS Summer Session respondents is 16.5 and the median age is 17.

HIGH SCHOOLS - MCKINLEY IS THE MAIN SOURCE OF RS STUDENTS

Now that the pilot phase of RS is over, all public high schools in the State of Hawaii can participate in the program; however, HCC’s Spring and Summer Programs drew students from only a handful of high schools. 76% (35) of the respondents came from a single high school - McKinley. Only two respondents attended a non-Honolulu district school (Moanalua). This suggests that the publicity effort for RS remains largely within the Honolulu School District and must be far more effective at McKinley than at the other Honolulu public high schools. Not a single respondent attended Farrington High School (closest high school to HCC).

If the recruitment effort at McKinley could be duplicated at nearby Farrington and Moanalua High School and if the effort could be extended to other Oahu public and private high schools, RS enrollments at the college could be boosted dramatically.
Last summer’s assessment report noted the low participation rate by students from high schools with high numbers of minority students. The report recommended that efforts to recruit from these schools (to boost minority RS enrollment) should be strengthened. For whatever reason, participation by students from high minority population high schools (like Farrington) actually declined and, as seen in the ethnic data, the college failed to increase minority RS participation.

**ALMOST ALL (84%) RS STUDENTS PLAN ADVANCED DEGREES**

An increasing percentage of RS students report that they plan to earn advanced degrees. Last summer about three-quarters of respondents reported that they would pursue advanced degrees. This year 84% of the respondents are seeking Master’s, Doctorate, or Professional Degrees.

**Chart/Table # 4**

**DIVERSE COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY PLANS AFTER HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION**

The number of RS students who are planning on advanced degrees demonstrates how they differ from a more “typical” community college student. A 1993 study of HCC Associate of Arts students (*Reaching for the Ring*) reported that 82% planned to transfer and most (82%) planned to transfer to UH-Manoa.

While 68% of 2002 RS respondents include UH-Manoa as a possible first campus after high school, numerous other colleges/universities were mentioned as under consideration, including:


Only two RS students are considering HCC after high school graduation.

As expected, RS students set their sights on enrolling at four year colleges/universities, but use the RS experience at HCC to launch their college careers and hone their college academic skills.

**RS STUDENTS CONTEMPLATE DIVERSE CAREERS**

Eventual career/professions contemplated by RS students include:


**MAJORITY OF RS RESPONDENTS ARE 1ST GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS**

Only 34% of the fathers of RS students **completed baccalaureate degrees** (four possess graduate degrees); only 28% of the mothers of RS students **have baccalaureate degrees** (three possess graduate degrees).

53% of RS fathers and 59% of RS mothers did not attend college.

While these RS students have fairly clear college and career goals, the fact that many come from non-collegiate families translates to the necessity for some extra assistance from HCC counselors and faculty.

**HIGH SCHOOL GRADE POINT AVERAGE: MEAN = 3.35**

RS students report that their high school GPA’s range from 2.0 to 4.0 with a mean of 3.35.

Previous HCC studies of RS students revealed that many of the students who enrolled in RS would not have qualified for dual enrollment programs in other states where high school GPA minimums are set as part of the RS eligibility requirements. Last summer’s RS students had a mean GPA of 2.91. The GPA increase to 3.35 for Spring/Summer 2002 may signal better counseling and fine tuned selection for RS eligibility at feeder high school campuses. It is important to note that HCC Summer Session tuition fees are significantly higher than Fall/Spring semester tuition/fees - during the regular academic year, an HCC course costs about $130; however, a summer session course costs about $270.

**ONE-THIRD OF RS RESPONDENTS HAVE TAKEN AP CLASSES**

None of last summer’s RS students reported prior enrollment in AP classes. A third (34%) of these 2002 respondents reported having previous AP experience - another indicator of the improved academic preparation of the RS students.
GEAR UP FUNDS SUPPORT 38% OF RS (2002) STUDENTS

The presence of Gear Up funding has supported early college enrollment for more than a third of this summer’s RS students. The fact most of these RS students are first generation college students suggests that Gear Up funding is targeting exactly the students who need an additional financial and counseling boost to enter a college program. Further evidence that Gear Up is reaching this targeted group is revealed with cross tabulation analysis that shows that 52% of the fathers of non-Gear Up students have completed baccalaureate or higher college degrees compared to only 13% of fathers (completing baccalaureate) of Gear Up students.

CHART/TABLE # 5

Only half of the Gear Up supported students report that they definitely or probably would have enrolled in this summer’s RS Program if Gear Up funding had not been available. Without Gear Up funding, many of the neediest RS students would not be in the program.

RS STUDENTS EXPECT TO PASS THEIR CLASSES

44 of 45 respondents (97%) expected to pass all of their HCC classes.

RS STUDENTS PLAN TO CONTINUE OR INCREASE THEIR HIGH SCHOOL EXTRACURRICULAR, ATHLETIC, AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

It has been reported that some high school faculty/administrators/parents are somewhat resistant to the RS Program because they believe that RS students will reduce their high school extracurricular involvement. As the RS program progresses and some RS students take heavier college loads, this is a possible outcome; however, at this point this does not seem to be a factor.

26% of respondents plan to increase their high school activity participation; 72% will maintain the same level of high school activity participation; and only 2% believe they will decrease participation in high school activities.
HCC FACULTY: PROVIDED INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION AND ASSISTANCE

RS students give HCC high marks to HCC faculty for the individual attention and support they provide.

CHART/TABLE #7

RS STUDENTS FELT WELL PREPARED FOR THE PROGRAM

As seen in the bar graph below, RS students report that they were generally well prepared for their RS experiences. They understood the necessity to be individually responsible, understood college coursework expectations, and felt comfortable with the behavioral expectations of the college environment.

They felt least prepared for the math, writing, and classroom discussion components of college.

CHART/TABLE #8

(1.0 = Extremely Well Prepared ..... 5.0 = Poorly Prepared)
RS STUDENTS FEEL WELL ACCEPTED

RS students report that they feel well accepted by their high schools, friends, family, and faculty. They feel best accepted and least accepted by the college campus, but even in the case of the campus, none report that they are poorly accepted and 91% report that they are well or extremely well accepted.

CHART/TABLE #9

(1.0 = Extremely Well Accepted ..... 5.0 = Poorly Accepted)

RUNNING START WELL REVIEWED BY PARTICIPANTS

62% of respondents rated the OVERALL RS experience as EXCELLENT and 36% rated it as GOOD. No respondent rated the experience as POOR and only one respondent rated RS as FAIR.

While all aspects of the RS Program received favorable reviews, RS students gave the highest marks to the quality of the college courses, the quality of the assistance provided by the high school counselor, the individual attention and support provided by the college instructor(s), and the quality of assistance provided by their college counselor. Lowest marks (still good marks) were given to the application and registration
processes.

CHART/TABLE # 10

**RESPONDENTS RECOMMEND RS TO THEIR CLASSMATES**

80% of RS students will *Definitely Recommend RS* to their high school classmates; 14% will *Probably Recommend RS*; and only 7% will *Maybe Recommend* - no respondent will *Not Recommend RS*.

CHART/TABLE # 11

**RS STUDENTS PREFER COLLEGE TO HIGH SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT**

71% of respondents preferred the collegiate environment; 21% had no preference; and only 9% of respondents preferred the high school environment.

CHART/TABLE # 12
RUNNING START STUDENT COMMENTS

Below are representative RS student comments about what they liked BEST, LEAST, SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT, and the OVERALL EXPERIENCE.

LIKED BEST:

The teachers, the surroundings, the freedom, and the challenge. All SUPER! ....

I like the smaller classes, higher level of class interaction, and the higher level of maturity. RS is a super program that every college-bound high school student should take advantage of.

I like the fact that there is more independence in regards to doing my homework. I depend on myself to get the work done, and that is what pushes me to work harder and strive for the best.

The teachers were very good and knew what they were doing.

I enjoyed being able to work with people who were not necessarily my age. It was interesting to learn about their past and experiences. Also, I enjoyed experiencing a college level course and previewing what is to come following my graduation.

I'm able to get a headstart in college.

Students can gain both college credit and high school credit at the same time.

On my first day of class, I noticed that many of the students were a lot older than me, but being able to socialize with adults made me realize that they can be friendly and speak to you on the same level, student to student. The experience alone was worthwhile. The classes were also good and the professors were also great. They explained ideas clearly and if misunderstood; they would clarify their concepts on the chalk board or attempt to provide a more basic explanation of the problem.

Running Start has given me a "college experience" that I would not have been able to experience if the program had not been up. The summer semester has given be ideas on the expectations of the college course load and I was able to adapt to the social environment.

The aspects that I liked about RS is the whole college experience. We were sort of treated like equals, like the RS students were really college students

WHAT THEY LIKED LEAST

Paying $300+ for the course and textbook. (But that was required ha,ha)

I did not realize the amount of studying and note taking I had to do.

The fact that there is a limited course selection.

I did not really like the timing of the class. I did not really like that the running start program ran almost all summer. But it was not that bad
because my class was only about 2 hours long, 4 days a week.

Not really getting to know my classmates made it a little awkward at times.

It took away from my ability to do things my senior year.

**SUGGESTIONS/COMMENTS**

*Being a running start student at a high school age is pretty fun and when I revealed this to the non-Running Start program students, they were shocked. They were shocked that how can a 15 year old high school student be at HCC right now. Otherwise Running Start Program is very useful - and I believe it can help other students.*

*It was a great experience, there's nothing much else to say.*

*I was really impressed on how my teacher lectured. He didn't need any textbooks. It was very professional. My class was cool. The program should get more HS students to try it because it really helps them in the future.*

*I hope that this program continues, it gives high school students a chance to experience college life.*

*I really enjoyed my experience. The class I took, History 152, was a very rewarding class. It really opened up some interests that I never knew I had. After this class, I'm considering studying history as a major.*

*I would say they should have more courses available for the RS Program.*

**THE BOTTOM LINE - RS STUDENT PERFORMANCE**

The ultimate goal of any evaluation is to determine if a program meets its objectives. The RS program was implemented to accelerate student academic progress, ease the transition from high school to college, and, ultimately, save taxpayer dollars by streamlining the educational process.

While respondent comments and responses demonstrate RS Student satisfaction with the program, ultimately the success of the program lies in their performance in their college classes.

An analysis of the actual grades (not self reported, but gathered from HCC student records) of RS student performance for the Spring and Summer Semesters of 2002 demonstrate that RS students are succeeding in their college coursework.

**SPRING 2002 RUNNING START STUDENT PERFORMANCE - 3.06 GPA**

Running Start students completed (with grades) 83% of the classes in which they enrolled (a higher percentage of class completions than experienced by traditional first semester HCC liberal arts students).

Only one RS student received a failing (“F”) grade. Overall (including the “F”), the grade point average for Spring 2002 RS students was 3.06 (“W” and “N” Grades not included in calculation.)

**CHART/TABLE # 13**
SUPERB SUMMER 2002 RS STUDENT PERFORMANCE - GPA = 3.42

While Spring Semester RS students fared quite well, the larger group (44 students) of Summer 2002 students truly distinguished themselves by completing virtually all of the courses in which they enrolled (52 of 53 classes with C or higher - 98% successful completion rate).

The one student who did not complete a class did not fail the class, but rather received an “N” (No Evaluation) grade.

The overall Grade Point Average of these Summer RS students was a somewhat remarkable 3.42 - indicating their preparation and motivation for college (and the improved screening of this year’s participants).

CHART/TABLE # 14

GEAR UP STUDENTS

Gear Up is the federally funded grant program that is attempting to boost college attendance rates for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Gear Up pays the college tuition and textbook expenses for Running Start students who are eligible for the “free” or a “subsidized” lunch programs.

As one might expect, compared to Non-Gear Up students, fewer Gear Up students come from college educated families. For example, only 13% of the fathers of Gear Up students hold Bachelor’s Degree (or higher) compared to 52% of Non-Gear Up students.

The lack of college experience in their families may explain the difference we find in reported college preparedness levels of Gear Up and Non-Gear Up students. While 95% of non-Gear Up students felt they
were Extremely Well or Well Prepared for College Coursework Expectations, only 69% of Gear Up students felt similarly prepared.

Gear Up student preparedness self perceptions are borne out when we compare the actual grade performance of Gear Up and Non-Gear Up students. While Gear Up students did very well during the Summer 2002 session (Overall GPA = 3.22), Non-Gear Up students outperformed them (Overall GPA = 3.45).

THE IMPACT OF GENDER

While male and female respondents report similar levels of preparation for college, female RS students report slightly better performance in the their college courses (higher GPA’s). Females also feel more accepted on the college campus (48% of female RS respondents as compared to just 18% of male RS students feel Very Well Accepted).

Gender is not, however, a factor on most other items on the survey: for example, male and females RS students do not differ on: preference of the college environment over the high school environment, recommending RS to their friends, or their overall rating of the RS experience.

FACULTY VIEWS OF RUNNING START STUDENTS/PROGRAM

HCC’s RS Counselor (co-researcher) Jean Maslowski collected responses from HCC RS faculty to add their views to this RS Evaluation. Her instrument included items on:

- Student academic preparedness
- Amount of outside assistance sought by RS students
- Degree of RS student classroom participation
- General comments about RS students

Overall, RS students were seen as just as good or better than regular students.

Representative quotes from faculty are included in the sections below:

ACADEMIC PREPARATION?   MOST WERE WELL PREPARED

Most were very well prepared, better than the typical HCC students...They had good writing skills and even better study habits.

Excellent - well prepared from a high school World History class.

I think that all of my RS students were academically prepared for first year college work. This doesn’t mean that all were emotionally prepared, though...I am not sure that all of them were prepared to accept criticism of their work...

All were adequately prepared.

***** obviously has strong writing skills, but he needs help with classroom preparedness, commitment, etc.

...They proved their ability to tackle the challenge of writing a 10-page academic research paper via the TOULMIN ARGUMENT and MLA Documentation Protocol.

SEEK ADDITIONAL HELP OUTSIDE OF CLASS?   MIXED RESPONSES
They all spoke to me after classes at one time or another, but not outside of class.

No. I’m sorry that I didn’t try to set up appointments with him...

Three did - one did not and failed.

Both students easily and automatically approached me on their own initiative to talk to me after class and privately in my office several times to seek academic advice on assignments.

Some did, but most seemed too shy or too busy going to another class. I usually had to schedule an appointment with them if I needed to discuss their papers. One student, though, stayed after class to get feedback on his papers.

In most cases, no...I believe this is really a matter of being unfamiliar with college. In some cases, students did come to see me before or after class with needs and questions, and I found them to be responsible, clear-thinking people who were capable of solid communication of their needs.

DID RS STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN CLASSROOM DISCUSSIONS?

To a greater degree in small groups, but to a lesser degree when the discussion included the entire class. The young men were much more vocal in class discussions than the girls. It took a lot of coaxing to get the girls to share their ideas with the rest of the class.

More than average - almost always had correct responses to my questions.

Greater. They commented regularly in class discussion at a much higher rate than the non-high school students present. Their comments and questions were insightful, and, though very pragmatic, well thought-out.

They had average participation.

Same or greater extent.

There was no difference in the level of participation.

They were quieter than other students. They were more comfortable talking to me many times after class in my office. That was all right.

OTHER COMMENTS?

In general, I find these students to be excellent and academically well motivated. There are occasional maturity issues or conflicts with high school schedules that can’t be helped. However, their drive and genuine interest in the subject seem to carry them through. I have no doubt that these students belonged in my classroom as much as any others. I hope to see more in the future.

One can easily see the six RS students did exceptionally well compared to the rest of the class. They accounted for over half of the students that passed with at least a C and for 80% of the A’s.

I would not have guessed that ***** was a RS student. He is very mature and is doing very well.

Because **** had attendance problems, he was confused about assignments, due dates, etc.

One did exceedingly well, while the others struggled but did great.

The RS students were extremely bright and extremely helpful. During group work, they helped less able students edit and revise their papers. The content of their papers showed much more maturity than the typical high schooler’s. I thoroughly enjoyed working with them.

I did not know their status until after the midterm. Would it not benefit these students if the instructor knew before hand? I truly enjoyed having these students. I welcome more student be be added to any of my future sections (if possible I’ll be able to even add them as overload add-ons.)

HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELOR RECOMMENDATIONS

HCC RS Counselor Jean Maslowski contacted RS high school counselors/coordinators at the end of the Summer 2002 semester to solicit feedback on RS Program improvement.
High school counselors suggest:

- Develop more publicity: brochures, posters, etc.
  
  * Cover it in the news...Posters for high schools to display...
  * Application available like Common UH Application..

- Distribute HCC Schedule of Classes earlier

- Have Running Start faculty talk to potential students
  
  * This was helpful for us, but just a little too late.

- Schedule classes in the afternoon, early morning, and weekends
  
  * McKinley students are anxious to take RS classes at HCC. The very best times to offer RS classes would be in the afternoons, evenings, or weekends.
  * Late afternoons or early mornings.

- Provide earlier information on Placement Testing Dates, Available Classes, and Times so parents can work on transportation.

- Offer foreign languages.

**CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS**

*Running Start* is now a permanent component of Hawaii’s public education system. However, to date, the promise and potential of the program remain in an embryonic form. *RS* offers Hawaii an opportunity to transform part of the “seamless web” rhetoric into reality. As the State of Washington is demonstrating, high school to college transitions are greatly enhanced through such a dual enrollment/dual credit program.

While *RS* enrollments in the HCC Summer Session (2002) were up significantly, *RS* enrollment in the regular Fall 2002 semester had not increased. So, while some progress has been made on recommendations from the 2001 study (*Out of the Blocks*), much work remains:

- **Improve *RS* publicity efforts at the high schools and the community.**

  Progress is being made on this front. Brochures and posters are being made and this report will be released to the press in the ongoing effort to make the public aware of the existence of this unique program.

  HCC *RS* faculty, *RS* students, and regular HCC students who are graduates of Oahu high schools are being recruited for presentations to high school students and their families.

- **Improve DOE/UH communication about coordinating schedules to insure that college classes are offered at times/dates that facilitate student enrollment.**

  High School RS counselors and conversations with *RS* students make it clear that the current expectation is for students to take HCC college classes before (early morning) or after (late
afternoon, evening, or weekend) their high school courses.

HCC is attempting to accommodate RS student schedules; however, the college wants, if at all possible, to avoid “special” sections of its courses as one of the key components of RS is to place RS participants in integrated classrooms so they can gain actual college classroom experience.

As the program matures, we expect that increasing numbers of RS students will enroll for half, most, or even all of their classwork at the college - while maintaining high school enrollment. (This has been the experience in the State of Washington where many RS students simultaneously receive high school diplomas and A.A. degrees.)

As some RS students seek heavier college loads, high schools and the college will have to work together to ensure that the students can be released to attend “prime time” hour courses as many essential core courses are only offered at these hours.

**Expand Running Start Course Options**

When we launched the pilot program, there was a desire to reduce the complexity by limiting the number of classes RS students could take - only a few courses with direct “matching” Hawaii public high school courses were included in the list of possible HCC classes for RS participants. Now that we have demonstrated the efficacy of the program, we should follow Washington’s example and permit RS students to take the entire gamut of college courses and match simply by distribution area (Math, History, Social Science, Humanities/Art, Computer Science, etc.).

As students attempt to complete a year or two of college credits before high school graduation this will become absolutely necessary. Furthermore, RS participants plan to transfer to an wide array of colleges/universities. Given the realities of different Core/General Education requirements, students need to select from a range of courses to ensure that they will fulfill General Education Requirements at the college/university that they plan to attend.

**FURTHER DEVELOP RS ORIENTATION, WORKSHOPS AT HIGH SCHOOLS, AND SET AN ANNUAL RS UH/DOE MEETING**

All of these programs have been identified as critical to the success of Washington’s RS Program. Might Gear Up consider some special preparatory workshops for Gear Up assisted students?

**EXPAND RS PARTICIPATION TO INCLUDE OCCUPATIONAL/TECHNICAL PROGRAMS**

Many very capable high school students plan to enter technical/occupational programs (like HCC’s Aviation Maintenance, Automotive Technology, Aviation, Administration of Justice, and Early Childhood Programs). These students should be permitted to get a “headstart” on the career education program by declaring some of these programs as part of the RS opportunity.
PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

HCC RS faculty, counselors, and administrators will meet to discuss this report and to then plot the future of RS on the campus.

Probable goals include:

- Tightening ties with existing RS feeder high schools.
- Developing ties with other public high schools.
- Opening “RS” opportunities for private high school students.
- Working with the D.O.E. to expand the range of courses available to RS students.
- Exploring RS opportunities for occupational/technical programs.
- Conducting research on the progress and views of former RS students.
- Developing more sophisticated brochures, posters, and publicity efforts for the RS program.
- Communicating more effectively with Parent/Teacher organizations.
- Opening RS opportunities for Home Schoolers.
- Expanding orientation and support services for RS students.
- Continue the structured evaluation of the program.
- Contact former RS students to determine the impact of their participation upon their college (after high school graduation) preparation and performance.