



WHAT IS THE PENNSYLVANIA COLLEGE ACCESS GRANT PROGRAM?

The College Access Challenge Grant Program (CACGP) is a federal formula grant program that is designed to foster partnerships among Federal, State and local government entities and philanthropic organizations to significantly increase the number of underrepresented students who enter and remain in postsecondary education.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), Project GRAD USA (GRAD USA), and the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) have partnered under the CACGP to deliver coordinated, intensive college access services to 16,629 students in seven low-income high schools and their feeder middle schools while also providing financial aid information statewide. This partnership will serve the following high schools and their feeder middle schools: Chester-Upland, McCaskey, Sayre, South Philadelphia, Strawberry Mansion, Vaux, and Woodland Hills.

SERVICES & BENEFITS OF PA CACGP

GRAD USA will provide targeted, intensive intervention services from its College Readiness Initiative (CRI) leveraging the significant college access resources provided by PHEAA state-wide. PHEAA will provide financial aid informational workshops, training, and materials throughout the State including the seven identified high schools. PDE will ensure CACGP implementation, effective program delivery, quality control and will support buy-in with the targeted districts and the statewide effort.

CACGP Services

1. Academic support in literacy and mathematics will be provided to students through GRAD USA's academic personalization strategies that 1) develop information on individualized student deficits, or gaps in student knowledge, 2) produce more time on-task through tutoring to increase personalized time on-task to fill specific knowledge gaps, and, 3) identify additional strategies and materials to meet students' deficits. Teachers will receive analyses of their students' areas of deficit and provided with description of strategies and materials for use in tutoring. Consultation will also be provided to each school and/or district for choosing additional programs for acceleration to grade level of those students two or more grade levels below placement as well as consultation on creating a rigorous, college-bound curriculum and rigorous postsecondary planning and course selection. This intervention ensures that students complete core college preparatory courses and provides additional supports to ensure students erase deficits in mathematics and literacy.

2. College access activities focused on parents and students will be implemented through College Readiness Centers located in all seven of the targeted high schools and strategic in timing to most benefit students in college preparation and the college application process. These activities will be provided to make connections for parents and students between expectations of postsecondary education and career and the rigorous high school preparation which these expectations require. In addition, to address the critical transition from middle to high school, GRAD USA will provide targeted college access programming to the feeder middle schools. GRAD USA's targeted CRI services work in partnership with colleges and universities to provide the opportunity to connect students and families with postsecondary institutions and serve as a motivation to college by encouraging both students and families to think that college is a realistic possibility.

To achieve the goal of providing all students with college access information and strategies, the partnership will provide the following strategies:

- A series of GRAD College Access Forums (implemented in partnership with postsecondary institutions) and on-going school-based support that address course selection and college and career planning; the college application process; financial aid; and, career awareness.
- College Tours are provided on partner college and university campuses to students and families so that they view college as a realistic possibility; experience life on a college campus; establish relationships with colleges and staff; and, provide information and resources on the college-going and college application process.
- Parent University workshops targeting college access awareness for parents provide interactive sessions where parents/guardians gain inspiration and information about the value and affordability of a college education and the college-to-career link. These workshops also increase overall parent/guardian awareness, skills, and commitment to their children's pursuit of a postsecondary education and lifelong learning.
- GRAD's Walk for SuccessSM, a door-to-door campaign visiting the homes of families of 8th and 9th grade students, serves as a constituency development tool to support academic achievement, raise college access awareness, and develop a college-going culture. The Walk provides for raising awareness among families about the value and affordability of a college education and the college-to-career link; and, generating a signed College Access Agreement, a commitment from students and families to the student's pursuit of a postsecondary education, including the importance of the college-to-career link.
- Community mentors and tutors are utilized by leveraging existing mentoring and tutoring opportunities and working with the schools to increase the number of community, university, and local business members who serve as student tutors and mentors.

PHEAA will provide college access services throughout the State but will also focus resources on the seven targeted schools. PHEAA's services at the targeted schools will be coordinated with the GRAD USA CRI framework and will include

- Conducting workshops for parents and students about financial aid programs and services and completion of the FAFSA across Pennsylvania
- Providing materials to students and families outlining financial aid opportunities statewide.
- Providing training to students and workshops for school counselors across the Commonwealth on the use the Education Planner website (EdPlanner.org) which offers six modules that cover the following areas:
Discovering, Preparing, Selecting, Applying, Deciding, and Paying.

WHAT IS PROJECT GRAD?

GRAD USA is a national nonprofit education reform model serving over 133,500 economically disadvantaged youth in 213 schools across the nation. GRAD's mission is to ensure a quality public education for economically disadvantaged students so that high school graduation and college entrance rates increase dramatically. As a partner with communities seeking to create a rigorous college-bound culture for their students, GRAD is deeply committed and uniquely qualified to produce high quality results that advance the vision of high school graduation and college success for all. For more information, please visit www.projectgrad.org or contact Tycene Edd at 713-816-0404.