

Project Narrative: Only Connect: The High School Early College Network Based at Bard
College at Simon's Rock

Project Narrative: Absolute Priority Three: Innovations that Complement the Implementation of
High Standards and High Quality Assessments

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Competitive Preference Priority 6—Innovations that Support College Access and Success

Bard College, in consortium with two public secondary schools, Bard High School Early College Manhattan and Bard High School Early College Queens, will implement Only Connect: The High School Early College Network based at Bard College at Simon’s Rock. This project will scale up innovative practices, strategies and programs that will enable 75,000 middle and high school students to successfully prepare for, enter and graduate from a two- or four-year college.

Bard College at Simon’s Rock, the nation’s only four-year residential liberal arts early college, is a small, selective, supportive, intensive college of the liberal arts and sciences which accepts students for enrollment after the 10th or 11th grade in high school. Students benefit from faculty trained in the country’s best universities; inspired and inspiring classes; first-class facilities for the sciences, the arts, and athletics; and an astonishing range of opportunities for conducting specialized research and gaining hands-on experience with 43 academic concentrations, many of them interdisciplinary. Bard College at Simon’s Rock has been offering the early college option to American adolescents and their families since 1966; and in the 2001–2002 academic year, Simon’s Rock joined with Bard College in creating the Bard High School Early College (BHSEC) in New York City.

a) Students’ Preparedness and Expectations Related to College

Only Connect: The High School Early College Network will start in the four states in which Bard College currently operates – New York, Massachusetts, Louisiana and California – to work with school districts, state education departments and local universities to expand early college high schools based on the two Bard High School Early Colleges (BHSEC) operating in New York City. The most often cited example of early success of early college high schools is

that of Bard High School Early College in New York which opened in 2001, and where 90 percent of the first graduating class went on to college, a majority as sophomores or juniors (U.S. News and World Report 11/3/03). The two BHSEC campuses provide a unique educational opportunity to a growing population of public-school students, many of whom come from underserved middle schools and low-income neighborhoods of the city. By integrating high school and the first two years of college within the framework of an urban public high school, BHSEC offers these students access to intellectually-stimulating, academically-rigorous college courses taught by college-level faculty who are dedicated to teaching young scholars. Students at BHSEC earn a Bard College Associate in Arts degree and sixty college credits, at no cost, thereby helping them bridge the gap to higher education. Ninety-nine percent of the class of 2009 enrolled in four-year colleges and universities. Many of those students would not have been able to do so without the boost they got from BHSEC. By creating a college-going culture, providing the necessary support and offering sixty college credits, students who attend early college high schools based on the BHSEC model will not only be completely prepared for college, but will also have two years of college completed within the usual span of a high school education.

Students enter the BHSEC program as ninth graders and take two years of an innovative high school curriculum designed to prepare them for the rigors of the college program. Then, in what would be their junior and senior years of high school, students go into “Year 1” and “Year 2” of the early college program. At the end of four years, these students graduate with both a New York State Regents high school diploma and the Bard College Associate in Arts degree, thereby graduating with 60 college credits, tuition-free – a total value for all students of approximately \$10 million a year.

b) Understand Issues of College Affordability, Financial Aid and College Application Processes

Each new Only Connect Early College High School will have a College Transfer Office. This department serves a critical function in assisting students with college planning. For many students, especially for those who may be the first in their families to attend college, the college admission process may seem daunting. Moreover, many of our students would be unable to complete college without generous financial aid and scholarships as well as without the head start that BHSEC gives them with tuition-free college credits. The College Transfer Office (CTO) fulfills the vital function of helping students (at BHSEC, virtually all of them) make the transition to four-year schools. Every student at the beginning of his or her second semester in Year One/eleventh grade is assigned to a teacher or guidance counselor who also serves as a college transfer advisor. Each college advisor counsels twenty students and maintains an ongoing and regular schedule of meetings and support activities. Advisors regularly meet with parents, hold college-awareness workshops, hold college fairs or transport students to college fairs, maintain a calendar of college events and college admission officer visits, give SAT prep courses and scholarship workshops. College Transfer Office staff are members of the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) and the New York State Association for College Admission Counseling (NYSACAC).

c) Support to Students from Peers and Knowledgeable Adults

Modeled after the Learning Center Model offered at most college resource centers, both BHSEC campuses provide extensive tutoring and academic assistance in all subject areas. All of the early college high schools in this network would incorporate the Learning Center Model and the Student Mentoring Model from BHSEC. These support structures are essential in helping all

our students meet the challenges of the program, and especially those students who enter the program under-prepared from struggling middle schools. The Learning Center provides critical support – one-on-one and small group tutoring – in academic skills, with an emphasis on writing and verbal skills. This is essential to help all students meet the challenges of the program, and especially those students who enter the program under-prepared. All core academic subjects are addressed in The Learning Center as well as additional support for English Language Learners. Every ninth grader is also assigned a Year One college student mentor and all incoming ninth graders are enrolled in a Summer Bridge Program that works on critical thinking and academic writing skills.

Project Narrative: Absolute Priority Three: Innovations that Complement the Implementation of High Standards and High Quality Assessments

Section A: Need for the Project and Quality of the Project Design

The value of an education in a liberal arts college is not the learning of many facts but the training of the mind to think something that cannot be learned from textbooks.—Albert Einstein

Bard College, in partnership with a consortium of two secondary public schools, Bard High School Early College (BHSEC) Manhattan and Bard High School Early College Queens, submits this proposal, Only Connect: The High School Early College Network, for an Investing in Innovation Fund (i3) Scale Up Grant that addresses Absolute Priority Three: Innovations that Complement the Implementation of High Standards and High Quality Assessments as well as Competitive Preference Priority 6—Innovations that Support College Access and Success, as described in the preceding section. Bard College has an established record of significantly improving student achievement, attainment and retention, through its work with the two BHSEC schools in New York City, its work since 2008 in New Orleans – Bard Early College New Orleans, its Institute for Writing and Thinking, its establishment in 2009 of the Paramount Bard Academy in the Central Valley of California, and most significantly, its achievements since 1979 when Simon’s Rock, in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, founded in 1966 as the first residential early college, became a campus of Bard College and subsequently was renamed Bard College at Simon’s Rock.

Bard College proposes to create a network of early college high schools, with Bard College at Simon's Rock (Simon's Rock) serving as the network's center. Only Connect: The High School Early College Network will bring the unparalleled depth of experience and nationally-recognized expertise of Bard College at Simon's Rock to the creation and management of early college high schools across the country based on the Bard High School Early College Model. Beginning in the four states within which Bard College currently operates early college programs, New York, Louisiana, California and Massachusetts, Only Connect: The High School Early College Network will work at the school district and state level to build partnerships with colleges and universities, to assist in turning around poor performing early college high schools and to create partnerships with school districts and other LEA's to open new ones.

The two public secondary school partners, BHSEC Manhattan and BHSEC Queens, will serve as "laboratory schools" for the network of new early college schools and their partners that would be established pursuant to this grant. The schools would (i) host visits from the new school teams; (ii) help to plan those visits, facilitate meetings between our faculty and administrators and the visiting new school team; (iii) serve throughout the life of the grant as an important resource for the colleges and the new schools being organized through this grant, whether questions have to do with budgeting or curriculum development or professional development; and (iv) respond to referrals from a virtual 'hotline' (on-line or telephone) provided by the network, enabling personnel at the new school to turn to someone experienced in running a high school early college for help in answering a question or resolving an issue. Bard and Simon's Rock have been committed and professional partners, helping to develop two excellent and highly sought after early college high schools in New York City known for the

quality of their teaching and engaging curriculum as well as for their collegial and caring school communities. Both schools have an exceptional level of student achievement that is far above the state standards, and both have well-tested structures in place that maximize student success and that would be the structures upon which new schools in the network would be built. Bard College and Bard College at Simon's Rock have supported BHSEC Manhattan and Queens in developing the high school early college curriculum, in recruiting a diverse student body, particularly from underserved communities, and in developing supports for students who come from low performing middle schools.

Need for the Project

To make secondary education meaningful, more intellectual demands of an adult nature should be placed on adolescents. They should be required to use primary materials of learning, not standardized textbooks; original work should be emphasized, not imitative, uniform assignments; and above all, students should undergo inspired teaching by experts. A Second-Rate Secondary Education, Leon Botstein, President, Bard College, Newsweek, August 9, 2008.

Over the past 20 to 30 years, colleges and universities have experienced a significant increase in the proportion of incoming students who are under-prepared for college level work. The problem isn't just that they have not received adequate instruction or that they have failed to acquire the necessary skills in preparation for college. A report of the National Commission on the High School Senior Year (Raising Our Sights, 2001) indicated that students find the last year of high school to be "tiresome", "repetitious" and "boring." A number of students who enroll in early college do so because they are not being adequately challenged and have exhausted the limited options their current schooling provides. They may find that high school does not tap their cognitive abilities or personal passions. These same students may find that local dual

enrollment and occasional college courses provide acceleration without excellence, and fall short of their needs for a personalized learning environment and a community of their peers. Advanced Placement courses can provide occasional challenge, but too frequently are simply part of the positioning process for college, rather than an engagement with serious college-level work.

The focus in outstanding early colleges like Bard College at Simon's Rock and the two Bard High School Early College schools is on raising the ceiling, not the floor, of education. Students come from many races, ethnicities, and socio-economic backgrounds. They are consciously choosing to be in a community of learners, one that values learning above mere credentialing, and one that still believes in—and realizes on a daily basis—the transformative power of education.

The Early College Model: Bard College at Simon's Rock

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the National Governors' Association, and the federal government's Commission on the Future of Higher Education have all pointed to early college as an important means of responding to challenges facing our educational system. The question is no longer whether early college—enrolling students in a full college curriculum at the ages of fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen—is a good idea, but rather how we can most effectively make early college work. How do we define and create excellence in early college?

Bard College at Simon's Rock was the first four-year, liberal arts, residential, early college in the county (accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges), and has been providing excellence in postsecondary education to adolescents—two years before students usually are exposed to such an opportunity. Adolescence is a time when creative and intellectual abilities are in ascendancy, curiosities are heightened, and questioning authority is the norm; thus it is the best age for students to begin liberal arts study. National studies,

commissioned reports, and the like have suggested that at this age students are often ready for the challenges of college work. We believe that when such work is presented in a developmentally appropriate way, the last two years of high school and first two years of college represent the ideal time for introducing the liberal arts—before vocational or professional training.

Our model restructures the last two years of high school and the first two years of college by introducing adolescents to the best of the classical and progressive educational traditions with a pedagogy that recognizes and fosters their unique intellects. This approach provides an alternative to the traditional structures of high school and college by offering a rigorous liberal arts curriculum for students beginning after the 10th grade. After two years they earn an Associate of Arts degree and a Bachelor of Arts degree two years later. At the Bard High School Early Colleges, students start in ninth grade and take two years of classes aimed at providing students with the essential skills and content needed for college. In what would be the eleventh and twelfth grades, students take two years of Bard College credit classes, graduating with a Bard College Associates degree.

We believe that our successes with younger students, some of whom have not had the best educational experiences prior to coming to Bard College at Simon’s Rock, is because our particular approach to educating adolescents involves a different pedagogy than that offered in secondary schools and in many colleges. A fundamental assumption underlying the pedagogy of Bard College at Simon’s Rock is that many students who are seen or labeled as “unmotivated” or “not very bright” by their teachers are not actually so. Rather, and more likely, for some of these students the problem is not their ability or inherent motivation to learn, but that they are—for

whatever reasons—not being intellectually challenged and directed in ways that respect and nurture their adult intellectual capacities.

Since our inception, a significant proportion of Bard College at Simon’s Rock entering classes have included students who are, by traditional indicators (high school grades, drop-outs, and/or test scores), “at risk”. By the end of the first year these students are often indistinguishable from the general pool of students and succeed at the same rate. Likewise, when in 2001 the Bard College at Simon’s Rock pedagogy and curriculum was exported to Bard High School Early College (BHSEC) in New York City—a partnership between Bard College, Simon’s Rock College, and the New York Public School System—the students responded in as positive a manner as they do at Bard College at Simon’s Rock. Bard High School Early College Manhattan has a first-to-second year retention rate approaching 100%. A follow-up study of the 2003 Bard High School Early College’s graduating class (Olson, 2005) showed that they, too, transferred to good colleges and universities, and reported feeling well-prepared, and even “over-prepared”, for their Bachelor’s degree studies. Moreover, students who enter the ninth grade from under-performing New York City middle schools “catch up” to their peers who entered from the top tier of New York City middle schools by the end of the tenth grade. Bard High School Early College Queens opened in 2008 and has a similar record of student achievement. Both schools are reflective of their neighborhoods, BHSEC Manhattan on the Lower East Side and BHSEC Queens in Long Island City. BHSEC Queens is also a Title One school.

Our freshman orientation, called Writing and Thinking Workshop, introduces students to our pedagogy in a fun and creative classroom setting. BHSEC students have the same week-long workshop as entering ninth graders. Across our curriculum—from the first class to the last—students are expected to articulate their ideas, both verbally (in class) and in writing. For some,

this is natural, while for others much support is needed; but all our students' ideas and opinions are taken seriously and valued. Our Freshman and Sophomore Seminars, also taught at the BHSEC schools in New York City, include texts from a variety of disciplines and are taught by faculty from throughout the college, regardless of area of specialization. Our expectation of our students is that with the appropriate support, they can rise to almost any academic challenge. Both Bard College at Simon's Rock and the BHSEC schools have a well-integrated system of advising, that ensures that all students are given guidance from when they enter the program until they leave.

Early College may not be the solution for all. However, it may be the right option for many adolescents who are feeling bored, disengaged, under-challenged and unmotivated in high school. That our model has proven successful on three campuses, in distinctively different educational settings, suggests that it is likely to work in many others as well. We are proposing to disseminate our early college pedagogies widely in order to support more programs where adolescents are given the opportunity to begin college-level work two years early.

Replicable Key Strengths

Core Curriculum: The liberal arts and sciences curriculum developed at Bard College represents one of the most significant contributions that we can make to the early college movement and the broader field of educational improvement. Students at all of our campuses take a series of core seminars in which they examine classical and modern texts. The seminars are writing-intensive; through formal and informal writing, students develop skills of analysis, critical thinking, and synthesis. Students are not “tracked” into these seminars; rather, all students—regardless of previous preparation—enroll in these small, interactive seminar classes, and all students are held to rigorous standards. The seminars provide a common intellectual

experience for students and a framework that promotes open discussion, meaningful critique, oral expression, and an approach to writing as a tool for interpretation and understanding. This last component, in particular, was developed and refined by Bard and Simon's Rock faculty in cooperation with Bard's Institute of Writing and Thinking.

Math/Science Model: Bard has positioned itself as a leader in creating specially designed mathematics and science curricula for early college. These efforts can be seen in each of our early college initiatives. In 2004, BHSEC introduced a new integrated science curriculum to prepare its ninth and tenth graders for college-level science courses. The integrated curriculum structures an accelerated course of study in key scientific disciplines around an inquiry-based, lab-intensive, experiential approach. Students explore thematic questions (for example, their own genetic makeup) using techniques and concepts drawn from different scientific traditions. We offer a rigorous 9th grade Physics first course at both BHSECs followed by either biology or chemistry and then all students take two years of college mathematics and one year of college science in the two college years. They can choose from a variety of advanced science classes, such as molecular biology, organic chemistry, biotechnology and so on, based in part on the research passions of the science faculty teaching the college classes, all of whom hold Ph.Ds in their disciplines.

College-level courses at BHSEC then build on the concepts and skills learned in the integrated science curriculum while also going into much greater depth in the key disciplines. BHSEC faculty partner with the New York Academy of Sciences, the Courant Institute, and Rockefeller University to provide in-depth, college level opportunities for BHSEC students.

Diversity: We know that education is still the single most significant factor in allowing for personal, social, and economic transformation. Because the early college experience is not

yet widely accessible, it is incumbent upon existing early colleges to ensure that students are not deprived admission because of accidents or opportunities of birth. Thus, the ideal class at an early college may be intimate in scale, but should be rich in the range of students it enrolls. The early college should recognize and support difference, and provide room for students to be fully challenged and supported in the college environment. In the process of experiencing college together, this diverse group of students will find that they are more bound by intellectual curiosity and even precocity than they are separated by their differences.

The liberal arts enable students to reach beyond their own experiences and imagine worlds far distant in time and place, as well as to investigate and make sound judgments. The experience of majoring in a particular field teaches what it means to go beyond the surface of things in a disciplined manner. From *Why Study the Liberal Arts?* by Leon Botstein, President of Bard College

Liberal Arts Core: Liberal education is meant to be, quite simply, education that liberates – liberates us from the constraints of our own limited experience, liberates us from prejudice, liberates us from the folly of reactivity without analysis, and liberates us from the tragedy of judgment derived from emotion without thought. Students in early colleges are ideally situated to benefit from a liberal arts education. The best of the liberal arts help students develop skills in critical thinking, quantitative literacy, and analysis while providing exposure to the arts and to a range of intellectual disciplines. For students in adolescence, this curricular approach allows the exploration of ideas and abilities while encouraging the development of an authentic individual voice, work that is well suited to the adolescent mind. The best of the liberal arts blends classical and progressive education by offering students a common core, not because it represents an exhaustive list of all significant knowledge, but because it invites students to engage difficult and

complex texts together. In the process, they learn how to question, to read critically and write coherently, to test their own assumptions and that of others, and to do so beyond disciplinary or intellectual bias.

Pedagogy and People: The hiring, professional development, and promotion of faculty within our early colleges are tied closely to their commitment to the concept of early college and to their effectiveness as teachers. Faculty possess terminal degrees in their fields (PhD's, MFA's) and are trained to teach adolescents.

The pedagogies that define and guide our teaching at these institutions are writing across the curriculum, the creation of close relationships between students and adults, a highly engaged advising structure, small classes, interdisciplinary inquiry, student scholarship, and the development of leadership and responsibility in students. The relevance and usefulness of this pedagogy to the broader early college education effort is especially strong, as it combines high expectations with structured support, a model that allows us to capitalize on the intellectual questioning and curiosity that is the natural work of adolescence.

To support these pedagogies, Simon's Rock and BHSEC provide students with an especially supportive environment to help ensure their success in tackling the rigors of a challenging academic curriculum. The advising processes at both Simon's Rock and BHSEC are highly structured, designed to provide students with mentors and a strong relationship with an adult along with the requisite academic support. At BHSEC, a Learning Center offers academic tutoring and learning resources in writing and mathematics, and the College Transfer Office provides students with guidance on completing college transfer applications, essays, and financial aid forms. At Bard College at Simon's Rock, the Win Student Resource Commons provides peer tutoring as well as staff support in writing and mathematics.

You have to create a different kind of environment in which you combine the best of college, which is intellectual ambition and competence, with a willingness to spend time with young people and deal with the age group with the kind of attention and caring that's characteristic of high school teachers. Leon Botstein, President, Bard College, May 2007 *Phi Delta Kappan*

Network Goals: In working with state education departments, local school districts and existing public and charter schools, the network will use the strengths of our model, the two BHSEC schools as laboratory schools, and the existing depth of expertise of our administration and faculty to create new schools or to strengthen and turn around failing and struggling schools. A major role of Only Connect: The High School Early College Network will be to transmit the vision of the network to all schools that become a part of the network. Not only will Only Connect, as the intermediary, serve to ensure all schools follow the core principles; it will also ensure that high need students are the ones being served. Its role will include overseeing accountability, technical assistance, and policy. Initially, we will work within the four states in which we have a presence, New York, Louisiana, Massachusetts and California, with state educational officials with whom we have close ties and with local school districts and LEA's with whom we have formed strong bonds to discover their needs: Turn around failing schools? Start new early college high schools? Bring together local colleges and universities and districts to partner on a new early college high school or improve one that may exist? Once we have performed a thorough needs assessment, we can then, through our network, serve the needs as appropriate for each locale. We will assist with selecting appropriate partnership sites, distributing grants to network partners, setting up timelines, formulating agreements, and supporting the ongoing administration and development of partner schools. A key role will be to

distribute funding to partners and open the agreed-on number of schools within an established timeframe.

Since the student population at Bard College at Simon's Rock and the two BHSEC's is diverse and representative of the high-need students to be served by this grant (BHSEC Queens is at Title 1 school), Bard College not only has an exceptional approach to closing the achievement gap between high school and college for high-need students, it also has an explicit strategy, based on many years of success, to continue its work with new partners.

Only Connect: The High School Early College Network will establish four regional centers, the base at Bard College at Simon's Rock and three in New York City, California and Louisiana, from which on-site consulting and other services will be launched. Also, at Bard College at Simon's Rock, summer teaching seminars and school-year weekend workshops will be offered on topics ranging from pedagogy, sustainability, institutional advancement, and management. Prior summer seminars attracted secondary school teachers and administrators from states as far as Texas, Utah and California.

Only Connect: The High School Early College Network's mission will be to advance the successes of early college education by providing a national model of the best practices in educating adolescents and by offering a menu of services that will create new early college high schools or turn around failing ones. An annual conference, a National Conference on Adolescents, Acceleration and National Excellence, will be offered at Bard College at Simon's Rock followed by the development and coordination of the network.

The network's five year goals are:

- to disseminate the principles and practices of our early college pedagogies and practices to more postsecondary institutions, early colleges and high schools engaged in reform;
- to promote the growth of new early college high schools;
- to develop an active network of sharing and support among postsecondary institutions and others interested in excellence in liberal arts education of younger students; and
- to create a collective force for change in secondary and postsecondary education.

In promoting the growth of new early college high schools, the Only Connect Network based at Bard College at Simon's Rock would provide the following assistance:

- Understanding and transmitting the Only Connect vision
- Developing design elements based on the Only Connect core principles
- Selecting sites with the capacity to open a new ECHS
- Distributing grants to local partners to open new ECHSs
- Providing technical assistance to the local partners and the ECHSs
- Providing policy support to remove barriers or add supports for ECHSs.
- Tracking the progress of ECHSs and holding them accountable for implementing all of

the required ECHS features and for student success.

Only Connect: the High School Early College Network's seminars and consulting services would have the following intended outcomes and would contribute to the overarching mission and goals of the network in the following ways:

- teachers will develop collegiate curricula appropriate for adolescents;

- teachers and administrators will adapt early college pedagogies and other related techniques to the needs of their own institutions;
- the number of institutions and faculty aware of early college pedagogy will grow;
- the liberal arts early model will influence the direction of new early colleges; and
- a periodic feedback system for developing early college high schools will be created.

The annual National Conference: Adolescents, Acceleration, and National Excellence will bring together scholars and educators interested in the education of adolescents, with particular focus on how the pedagogies of early college may help in defining and promoting such excellence in the liberal arts. A portion of the program will be devoted to panel presentations and workshops on a variety of themes associated with excellence in the education of adolescents; these may include:

- the contemporary adolescent as learner;
- race and ethnic issues for adolescent learners;
- the liberal arts for adolescents;
- interdisciplinary study and the adolescent learner;
- engaging the adolescent writer;
- adolescent learning styles – strengths, challenges and individual differences.

The conference would have multiple potential audiences – early college high schools, college and university faculty and administrators, teacher education programs, as well as education foundations, legislators and policy makers interested in these issues – although a particular focus would be to involve more postsecondary educators and administrators in

discussions of early college and the pedagogies of teaching adolescents, with the hope that more would consider opening early colleges affiliated with their institutions.

We will publicize and promote the conference with printed materials distributed through postal mailings, e-mails, conferences through our consulting visits and on a dedicated website.

The network will provide a clearinghouse of best practices associated with early college pedagogy. This would include information from Simon's Rock, but also from other secondary and postsecondary educators knowledgeable about early college. Among these resources would be our two-year and four-year curricula, the summer teaching seminar curriculum, "Guide to the Writing and Thinking Workshop"; and our "Guide for Early College Advising." It would also serve as a center from which cooperative agreements and programs across early college and early college high school programs could be developed.

In summary, we will work to identify partners in Massachusetts, New York, Louisiana and California to start, provide technical assistance as described above, expand the Teaching Seminars, promote our Consulting Services, plan an annual National Conference, identify and contract an external evaluator, revise the existing Seminars evaluation tool, and develop evaluation tools for the Consulting Services and conference. In the second year, we will assess the influence and impact of the prior years' Teaching Seminars and Consulting Services, expand the reach of our Seminars and Consultations, host the National Conference, create a National Network on Early College Pedagogy and begin opening schools. In the third year our outreach, programs, and assessments will expand even further. We will be able to gather more data on the impact of the network on the broader postsecondary community. By the fourth and fifth years, new schools should be up and running with more in further stages of planning. During the academic year, both Simon's Rock and BHSEC regularly host dozens of visitors from the United

States and abroad who come to observe the early college approach as developed by Bard. While this process has been somewhat effective, a more integrated consulting and visitation schedule would provide greater structure for Bard and more definitive support for other educators and schools. Our management structure and design would follow the principles set forth as follows:

In general, the greater the degree of management support and design specificity a school development organization provides, the better the odds are that it will be able to replicate high-quality results in new locations. Tighter management responsibility, support, and control or a more specific model will increase the consistency of the organization's outcomes. School developers do not need to own and manage their schools, nor do the schools necessarily need to be charter schools, in order to achieve a sufficient measure of management accountability. Management responsibility, support, and control can be strengthened in a variety of ways: through relationships and the leverage the school-development organization provides to a district through its staff and resources; through community engagement; and/or with formal contracts and accountability systems. Similarly, school designs need not be spelled out in every detail in order to be specific enough to ensure consistency. Rather, school developers need to identify the core elements of their models that make them effective and ensure that those elements are replicated faithfully. *Expanding the Supply of High-Quality Public Schools*
Susan Colby, The Bridgespan Group September 2005

We anticipate starting and/or turning around 150 high schools nationwide through the efforts of this network, working with 75,000 or more students within the next five years.

Section B: Strength of Research, Significance of Effect and Magnitude of Effect

One of the more well-regarded and well-researched studies of quality in American higher education is the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The NSSE study is conducted each year by higher education researchers at Indiana University; more than 300 colleges and universities participate, including Bard College at Simon's Rock. The results for this pioneer early college are striking. Bard College at Simon's Rock is measured not against other early colleges, but is placed with a set of peer institutions that represent some of the finest undergraduate liberal arts programs in the country – Hamilton, Vassar, Davidson and the like. The survey assesses the experience of students in and out of the classroom on a group of measures that are considered essential components of effective learning environments. On these measures, Simon's Rock has scored extraordinarily well. For example, the college scored well above our peers in students' opportunity for regular interaction with faculty, in discussing course ideas out of class, in having friends of a different race or ethnicity, and in the challenge and rigor of the academic curriculum. That the college outscores not high schools or early college peers but some of the best traditional liberal arts institutions in the country is a suitable measure that we practice our preaching in our commitment to excellence.

Students from Simon's Rock also do well when placed in other educational environments. One of our signature programs is a 3-2 engineering degree with Columbia University; students take three years at Simon's Rock and two years at Columbia's College of Engineering, graduating with a joint BA and BS from the two institutions. In our first class of students to enter the program, we saw the GPAs of all but one student rise when they went to Columbia's Engineering School; students from subsequent years have had similar results.

This is not surprising as liberal arts colleges as a group produce about twice as many eventual science Ph.D.'s per graduate as do baccalaureate institutions in general, and the top colleges vie with the nation's very best research universities in their efficiency of production of eventual science Ph.D.'s. (*Science at Liberal Arts Colleges: A Better Education?* Thomas R. Cech)

Kirst (2001) describes college-bound high school seniors as often taking classes that are not academically challenging. A 2006 Gates Foundation study found that more than two thirds of high school drop-outs had passing grades when they left school. Students drop out of high schools because their classes aren't interesting, they do not feel motivated to work hard in high school, and they report that they would have worked harder if their high school had been more demanding of them. Many of these students feel they could have graduated if even some of these factors had been different (Bridgeland, DiIulio & Morison, 2006). The factors then that contribute to this problem are complex and include the nature of the work students are expected to perform, the level of engagement that classroom interactions invoke and the comfort and stimulation that accompanies the discovery of learning.

What is particularly concerning for postsecondary institutions is that the problems of students' lack of engagement, commitment and poor performance do not suddenly go away when adolescents leave high school; they follow them into their subsequent educational experiences and thus have profound consequences at the postsecondary level. In 2002, about 10% of entering postsecondary school students were enrolled in remedial reading coursework (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003), 10% in remedial math, and 25% in remedial science coursework (Johnson, 2000). However, in 2005, the statistics rose to between 30% and 60% taking some required remedial coursework (Conley, 2006). Consistent with this, a Michigan State University study found that approximately 40-50% of their entering freshmen class needed

to take remedial mathematics courses, and more than 12% were placed in “the equivalent of a basic first year high school algebra course...well below the beginnings of university study of mathematics or a foundation for [quantitative literacy]” (Estry & Ferrini-Mundy, 2005). These remedial courses, often taken for no credit, are a financial burden on the college student and his family. As many dual enrollment programs are free to participating students, they also serve as an inexpensive way for young people to earn college credit, thus lowering the long-term cost of a college degree (Orr, 2002).

Something has gone awry prior to students completing their high school curricula. The problems seem to begin or at least emerge in high school, and particularly during the last two years. In 2006, fewer students were on track for college-level reading than in the eighth and tenth grades (ACT, 2006). The *Third International Mathematics and Science Study* (Highlights, 1995; 1997; 1998) reports a similar trend, with US students’ performance levels on math and science tests in comparison to students in other nations worsening as one tests across the primary, middle and high school levels. The complex relationship between lack of challenge, poor commitment and low performance has been clearly described in *A Nation Deceived*: “American high schools are becoming hiding places for a lot of untapped academic talent” (Colangelo, Assouline & Gross, 2004, p. 29). For some students academic talent has been untapped. For others it has been misdirected. And some succeed in spite of their schooling. But even for those who plan to attend college, students have also been shown to have a lot of misconceptions about college, including the extent of financial barriers to entry, and limited knowledge of what it takes to enroll and finish (Kirst and Venezia 2004). Knowledge of how to apply to college is low (Rosenbaum, 2001). Whatever the case may be, secondary schools and colleges alike have not been able to find solutions that mitigate the academic declines that continue.

Colleges and universities have defined the problem of poor student preparation and later postsecondary retention as being the result of failed secondary schools and have offered as a solution redundancy in the curriculum as a way to bringing students up to a level that would appear to ensure future academic success. While this solution may work for some, data suggest that the systemic problems persist and other solutions need to be conceived. According to a report by the Council for Aid to Education, access to a college education has increased but we haven't done much about the quality (Herch & Benjamin, 2001). In addition, some believe that under-achieving students can actually perform at a much higher level; these students are just not motivated to do so because they are bored in class or see little relationship between their achievement in high school and their future success (Lords, 2000). Of those who attend college, "half receive some type of degree within five years of entering postsecondary education, and about one-quarter receive a bachelor's degree or higher. The most privileged students graduate at much higher rates than their less-advantaged counterparts: better than 40 percent of students in the top socioeconomic quartile graduate with a four-year degree, compared to only 6 percent of students in the lowest quartile. And White students are considerably more likely to receive a bachelor's degree than Black and Hispanic students" (Kahlenberg 2004). A study by the Education Research Center (2009) reported that, of students who enroll in college, 58% of White students earn a degree, while only 36% of Black students and 42% of Hispanic students achieve the same.

Rather than providing remedial coursework for students entering their first year of college, we should provide opportunities sooner to engage in challenging intellectual work. As a U.S. Department of Education study found, the more rigorous students' high school academic experience has been, the more likely they were also to succeed in college (Adelman, 2006). One

solution is to reform what happens in the last two years of high school and the first two years of college by offering to 15 year-olds a rigorous liberal arts education, as Bard College at Simon's Rock has been doing for 40 years and the Bard High School Early College for ten. A recent examination of Texas longitudinal data concluded that high school students in that state who concurrently enroll in postsecondary courses experience greater success in college. Indeed, they are twice as likely to graduate from college in four years as those who did not enroll in such a program (O'Brien and Nelson, 2004). Nationally, four-year college students who participated in a high school dual enrollment program have, on average, a higher college GPA and a higher four-year graduation rate than students who did not participate in such a program (Martinez and Klopott, 2004).

According to Nodine, as of 2009, there were more than 200 early college schools in operation in various locations around the country, which represents a sharp growth from 2002, when there were only two such schools (one of which was BHSEC). Early findings on the impact of the early college model suggest that it has been extremely successful in achieving its intended outcomes. For example, Nodine (2009) reported that the four-year graduation rate for early college schools is 92%, while the national graduation rate is estimated to be less than 70% (Education Week, 2009). Vargas and Quiara (2010) examined the success of the early college schools within North Carolina. This state has been one of the leaders in this work and has opened 70 early college schools since 2004. These researchers report that students in the early college schools show significantly lower dropout rates (as compared to statewide rates for traditional schools), higher scores on state end-of-course exams (as compared to traditional schools in each district), and greater numbers of college credits earned than students attending schools with comparable demographic characteristics. Most notably, early college programs

have not lost sight of their goal to serve under-represented populations. Hoffman and Webb (2010) reported that 74% of students in the early college programs are of color; 56% are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, and nearly a third of all the schools qualified for Title 1 funding.

Among the rapidly growing number of early college high schools, the BHSEC model distinguishes itself as an early college school that blends the most effective aspects of the early college approach with several important distinguishing characteristics. As described earlier, BHSEC embeds a two-year college liberal arts program within a four-year, tuition-free public high school program. Graduates from BHSEC earn both an Associate in Arts degree from Bard College and a New York State Regents Diploma through Bard's partner, the NYC Department of Education. This structure, along with the fact that BHSEC hires faculty who teach both high school and college courses and provide critical supports to students throughout their four years, serves to eliminate the gap that perpetuates between high school and college.

BHSEC has a four-year high school graduation rate of 92%, and a six-year graduation rate of 98%. Moreover, BHSEC stands out even among other rigorous early college programs. In other early college models, 88% of students earned at least a semester of transferable college credit; 40% of graduates earned more than one year of college credits; and 11% earned two full years of college credit or an Associate's degree (Hoffman & Webb, 2010). However, at BHSEC, a full 96% of students who entered in eighth grade with relatively low skills in English language arts received at least two years of college credit; and 88% of all students received two years of college credit and an Associate's degree from Bard College. It is also notable that an astounding 99% of the students in BHSEC's graduating class of 2009 were accepted to four-year colleges, while reports from other early college models indicate that 60% of students are accepted to four-

year colleges (Jobs for the Future October 2009). Upon graduation from BHSEC, students attend such selective private institutions as Yale, Brown, University of Chicago, Williams, Middlebury, Swarthmore, Georgetown, Vanderbilt, Wesleyan, and others. Perhaps of greatest importance, analysis of data on a key outcome variable—graduation with a four-year degree—reveals that 90% of BHSEC graduates from the first three graduating classes (2003, 2004, 2005) have successfully completed four-year college degrees. While data on students who graduated from other early college programs are not yet available, it is important to note that only 40% of students entering college nationwide earn a four-year degree within six years (Public Agenda, 2010). Furthermore, in comparison to students who were accepted into Bard College from other schools in NYC (including both public and private schools), the BHSEC students had higher average degree completion rates (78.7% as compared to 48%) and GPAs (3.48 as compared to 3.27), and were able to complete their degrees in less time (2.6 years as compared to 4.0 years).

Bard Early College in New Orleans

In spring 2008, the Bard Early College in New Orleans program served its first cohort of students, offering two credit-bearing college courses to 11th and 12th graders at one New Orleans public high school. Each year, the initiative expanded to include additional schools and additional courses so that currently 13 courses are offered at eight high schools. Six of the eight participating schools are run by the Recovery School District, the state agency that oversees Louisiana's lowest-performing schools. The remaining two are under the umbrella of the Orleans Parish School Board. All participating schools serve exclusively minority student populations, the majority of whom (at least 70%) are from low-income families. In the six participating RSD schools, only 11-16% of students demonstrated proficiency on the state reading assessment, while this was true for 52-59% of students in the two Orleans Parish schools.

Preliminary data on outcomes achieved by students in the New Orleans program are promising. The majority of students participating in each term completed a college course, for which a majority earned college credit. To date, across the four semesters for which we have data, 214 of the 265 students completed courses (81%), and 182 of those (85%) received credits.

In sum, there is clear and compelling scientific evidence attesting to the early college model's impact on success in high school and college. However, even without this growing body of research, there is a powerful *prima facie* argument that when underrepresented high school students participate in an early college experience, as best exemplified by the BHSEC model, the impact is stunning and highly scalable: participants are exposed to a high quality, high level curriculum; they obtain college credits and, in most cases, an Associate's Degree – all while still attending a public high school that requires relatively little additional investment. In fact, return-on-investment (ROI) analyses conducted with BHSEC students estimate the cost of this supplementary and highly replicable activity is an astonishingly low \$200 per college credit.

Section C. Experience of the Eligible Applicant

Bard College is committed to providing meaningful, high quality liberal arts education to those least supported and served by society. The early college experience was described in the preceding two sections. In this section we provide a description of a number of our other education outreach programs.

Clemente Course in the Humanities—This program, begun in 1995, provides college-level instruction in the humanities to the poorest residents of New York City and other urban areas who are between the ages of 17 and 45. The Clemente Course removes all financial barriers to higher education: books, carfare, and childcare are free, and no tuition is charged.

Approximately 60 percent of the program's graduates have transferred to four-year colleges and universities.

Bard's College Access and Preparedness Program (BCAPP)—An offshoot of the Clemente Course, BCAPP was inaugurated in 2006. Its aim is to prepare and motivate at-risk young adults of high school age to go on to college and, once there, to have successful post-secondary careers. BCAPP does this by offering these adolescents college-level courses for Bard credit—again tuition-free—either at their high schools during regular school hours or in after-school courses presented in community-based settings.

Bard Prison Initiative (BPI)—Established in 1999 in response to publicly supported prison education programs, and founded by Bard students, BPI now enrolls inmates in rigorous and challenging degree programs at both the Bachelor's and Associate levels, in five maximum- and medium-security prisons in New York State.

Bard College Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Program—This program operates a laboratory charter school, the Paramount Bard Academy, in the Central Valley in California. An early college high school, the school is expanding into the middle school and elementary grade levels and serves as the California campus for the MAT program. The MAT program also partners with schools in the South Bronx, Manhattan and Queens and New York's Hudson Valley, most often placing its students for their practicum in high-need schools. The MAT Program seeks to improve student achievement and high school graduation rates by developing a cadre of high-quality new teachers committed to urban and rural education.

Bard Institute of Writing and Thinking—Since its founding in 1982, IWT has developed and refined writing practices for use in diverse disciplines and forms of learning. The Institute offers workshops for high school teachers and others that seek to enrich student learning by

offering challenging, engaging, and effective teacher development programs focusing on the role of writing in teaching and learning. IWT offers courses to over 800 teachers per year both at Bard and on-site, within New York State and also Maine, Vermont, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, North Carolina, Louisiana, Texas, Illinois, Colorado, California and Oregon. Since IWT began offering workshops, more than 40,000 secondary teachers have taken IWT coursework and gone back to their school districts to in turn lead workshops and provide mentoring on IWT practices.

As described in the Strength of Research section, the BHSEC model demonstrates that an academically rigorous liberal arts program can intellectually engage a diverse group of high school-age students and better prepare them for success than traditional high school. Like many other urban public high schools, the majority of BHSEC students are from non-White backgrounds, many are from low-income or non-English speaking households, and a substantial percentage of students who enter the school are not high academic performers. Despite these challenges, the BHSEC model has a demonstrated track record of success in effecting positive outcomes for both low-performing and high-achieving students. To summarize, the BHSEC model has been shown to significantly reduce the gap in the average GPA attained between students with disparate levels of reading proficiency upon entering the program. When compared with outcomes achieved by other early college high school models, the BHSEC model boasts higher rates of students earning college credits and AA degrees while in high school, as well as greater college acceptance and enrollment rates. The BHSEC four-year high school graduation rate is 92%, compared to a national rate of 69% (as identified by Education Week's Diplomas Count 2009), and 90% of alumni from the first three BHSEC graduating classes ('03, '04 and '05) successfully completed a four-year college degree.

Section D. Quality of the Project Evaluation

To meet the goals and standards promulgated by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Program Evaluation (JCS), Metis Associates, the independent agency that has been selected to conduct the evaluation,¹ will conduct a “best practice” evaluation that will be rigorous, participatory, systematic, and cumulative, with links between activities, outcomes, and contexts that yield definitive insights into the nature and extent of implementation quality and impact. The evaluation will include a rigorous **experimental design**, in which schools that are part of the Only Connect Network will over-recruit students for their entering classes in each implementation year of the project. Students then will be randomly assigned to treatment or control conditions and tracked through their high school years and beyond in order to determine whether there are differences in outcomes between the groups.

Metis Associates, founded in 1977 is a national research and evaluation consulting firm that has collaborated successfully with large, urban school districts around the country, as well as numerous non-profit organizations and institutes of higher education. Metis’s staff is highly skilled at designing and implementing large-scale systemic reform initiatives in a wide range of programmatic areas. In recent years, Metis has been the evaluator for several of the College Board’s initiatives, including the New York Education Initiative, which involves the development of new small public secondary schools in high poverty, inner city areas that are aimed at preparing students for enrollment and success in college; and the EXCELeRator Initiative, which involves the reform of existing low-performing high schools with the same goal of preparing students for success in college. The design and execution of the proposed project

¹ Additional information about Metis Associates may be found at www.metisassociates.com.

will be directed by Metis Executive Vice President, Dr. Alan J. Simon, who will serve as the Principal Investigator.

We recognize the importance of the Investing in Innovation grants for their contribution to the national knowledge base about what works in education. To assure the quality and rigor of this evaluation and its consistency with those of other funded projects, Simon's Rock, its consortium partners, and Metis will ensure their full cooperation with any guidance and technical assistance that may be provided by the US DOE and with any cross-project evaluations that may be conducted by the Department and its contractors.

1. The extent to which the methods of evaluation will include a well-designed experimental study or well-designed quasi-experimental study.

Experimental Design

Schools that participate in the Only Connect network will understand that an experimental study is being conducted to test the impact of the model and that their cooperation with the study is an important part of their participation in the network. Network schools (including both existing and new schools) will be asked to recruit at least double the number of students needed to fill their classes for all entering classes of 9th grade students. Students who meet the eligibility requirements will then be randomly assigned to treatment or control conditions. Students in the treatment condition will be admitted to a network school. Students in the control condition will attend a non-network school in the same LEA. Our experience with the BHSEC Manhattan and BHSEC Queens schools suggests that recruiting double the number of students to participate in the program is realistic. In fall 2009, more than 4,000 8th grade students applied for the 300 available 9th grade seats in these two schools. If, however, schools

are located in rural areas, where there is only one high school in the district, they will not be included in the experimental design component of the evaluation.

Treatment and control students will be tracked during their high school years and beyond, in order to examine such achievement outcomes as: school day attendance rates, credit accumulation, grade promotion, graduation, college credits earned while in high school, four-year college enrollment and acceptance rates, and college persistence and graduation rates. As described earlier, implementation of the Only Connect project will begin in Year 2 of the grant. Four states will participate in Year 2, with five schools each (schools may be existing or newly opened), for a total of 20 participating schools in Year 2. Classes in each school will consist of approximately 125 students each. The 9th grade students who start in Year 2 will be tracked through the five grant years. Additionally, new schools will be opened each year and new cohorts of students will be added to schools already in the network.

The use of an experimental design is considered by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) to be the “gold standard” for evaluating the effectiveness of educational interventions. Random assignment of students to treatment and control conditions provides the best possible assurance of the equivalence of the groups, inarguably stronger than even the most rigorous quasi-experimental design. Furthermore, the large number of student participants (approximately 75,000 students by the end of the five project years) adds to the strength of the case for the equivalence of the groups. Nevertheless, even a rigorous experimental design, such as the one being proposed, cannot completely eliminate all threats to validity. Indeed, challenges such as program attrition and imperfect measurement of variables could threaten validity. In order to address potential threats to validity, Metis draws on best practices in evaluation, as well as its extensive experience with rigorous experimental and quasi-experimental evaluations.

Threats to external validity will be addressed by including schools that are connected to multiple IHEs from around the country. It should be acknowledged, however, that schools that participate in the experimental study must be connected to local school districts that are large enough to have more than one high school and can garner at least double the number of interested students that would comprise the entering classes.

Threats to internal validity may be introduced through non-participation of the schools, non-participation of the students, attrition of the students from the schools, and/or movement of students between partner and non-partner schools. Metis has considered each of these threats to validity and plans are in place to address each of them. For example, in order to ensure that all schools participate in the study, the expectations and benefits of participating in the Only Connect Network (which includes participation in the study) will be carefully laid out in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which IHEs, school principals, and district superintendents will be asked to sign when they become part of the network. The MOU will also include assurances of the propriety of the proposed study, which will be assured by the local Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) for the IHEs and the LEAs, as well as Metis' own IRB. Additionally, to reduce the problem of student non-participation, Metis will assure that all data will be kept completely confidential—no student names will be identified, as is Metis's strict policy.

In order to address issues of student attrition, intended and actual treatment groups will be tracked, and the demographic characteristics of any students who did not receive the intended treatment will be compared with those of students who did. If there are no significant initial differences between these groups, it is reasonable to assume that the attrition will not meaningfully affect the study's validity. However, if these groups do differ significantly on

salient demographic variables, these variables will be added to the analyses² as an effort to create a statistical control for factors that have been rendered non-random and, therefore, non-equivalent by attrition.

Allowing students to transfer from non-network to network schools (and the reverse) will be discouraged. However, if such movement does occur, it will be noted in the files and analyses will take it into account.

Key to the evaluation design will be the development of a thorough database, which will enable evaluators to track students in both the treatment and control groups through their participation in the study. Only Metis evaluators—and only those evaluators within Metis who are responsible for conducting pertinent analyses for this project—will have access to this database, which will be protected using Metis’s strict data security procedures.

2. The extent to which, for either an experimental or quasi-experimental study, the study will be conducted of the practice, strategy, or program as implemented at scale.

As described above, the randomized control trial design will allow for a rigorous investigation of the impact of the model. Furthermore, the study will be carried out through all four implementation years and will include a total of 75,000 students by the end of Year 5. The evaluation is designed to scale up as the project scales up, and the final report will include data on the project at full scale. Students who participate in the study will come from schools in all parts of the country, including those that are newly opened, and those that were existing prior to their participation in the project. Data derived from this study will provide the strongest possible

² They will likely be added to the Level 1 predictors in hierarchical linear modeling analyses, if this analysis is deemed possible after examining the quality of the data.

evidence of the counterfactual—that is, it will answer the question of what would have happened to the students if they had not enrolled in an Only Connect Network school as well as is possible in a non-laboratory setting.

3. The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide high-quality implementation data and performance feedback, and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.

Listed below are questions that will be addressed through the evaluation, including questions that focus both on the implementation and outcomes for the project.

Implementation Questions

- What are the challenges/issues associated with developing an active network of early college high schools, including working with IHEs and LEAs? What supports are needed? What are the lessons learned?
- What differences (if any) exist between the school designs being implemented across the network schools? What are the core elements of implementation that are imperative to achieve the intended outcomes?
- To what extent do the staff of network schools perceive that the seminars and consulting services offered through the network are useful to them? To what extent are they applying what they learn to their implementation? What additional professional supports do they need?
- What differences (if any) exist between implementation in existing and newly opened schools? Are there differences in the supports that are needed for these schools?

To address these questions, data will be collected through the following sources: 1) quarterly *observations* of Advisory Board meetings; monthly meetings of the Only Connect Network staff; professional development sessions, including the annual National Conference and other seminars; and network schools in session; 2) *interviews and focus groups*, conducted in the spring of each project year, that collect program process information from project staff, IHE and LEA administrators, principals, teachers, and Advisory Board members; 3) *professional development feedback forms and end-of-year surveys* that tap school staffs' perceptions of the quality and usefulness of the conference and seminar offerings; and 4) *review of documents* including, but not limited to MOUs with participating IHEs and LEAs, professional development agendas and attendance rosters, school organization sheets and course offerings, curriculum units, and other project documentation.

All interviews and focus groups will be digitally recorded and transcribed. Protocols will be developed for observations so that evaluators can capture the key aspects of the activities being observed. Content analyses will be conducted on the data collected through the interviews, focus groups, and observations to evaluate fidelity, adherence to best practices, and challenges, as well as to provide a context for understanding outcome results.

Outcome Questions

- What differences exist between students in the treatment and control groups on the following outcomes: school day attendance, credit accumulation, grade promotion, drop out rates, high school graduation rates, college credits earned, levels of engagement, Associates degree attainment, college admission, and college enrollment?

- To what extent are variations in implementation associated with differences in outcomes on all key variables? What (if anything) do the results indicate about core elements of implementation necessary to achieve the desired outcomes?
- What differences (if any) are evident in the outcomes for newly developed and existing network schools?

To answer the above questions, individual level student achievement data will be collected through the LEAs, the individual schools, and from the National Student Clearinghouse dataset, as appropriate.

Descriptive analyses will be conducted on all quantitative data that are collected. Additionally, appropriate multivariate techniques³ will be used in impact students and cohort/dosage analysis. Depending on the quality and availability of the data, hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) will be employed for outcome analyses whenever possible because it not only adjusts for the clustering effect but also allows for the statistical controlling of multiple covariates (i.e., various school, teacher, and student characteristics) within the same analysis (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002).

In addition to the collection and analysis of achievement and administrative data on students, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) will be administered to all study participants in 11th grade and above. The NSSE is a self-report survey that asks students about how they use their time while in college and what they gain from the experience. The NSSE was piloted in 1999 and is being used by more colleges and universities around the country each year

³ Appropriate effect size indices will be calculated to measure the practical importance of an estimate/finding. Statistical significance adjustment procedures (e.g., Benjamini-Hochberg, Bonferroni) will be applied when multiple comparisons are involved.

(643 different colleges and universities used it in spring 2009). Kuh (2003) found that the NSSE has sound psychometric properties, including test-retest reliabilities that range from .57 to .85. Treatment students' responses to questions on the NSSE may be compared to those from students in the control group, as well as to a national sample.

4. The extent to which the evaluation will provide sufficient information about the key elements and approach of the project so as to facilitate replication or testing in other settings.

Metis understands that different stakeholder groups will be interested in the evaluation findings for this project. To this end, Metis proposes to support a multi-faceted communication and dissemination plan that will guide the evaluation, address challenges, and share information for the purpose of providing formative feedback and results as well as informing replication. Metis will provide timely and frequent reports on both the nature of the evaluation activities conducted and the results and findings of these activities in both oral and written reports. It is standard practice at Metis to author evaluation reports suitable for distribution to a broad audience of policy makers and practitioners. All technical terms will be defined within the context and focus of the evaluation and in consideration of the readers' technical and statistical sophistication. Reports will include documentation of the procedures and methodologies used; a presentation of quantifiable, descriptive, and analytic findings; illustrative graphics; and a prose explication of the data and interpretation of the findings. In all cases, recommendations will derive from and be associated with specific findings. In summary, reports will be characterized by conciseness, logical development, well-defined technical terms, tabular or graphic representations, and relevant examples.

In addition to supporting assessments of program fidelity, findings from the above formative evaluation activities will provide documentation of variations in program implementation and classroom, school and district contextual factors, including how these variations relate to program effectiveness. This documentation will help to illuminate programmatic elements and procedures that are key to successful replication, and to highlight those contextual factors and settings that have not been tested or for which the program has not been validated by the current study.

These details will be explicated through the proposed dissemination and reporting mechanisms in accordance with the requirements of Section E(5) of the RFP. To support replication, the network program logic model (see attachments) will be expanded to show relationships between program context and settings, resources, inputs, practices, and short and long term outcomes, and how each of these variables were measured and analyzed for the evaluation, including references to data collection instruments, administration guidelines, and description of statistical procedures.

5. *The extent to which the proposed project plan includes sufficient resources to carry out the project evaluation effectively.*

Metis Associates has developed a detailed work plan, timeline, and budget for the completion of the evaluation of the proposed project (see attachments for the detailed work plan). The total proposed cost for the evaluation is: \$4,010,965. The principal cost for performing this evaluation is labor. Staff costs are derived from the work plan which is constructed to accomplish the objectives and produce the deliverables spelled out in the evaluation design. Sufficient resources have been allotted for periodic meetings with the USDOE's technical assistance providers and to attend national meetings of i3 grantees. The

work plan for the evaluation identifies the Metis staff members who will provide the variety of skills and experiences necessary to complete the study in a timely and professional manner. The work schedules for each listed staff member have been reviewed to ensure their availability to perform their role on this evaluation.

6. *The extent to which the proposed evaluation is rigorous, independent, and neither the program developer nor the project implementer will evaluate the impact of the project.*

As described above, the evaluation for the Only Connect project will be conducted by Metis Associates. Metis will be contracted as a strictly independent evaluator and has no investment in the success of the program. Metis evaluators will coordinate with the program developer and implementer as resources for information about the model; however, in all matters pertaining to the planning and execution of the evaluation (selection of methodology, identification of statistical methods, development of instruments, interpretation of findings, etc.), the final decision on all disputed issues will rest with the Metis research team in order to insure objectivity of the evaluation.

Section E. Strategy and Capacity to Further Develop and Bring to Scale

As described in Section A, Bard will bring its BHSEC model to scale by creating Only Connect: The High School Early College Network based at Bard College at Simon's Rock, which will begin the process of creating new early college high schools beginning in the four states in which it currently has a presence: Massachusetts, New York, California and Louisiana working with state education departments, school districts, LEA's and charter schools with the goal of creating 150 new early college high schools based on the BHSEC model.

We are planning that each school will serve 500 or more students. Schools will share common features as described in Section A. Year One will be the planning year with all activities occurring at Bard College at Simon's Rock. Year Two will see the introduction of three more regional centers in New York, California and Louisiana with the creation of five schools in each state, totaling 20 schools underway by the end of Year Two. These centers will take on greater responsibility in Years Three through Five, spearheading the formation of more schools, so that each regional center, by Year Five, is accountable for 30-40 Only Connect network early college high schools. The number of students to be served by Year Five will be 75,000 to 100,000 students.

In addition, Only Connect will hold an annual early college conference, seminars, and workshops at Bard College at Simon's Rock, disseminate information through print and online means and use the two BHSEC schools as laboratory schools, hosting visitors there and at Simon's Rock.

Over the years, Bard has established itself as a national leader in early college education and can capitalize on this reputation and the cumulative experience and expertise of its personnel to successfully bring this initiative to scale. The entire Bard College senior administrative team,

including President Leon Botstein, will contribute their extensive knowledge and experience in the oversight and management of complex projects involving numerous partners at both the international and national levels. Bard, Simon's Rock and BHSEC administrators, faculty and staff also bring a wealth of experience in starting up and sustaining new early college programs. Faculty from Bard's nationally-recognized Master's of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program, who currently work with educators from all over the world, including New York, California, Palestine, and Russia, will provide assistance in the development of comprehensive training programs. Bard has cultivated strong and sustained support from state and local public officials for its various projects, including the NYC BHSEC schools, and will build on this political capital to support the success of this network.

Our goal is to promote the adoption of the early college model as a key component of a national strategy to reform public education in America. Starting in the four states where we have an established and well-respected presence will make outreach to state education departments, local school districts and charter schools not only easier but also allow the project to begin that much more quickly than if new alliances and partnerships needed to be forged. Bard is an established presence in each of the four states and already has extensive academic, philanthropic and political networks upon which it can build.

We estimate that the per-school startup costs will be approximately \$200,000 for the planning year and \$400,000 annually once the school is fully operational.

Recognizing the importance of sharing lessons learned through the initiative, the annual conference, seminars, workshops and regional consulting will be offered free of charge to participants in the network for the five years of the grants. We anticipate those costs to be \$450,000. Additionally, a web site and print materials will be available to partners as well as the

public and serve to disseminate the findings of the network's efforts. We anticipate those costs to be \$150,000

Cost per student is \$630 so totals per numbers of students is as follows: \$157,500,000 for 250,000 students,, \$310,500,000 for 500,000 students and \$630,000,000 for 1,000,000 students.

Section F: Sustainability

For over 150 years, Bard has established itself as a national leader in early college education and can capitalize on this reputation and the cumulative experience and expertise of its personnel to successfully sustain this initiative. Bard's continuing willingness to make changes and take risks, as reflected in its creation of an innovative structure and reexamination of its curriculum, makes it a vital force for excellence and coherence in undergraduate education. In the early years of a new century, Bard seeks to strengthen its capacity to play a significant role in the revival of the humanities and arts in the United States and in the reform of American education.

Since the network will be working with state educational agencies and LEA's on the creation of new schools or the turn-around of pre-existing schools, the schools within the network would be sustainable for the great part by public funding, with support from the network for the college credit and support services. BHSEC has a strong track record of supporting its two schools in New York City and will actively advise and train new schools in the funding of services beyond public school monies. The network will also capitalize on the wide range of stakeholders at all levels with a vested interest in supporting these programs—including students, parents, elected officials, state and local educational agencies, business leaders, and private foundations—in order to ensure the sustainability of the initiative.

Our goal is to promote the adoption of the early college model as a key component of a national strategy to reform public education in America.

Bard has developed a new vision of the liberal arts college as a central body surrounded by significant institutes and programs that strengthen its curriculum. Bard College currently operates successfully three stand-alone high schools, an extensive network of early college courses in New Orleans and through the Bard Prison Initiative and a large number of national and international outreach efforts. Bard College much resembles “the little engine that could” in that as a small liberal arts college located in New York’s Hudson Valley it has a large national and international presence, transforming the educational landscape both before and after the undergraduate college years. Bard College has a depth of experience in managing, sustaining and expanding these varied initiatives and has demonstrated the capacity to sustain this project as well.

Collectively, the network will contribute an extensive network of contacts with foundations and corporations, which will be utilized to garner major private support and help meet the required private sector match of at least 20% of the total grant award following the peer review of I3 applications. In addition to private sector support, the network will develop a constituency of individual donors at the national and local levels to support services and individual schools. Each college partner will be encouraged to develop “Friends” and “Alumni” who will contribute to its early college high school, similar to those already in place at those post-secondary institutions. Campaigns for individual donors will include annual and endowment campaigns, which can be expected to grow over time as the number of graduates of each school grows.

It is the support of stakeholders like these, and their commitment to educational excellence and equity, that will enable us to sustain this initiative at the conclusion of the I3 funding cycle.

Section G. Quality of the Management Plan

Project Management. The day-to-day management of Only Connect: The High School Early College Network will be the responsibility of a part-time Project Director, who will report directly to an Advisory Board and the President of Bard College. Mary Marcy, Ph.D, the Provost of Bard College at Simon's Rock will serve as the Project Director. Dr. Marcy will have overall programmatic and administrative responsibility for implementation of the project and will carry out the following tasks: assist with the recruitment of partners; work closely with project staff to ensure the timely and effective implementation of all project components; convene annual retreats for all partners to share best practices and participate in training activities; represent the project at all i3 grantee meetings and actively participate in other dissemination activities to share lessons learned from the project; and monitor all project expenditures to ensure compliance with all fiscal requirements and regulations.

The network will have its own Advisory Board to inform, guide and oversee the design and implementation of the project. The Advisory Board will be comprised of the Board of Trustees of Bard College at Simon's Rock, the principal or school district official from each partnering LEA, the Project Director, and representatives from external stakeholders (e.g., educators, public officials, foundations and corporations committed to excellence in education and the development of high school early colleges). The Advisory Board will be established within the first quarter of the project and will be convened on a quarterly basis throughout the five-year project period.

Bard College at Simon's Rock has a board of overseers who will, during the planning year, serve as the advisory board until a permanent one can be established.

Project Staffing. Project Director: The Project Director will serve part-time as the executive director of the network, reporting directly to the Board of Advisors and the President of Bard College. She will have overall programmatic and administrative responsibility for implementation of the project and will carry out the following tasks: assist with the recruitment of partner colleges; work closely with project staff to ensure the timely and effective implementation of all project components; convene biannual retreats for all early college partners to share best practices and participate in training activities; represent the project at all i3 grantee meetings and actively participate in other dissemination activities to share lessons learned from the project; monitor all project expenditures to ensure compliance with all fiscal requirements and regulations; and manage relations with partner colleges and universities and the Board of Advisors.

The Assistant Project Director will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the network and be responsible for human resources, accounting, policy, technical assistance and other operational and financial matters.

Administrative Assistant: The Administrative Assistants will work with the regional directors, handling correspondence, calendars, meetings and general office matters.

Webmaster: The Webmaster is a full time professional who will lead the web design process and then manage extensive on line presence that will enable real time discussion groups, sharing of data, multi-media hosting and playing, and the managing and posting of content.

Vice President-Administration and Development : The Vice President, Administration and Development is responsible for the oversight of the regional directors, leading the policy

initiatives and developing additional financial support from the private and public sectors, including foundations, corporations and government grants, work to ensure that there is continuing and sustaining funding for the new high school early college schools as well as the network.

Vice President Curriculum and Research—The Vice-President, Curriculum and research will oversee the research analyst and the four curriculum developers and will be charged with ensuring that all network schools are aligned with the mission and the goals of the network as well as maintaining the core elements of network schools. He/she will also oversee faculty training, professional development and the annual conference and seminars.

Curriculum Specialists—Each regional site will have a curriculum specialist who will work closely with partners and faculty to make sure that all schools maintain the quality of instruction needed for students to earn college credits and to make sure that each school offers learning supports and college advising so that students are fully-capable of college level work.

Financial Analyst: The Financial Analyst is a full time professional who will manage all financial and administrative aspects of the Network, including budgeting, bill-payment, and human resources management.

Four Regional Directors: Four regional directors will be hired for this project. The Regional Directors will work on site with partners to facilitate the opening of network schools. They will be responsible for working with the Project Director to recruit college partners and then to assist partner colleges in negotiating Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with LEAs; to support partners in obtaining long-term sustainable funding for early college tuition credits; and to work with partners to obtain accreditation for the AA degree. This regional director will

assist generally with the administrative side of organizing new high school early college partnerships and provide curriculum planning and professional development support.

Research Analyst: The Research Analyst will be hired to serve as the liaison to the project evaluator, helping each of the new high school early colleges and their partners to establish data collection protocols and oversee the collection of data and preparation of all performance and evaluation reports. The Research Analyst will work with the Regional Directors and all school leaders and partners to use the results of research to improve student outcomes and further develop the high school early college programs.

The Project Director will be supported by four full-time Regional Directors who will provide on-site training, support, and technical assistance to facilitate the opening of the partnership schools. Together, these five staff positions will comprise the Management Team.