Investing in Innovation Fund Grant Proposal: CDFA 84.411A – Scale-up 2013

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<u>**Response to Priorities**</u>

Absolute Priority 1: Improving the Effectiveness of Teachers or Principals

North Carolina New Schools' proposed project, *Early College Strategies for All*, will

continue to expand and scale-up its proven strategies for successful implementation of the Early

College Model. *Early College Strategies for All* will focus on continued scalability with rural

school districts of North Carolina and work with out-of-state partners in at least four other states

to customize and implement the model for rural schools in their specific state's policy settings.

Implementation of North Carolina New Schools' (hereinafter referred to as NCNS) Design

Principles as part of *Early College Strategies for All* encompasses a whole school reform effort

in which all students are expected to participate in college-level courses. The whole school

reform effort requires schools to align their academic program with state standards as well as

with the standards adopted by a postsecondary partner for entrance into and success in college

courses. NCNS' whole school reform effort includes a comprehensive talent development

approach, which leads to highly capable teachers, principals and administrators as a way to

support students. *Early College Strategies for All* meets **Absolute Priority 1** as it supports schools through a unique talent development strategy for teachers, principals and district leaders in order to enable significant transformations for students. NCNS' focus on higher standards for students for college and career readiness is achieved through an engaging instructional methodology outlined below in the Project Description, which articulates the NCNS Design Principles and aligned instructional strategies. Teacher and principal effectiveness is improved both in the short and long term through building NCNS partners' capacity to engage in new methods of teaching and learning.

<p align="center">**Absolute Priority 5: Serving Rural Communities**</p>

The proposed project, *Early College Strategies for All,* also meets **Absolute Priority 5** as it will serve five Rural Low Income Schools (RLIS) program-eligible LEAs in North Carolina (hereinafter referred to as NC), up to six RLIS program-eligible LEAs working with its out-of-state partners focusing on capacity-building and implementation work in Illinois and Mississippi, and RLIS program-eligible LEAs through capacity-building work in South Carolina and a fourth state to be identified through an RFP process during the planning period. The proposed scale-up project addresses the unique challenges of students in rural areas by radically changing expectations for college readiness, teaching and learning, personalization, professionalism, leadership and school design with a program that is sustainable, affordable and scalable for rural LEAs.

<p align="center">**Competitive Preference Point 2: Enabling Broad Adoption of Effective Practices**</p>

The proposed project, *Early College Strategies for All,* meets the criteria for **Competitive Preference Point 2** to enable broad adoption across the United States of the effective Early College Model practices, which have been implemented and successfully tested in NC.

A. NCNS has formalized its Early College Model and identified and defined the key

elements of the model in its Design Principles outlined in greater detail in the Project

Description. NCNS has also developed and will continue to expand upon the

professional learning tools, resources and strategies for others to consider using when

adopting the model. Implementation of the proposed project will enable NCNS and its

out-of-state-partners to refine early college practices and support tools so that the

positive impact experienced by NC students taking part in the Early College Model can

be replicated in other states.

B. NCNS has worked with the SERVE Center at the University of NC Greensboro since

2003 to evaluate the effectiveness of the Early College Model and to make minor yet

meaningful model design changes and enhancements to specific strategies based on

those results. The SERVE Center will continue to serve as the independent evaluator for

Early College Strategies for All.

C. NCNS has developed a plan for the identification and support of seven Model Schools in

NC that will be used as part of the capacity building training provided to both in and

out-of-state partners interested in considering implementation of the Early College

Model.

D. NCNS is committed to continuing to assess the success of the scalability and

adaptability of the Early College Model as outlined in the Evaluation Design section

below. NCNS is also committed to continuing to utilize and enhance its professional

learning materials and toolkits to support the ongoing sustainability of the Early College

Model for its partners after the grant period.

Introduction

North Carolina New Schools (NCNS), a 501(c)(3) non-profit professional services agency, chartered in 2003 in NC, is applying for this i3 Scale-up grant to support implementation of *Early College Strategies for All.* This project will scale up its proven Early College Model in schools and districts across NC as well as in four other geographically diverse states. NCNS' rural Local Education Agency (LEA) partners in NC include: Duplin County Schools, Harnett County Schools, Hertford County Schools, Rutherford County Schools, and Surry County Schools. NCNS' out-of-state partners include: the NW Education Council for Student Success from the State of Illinois, Mississippi Department of Education from the State of Mississippi and New Carolina -- South Carolina's Council on Competitiveness from the State of South Carolina. A fourth out-of-state partner will be selected through an RFP process during the planning period. The scale up logic model (Figure 3 on page 24) shows the key activities and roles of each partner in the scale up project. The NCNS' partnership and application are also supported by the organization's continuing partnerships with the North Carolina Community College System, University of North Carolina and the North Carolina State Board of Education. NCNS, with its partners, is pleased to apply for an i3 scale-up grant to expand its work in North Carolina and also work with other states to implement the Early College Model in their unique policy settings based on NCNS' successfully evaluated implementation in NC.

In a time when high-quality, college-level learning is a necessity for many jobs and when far too many students are not completing high school, there is an urgent need to rethink and redesign educational systems. In partnership with school districts, education organizations, higher education, private industry and government, NCNS has been responding to this need through Early College Model strategies since 2004. This innovative educational model is designed to

increase the number of students who graduate from high school and who are prepared for and enroll in college at no cost to them or their families. Through *Early College Strategies for All*, NCNS intends to scale up use of these powerful strategies within NC and throughout the nation through the establishment of Model School sites and the creation of conditions for scaling and adapting the Early College Model in other states. Additionally, building on NCNS' proven approach to implementing successful early colleges, and years of experience in developing and implementing this model and related strategies and practices, this program will increase the capacity of education organizations in other states to build and potentially implement the Early College Model in their region and state.

A. Significance

Addressing a National Need

Across the U.S., specific groups of students (grades 9-12) consistently demonstrate gaps in achievement and high school dropout rates. These include minority students, low-income students, students whose parents did not attend college, and students from rural communities. Furthermore, students who do graduate often do so without the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in postsecondary education and/or careers, especially those students who are traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education. (American Diploma Project, 2004; Bailey & Dynarski, 2011). As indicated in The Nation's Report Card, released in December 2013, and reported in the U.S. Department of Education's National Assessment of Educational Progress by the National Center for Educational Statistics, achievement gaps across the nation are substantial:

The black-white achievement gap in math and reading scores was 30 points (12th grade).

The white-Hispanic gap was 21 points in math and 22 points in reading (12th grade)

Minority students dropped out of school at disproportionately higher rates than their white counterparts -- 5.5 percent of black students and 5 percent of Hispanics dropped out of grades 9-12, compared with 2.3 percent for white students.

The dropout rate for low-income students was five times greater than their higher-income counterparts -- 7.4 percent compared with 1.4 percent.

Research indicates that rural drop-outs are less likely to return to school or to pursue a General Educational Development (GED) certificate than their urban or suburban counterparts (SEDL, 2014). Furthermore, students whose parents did not attend college are also under represented: only 54 percent of students attend college if their parents completed high school but not college. The percent is even lower for students whose parents had less than a high school diploma (36 percent). This compares with 82 percent of students who attend if their parents have a bachelor's degree (Indicator 26, The Condition of Education 2001).

A national survey, conducted for Achieve, Inc[1]., of 2,200 Americans, including nearly 1,500 high school graduates, 400 employers and 300 college instructors indicated that 40 percent of American public high school graduates are unprepared for college and work (Hart, 2005). In almost every state, K-12 and postsecondary education systems operate as separate entities. They are governed, financed and operated independently. As a result, young people face needless obstacles in moving from one system to the next. They face different expectations, different standards and different assessments to complete high school and then to enter college. Many students, particularly those with little access to help in navigating their way, are not successful in making this transition, even when they do manage to graduate from high school (American Diploma Project, 2004).

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[1] Achieve, Inc. is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit education reform organization (www.achieve.org)

NCNS' *Early College Strategies for All* addresses these needs and provides students with early access to college credit at no cost to the student's family and in a model with supports in place for the student.

Expected Impact Compared With Alternative Practices

NCNS, was founded in 2003 and funded through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in 2004 to develop early colleges in NC (small stand-alone high schools, often located on a college campus). NCNS has long understood that the traditional school model – based on a one-size-fits-all factory approach to education – no longer applies in the 21st century economy.

In addition to the work in developing stand-alone early colleges, NCNS has introduced an integrated model that blends the strategies of early college into the traditional high school, the Early College Model. Through the work of NCNS, teachers and principals in NC have changed how they teach and lead; schools have been restructured to meet the needs of students; and school leaders have increased capacity to lead.

In 2011, NCNS received an i3 Validation grant to serve 18 rural schools as designated in the U.S. Department of Education Rural Low Income Schools Program. This allowed the expansion of the Early College Model into the traditional school setting, reducing cost and expanding the impact to more students. The i3 Validation project was designed to increase the number of students who graduate from high school and are prepared for enrollment and success in postsecondary education. The i3 Validation project blended high school and college by applying strategies from the successful Early College Model to18 traditional high schools located in rural, low-wealth districts. All of the targeted schools were RLIS low-income with Free and Reduced Lunch Eligibility ranging from 42.6 percent to 76.2 percent. The same research-based[2] NCNS

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[2] Edmunds, J. A., Bernstein, L., Unlu, F., Glennie, E., & Smith, A., 2013

Design Principles included in the original small school design and in the Validation grant rural

community early college design will be incorporated into the project (*Early College Strategies*

for All) as outlined in this proposal and detailed in the Quality of the Project Design section

below.

The i3 Validation grant is currently part of a longitudinal study (please see Appendix D for

details of the study). While the study is ongoing, so far it has found positive impacts on students'

enrollment and success in a college preparatory course of study as well as on their attendance,

suspensions, and postsecondary enrollment.

In addition to the early findings of the i3Validation grant, the cumulative work of NCNS

related to early colleges provides a strong contrast to the achievement gaps other states are

demonstrating: 74 percent of early colleges in NC with graduating cohorts in 2013 (62 schools)

achieved graduation rates of at least 95 percent; 25 of these schools had graduation rates of 100

percent. These students not only graduated from high school, but many of them also graduated

with two years of transferable college credit. Specifically, from 2008-2013, nearly 7,000

demographically diverse students in the cohort group graduated from early college in NC, with

more than half earning associate degrees in addition to their high school diplomas (NC

Department of Public Instruction-based data and data gathered from individual early college high

schools). Additionally, recent graduation data shows that regardless of ethnicity or income level,

all student populations in NCNS' partner early colleges experience a significant difference in

graduation rates.

The *Early College Strategies for All* project as outlined in this proposal incorporates the

Design Principles that have been developed and implemented successfully for 7,000 students in

NC within 77 early colleges by NCNS resulting in the outcomes highlighted above. The targeted

students include minority, first-generation college-going, and low-income populations.

Consistent with the priority preference of the i3 fund, the targeted schools are also rural.

Early college strategies have been studied in two large-scale experimental studies. One on-going experimental study is being conducted in NC and is using a lottery-based student selection. This study meets the Standards of What Works Clearinghouse (waiting for review). Results from this study (cited below) show a positive impact on student outcomes of over 5 percentage points on graduating with a regular diploma from high school for underrepresented students and "puts the early college in the company of a very small number of effective interventions" (Edmunds, J. A., Bernstein, L., Unlu, F., Glennie, E., & Smith, A., 2013). The other study, which has been determined to meet the standards of the What Works Clearinghouse, was a retrospective experimental study (American Institutes of Research, & SRI International, 2013) and included the following key findings for 10 Early Colleges that enrolled students in grades 9-12 and had high school graduates between 2005-2011: 1) early college students were significantly more likely to enroll in college than comparison students. 81% of early college students enrolled in college, compared with 72% of comparison students; and 2) early college students were significantly more likely to earn a college degree than comparison students. 25% of early college students earned a college degree, as compared with only 5% of comparison students.

Early College Strategies for All will reach 13,300 students over five years through the training and coaching provided to 862 teachers, principals and district leaders. This will include the following activities: (1) scaling up and expanding the depth within NC to include expanding one District Reach Model and supporting six new early college school settings; (2) developing seven Model Schools within NC that can be used as national study schools for other states and schools to visit and study best practices; (3) working with two states to open six early colleges

based on the NCNS Early College Model; and, (4) providing state- and regional-level capacity

building to two additional states to set the foundation for opening early colleges in the future.

Capacity building will include: policy development guidance to facilitate changes in state policy

to allow expanded dual enrollment; state and regional leadership development related to early

college and the NCNS Design Principles designed to improve the effectiveness of teachers and

principals; guidance and mentoring related to business and private partnership development; and

study visits to the seven NCNS' Model Schools.

The NCNS' Early College Model has been successful due to a combination of factors. In

addition to the Design Principles and other elements of the NCNS model (discussed in more

detail in the Project Design section below), key elements have included: strong partnerships with

the NC Department of Public Instruction, the NC Community College System, the University of

NC, private colleges and universities, LEAs, and a focus on strategies for having a voice in state

policy. Furthermore, colleges and universities in NC have integrated their services and systems

allowing students to make a smooth transition from high school to college and/or career. Strong

business and private partnerships have resulted in securing $2 million over the past five years in

private partnerships and have engaged 15 partners in the i3 Validation project.

As an early pioneer in early college implementation, NCNS has learned what does and does

not work. NC has become a national leader; early college strategies have been implemented

throughout NC with 77 stand-alone early colleges and 18 comprehensive high schools

implementing early college strategies, serving a combined enrollment of more than 15,000

students in 71 counties and districts across the state. NCNS has been able to measure and

demonstrate significant effectiveness and the impact of strategies related to implementing the

Early College Model. Statistically significant changes have also been demonstrated through the

Early College Model for these traditionally at-risk students.

   Early College Strategies for All will target rural, high poverty schools with a high

percentage of underrepresented and minority students. Students within the schools that classify

as first-generation college students will also be targeted. The districts committed to this project

(See Table 3 in Management Plan section for list) have Free and Reduced Lunch eligibility

ranging from 47.45% to 100%. All are classified as rural based on the U.S. Department of

Education Rural Low Income Schools Program and have a high proportion of minority students

ranging from 19% to 85%. The highest minority population is black (38% of minority group).

The additional NC LEA and the schools selected by the out-of-state partners (to be determined in

quarter one of year one of the project) will follow the same selection criteria. Approximately

13,300 students will be impacted through the project.

Anticipated Project Impact

   Highly skilled graduates are required to foster our nation's prosperity. This requires

intervening in the generational cycle of low educational attainment, high poverty, and low

expectations for students who have not before considered college as an option. Engaging this

student population results in interrupting the cycle of poverty and increasing future wage

potential for these students. As a result of the *Early College Strategies for All* project, LEAs and

individual schools across the nation will have access to the tools, strategies and information to

allow integration of early college strategies into their traditional school setting resulting in

increased graduation rates and college credit for traditionally underrepresented students.

   During the five-year period of this project, approximately 13,300 students will be impacted;

862 teachers, principals and district administrators will be impacted; graduation rates will

increase; enrollment in college will increase; acquisition of college credit will increase; and four

additional states will enact legislation and/or policy changes to expand access to college courses

for high school students in schools. (Outcomes are included in the Project Design section below).

Review of the statistics (as described above) clearly demonstrate the need for a new way to

educate students. Even when they manage to complete high school, many students fall "between

the cracks" when making the transition between high school and college or career which

especially impacts students who are traditionally underrepresented. This is true not just in NC,

but as research (noted above) and student outcome data related to drop-out rates (also noted

above) indicate, this results in a national gap in services to students. NC leads the nation in the

development of early colleges and NCNS has been the foundation for its development and

growth in the state. NCNS provides leadership development to guide schools through the

integration of the Early College strategies (through the Design Principles), which has resulted in

increasing the schools' capacity to deliver research-based instructional practices that engage and

motivate students for higher levels of learning. This leadership development work has also led

the schools to focus on data-based decision making. Furthermore, NCNS has focused on

nurturing state-level connections that have fostered strong partnerships and collaborations. This

cumulative approach has resulted in increased success in postsecondary education and increased

graduation rates for traditionally underrepresented students. The specific research-based Design

Principles that have been the keystone for the student outcomes that are highlighted above are

incorporated in the *Early College Strategies for All* project (described in the Quality of Project

Design section). NCNS was founded through an effort that began with the Governor of NC, who

was integral in securing funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in 2004. Thus,

NCNS has always had a voice in state policy related to early colleges and will work to integrate

this important element into other states as they focus on scaling up the Early College Model. Furthermore, the NC Department of Public Instruction has five staff on permanent assignment to NCNS. The *Early College Strategies for All* project will also identify and further develop seven model schools within NC, which can continue to be models to be used as study sites for other schools across the nation long after the i3 Scale-up grant period ends.

NCNS has an annual operating budget of $14.7 million, and 57 full-time highly qualified staff. NCNS was founded in order to develop early colleges in NC and continues to focus on early college development, working with schools to integrate the Design Principles and other supporting elements (discussed in more detail in the Project Design section) that have resulted in higher graduation rates and college credit for underrepresented students.

The NCNS' work was included in two studies[3] including one longitudinal study conducted by SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina Greensboro. The study was supported by the Institute of Educational Sciences. This study indicates:

This rigorous experimental study of the Early College High School Model in NC shows that the model is providing students with a more rigorous and personalized schooling environment that is having a positive impact on graduation rates, particularly for students who historically have struggled to graduate from high school. Having a positive impact on high school graduation rates is relatively rare. Out of 13 interventions with evaluation studies that met the evidence standards of the What Works Clearinghouse, only five had positive impacts on completing school. Out of those five, three had positive impacts only on obtaining a GED but they had negative impacts on obtaining a high school diploma. One of the remaining interventions

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[3] (1) Edmunds, J. A., Bernstein, L., Unlu, F., Glennie, E., & Smith, A. (2013); (2) American Institutes of Research, & SRI International. (2013).

served students who had dropped out of school. Only one intervention had a similar

population to the one served by the early colleges and it has a positive impact on both

attaining a GED and graduating from high school. **Having a positive impact of over**

5 percentage points [referencing the NCNS Early College High School Model]

on graduating with a regular diploma from high school puts the early college in

the company of a very small number of effective interventions.

 The expected outcomes are listed below in the Project Design section.

B. Quality of the Project Design

Building Applicant Capacity to Scale Up

Ten years ago, early college high schools were created in NC to increase graduation rates

and ensure students are ready for college and careers. Today, NC leads the nation with

unprecedented graduation rates averaging 95 percent, with 52 percent of graduates in 2013

earning a high school diploma plus an associate degree or two years of transferable college credit

at no cost to them or their families. NCNS' core work of talent development as a means to

student achievement is founded in the belief that vertically aligned schools and districts--those

where teachers, principals, district leaders, boards of education and local higher education

partners share common expectations and understanding of excellent instruction--are a non-

negotiable for deep and lasting educational improvement in a community. Research demonstrates

that this model is increasing high school graduation rates and college access and enrollment for

students, particularly for students who are traditionally underrepresented in college settings.[4]

Elements of NC New Schools' Success

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[4] WWC Review of the Report "Early College, Early Success: Early College High School Initiative Impact Study."
What Works Clearinghouse, Institute of Education Sciences, March 2014.

NCNS upholds that the success of the model is the result of unwavering commitment to integrating the four key elements listed below in all its work.

1 - Design Principles - All NCNS' partner schools and districts are expected to implement a specific set of Design Principles, outlined in Figure 1 to the right, that accelerate systemic, sustainable innovation in schools. The Design Principles that NCNS uses as the guide in

Figure 1

**North Carolina New Schools'
Design Principles**
- Ready for College
- Powerful Teaching and Learning
- Personalization
- Redefined Professionalism
- Leadership
- Purposeful Design

all its work and in the design of the proposed *Early College Strategies for All* project are based on the idea that each child in every school is entitled to achieving high academic and affective outcomes. To that end, the following six Design Principles are considered non-negotiable for all partner LEAs and schools involved in leading school transformation:

• **Design Principle #1: Ready for College:** Partner schools are characterized by the pervasive, transparent, and consistent understanding that the school exists for the purpose of preparing all students for college and work. They maintain a common set of high standards for every student to overcome the harmful consequences of tracking and sorting.

• **Design Principle #2: Powerful Teaching and Learning:** Partner schools are characterized by the presence of commonly held standards for high quality instructional practice. Teachers in these schools focus on an aligned instructional system design with rigorous instruction that ensures the development of critical thinking, application and problem solving skills often neglected in traditional settings.

• **Design Principle #3: Personalization:** Staff in partner schools understand that knowing students well is an essential condition of helping them achieve academically. These schools ensure adults leverage knowledge of students to improve student learning.

• **Design Principle #4: Redefined Professionalism:** Evident in partner schools are the collaborative work orientation of staff, the shared responsibility for decision making, and the commitment to growing the capacity of staff and schools throughout the network.

• **Design Principle #5: Leadership:** Staff in partner schools work to develop a shared mission for their school and work actively as agents of change, sharing leadership for improved student outcomes in a culture of high expectations for all students.

• **Design Principle #6: Purposeful Design:** Partner schools are designed to create the conditions that ensure the other five Design Principles: ready for college, powerful teaching and learning, personalization, leadership and redefined professionalism. The allocation of time, space and resources ensures that these best practices become common practice.

2 - Vision - The Early College Model and the design of the aligned instructional systems is based on the belief that every student should **"read, write, think and talk in every class, every day"** and should be given the opportunity to graduate high school, succeed in college, launch careers and strengthen their community.

3 - Leadership Development - The development of leadership and capacity in school and district leaders is critical to the success of the model in each community.

4 - Partnerships - In order to accomplish this important work for the benefit of students, NCNS supports and enables the creation of public-private partnerships between school districts, higher education institutions, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, the North Carolina Board of Education, the North Carolina Chamber of Commerce, the North Carolina Office of the Governor, corporations, foundations and non-profit organizations. Furthermore, as a result of the higher education partnerships that NCNS builds and sustains, students have the opportunity to take college coursework while in high school.

There are three settings for the implementation of NCNS' Early College Model:

1 - Early College High Schools

Early college high schools (self-contained schools, often on college campuses) create learning environments that focus on college readiness for all students. Early colleges focus specifically on serving students who are typically underrepresented in the college-going population and are at-risk of dropping out, including minorities, first-generation college-going students, students from low-income families, and under-performing students. As originally implemented in NC, Early colleges are small autonomous schools managed by the LEA in partnership with a higher education partner. Many are located on either a community college or a university campus. In most settings, students begin taking college courses in their freshman year, and in all settings the expectation is that students will graduate from high school with an associate degree or up to two years of transferable college credit - all at no cost to their families. Each early college is expected to implement the NCNS Design Principles (described above).

2 - Comprehensive High Schools

Comprehensive high schools (with integrated early college strategies) are designed to increase the number of students who graduate from high school ready for enrollment and success in college. Through the use of the Design Principles and other early college strategies, NCNS provides comprehensive high schools with a set of services that guide the transformation of entire schools and that create educational environments where students thrive and set their sights on college and careers. In these innovative high school environments, students are given the opportunity to earn up to 21 units of college credit. Given that the majority of students attending NCNS' partner schools are from low-income families, among the first generation in their families to attend college, at risk for dropping out, or underrepresented on college campuses, the

impact is substantial and life changing for these students and their communities.

3 - District Reach

District reach is a new scale-up strategy for implementation of the Early College Model. An LEA may choose to implement the Early College Model in all or part of their middle and high schools. The program facilitates the use of onsite or online courses for students, teachers and leaders for continuous improvement and professional learning. Scaling the NCNS six Design Principles throughout a district ensures the creation of strategies, systems and methods for achieving excellent performance, stimulating innovation, building knowledge and capabilities, and ensuring organizational sustainability.

Implementing Scale-up Strategies: Early College Strategies for All

Building on years of experience with the Early College Model and the success of the i3 validation grant, NCNS aims to reach even more educators and students by expanding the network of rural and high-poverty schools and districts using early college strategies. The support of an i3 scale-up grant will enable NCNS to showcase the model schools that have successfully implemented its Early College Model in rural districts in NC to other states throughout the United States interested in tailoring the successful model to their regions and states. NCNS is uniquely positioned to scale its proven approach both in and out of NC and initiate the capacity building its peer organizations in other states require to successfully implement the model for their students.

To scale up the strategies of the Early College Model in additional rural counties in NC and into other states across the United States, NCNS has reached out to a number of other like-minded organizations and education agencies throughout the country. Scaling the Early College Model through *Early College Strategies for All,* NCNS' model and Design Principles will reach

13,300 students over five years through professional learning provided to 862 teachers, principals and district administrators. This will occur through: (1) scaling up and expanding the depth within NC to include one District Reach Model and supporting six new Early College school settings; (2) developing seven Model Schools from current NC early college partners that can be used as national study schools for other states and schools to visit and study best practices; (3) working with two states to open six Early Colleges based on the NCNS' Early College Model; and, (4) providing state- and regional-level capacity building to two additional states to set the foundation for opening early colleges in the future. Capacity-building activities will include: a) state and regional leadership development related to the Early College Model and the NCNS Design Principles; b) policy development guidance to facilitate needed change in state policy to allow dual enrollment and flexibility in high schools for blended secondary and postsecondary instruction; c) guidance and professional development related to the aligned instructional systems and business and private partnership development; and d) study visits from and to NCNS.

The key services, as part of the Integrated Systems of Support that are provided during the Early College Model intervention as outlined below in Figure 2 - Intervention Logic Model, include:

Instructional Coaching: Instructional coaches support teachers to adopt and implement an aligned instructional system that helps students read, write, think and talk in every class every day. The coaches work onsite at the school with teachers and principals.

Leadership Coaching: NCNS' leadership coaches support principals onsite with focused development sessions plus virtual coaching sessions designed to support each principal's individual development plan using leadership assessment results.

Professional Development - Coach University: Coach University is a 12-month program of professional development for instructional coaches which is designed to drive sustainability, build capacity and support a coaching framework within schools and districts. Coach University features Integrated Systems of Support including on-site support, group professional learning, foundational training, study visits to model schools and a conference highlighting instructional best practices.

Staff Support - Summer Institute: Summer Institute includes facilitated team time for reflection and action planning, concurrent professional learning sessions connected to the Design Principles, opportunities to hear keynote speakers and leaders in education, and networking among principals, teachers, counselors, college liaisons, higher education partners and district office leaders.

Staff Support - New Teacher Institute: The New Teacher Institute provides principals and teachers new to the NCNS network the opportunity to develop an understanding of the aligned instructional system, a set of strategies that help students read, write, think and talk in every class, every day.

The logic model below (Figure 2) depicts the intervention activities for those that are

implementing early colleges.

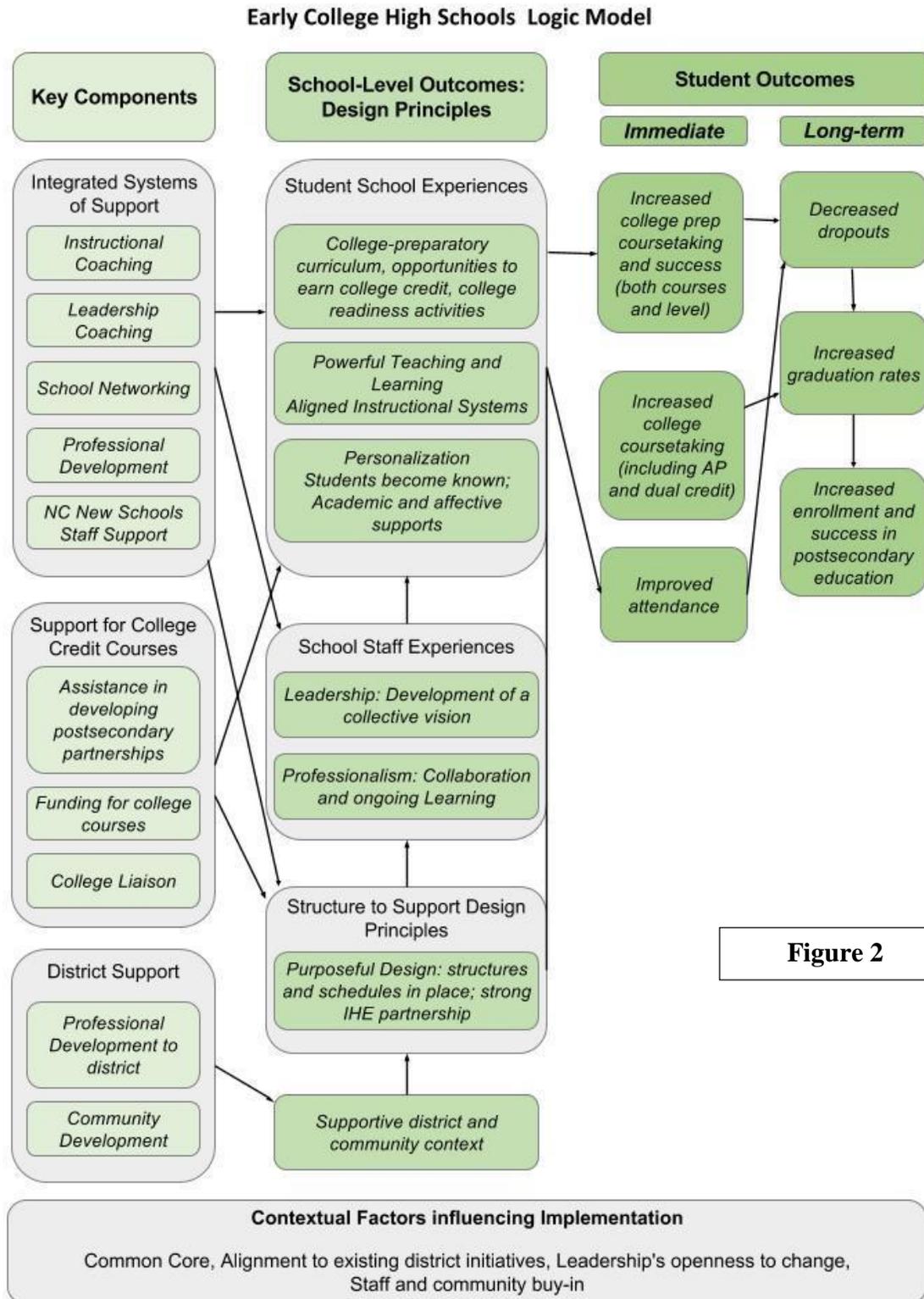Early College High Schools Logic Model

Figure 2

As shown in the intervention logic model above, through the Integrated Systems of Support and LEA level support and professional development, a number of short and long term outcomes will be achieved for students. Specifically, NCNS has identified the following key measurable outcomes that will result from the work of the *Early College Strategies for All* project:

Approximately 13,300 students will be impacted over the grant period;

Approximately 862 teachers, principals and district leaders will be impacted over the grant period;

The four-year graduation rate will increase an average of five percentage points across the participating project schools in the participating states by the end of the grant period;

Schools will increase enrollment in and credits earned in college level courses by 10 percentage points by the end of grant period;

At least 50% of students will successfully complete at least 12 units of college credit in three years;

Policy makers will have an increased awareness about the importance of expanding access to college courses for high school students. Four additional states will enact legislation and/or policy changes to expand access to college courses for high school students; and

Each school will have at least one high quality partnership between schools, postsecondary institutions and business and industry.

The measurement of achievement for each of these outcomes is outlined in the evaluation section that follows.

State policies on dual enrollment are a critical component of the potential success for the Early College Model. As these policies vary significantly by state and have nuanced barriers as

indicated below (see Addressing Barriers), NCNS has worked to identify key indicators for

consideration related to future success in working with out-of-state partners. For the

identification of scale-up partners both within NC and out-of-state, NCNS looked at the seven

factors outlined below. Based on these criteria, 14 schools in NC were identified to be either

Model Schools or part of the establishment of new Early College Model settings or expanded

District Reach. The NC partners are outlined in detail in Table 3 in the Project Management

section. Following are the seven factors considered:

1. Demonstrated interest in NCNS' Early College Model;

2. Work with LEAs on the RLIS list for their state;

3. Commitment from their state education agency and institution of higher education partners;

4. Commitment from their LEA leaders;

5. Quality of work overall (i.e. - good accreditation visits, no fiscal improprieties, increased
   student achievement over time, ambitiousness of projects over time, awards received);

6. Student performance; and

7. Statewide/localized policy related to dual enrollment.

    Based on the selection criteria outlined above, three out-of-state partners were identified in

three different states: 1) Illinois -- NW Educational Council for Student Success; 2) Mississippi -

- Mississippi Department of Education; and 3) South Carolina -- New Carolina -- South Carolina

Council on Competitiveness. A fourth out-of-state partner will be sought for participation in the

Early College Strategies for All project through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process initiated at

the beginning of the first year during the initial planning phase. The RFP will be widely

distributed to secondary school access portals around the country such as the Southern Regional

Education Board. Once the RFP is sent for distribution, NCNS will host a technical assistance webinar to discuss the project with prospective partners.

The scale-up logic model below (Figure 3) depicts the scale-up strategies for those that are implementing the Early College Model in the five different states.

Figure 3

Logic Model for Scale-Up Strategies
Early College Strategies for All
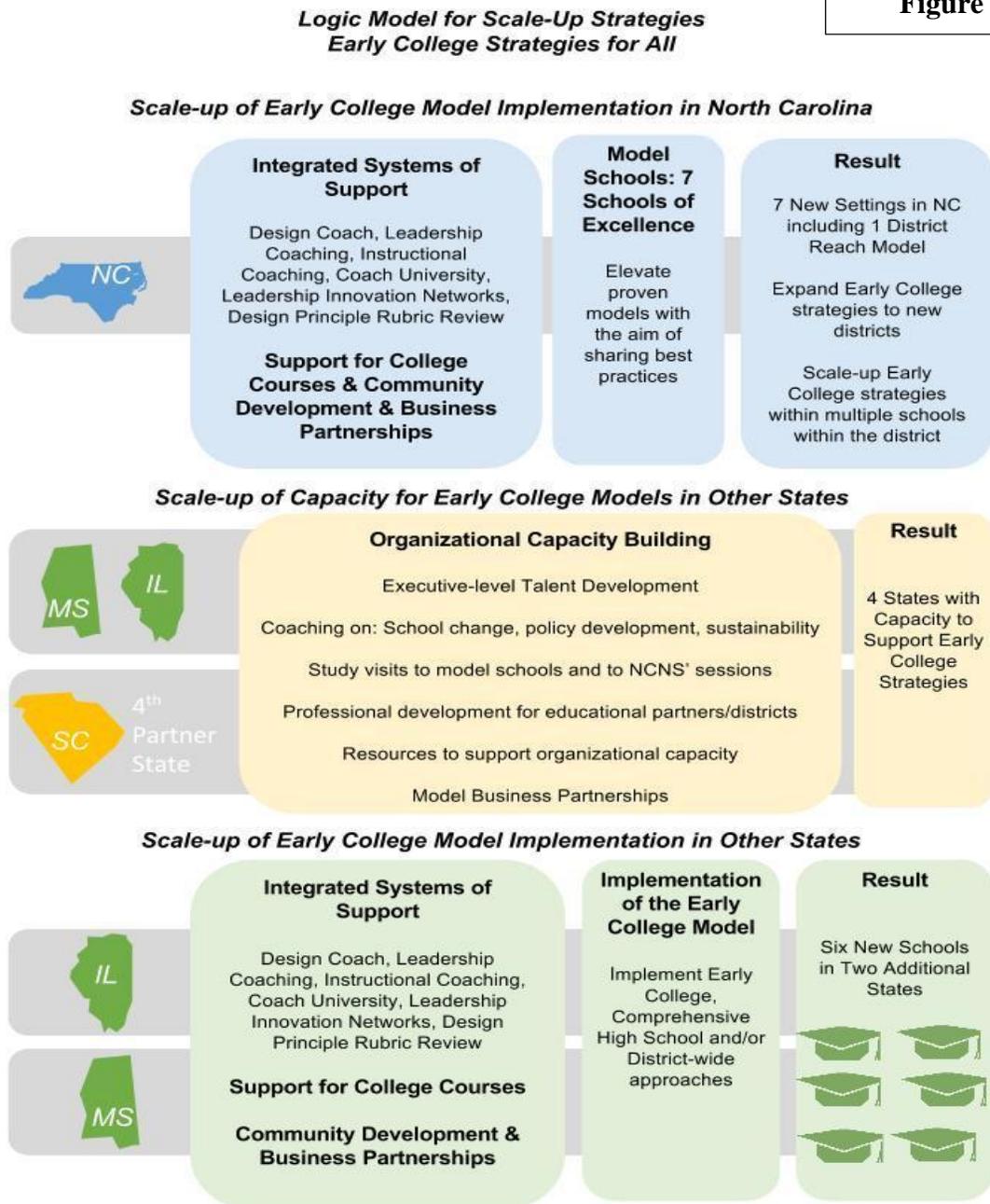
As illustrated above in Figure 3, there are two levels of involvement in *Early College Strategies for All* for out-of-state partners: 1) capacity building, or 2) capacity building and implementation. The states of Illinois and Mississippi will focus on capacity building efforts in order to prepare their state-wide policies and a few key school districts for implementation of their first Early College Models during the five-year i3 scale-up grant period. The state of South Carolina and the yet to be determined fourth partner state will focus on capacity building efforts but may implement their first NCNS based Early College Model later than the five-year i3 scale-up grant period.

Addressing Barriers

Previous to the proposed *Early College Strategies for All* project, the biggest barrier for scaling up of the Early College Model across all states in the United States is the significant variation that currently exists related to dual enrollment policy. The barrier exists not necessarily based on the impact of an individual policy, but rather on the variety of policies that each state begins from when looking to adopt the Early College Model as part of the scale-up work of the *Early College Strategies for All* project. For example, some policy variations seen across the partners currently included in the *Early College Strategies for All* proposal are:

In Illinois, the determination of whether a community college course is offered for concurrent high school and college credit must be made at the secondary level, according to the school's policies and practices of the district.

In Mississippi, partnerships among local districts, state institutions of higher learning, and the state board for community and junior colleges must collaboratively develop a template for individual community and junior colleges and institutions of higher learning for consistent implementation of the dual enrollment program throughout the state.

In South Carolina, institutions must cooperate with each other in providing dual enrollment courses in a particular geographic area. Policy also specifies "students enrolled in dual enrollment courses must be guaranteed convenient geographic and electronic access to student and academic support comparable to what is afforded to on-campus students, including access to library resources."

This variation in policy environment highlights how customized each state's approach to implementing the basic tested and proven Early College Model through the *Early College Model for All* project needs to be for success. While the Design Principles and Integrated Systems of Support remain the same regardless of a state's policy setting, there is a critical need for local and regional partnerships within each state to be established between schools/districts, institutions of higher education and industry partners to create an environment of success for the model.

A second, and related barrier is the lack of alignment between the K-12 and higher education system created as a result of policy differences.

NCNS will use i3 scale-up funds to support capacity-building efforts in four partner states (Illinois, Mississippi, South Carolina, and a fourth partner to be determined during an RFP process) related to the required policy changes necessary to have an environment where the Early College Model can thrive and expand. This capacity-building support, while not directly supporting policy or advocacy work, will share policy lessons learned from NCNS' approach in NC The capacity-building support will also provide customizable tools and potential methods of identifying individual state potential or high-leverage partners, as well as barriers to creating successful environments conducive to a thriving Early College Model.

Additionally, the capacity-building work will include public-private partnership and coalition building support among the schools, districts, and communities to be engaged in the new model. As interest, engagement and confidence in the model is critical to the success of the Early College Model, NCNS will also provide model materials and activities for the out-of-state partners to customize to educate and engage potential partners in supporting adoption of the Early College Model.

Sufficiency of Resources for Implementation

NCNS has an annual operating budget of $14.7 million to fund the resources necessary for its work supporting the Early College Model in NC. As current i3 grantee, and as a result of the organization's experience with implementing the model since 2004, the cost for implementation and scaling of the model is a known cost. The i3 scale up request for $20 million will be sufficient when paired with the higher than minimum match requirement secured both by NCNS and its NC and out-of-state partners to implement *Early College Strategies for All* as designed and outlined throughout this proposal.

NCNS has designed numerous sustainability components into the program for its Early College Model and supporting Integrated Systems of Support as outlined below. Through the past nine years of implementation, NCNS has found that as a result of participating in the Integrated Systems of Support and embracing the Design Principles, a school/district is transformed by increasing the effectiveness and potential of the adult learners (teachers, principals, and district leaders), thus developing sustainability within the schools/districts to carry on the work past the involvement of NCNS.

To ensure sustainability of the work in each school/district through the Integrated Systems of Support provided by NCNS, each district is supported in their creation of their own "Coach

University" similar to the larger Coach University that NCNS hosts. The train the trainer model

for instructional coaches increases leadership skills and incorporates research-based instructional

strategies, thereby supporting districts creating the support structures needed to continue and

propel the work themselves.

Additionally, NCNS teaches each school/district/partner to implement a Design Principle

Rubric Review process as part of the model. The annual Design Principle Rubric Review ensures

fidelity of implementation to the six Design Principles that are core to the Early College Model

and reinforces the idea that change is a continuum of continuous improvement beyond grant

funding support. Based on the Cambridge School Quality Review Model, the Design Principle

Rubric Review encourages consistency across the network and helps with inter rater reliability of

the tool. Content focus groups review progress within each area of the rubric-expertise with

NCNS trained leadership coaches facilitating the focus groups. Once each focus group has

completed the rubric, the entire team and the NCNS' staff meet and facilitate a discussion about

the results. This is conducted in a non-evaluative way that ultimately leads to a discussion that

uses evidence as a basis for the school/district developing their own actionable improvement

plan. Putting the Design Principle Rubric Review process in place empowers each school/district

to take charge of their improvement plan and the ongoing evaluation of their progress against the

plan that is agreed upon. The Design Principle Rubric Review process also builds a common

language among district leaders for continuous improvement.

In addition to the empowerment model and train-the-trainer models utilized to ensure the

continuation of programming and services, NCNS also works with its school/district partners to

form strong lasting partnerships both with institutions of higher education and industry partners

to support the program in the long-term. These partnerships established between the local

schools/districts and the local/regional institutions of higher education and industry partners are a key component of the long term viability and success of the Early College Model as successfully implemented in NC to date.

A goal of NCNS in its capacity-building efforts with each of its out-of-state partners is, where possible, to focus on creating a system where the support of legislated state funds is available to Early College Model programs and is therefore designed to help sustain schools and districts once established as a successful Early College Model.

Finally, by designing the *Early College Strategies for All* project to have a higher match requirement of all partners than is required by the U.S. Department of Education, and encouraging partners to have a graduated scale for increasing their match annually throughout the grant period, it encourages self-sufficiency and sustainability after the life of the U.S. Department of Education i3 grant funding.

C. Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel

Key Responsibilities and Major Objectives

The outcomes for the project are included in the Program Design section. These include: (1) Approximately 13,300 students and 862 teachers, principals and district leaders impacted over the five-year grant period; (2) The four-year graduation rate will increase an average of five percentage points across the participating project schools by the end of the fifth year of the grant; (3) Schools will increase enrollment in and credits earned in college level courses by 10 percentage points by the end of grant; (4) At least 50% of students will successfully complete at least 12 units of college credit in three years; (5) Policy makers will have an increased awareness about the importance of expanding access to college courses for high school students. Four additional states will enact legislation and policy changes to expand access to college courses for

high school students; and (6) Each school will have at least one high quality partnership between schools, postsecondary institutions and business and industries.

A balanced assessment system is integrated within the design of *Early College Strategies for All* and will provide performance feedback related to participants, programming, and system change, for which the results will be used to continually assess the project's success, based on the indicators of progress toward the program outcomes. The balanced assessment system incorporates formative, benchmark, and summative feedback, allowing stakeholders at every level a meaningful look at progress toward outcomes on a daily, quarterly, and annual basis, and upon project completion.

Formative data--This includes daily, weekly and monthly collection and review of information on logistics, barriers, communication, etc. to provide ongoing feedback. This review will occur during daily or weekly staff meetings. Utilizing feedback from schools and NCNS' staff, student progress will be monitored by schools and communicated to NCNS. Monthly check-ins with all schools and states by NCNS will allow a quick check on progress and an opportunity to address concerns or make changes to procedures, and collect data on repetitive concerns for the purpose of altering the program design or procedures if needed. Benchmark data--This includes quarterly collection and review to determine program progress, and provides periodic diagnostic and progress assessments over multiple data points across time. Data are used to make decisions about program components, to determine the success of collaboration and to make program adjustments as needed. Benchmark data will include school/districts quarterly collection and review of student progress, review of assessments and rubrics for, and by, all partners, and review of feedback and reports from all

partners and NCNS' teams with input from the independent evaluator, SERVE (specific

information about the evaluator is included in the following section).

Summative data--This includes annual collection and review of all applicable data with

evaluator, reviewing cumulative results, and providing an annual snapshot of progress. This

data is reflected in the annual report to the U.S. Department of Education and is shared with

all stakeholders.

Table 1							
Activity	**Milestone**	**Responsible**	**Year and Quarter**				
			YI	**Y2**	**Y3**	**Y4**	**Y5**
Prepare for Implementation	Secure agreements, contracts with applicable partners, hire positions, meet with evaluator.	Co-Directors; Senior Directors	Q1				
In-State (NC) Begin Integrated Systems of Support	Provide: (1) Executive-level consultation working with district leadership (pg. 21) (2) Instructional coaching for teachers in schools, Coach University (pg.21) (3) Leadership Innovation Networks (pg. 21) (4) Design Principal Review Rubric Review with each school (pg. 28-29).	(1) Strategic Partnership Team (2) Instructional Coaches (3 & 4) Strategic Partnership Team & Project Co-Directors	Q2-4	Q1-4	Q1-4	Q1-4	Q1-4
Engage Students	Enroll students in higher education courses.	Director of Policy and Engagement		Q2-4	Q1-4	Q1-4	Q1-4
Run Request for Proposals (In and out of state)	Secure partners.	Strategic Partnership Team, Talent Development Team & Project Co-Directors	Q1-Q2				
Partner with industry (In state)	Connect with existing and develop new industry partners.	Strategic Partnership Team	Q4	Q1-4	Q1-4	Q1-4	Q1-4
Prepare to Support National Implementation Efforts	Develop (1) Website for model schools & (2) Marketing Materials for Model Schools.	(1 & 2) Program Co-Directors Program Co-Directors and Director of E-Learning	Q2-4	Q1-4	Q1-4	Q1-4	Q1-4
Out of State Organizational	Provide (1) Executive-level talent development (Administration-level)	(1) Talent Development Team	Q2-4	Q1-4	Q1-4	Q1-4	Q1-4

Capacity Building (MS, IL, SC, fourth partner - TBD)	(pg. 17); (2) Coaching on school change, policy development, sustainability (pg. 28-29); (3) Instructional coaching for teachers (pg. 21); (4) Assistance in identifying industry partners (pg. 17 & 29); and, (5) Support to establish interagency taskforce in each state to review state policy.	& Strategic Partnership Team; (2) Strategic Partnership Team; (3) Instructional Coaches; (4) Strategic Partnership Team; (5) Strategic Partnership Team & Project Co-Directors					
Provide Integrated Systems of Support for Scale-up Early College States (IL, MS).	Provide (1) Instructional coaching (pg. 21); (2) Leadership coaching (pg. 21); (3) Coach University (pg. 21); (4) Leadership Innovation Networks (pg. 21); and, (5) Design Principal Rubric Review (pg. 28-29).	(1) Design Coach; (2) Leadership Coaches; (3) Senior Director of Coaching Services; (4) Talent Development & District Services Teams; (5) Talent Development Team;	Q2-4	Q1-4	Q1-4	Q1-4	Q1-4
Open Model Schools for National Learning Sites	Facilitate Study Visits to Model Schools (pg. 19-21).	Co-Director (In state)		Q2-4	Q1-4	Q1-4	Q1-4
Engage Students (out of state: MS, IL)	Enroll students in higher education courses.	Co-Director (out-of-state)		Q2-4	Q1-4	Q1-4	Q1-4

The figures below show the staffing pattern and flow of reporting for those involved in successfully implementing the proposed *Early College Strategies for All* project.

Key Personnel

Figure 4

NORTH CAROLINA NEW SCHOOLS

Board of Directors

President
Tony Habit

Board of Advisors

Strategic Partnerships — Senior Vice President Lynne Garrison

Finance and Administration — Senior Director of Finance and Administration Wendi Knapke

Talent Development — Senior Vice President Angela Hinson Quick; Vice President Jodi Anderson

Strategic Partnerships
- 10% — Sr. Vice President
- 15% — Director, Institutional Advancement
- 25% — Director, Policy and Engagement
- 100% — Community Development Coordinator

Finance and Administration
- 10% — Senior Director
- 100% — Financial Analyst

Talent Development
- 25% — Sr. Vice President
- 10% — Vice President
- 25% — Sr. Director Coaching Services
- 25% — Sr. Director Professional Learning
- 25% — Sr. Director District Services
- 100% — Co-Project Director
- 100% — Co-Project Director
- 100% — Director E-Learning
- 100% — Design Coach
- Varied — Instructional Coaches
- Varied — Leadership Coaches
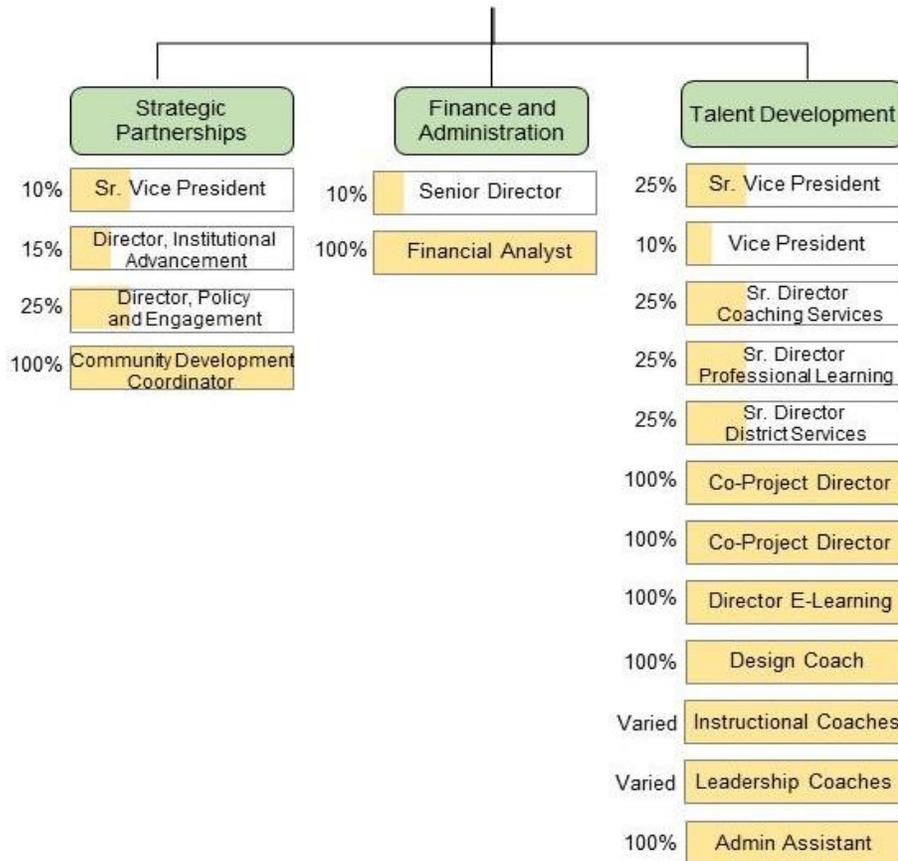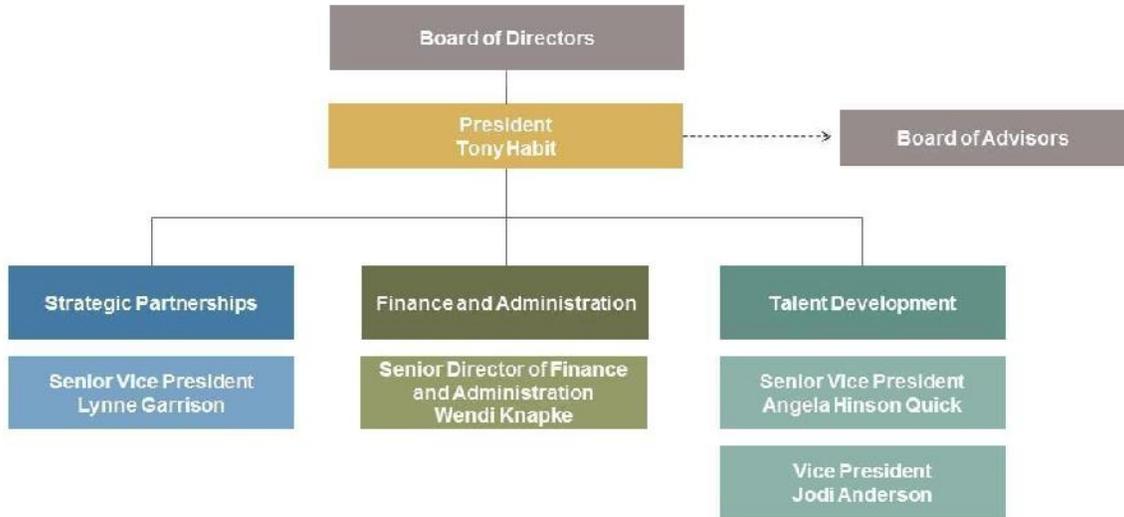- 100% — Admin Assistant

Figure 4 above and Table 2 below illustrates the key personnel that will be part of the team

to implement *Early College Strategies for All* through working with the Model Schools in NC

and the out-of-state partners. All resumes are attached in Appendix F for existing positions. Job

descriptions are attached in Appendix F for new positions.

Table 2: Key Personnel		
Position	**Function**	**FTE %**
NCNS PRESIDENT		
Tony Habit, Ed.D. President	Leads NC New Schools. A component of this work includes national representation for *Early College for All* on committees and state- and national-focused efforts. No funds are requested for Dr. Habit.	5%
STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS TEAM		
Lynne Garrison, Senior Vice President of Strategic Partnerships	Leads private and partnership fund development, community development and collaboration efforts. Oversees all staff within the Strategic Partnership Team. *Reports to: Tony Habit, President*	10%
April Anthony, Director, Institutional Advancement	Recruits diverse revenue streams from national and local foundations as well as corporate and individual donors.	15%
Jason Kessler, Community Development Coordinator	Engages community stakeholders in rural school districts for the purposes of cultivating partnerships for sustainability and support for local program implementation.	100%
Edna Wallace, Director of Policy and Engagement	Conducts research and analysis to inform internal and external leaders on strategies to scale education innovation free from policy barriers.	25%
TALENT DEVELOPMENT TEAM		
Angela Hinson Quick, Ed.D. Principal Investigator/Senior Vice President	Provides leadership for project staff, supervises all Talent Development staff.	25%
Jodi Anderson, Ed.D. Vice President of Talent Development	Provides program oversight and strategic planning with school and district staff to ensure coaching services are implemented with high level of fidelity.	10%
Coaching Services (Talent Development Team)		
Pauline Younts, Senior Director, Coaching Services	Interviews, hires and supervises all "field staff" that work in the schools. Creates the schedule for the coaches working with individual schools. Supervises and ensures quality at the school level.	25%
Instructional Coaches *To be hired*	Works with school districts to provide high quality job-embedded professional development and follow-up supports for teachers.	15 FTE
School Design Coach *To be hired*	Provides direct support to communities engaged in high school redesign. The coach guides and focuses community members, school leaders and teachers on innovation, reflective practices and the strategic planning process in the development of sustainable innovation.	100%
Leadership Coaches *To be hired*	Provides direct support to principals engaged in high school redesign including the creation of new, academically rigorous high schools in non-traditional settings such as on the campuses of colleges and universities as well as transforming existing conventional high schools.	9 FTE

Professional Learning (Talent Development Team)		
Robin Marcus, Senior Director, Professional Development	Creates special professional learning opportunities that are targeted to the school/district.	25%
Director or E-Learning *To be hired*	Works with internal and external stakeholders to implement innovative administrative, teaching and learning technologies as part of the Integrated Systems of Support to improve efficiency.	100%
District Services (Talent Development Team)		
Terry Worrell, Ed.D. Senior Director of District Services	Coordinates the district-wide leadership and coaching services. Leads team to work with districts to integrate the Design Principles and innovative approaches. Will supervise the Co-Directors and Administrative Assistant.	25%
Dennis Davis, Co-Project Director (in-state)	Manages the day-to-day operations specific to NC partners, provides support to the leadership and instructional coaches, liaisons with partner NC school districts, IHEs and independent evaluators, in charge submitting required reports, works closely with the NCNS Executive Team on key decisions, and acts as lead contact for the U.S. Department of Education. (Mr. Davis will transfer full-time to the *Early College Strategies for All* project. A new staff member will be secured from other funds to fill his current position.)	100%
Co-Project Director (out-of-state) *To be hired*	Manages the day-to-day operations specific to out-of-state partners, supervise the leadership and instructional coaches, liaisons with out-of-state partner school districts, IHEs and independent evaluators, works with co-project director on required reports, and works closely with the NCNS Executive Team on key decisions.	100%
Administrative Assistant *To be hired*	Provides operational support for the day-to-day activities.	100%
FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION TEAM		
Wendi Knapke, Senior Director of Finance and Administration	Manages the financial operation of the grant, leads the finance and administration team. *Reports to: Tony Habit, President*	10%
Financial Analyst *To be hired*	Works closely with the school districts and project partners to ensure efficient billing procedures and systems and making budget adjustments, etc., as needed.	100%
PROJECT EVALUATION		
Julie Edmunds, Ph.D. (SERVE Center at UNC Greensboro) Independent Evaluator	Serves as the independent project evaluator.	N/A (project-based contract)

Multi-year Financial and Operating Plan

NCNS has a Finance and Administration department; 2.1 full-time equivalent staff members

will be dedicated to this project. This department has overseen $60 million in private-public

funds since 2004. The organization has an annual operating budget of $14.7 million. NCNS has

smoothly implemented the i3 Validation grant since 2011 and is therefore familiar with reporting

and accountability standards at the federal level. This team is led by Ms. Wendi Knapke, who

has been with NCNS since 2007 and oversees all accounting and finances for NCNS. She holds a

Bachelor of Science-Accounting degree.

In preparation of this proposed project, NCNS carefully reviewed its staffing structure and

the project includes budget request for additional staff where needed to successfully implement

the project. The NCNS' staff has numerous years of experience in every aspect of education;

many hold a doctorate of education. Furthermore, NCNS has transferred staff with the highest

qualifications, experience and expertise to ensure fidelity of implementation. These positions are

reflected above in Table 2. Resumes and job descriptions are attached in Appendix F.

Operating at a national level will be a smooth transition for NCNS. NCNS founding and

continuing president is Dr. Tony Habit. Dr. Habit developed NCNS in 2004 to become a highly

respected private-public venture with the aim of transforming secondary education in NC. He is

an experienced leader for the development of school reform and innovation strategies in

partnership with government, higher education and the private sector. Under Habit's leadership,

NC's early colleges were named by the Harvard Kennedy School of Government as an

"Innovation in American Government" award recipient. Dr. Habit, has a national and

international presence and influence. He regularly participates in governmental committees and

commissions at the state and federal levels including presentations to the United States Senate

Health Education Labor & Pensions Committee. He has traveled extensively to learn about

school innovation in other countries. In 2000, he was named an Eisenhower Fellow to travel to

Australia and New Zealand to study market competition and school quality and the use of

technology to enhance teaching. He serves on boards and advisory committees for several state

and national organizations including the National High School Center, North Carolina eLearning

Commission, World View and the Joining Our Businesses and Schools (JOBS) Commission.

Commitment of Resources and Partner Resources

Within the past five years, the NCNS Strategic Partnership team has secured $2 million in

private funding and engaged a total of 15 partners in the i3 Validation project. Furthermore, the

partners outlined below have committed to the i3 Scale-up *Early College Strategies for All*

project. At the time of application, NCNS had secured a $100,000 commitment from long-time

funding partner, SAS. NCNS has also secured formal letters of support for the project from the

Golden LEAF Foundation, the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of

North Carolina, and a statewide business coalition named BEST NC. All five letters of

commitment and support are in Appendix G.

Key Collaborative Partners

The LEAs within NC that will be implementing the Early College Model during the *Early

College Strategies for All* have letters of commitment included in Appendix G as part of NCNS'

LEA partnership. The NC LEA partners are outlined below in Table 3.

Table 3		
Duplin County School District	Duplin Early College High School	New District & District reach strategies
	East Duplin High School	New District & District reach strategies
	James Kenan High School	New District & District reach strategies
	North Duplin Jr./Sr. High School	New District & District reach strategies
	Wallace-Rose Hill High School	New District & District reach strategies
Harnett County School District	Early College	New Early College School/District
To Be Determined	Early College	New Early College School/District
Rutherford County School District	East Rutherford High School	Model School
Hertford County School District	Hertford County High School	Model School

Surry County School District	East Surry High School	Model School
	Surry Central High School	Model School
	Surry Early College	Model School
	North Surry High School	Model School
	Meadowview Middle School	Model School

Out-of-state partners that will be implementing the Early College Model in different settings during the *Early College Strategies for All,* and have letters of commitment included in Appendix G as part of NCNS' scaling up work are outlined below in Table 4.

Table 4	
Key Out-of-State Collaborative Partners	**Role**
New Carolina, South Carolina Council on Competitiveness (See Letter of Commitment in Appendix G)	Collaborating with NCNS and regional and state education partners to build capacity to create an environment for the success of the Early College Model. Providing a matching commitment of 10% of the value of their partner support (private funding only) during the five year grant period.
Mississippi Department of Public Instruction (See Letter of Commitment in Appendix G)	Collaborating with NCNS and regional and state education partners to build capacity to create an environment for the success of the Early College Model. Collaborating with local schools and districts and higher education partners to implement the Early College Model in at least three schools in Mississippi Providing a matching commitment of 10% of the value of their partner support (private funding only) during the five year grant period.
NW Educational Council for Student Success (Illinois) (See Letter of Commitment in Appendix G)	Collaborating with NCNS and regional and state education partners to build capacity to create an environment for the success of the Early College Model. Collaborating with local schools and districts and higher education partners to implement the Early College Model in at least three schools in Illinois Providing a matching commitment of 10% of the value of their partner support (private funding only) during the five year grant period.
To Be Determined by an RFP process in Year 1	Collaborating with NCNS and regional and state education partners to build capacity to create an environment for the success of the Early College Model. Providing a matching commitment of 10% of the value of their partner support (private funding only) during the five year grant period.

Project Director and Key Personnel Experience

Each member of the NCNS' team is an experienced professional with numerous years of educational experience and personal educational attainment, many hold a doctorate degree in

education. (Please see attached resumes in Appendix F). Each area of implementation within the *Early College Strategies for All* project has a team of staff with specialized skills to successfully carry out the activities within their area of specialization.

Mr. Dennis Davis, Sr. has served as the Project Director for the NCNS i3 Validation grant and will be transferred to the *Early College Strategies for All* project, allowing a continuation of his expertise, experience with the i3 initiative and relationships with the partners at both the local and national levels to carry to the *Early College Strategies for All* project. Mr. Davis, who has a Master's degree in School Administration/Supervision, has worked for the NC Department of Public Instruction, as program director for numerous federal and state funded-programs, and with NCNS as the Project Director for the i3 initiative since May of 2012. His resume is attached in Appendix F.

Another Project Director will be secured (Co-Project Director) to work with Mr. Davis and will focus on the out-of-state partner schools and states. The job description for this position is included in Appendix F. This position will possess a minimum of five years of school- and/or district-level administrative experience; have a demonstrated history of federal grant administration and knowledge of federal rules and regulations regarding grant implementation, possess strong communication skills, and will have a minimum of a Master's degree, with higher education preferred. These positions will be supervised by Terry W. Worrell, Ed.D., Senior Director, District Services. Dr. Worrell has worked in numerous areas of school administration, including as an area superintendent, and has written numerous articles, provided state, national and international presentations and has published numerous education-related research articles. Her resume is attached in Appendix F.

D. Quality of the Project Evaluation

Early college high schools have been shown through two lottery-based Randomized Control Trials to have a positive impact on relevant student outcomes. The early college scale-up is taking the effective practices of the early college and implementing it at scale in three different settings: 1) small, stand-alone early college; 2) comprehensive high school; 3) and a district-wide model. The evaluation uses multiple methods to examine the impact of the early college in these different settings. The evaluation will also examine the implementation of the strategies that NCNS is using to scale up the model.

The evaluation is designed to answer the following core questions concerning the impact and implementation of the Early College Model and the scale-up strategies:

1. Early college impact: What is the impact of the Early College Model on core student outcomes related to college readiness and success? To what extent are the key components of *Early College Strategies for All* being implemented with fidelity? Early college implementation: To what extent are new schools being implemented with fidelity?

2. Scale-up strategies: NCNS is implementing a set of new strategies to scale up the model. What do the scale-up strategies look like in each of the states in which they are being implemented? To what extent do they appear to be having their intended effects?

The approaches used to answer each of these questions are described.

Impact Study

Because the Early College Model is being implemented in three different settings, the evaluation team proposes using a combination of experimental and quasi-experimental methodologies. An experimental methodology will be utilized to assess the impact of the small

stand-alone early colleges and a quasi-experimental methodology to assess impact on the comprehensive and district-wide models.

The following specific sub-questions drive the impact study:

1. What is the impact of the stand-alone Early College Model on improved student outcomes in high school, including increased enrollment in and credits earned in college preparatory courses, increased numbers of students staying in school, and increased college course taking and credits earned while in high school?

2. What is the impact of the Early College Model implemented in traditional high schools as the only high school in the district and as part of a district-wide model?

3. How does the impact vary by student sub-group, including students who are low-income, members of racial and ethnic groups underrepresented in college and those who are first in their family to go to college?

Assessing the impact of stand-alone early colleges. Small, stand-alone early colleges are schools of choice and are often located on college campuses. As a condition of participating in the grant, districts that wish to start stand-alone early colleges must agree to use a lottery to select students from their applicant pool. This methodology, which has been used to assess the impact of the early colleges in other studies (American Institutes of Research & SRI International, 2013; Edmunds, Bernstein, Unlu, Glennie, & Smith, 2013; Edmunds et al., 2012), allows the evaluators to create two groups: students who applied and were randomly selected to attend the school (the treatment group) and students who applied and were randomly selected not to attend (the control group). NCNS anticipates that seven of the 13 expansion sites will be stand-alone early colleges. Based on NCNS and SERVE's experience with early colleges in similar settings, it is anticipated that there will be 100 applicants for approximately 50 student

seats. SERVE will examine impacts for two cohorts of students who applied to the early college. The sample size is thus an estimated 700 treatment students (50 students accepted x 7 schools x 2 cohorts) and 700 control students. A power analysis in Optimal Design indicates that this would be sufficient to measure effects of .21 standard deviations or less [assumptions include p .05, 14 cohort-sites with 100 students at each site, variance explained by blocking and covariates of .60 (Bloom, Richburg-Hayes, & Black, 2005; Xu & Nichols, May, 2010)].

The study will examine outcomes in three core domains as the primary outcomes of the study: 1) enrollment and success in a college preparatory course of study; 2) enrollment and success in college-level courses (dual credit, AP, and IB) and 3) staying in school. These analyses will be conducted on data collected by NC, Mississippi, and Illinois, which are all states with longitudinal data systems. Student application data will be linked to administrative data from the longitudinal data systems and then de-identified for all analyses.

As is the recommended standard in education policy studies, the study will utilize an intent-to-treat model, such that students remain in the group to which they were initially assigned, even if they eventually leave the school. This approach, coupled with the SERVE Center's use of administrative data from state-level longitudinal systems, means that student attrition will not be problematic and students will not be lost if they cross district lines. The current experimental study in NC has attrition rates of approximately 3-4%.

Comparisons between the treatment and control groups will be conducted for each core outcome using a series of multivariate regression models. The core components of each model are as follows:

Dependent variable. The dependent variable is the outcome of interest (i.e., enrollment in a college preparatory course of study).

Independent variables. The independent variables include student baseline characteristics (8th grade math achievement, gender, underrepresented minority status, first-generation college-bound status, and eligibility for free/reduced-price lunch). SERVE will also include control variables for randomization blocks, defined as groups of students who applied to a particular early college in a given year and were randomized together. Randomization blocks are modeled as fixed, and the regression specifications include indicator variables for each block, which also account for the clustering of students within blocks. Schochet (2008) recommends this approach for studies employing models that utilize the same components as the main outcome analyses described above. The estimated impacts for complementary subgroups (e.g., minority and non-minority) will then be statistically compared using t-tests.

This analytic approach has been used in the longitudinal experimental study of early colleges (Edmunds, et al., 2012) as well as in other lottery-based studies for charter schools (Gleason, Clark, Tuttle, & Dwyer, 2010). For the sub-group analyses, SERVE will estimate impacts using separate regression models that utilize the same components as the main outcome analyses described above. The estimated impacts for complementary subgroups (e.g., minority and non-minority) will then be statistically compared using t-tests.

The experimental approach described above will allow this portion of the evaluation to meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards without reservations.

Assessing the impact of early colleges in a comprehensive high school. The other setting in which early colleges will be implemented will be in comprehensive high schools, either as a single high school in the district or as part of a comprehensive district-wide effort. To assess the impact of the model in this setting, SERVE will utilize a quasi-experimental design that relies on matched comparison schools. SERVE estimates that 6 comprehensive high schools will be

served as part of this grant. These 7 schools will each be matched to 3-4 comparison schools, giving a total sample of 35 schools. This should be sufficient to detect effects of .21 standard deviations or higher.

Given that this portion of the evaluation will be quasi-experimental, establishing baseline equivalence between the treatment and comparison schools will be critical. SERVE and NCNS will identify schools that are equivalent on the baseline outcome measures (e.g. dropout rates, etc.) and on key demographic measures, including percentage poverty and percentage minority. The core outcomes will be the same as those identified in the experimental study above. The data for this portion of the study will come from the longitudinal state administrative data systems in the states with schools. All data are de-identified.

A hierarchical linear modeling approach (HLM) (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) will be used as the general analytic framework within which we will examine impacts of interest to account for the nested structure of the data. In most cases, where student-level data is available, students will be nested within schools.

In general, these models seek to answer the question, "Is there an overall treatment effect of the early college intervention on relevant student outcomes for schools who implement the model relative to their comparison school counterparts?" Consequently, models will include a fixed treatment effect at level 2, which is the primary effect of interest. This treatment effect will be adjusted for a school level "pretest" measure (either the same measure from the baseline period or a highly correlated baseline measure) as well as all covariates upon which SERVE will match schools to reflect matching procedures in all models and increase precision (Bloom, Richburg-Hayes, & Black, 2007). SERVE will also include several theoretically relevant student-level characteristics (under-represented minority status, poverty status, ELL status, first-

generation college-going status, and 8th grade reading and math performance) that have been shown to add additional precision by explaining a portion of student-level variance.

This quasi-experimental design will be designed and implemented such that it will meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards with reservations.

<u>Implementation of the Early College Model</u>:

The implementation evaluation will focus on two aspects of the early college implementation: 1) the delivery of and participation in program services (what has been conceptualized as "structural implementation" (Century, Rudnick, & Freeman, 2010) and 2) the implementation of the Design Principles at the school level (this is similar to what has been conceptualized as "instructional implementation" and "represent[s] the actions, behaviors, and interactions that the user is expected to engage in when enacting the intervention" (Century, et al., 2010, p. 205). The implementation of the Design Principles can also be seen as proximal outcomes and thus will not be considered as measures of fidelity of implementation.

Fidelity of Implementation for each of the three Key Components shown in the logic model (Figure 2, Page 21) will be assessed by examining implementation of the specific services that fall within those components. Under *Integrated Systems of Support*, fidelity of implementation for the coaching and professional development services will be assessed on whether 90% of coaching services and staff support days are delivered as planned to schools, and whether participants participate in professional development services at a rate of at least 80%. For the NCNS' staff support, implementation will be assessed according to whether the schools received the days of support they were expected to receive.

For the second Key Component of *Support for College Credit Courses*, all three activities will be treated as dichotomous measures of implementation and it will be indicated whether these

activities are in place for each school. Each school must have a college partnership in place and a college liaison in place to be considered as full implementation. The third activity is provision of funds for college courses. As a measure of fidelity of implementation, this will be treated as dichotomous (Did the program provide funds for students to take college credit courses or not?). Because the actual number of courses that NCNS funds is dependent on the number of students who enroll in college courses, the number of courses supported will be considered as a student outcome.

For *District Support*, fidelity of implementation will be examined for district professional development and for the presence of community development activities. A total score for fidelity of implementation for each Key Component will be calculated by combining the level of participation in all of the required activities. Finally, a total score for fidelity of implementation for early college program as a whole will be created by weighting the values of specific key components according to their theoretical importance in the program and summing them.

All of these data on service delivery and participation will be collected from project records, including coaches' reports and professional development sign-in sheets, supplemented by interviews with staff and by site visit data conducted by the evaluators.

The services described above are designed to prepare the schools to implement the Design Principles. School-level implementation of the Design Principles can be considered both as an implementation measure and an immediate outcome. Given that these Design Principles are characteristics of a good school that could be found in both intervention and nonintervention schools, it is critical to understand implementation in both situations. The SERVE Center does not have formal benchmarks for each of these. Instead, the expectation is that treatment schools improve on these dimensions as compared to baseline and as compared to the comparison

schools. These data will be collected primarily through surveys administered to the staff of

treatment and comparison schools. These surveys will be based on surveys created to measure

implementation of the Early College Model as part of the longitudinal experimental study

conducted by SERVE. The scales related to implementation (included in Appendix J) have been

shown to have very good reliability and have also been shown to distinguish between the Early

College Model and other high school experiences (Edmunds, Willse, Arshavsky, & Dallas,

2013).

<u>Implementation of Scale-up Strategies</u>

This scale-up proposal is adding an additional layer of strategies to the support that NCNS

normally provides to schools and districts. This portion of the evaluation will look at the extent

to which these strategies (see logic model on page 25) are implemented as intended and the

extent to which they appear to be having the desired impact. Additionally, as this scale-up work

is new, it will include a formative component that is designed to provide ongoing feedback to

NCNS about their scale-up strategies. **Specifically, the scale-up implementation evaluation**

will look at the following questions: 1) To what extent are the key scale-up components being

implemented with fidelity? 2) What is the perceived quality of the organizational capacity work

and the model school work? 3) Has NCNS met its scale-up goal of developing organizational

capacity in five states (including NC) and having 13 new early colleges and 7 Model Schools

implemented in three states?

The first key component of the scale-up strategies is organizational capacity development.

The evaluation will collect data on the days of executive-level talent development provided and

on the extent to which the partner organizations are able to establish procedures for supporting

early colleges. These data will be collected through observations of the services provided and

through annual interviews with the partner organizations. These interviews and observations will also provide detail on the utility and quality of the organizational capacity development work.

The interviews will be semi-structured and will focus on understanding the activities that have been completed and participants' perceptions of the quality and impact of those activities. The observations will utilize a structured observation protocol that will examine the quality of the capacity-building work on different dimensions. The observation protocol will be developed in conjunction with NCNS and will be based on research on quality professional development and coaching (e.g., Desimone, 2009; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Aikens & Akers, 2011). Observers will be trained prior to use and there will be annual opportunities to calibrate the ratings on the observation protocol.

The second key component is the creation of Model Schools that can sponsor site visits for groups wanting to start new early colleges. The evaluation will assess the quality of the schools using the same survey used to examine implementation of the Design Principles in the early college implementation study described above. As noted above, this survey has been used with the longitudinal experimental study (Edmunds, Willse, et al., 2013), the scores of which will serve as standards against which the model schools will be assessed. Model Schools should attain a level of implementation of a Design Principle attained by the top 25% of schools assessed in the experimental study. Comprehensive schools that are intended to serve as model should have at least 75% of their students attaining college credit. The evaluation team will also observe the site visits to the Model Schools and will conduct surveys to assess the value of the site visits.

Finally, the evaluation will determine the extent to which the grant has met its scale-up goals of five states with organizational capacity and 13 new early colleges and seven Model

Schools in three states. Table 5 summarizes the evaluation components, data sources, and

timeline.

Table 5			
Evaluation Component	**Evaluation goals**	**Data Sources**	**Timeline**
Impact evaluation	Impact of early college models on key outcomes	State-level administrative data	Starting in 2017-2018
Early college implementation evaluation	Fidelity of implementation for key components School-level implementation of Design Principles	Project records Site visits School surveys	Annually starting in 2015-2016
Scale-up strategies implementation evaluation	Fidelity of implementation for key components and success at meeting scale-up goals	Project records Site visits Project records	Annually starting in 2016-2017

Reporting and Feedback

    The evaluation team will provide ongoing feedback to NCNS. This will include monthly

meetings to examine the evaluation process, annual reports that summarize results to date and

include recommendations for improvement, as well as follow-up presentations to debrief the

annual reports. The evaluation team will produce at least two reports that will be made broadly

available through posting on the NCNS' website and on the SERVE website. One report will

focus primarily on implementation and at least one report will include the project impact

estimates. These reports will be supplemented by presentations at national conferences and

articles submitted to researcher-oriented and practitioner-oriented journals.

Evaluation Expertise and Resources

    SERVE Center at University of North Carolina at Greensboro will lead the scale-up

evaluation. SERVE has studied early colleges for the past eight years, leading the first large-

scale experimental study of the impact of early colleges. They have received three competitive

grants from the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) to study the impact of early colleges. They

also have substantial experience with the i3 requirements as they are currently conducting

evaluations for three i3 grants. SERVE has the expertise to design and conduct an evaluation that

will meet the i3 requirements. They are already cooperating with the Department of Education's

technical assistance for the i3 and find the process very valuable. The evaluators are committed

to participating in a community of practice to exchange ideas with other i3 evaluators. The

evaluation will be led by Dr. Julie Edmunds at the SERVE Center at University of North

Carolina - Greensboro. Dr. Edmunds has been principal investigator for three IES grants for a

longitudinal experimental study of the impact of the Early College Model in NC. She has been

studying early colleges for the past eight years and has an in-depth knowledge of both the design

of the model as well as the issues associated with measuring its impact and implementation. Dr.

Edmunds is also leading the evaluation of three other i3 projects that also seek to implement the

early college design in comprehensive high schools. She will be able to use insights from these

evaluations to inform the evaluation of the Scale-up project.

Dr. Kristin Klopfenstein of the Education Innovation Institute at the University of Northern

Colorado will be co-investigator and lead analyst for the study. Dr. Klopfenstein has spent many

years working with large, longitudinal datasets to study the impacts of various high school

reform efforts including dual enrollment and Advanced Placement. She has extensive

experience with multi-level modeling and other analyses required for experimental and quasi-

experimental studies.

The $1.5 million that is budgeted for the evaluation will be sufficient to complete the

evaluation as articulated above. In addition, SERVE can draw on the substantial resources of the

University of North Carolina at Greensboro for data collection and analysis work.

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