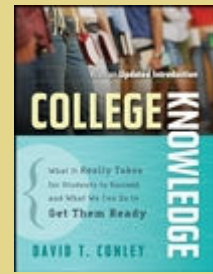




THE MAIN IDEA

current education book summaries



File: College
Readiness

College Knowledge:

What It Really Takes for Students to Succeed and What We Can Do to Get Them Ready

By David T. Conley (Jossey-Bass, 2008)

S.O.S. (Summary Of the Summary)

The main ideas of the book are:

- Too many students who start college *do not* finish. We are not adequately preparing students.
- High schools need to know the specific skills and knowledge students must master to succeed in college.

Over 600,000 students each year leave college before receiving a degree or take longer than four years to graduate. High schools are preparing students to *enter* college, but not to *succeed in* college. This book, based on the author's three-year research project, aims to help readers understand what it takes to succeed in college. A large portion of the book is devoted to detailed standards that outline what students must know and be able to do in English, mathematics, the natural sciences, social sciences, second languages, and the arts. These standards, plus a number of other strategies and key pieces of information, can help high schools better align their instructional programs to college success.

The author provides a series of *Questions and Actions* to give high schools some starting points to help them begin to improve their instructional programs to increase college readiness. Instead of having a separate *Professional Development* page, The Main Idea has incorporated some professional development ideas into these sections.

The Scoop (In this summary you will learn...)

- √ *Why there is such a weak link between the high school instructional program and college success (p.1)*
- √ *What the research says are some of the biggest predictors of success in college (p.3)*
- √ *How high schools that prepare all students for college success look different from those that prepare only a few (pp.4-6)*
- √ *What are some of the existing strategies schools already use to increase college readiness (pp.6-7)*
- √ *What exactly students must know and be able to do in order to succeed in college (pp.9-10 and online)*
- √ *What actual college syllabi, freshman schedules, college student academic work, and college assignments look like (pp.9-11 and online)*

I. Introduction

While more students today aspire to go to college, somewhere between 30 and 60 percent of students who get into college require remedial education once there. The problem is that high schools are preparing students to be *college-eligible* not *college-ready*. The former means they meet admissions requirements whereas the latter requires students to meet the expectations of entry-level college courses. Currently, students who receive A's in high school are facing the first C of their lives in college because of the changed expectations. Students can no longer proceed through the material slowly, provide a correct answer rather than a thoughtful one, write only one draft of a paper, and write opinions that are not backed by evidence. This book helps you understand why the preparation that occurs in high school is often not matched to the skills required to succeed in college. The findings in the book come from a strong research base in addition to the author's own study, from 1998-2001, sponsored by the Association of American Universities and the Pew Charitable Foundation.

The link between the high school instructional program and success in college is a weak one. High schools are designed to get their students to graduate, and for some, to get them accepted into college. However, this does not necessarily enable students to succeed in college. Why is this the case? Historically, K-12 and postsecondary institutions evolved in relative isolation. This was not a problem when: 1) Few students went on to college; 2) Most institutions of higher education were not selective; and 3) A college degree was not the only route to financial success. Now, all three of these situations have changed. Before, high schools did not need to ask: *What happens to students after college admission? What are the expectations of students in college?* And colleges offered little insight into these questions. To address this, a large section of this book is devoted to sharing a detailed set of specifications outlining what students should know and be able to do called the Knowledge and Skills for University Success (KSUS) standards that were developed during the author's research study. Currently, in most high schools, determining the knowledge and skills students need to succeed in college is largely left to individual teachers who rely on their instincts. Even when an individual teacher does a good job figuring this out, rarely does a four-year high school instructional program provide an intellectually coherent experience – both in terms of skills and content – that insures a majority of its students will be prepared for college. The KSUS standards and this book aim to help high schools design a program with direct information about college practices and expectations.

The Evolution of Admissions Criteria

Everyone knows there is a process to get into college: students need to take certain courses, get acceptable grades, and take and perform well on admissions tests. However, many people are lulled into thinking that students who perform

well in this process are prepared to succeed in college. This is not necessarily true. How did we arrive at this point? The roots of the college-preparation process date back to the late nineteenth century. At that time only about 5 percent of high school students went on to college and they were mostly from the upper economic classes. The concept of merit-based admission had not yet fully developed and academic readiness for college was often determined by which preparatory school the student had attended. The content, challenge level, and grading practices of courses varied widely back then, and still do today. This variety was harmless at a time when so few students went to college. However, after World War II the graduation rate jumped to 80 percent and college attendance drastically increased. When colleges saw their applicant pool increase they became more interested in the well-prepared student, but they never provided any insight into what defined a well-prepared student. They simply looked at a combination of students' GPA and scores on a national admissions test (ACT or SAT) and a variety of other characteristics. By the 1980s, the applicant pool continued to expand even more, and more students were meeting college entrance requirements. Admissions officers began to pay closer attention to the *challenge level* of academic courses. Eventually more weight was placed on honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses and on the International Baccalaureate (IB) program because the content was geared toward college course expectations. Before, an outstanding student might take one or two AP courses. Now, a comparable student commonly takes five or six such courses. However, outside of these courses, it is still not clear what high schools need to do to prepare students for college success. Even the development of state academic content standards in the 1990s were not connected to postsecondary success. The standards were not against college success, it's just that they were developed without college readiness in mind. Currently, *only about a third* of all students admitted to postsecondary institutions graduate in four years from the institution where they were admitted. This means that although students have figured out what to do to get admitted to college, they still do not know what to do to succeed once they're there.

What We Can Do to Increase College Success: Questions and Actions

- *Who determines which skills are taught in which classes in your school? Does it change when the teacher leaves?*
- *When there are multiple sections of the same course with the same name, are the skills taught in each the same?*
- *How much variance exists among college-preparatory classes? How much variation exists among grading techniques?*

In order to determine if courses are preparing students for college, and if there is a general coherence in the high school instructional program, a more introspective look at the above questions is necessary. Examining the differences between courses is a challenging task for high schools. This should not be attempted until trust exists among faculty. However a first step can be to list the goals and content covered in each course and to catalogue the range of grading techniques at your school. This can be presented to the group without identifying individual teachers. The eventual goal is to develop consistent content, approach, and grading practices, but for now it is helpful to note the variations among classes and teachers.

- *How are expectations different for different groups of students?*

To understand how the high school prepares different students, analyze student schedules, disaggregated by type of student, to determine if certain groups are underrepresented in college prep courses and who is not taking a full load of classes all four years.

II. The High School Experience: Preparing for College

What High School Students Know About College Readiness

A great deal of research has shown what students do and do not know about the college preparation process, particularly from the Bridge Project at the Stanford Institute for Higher Education Research and a national study conducted by Greene and Foster. Below are some examples from the research that provide insight into the areas where students lack knowledge of this process.

Student Aspirations: One finding showed that as students approached senior year, the percentage who aspired to a *community* college increased. This was because students realized they had not taken the courses required to attend a state college or that their GPA wasn't high enough.

Where Students Get Information on College Requirements: Most students in the research got their information from *parents* and *teachers*. Older siblings and friends who attended college also provided them with information. Many did not speak to a counselor until their junior year, and by then, they had often already made decisions. So although they do not fill this role officially, *teachers* are very important college advisers through their informal discussions with students. However, this is not a systematic approach to informing students because teacher knowledge about requirements, placement tests, and financial costs is often uneven.

Student Knowledge of Curricular Requirements: In 2003, Greene and Foster found that only 32 percent of graduates in their national study had taken four years of English, three of math, two each of natural science, social science, and foreign language – the level of preparation consistent with potential success in college. However, twice this number of students enroll in college directly upon graduation. This means that many students do not understand what courses they must take and what skills they need to develop in high school in order to become college-ready.

Student Knowledge of Placement Test Policies: Students tended to be largely unaware of placement test policies and content. This is a problem because low scores can result in remedial work and students being barred from courses they would like to take. Another problem is that students are more likely *not* to take math during their senior year and when they take a math placement test upon entering college, they perform worse because of the gap in their math education. Yet another problem is that placement tests often test knowledge and skills that are different from those taught in high school. If students can prepare for and pass these exams, they can get through college more quickly and economically.

Student Knowledge of Tuition Costs: When students were asked to estimate the cost of college, most grossly overestimated the amount. In the Stanford Institute study, for example, the average estimate of a 9th grader was \$40,000 for UC Davis when, at the time, the actual cost was \$4,000. African Americans and Southeast Asians had the least accurate (that is, the highest) estimates of tuition costs. Students with the most accurate information got that information from parents. Those who spoke mostly with teachers and counselors were half as likely to have a close estimate.

Overall, preparing for college is a knowledge-intensive process. Furthermore, this knowledge is not readily available all in one place. There are over four thousand distinct postsecondary institutions with their own requirements. The economically well-off are far more likely to have this type of information. Few high schools have the resources or programs to help all students navigate the complicated process of admissions and financial aid. It used to be that only 20 to 30 percent of high school students were headed to college. Now, to prepare *all* students for this option, counselors are assigned to much larger numbers of students while funding for college counseling is being reduced. Without this important information, students have trouble with deadlines, registering for tests, understanding test-preparation options, and taking advantage of fee-waivers. It takes only *one* mistake for students to disrupt the necessary chain of events for the college application process to occur and to miss out on postsecondary options.

Recommendations for Improving Student Awareness

In order to prepare *all* students for college, the high school curriculum needs to be simplified so students can *not* make bad choices. Most high school courses should meet a college requirement. Furthermore, high schools need to design programs or access to information that help all students, particularly first-generation college-goers, gain the necessary knowledge about admissions: the admissions process, testing, and financial aid. All students should be *automatically* signed up for the PSAT and SAT, or PLAN and ACT. Students should be provided with school time to fill out the forms and fee-waivers. Volunteer-staffed career centers can be a method to disseminate information when a district does not have the funds. Some high schools integrate career-planning units into the curriculum to provide opportunities to conduct college searches and learn about college requirements. It is difficult and it takes a long time for high school students to become aware of all that that they need to know to be admitted to and succeed in college.

What We Can Do to Increase College Success: Questions and Actions

- *How aware of college entrance requirements are middle school and high school students and their parents?*
- *Who is responsible for ensuring that they are aware of this knowledge and make appropriate decisions?*

Eighth graders preparing their high school schedules should know the basic course requirements for admission to the state's public university system. Counselors could conduct a group advising session to help students project their high school schedule over four years. After this session a brief quiz on college admission requirements should be administered along with the immediate answers. High schools should develop much more systematic programs on college knowledge. For example, they can implement a unit that requires all sophomores to learn about admissions testing and deadlines; course requirements for different postsecondary institutions; costs for a public or private education and common financial aid forms; placement test policies; ways to earn college credit while still in high school; and typical college freshman schedules at a variety of different colleges and universities.

- *To what degree do teachers know college requirements as well as what students need to succeed in college?*

Because teachers play such a pivotal role in the college-preparation process they should be given an annual packet of information with Web sites and key information about requirements. This should be reviewed at a faculty meeting.

The Main Idea's Professional Development Extension: Improving the College Preparation Process

To increase teachers' knowledge of the college preparation process:

- 1) Create a list of true-false questions about placement tests, financial aid, college academic expectations, etc. and let teachers answer these questions anonymously. Discussion of these questions provides an introduction to the topic.
- 2) Ask teachers to spend 5 minutes writing about their own transitions from high school to college. Make sure they address: WHO helped you? HOW did you make your decision? WHAT were your assumptions about college and how did these play out your first year? Share these responses so teachers can see that a lot of their support did NOT come from their high school. Also, this is a way for teachers to hear about a wide variety of college freshman experiences so they can share this variety with students.
- 3) Have teachers look at artifacts which will help to inform them about the college preparation process: bring in sample placement tests, college applications, FAFSA forms, etc.
- 4) To improve student access to this knowledge, have the faculty (or a committee) brainstorm *structures* your school could adopt to better impart information (information nights, bulletin boards, a buddy system with parents who have already gone through this, etc.)

According to two studies conducted by the federal government, the *1998 High School Transcript Study* and the *High School and Beyond* study, the single most important factor in determining college success is the academic challenge of the high school courses students take. This is particularly true for African-American and Latino students whose college degree completion rates are more positively affected than any other group by an academically challenging high school curriculum. Furthermore, the subject that is most predictive of college success is the level of mathematics completed. Research shows that students who complete courses beyond Algebra II (trigonometry and pre-calculus) are more than twice as likely to graduate from college than those who do not. Students who take a math course their senior year and another in their freshman year of college are more likely to succeed in college math than those who take either of these years off from math. Even college chemistry and physics is affected by math skills, so it is important for students to have continuity in math.

Other research states the importance of improving student reading and writing skills. It suggests that high school reading needs to be progressively more challenging and include a wide range of texts and styles. Students need a deep understanding of a few texts, not all of them literary, and an awareness of a wide range of publications to prepare for the analytical skills necessary in college. It is when students are provided with a carefully constructed four-year sequence of language arts that includes analytical skills as well as a great deal of writing with feedback, that students will develop the habits of mind they need to succeed in entry-level courses in college. Overall, the research shows the importance of challenging and appropriately sequenced math, reading, and writing skills.

What We Can Do to Increase College Success: Questions and Actions

- *To what degree are your language arts courses sequenced developmentally? What skills are developed over four years?*
- *Which language arts skills must also be developed or supported elsewhere in the curriculum?*
- *How much writing and what kind of writing are students expected to produce? Does the complexity of expectations increase with each passing year? What writing styles are emphasized? What type of feedback do students receive?*

Because reading and writing are so important in the college curriculum, it is essential that high school language arts skills are sequenced appropriately. Furthermore, because college reading often involves informational texts, students need to be taught to do this type of reading in high school throughout the curriculum, not just in English. Evidence shows that high school faculty emphasize student expression in writing while college faculty emphasize mastery of conventions. High schools need to develop schoolwide writing expectations across disciplines and grades to prepare students for college writing. To begin, faculty can compile the number of pages students must write each year, over four years, and the kinds of assignments students are given to determine how much emphasis is placed on expression versus mastery of conventions. In the senior year, writing assignments should parallel freshman year writing assignments in frequency, length, and expectations. Also, faculty should choose one writing assignment per grade where students will receive extensive feedback and be required to rewrite and resubmit their work. These assignments should be scored against the same criteria schoolwide. This will require detailed planning and teachers should be trained to score reliably.

The Main Idea's Professional Development Extension: Improving Academic Rigor and Sequencing of Skills

- 1) To make teachers more aware of the rigor expected in college, download samples of college freshman work at <http://cepr.uoregon.edu/cepr.samples.php>. Have teachers grade and comment on the samples. Then ask teachers to list the criteria they believe make the sample a strong one. Share and discuss the criteria identified.
- 2) Then have teachers look at a 12th grade assignment or sample of student work from your school and ask teachers how this differs from the college sample in terms of: a) independence expected of the student; b) coverage vs. in-depth thinking required; and c) quantity of work.
- 3) Divide the teachers by their disciplines. For each discipline, choose a foundational skill (e.g. English – writing, Math – problem solving, History – research, Science – the scientific method). Have teachers look at a college student work sample in this area. Then discuss how they would scaffold that skill (in terms of student independence, challenge level, and quantity of work) so that it is appropriately developed from 9th to 12th grade.

Developing an Intellectually Coherent Academic Program

How Intellectually Coherent Is Today's High School?

Overall, although high schools aim to challenge students, the emphasis is mostly on covering the required courses. Most high schools typically introduce different material each year but in similar ways at all grade levels. Students enter college expecting clear right and wrong answers without interpretation. When interpretation is required, they believe any type of interpretation is acceptable and do not understand the disciplinary rules that must be applied. As such, good grades in high school do not necessarily prepare them for the conceptually-oriented curriculum in college. They haven't yet developed the habits of mind they need to succeed in college. Below are some examples of how students are not being prepared in several disciplines.

English – In particular, English tends to consist of four unrelated courses with no culminating exam or set of exit skills. According to NAEP, only about a fourth of twelfth graders reach a level defined as proficient by the test.

Mathematics – While math courses seem to be more related, key skills such as problem solving or reasoning often are not fully developed. In fact, few graduates come away with a deep understanding of math concepts or realizing how math can be used to understand the natural world.

Science – In Science, memorization of terms is emphasized over understanding of concepts. Students are rarely taught to “think like scientists” by understanding the scientific method as a mode of inquiry rather than a mechanical process to be followed.

Developing an Intellectually Coherent Program

High schools that prepare *all* students for college success look quite different than those that prepare only a portion of students. The key characteristic of these high schools is that they have a coherent academic program that grows progressively more challenging each year. To do this requires clear agreement on exit standards. Without this agreement it is impossible to agree on course content. Once this agreement is reached, faculty can design a coherent, progressively more challenging course of study.

Create Exit Standards

To begin, faculty should create culminating exams, projects, or requirements that students must accomplish successfully. These exit requirements should integrate both knowledge and skills that will be required for postsecondary education. They should also include personal habits such as independent work, initiative, effort, inquisitiveness, and attention to detail and quality, all of which support student success in college. It is not easy to design culminating activities that are truly challenging. Senior projects are now much more common, but they are often performed more like a fancy “show and tell” rather than a rigorous requirement. One way to design or improve these culminating activities is to work in conjunction with postsecondary faculty. Although this is quite difficult to do, this type of teamwork clearly can lead to better connections and smoother transitions from high school to college.

Create an Intellectually Coherent Program of Study Within Disciplines

After planning appropriate culminating activities for high school, the next step is to look at the four years leading up to these exit standards to determine whether they are aligned. Some questions that can help with this difficult work include:

- How does this course contribute to the necessary skills and knowledge needed for the exit requirements?
- Does this course increase the intellectual capacity of students in a developmentally appropriate fashion? Is the pace appropriate?
- How does this course connect with those that come before and after? Does it emphasize key skills without repeating material?

To begin to help schools develop a coherent program of study, this section looks at the different disciplines in terms of what skills, knowledge, and habits of mind are often missing when students enter college and what steps faculty can take to improve this. Note that due to space constraints, only English and Mathematics, no other disciplines, are summarized here.

An Intellectually Coherent Program in English

→ **Reading** – Students should read a variety of texts, of different genres, for increasingly greater insight into those analytic processes used to comprehend text: author intent, style, voice, point of view, etc. They should explore be able to do a close reading. Faculty need to agree which texts will be taught when, the purpose of each, the types of analysis to be done, the genres they represent, and the themes and archetypes they illustrate.

→ **Writing** – Students' writing skills should be developed continuously and progressively in all classes in addition to English. Students should write frequently, about a variety of topics, with proper conventions, grammar, and usage. They should be able to develop arguments backed by evidence, understand the difference between fact and opinion, and adjust their writing according to audience. As a whole, the school will need to come to agreement about the standards and expectations for student writing along with examples of the type of work students are expected to produce by graduation and a common scoring guide that can be adapted.

→ **Editing/Rewriting** – Students should develop the skill of editing and rewriting their work with feedback. This is both an attitude and a skill. There should be clear writing standards throughout the school so student writing becomes progressively more complex and technically accurate.

→ **Research skills** – Students should formulate research questions, refine them, develop research plans, and find out what is known about a topic. Research projects should become a more integral part of the English curriculum. They should move from the simple project to the increasingly more complex. They need not be long – most colleges require five- to ten-page papers.

→ **Critical thinking** – Students should formulate and express original ideas backed by evidence. They should engage in an intellectual give-and-take without feeling hurt or always needing to be right. They should accept critique and respect the views of others.

→ **Senior-level seminar-type course** – This should be the culmination of the English program. It should emulate the demands of college classrooms. It might be team-taught with a writer, poet or professor. It should emphasize analytical thinking, critiquing of student writing, and the free exchange of ideas. There should be regular written assignments and the pace should mirror college. The senior seminar strategy is strongly encouraged. See The Center for Educational Policy Research's website (www.s4s.org/fipse) for more tools to help develop this strategy.

An Intellectually Coherent Program in Mathematics

- Students have a poor grasp of *basic mathematical operations* (e.g. using a common denominator to add fractions). Although they are taught these skills, they need to practice them enough to employ these skills consistently.
- Students do not develop a deep understanding of *algebra*. They need to understand it well enough to apply it both procedurally and conceptually to a wide range of problems. They need to think and reflect more about the methods they use to solve problems.
- Students need a firmer grasp of *geometry* – a deeper understanding of the ideas behind geometric proofs. They should be able to apply their knowledge of analytic geometry to real-world problems and understand the relationships between geometry and algebra.
- Students need to know the basic *trigonometric principles*.
- High school *calculus is not adequately aligned* with the calculus taught in the postsecondary world. High schools need to teach it in a way that it becomes better aligned.
- College professors in the natural and social sciences state that including *a statistics course* in high school would better prepare students for a wide range of entry-level courses in these two broad areas.
- Students need to develop their *mathematical reasoning*. The most important skill is to be able to think logically and systematically. They need to be able to use deductive and inductive logic and represent mathematical problems in multiple formats. They should be able to perform multistep problems and have a variety of skills they use to solve those problems. They should see the underlying structure and purpose of mathematics and to *apply mathematics* to increasingly more complex real-world problems such as carbon dating, amortization tables, and predator-prey models.
- In a coherent math program, ultimate connections can be made in a *capstone seminar course* that does *not* focus on new knowledge, but rather integrates the application of knowledge students already have. This should be a problem-based course which might involve experts from the community in areas such as engineering, agriculture, banking, etc.

In addition to creating an academically coherent program within each discipline, below are some schoolwide suggestions to better prepare students for college success.

Create Intentionality and a Clear Vision

A high school that prepares all students for college requires *intentionality* and *commonality* of purpose. Everyone must be focused on the intellectual and skill development necessary for a seamless transition to college. The faculty must share a vision of what a well-educated student looks like when graduating from their school. A good test of whether a school has such a vision is whether students can articulate this vision and connect their classes to this vision. Few schools have successfully articulated such a vision.

What might a vision of well-educated graduates look like? For example, they can present and support a point of view and catch flaws in an argument. They can make connections across disciplines and research a topic by locating appropriate source material. They ask interesting questions and apply high standards to their work. These are just a few examples, but what is remarkable is how different these students are from when they entered high school four years ago. Even more remarkable is the fact that the high school *consciously* and *deliberately* brought about this transformation. While some students already fit this description, the majority of students ride on the surface of their education, drawing cues from its industrial roots to see themselves as part of an assembly line that requires only that they show up and do as they are told. The high school must figuratively grab them and demand they develop their minds and become a part of a learning community with the shared goal of college success.

Create Clear Expectations and Progress Markers

To help students understand the school's vision and what it means to be a well educated student, it is important for a school to create clear academic expectations. Below are examples of ways to create clear expectations that help prepare students for college success.

Ninth Grade Orientation – Instead of simply reviewing student conduct manuals, the ninth grade orientation can be recast as a process that prepares students for the intellectual journey on which they are about to embark. Here they can get a clear sense of the intellectual expectations they will be expected to meet. Ninth graders need to get a sense of the type of work they will be doing and the products they will be expected to create. They can be given examples of culminating high school work, scoring guides, and course outlines; they can look at college-level work samples (at <http://cepr.uoregon.edu/cepr.samples.php>) or faculty can create their own over time; and they can look at tests they will be expected to take and scoring guides that accompany them.

Teacher Feedback – Teacher feedback is the most important way students will understand what will be expected of them later in college and how they are doing in relation to those expectations. The feedback should focus on the key skills students should be developing, not just what they got right and wrong. It should be detailed and complex. For example, in English, in addition to commenting on conventions and usage, feedback should discuss overall organization, quality of argumentation, originality of thought, and accuracy of assertions. When students receive this type of in-depth feedback over the course of four years, they come to understand the type of intellectual rigor that is expected of them.

Portfolios – Portfolios are another way to help students understand the college success standards they are expected to meet. The KSUS standards can be used for this purpose. These standards can serve as a checklist or rating system to determine whether each piece in the portfolio meets expectations.

Align the high school's instructional program with college readiness – The school can create a database to record the current state of its curriculum. This database can be the foundation for determining where the curriculum lacks coherence across departments or

grades. The Alignment and Challenge Audit introduced in the next section can be used for this purpose. Once these gaps are known, it becomes more possible to build a coherent program of study in which skills are developed systematically and progressively. Instead of having one English class that emphasizes writing and another with barely any at all, the school can create a well-sequenced curriculum that systematically develops skills.

Create the common goal of preparing all students for postsecondary success – If all courses are planned to be intellectually and developmentally coherent, then your school can become a place where it is impossible for any one student to make a bad decision about which courses to take. Students would have fewer choices but more common experiences. Students would also have greater clarity about the concepts, knowledge, and skills required for success. Overall, the high school curriculum would become clearer and more meaningful because it would be preparing everyone for the same goal: to succeed in college.

What We Can Do to Increase College Success: Questions and Actions

• *How can the content of high school and college curricula be better aligned?*

Intentionally aligning these two curricula should be a key goal for high schools. One way to begin is to have teams of high school and postsecondary faculty come together to look at student work and set mutual expectations for quality. These teams could even co-construct high school and college courses that are aligned. See information about paired courses at: www.s4s.org/fipse.

• *How do local postsecondary institutions place incoming students into entry-level courses and how well do they do this?*

Most students are not placed properly because placement tests don't represent high school learning. High schools should research the content of the tests and provide this information, plus preparation assistance (especially for seniors not taking math), to students. Also, senior courses should be adjusted to better prepare students for the content of these tests.

• *How well do high school graduates fare during their freshman year in college?*

This is a good gauge of how successful the high school instructional program is. Colleges often provide this information, but high schools rarely use it systematically. High schools can gather GPAs and information on student performance in the students' first math and writing courses. The goal is to examine trends over time and to alter the high school program appropriately.

The Main Idea's Professional Development Extension: Using Data on Graduates to Increase Student Success in College

- 1) Have a committee collect *quantitative* data about your graduates. To make this process easier, ask every senior to sign a release form to get their transcripts. Have the committee collect information about the following information: Are the students finishing college? In 4 years? Transferring or dropping out? At what types of schools are your graduates having more success? How are your graduates performing on placement tests?
- 2) Have the committee collect *qualitative* data as well. Ask each committee member to call 3 graduates 3 times during the year to ask a set of questions including the ones above as well as more open-ended questions about their struggles and successes.
- 3) Create an *alumni panel* (in January or June when colleges are out) to speak at a faculty meeting. This often can be a powerful way to show teachers what they're doing well and what they need to improve to increase college readiness. After the panel shares information, have the committee share the other quantitative and qualitative data they found.
- 4) If there is a particular area your school does not prepare your students well for (ex. math), after the panel, have teachers in that discipline sit down with alums and a copy of the Checklist for College Readiness (see last page in the summary) so teachers can get a much more specific idea of areas they need to improve to better prepare students for college in that discipline.

Existing Strategies to Increase College Readiness

This section discusses some existing programs that address the gap between high school and college. Many of the strategies to improve college readiness require schoolwide action.

Current Schoolwide Strategies Schools Use to Increase College Readiness

Advanced Placement: AP courses and exams increase the challenge of the college prep curriculum by testing student knowledge and skill needed for the first year of college. Colleges acknowledge this challenge by providing students with college credit. When properly taught, AP courses provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary for success in college. Because there is training for AP teachers, and a set exam, the AP system effectively creates a set of standards and consistent teaching expectations across all AP classrooms. This is the closest US education comes to a common program of instruction. When the AP serves as a capstone course at the end of a carefully planned sequence of courses that develop the requisite skills and knowledge students need for the AP course, the result is a high school experience that is coherent and organized around students progressively mastering core skills and concepts. While the AP course may not be for everyone, it can help high schools create a challenging and coherent curriculum organized around the goal of college readiness.

SpringBoard: The SpringBoard is not a test but rather a college-readiness program. It includes standards which outline what students should know and be able to do from seventh through twelfth grade in order to be prepared for college as well as increasingly complex instructional units around what is needed for college success. It also includes diagnostic tests at all levels to let students know how they are progressing in their college readiness skills.

ACT Testing Sequence: ACT provides a series of tests to gauge student college readiness in eighth, tenth, and twelfth grade.

International Baccalaureate: The IB program was developed to meet the needs of students who moved between countries as they completed their education. It provides a coherent education aimed at preparing for postsecondary success. It covers all four years of high school and its coherence comes from the set series of tasks students must complete as they move through the program.

Dual Enrollment and Postsecondary Options: These programs allow students to enroll in courses for which they receive both high school and college credit at the same time. This provides a clear financial advantage for parents. Also, admissions officers look favorably on transcripts that show students have a realistic expectation of college. Some are taught on college campuses and others in high schools. However, unlike with AP or IB courses, there are no common assessments or standards.

Early, or Middle, College High Schools: These high schools incorporate the equivalent of the first two years of college into the last two years of high school. These schools are often located on college campuses.

The Alignment and Challenge Audit: Currently, high schools rarely know if their program is aligned to the expectations of colleges. However, with the development of standards that outline what it takes for students to succeed in college, it is possible to measure a high school's curriculum against these standards. The Alignment and Challenge Audit was pioneered by the University of Oregon's Center for Educational Policy and Research as an extension of the KSUS standards. It is an outside audit that involves collecting and analyzing the content of the high school college prep curriculum. This is a complex process that requires collecting a great deal of curricular information and then having university faculty determine how much alignment there is with KSUS standards. For more information on the audit see: www.s4s.org/cepr.aca.php. Your school can also do a scaled down version of your own as well. The school can then use those results to make curricular changes to improve college readiness.

What We Can Do to Increase College Success: Questions and Actions

• *Are AP courses the culmination of a sequence of courses or do they stand apart? Who participates in AP courses and tests?*

Conduct a formal inventory of your AP courses and then look at their relationship to the courses that proceed them. Then look at who is taking these courses. The goal should be to get to as close to 100 percent as possible. Look at why some AP courses are *not* offered and the reasons for this. Perhaps students can take an online AP course – one way for a small high school to extend its curriculum. The school can provide additional support for these students.

• *Could IB be incorporated into your school, even just a few elements of the program?*

Examine the IB program to determine if any of its elements could fit into your school. An IB strategy, such as a senior paper requirement, could be implemented schoolwide.

• *How can postsecondary options be made available to students?*

Develop more relationships with postsecondary institutions to give students opportunities to take college classes or have these classes offered at your high school

III. The College Experience: What Students Need to Know to Succeed

Challenges High School Graduates Face When They Enter College

Soon after celebrating admission into college, often the sad realization sets in that being in college is a struggle. There are often two major reasons for this struggle: an inability to succeed academically in the classroom and detrimental behaviors (such as poor time management). This book focuses more on the former.

Lack of Mastery of Content Knowledge

College faculty have reported that there are large holes in students' content knowledge. It was not that they didn't know anything; in fact they knew a lot. However, they were unable to connect the pieces together or understand larger concepts. Much of this has been discussed earlier in the book – students come to college with an uneven high school experience, poor writing skills, math phobia, lack of experience with statistics, and an inability to interpret charts and graphs, among other problems. The problem is that students may fail an entry-level course because they lack the prerequisite skill and then avoid certain majors all together. This often drives students toward nontechnical majors. Furthermore, about a third of entering classes graduate in four years. It's not that students don't have the ability, it's just that they may need more than four years because they must learn or relearn material they should have mastered in high school.

Lack of Intellectual Maturity

Students who have intellectual maturity are open to new possibilities and are disciplined to apply thinking and analytical skills, "habits of mind." They have developed certain ways of thinking about knowledge and learning. College courses require more than mastery of content, they require this type of higher-order thinking. This is particularly true once students have chosen their major – it is here they truly develop this intellectual maturity and the key ways of knowing and thinking necessary for their major.

Lack of Understanding the Purpose and Opportunities of College

Many students hold the view that college is just an extension of high school. Students need to have some spark for the topic being taught and need to have a willingness to go beyond the minimum to truly reach their intellectual potential. Students with this approach often become involved in research projects, seminars, assistantships, summer programs, field studies, internships, or in a mentor relationship. Students need to understand the implications of the types of colleges or universities they choose – which college will yield more opportunities for them not just inside, but outside the classroom as well? Students who connect with faculty and other students report greater satisfaction with their college education. This only happens for students who see college as a time to learn and explore what is possible.

Insights into the First-Year College Experience

We have useful information about the first year of college from the National Survey of Student Engagement which has been administered at over 725 colleges and universities. This information paints a revealing picture of college life as new students experience it. Here are some of the results found in the survey.

Time spent on school work

The study found that 18% of American college students spent between 1 and 5 hours a week preparing for class, 24% from 6 to 10 hours, 20% from 11 to 15 hours, 16% from 16 to 24 hours, 10% from 21 to 25 hours, 6% from 26 to 30 hours, and 5% more than 30 hours. This contrasts sharply to Tom Loveless's study which found that only a third of 17-year-old high school students do more than one hour of homework. This change in expectations can be quite shocking to students used to spending much less time on class preparation while receiving good grades. It would help for students to have a more realistic understanding of the time needed to complete college assignments before they enter college.

Material covered

49% of college students, according to the survey, were expected to read eleven or more textbook or book-length packets of course readings per year. This is a big difference from high school – the amount and pace of reading required. High school students who were expected to read a few books a semester were shocked that they later needed to read a book a week in college.

Writing

The survey found, that for papers five to nineteen pages in length, 48% wrote one to four of them and 28% wrote five to ten of them. For papers less than five pages, 33% wrote between five and ten, 26% wrote between eleven and twenty, and 16% wrote more than twenty. Overall, students are likely to be writing something every week, and in many cases, two or more papers of moderate length each week.

Emphasis and goals of courses

As was mentioned before, the emphasis of course work shifted from high school to college where more analysis and deeper thinking are required.

Other findings from student self reporting

- Half of all students reported receiving tutoring during their freshman year
- 83% reported that they had lectures either “occasionally” or “frequently”
- 40% reported “frequently” feeling overwhelmed by all they had to do
- Two-thirds engaged in research projects
- 74% produced multiple drafts of written work
- 61% completed group projects

The General Education Requirement

The general education requirement has long been a facet of US colleges and universities and in fact distinguishes them from other systems in the world. Students must fulfill certain requirements before graduating as a way to ensure they receive a broad liberal education instead of specializing in only one area. The requirements vary at different institutions, but students generally take about a third of their credits in each of a number of designated subject areas including the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. Some institutions have designated core courses (students select from a list) and others have interdisciplinary courses with a thematic focus. The goal of these requirements used to be for students to be exposed to different areas of study. Now, these programs aim to help students develop specific ways of thinking and communicating. Below are some examples of different characteristics of current core curriculum programs (another name for general education requirements).

Integration of Skills – Many of the core curriculum programs integrate skills – such as communication, reasoning, and quantitative thinking – into the course content.

Appreciation of Diversity – Many institutions now mandate study of multicultural issues, gender issues, or other new topics. The goal is to teach diversity across the curriculum and connect it to the study of democratic values and a pluralistic society.

Small Learning Communities and First-Year Groups – It is becoming more common to find small-group learning experiences in the general education curriculum at large universities. Students are exposed to the core values of the institution through a seminar-style course taught by a senior faculty member. It also provides a more personalized learning experience and improves retention.

The book contains more specific examples of general education programs at the University of Chicago, the University of California at Los Angeles, the University of Michigan, and others.

Placement Tests

Although many people know about the placement tests, few treat it as an issue to address in the college preparation process. Students make the fatalistic assumption that there is nothing they can do and just hope for the best. The US Department of Education's National Center on Education Statistics reports that students who begin college by taking remedial courses are less than half as likely to graduate within six years as their counterparts who do not. Therefore, understanding placement tests is an important step in improving the likelihood of student success in college.

Placement tests are either commercially produced or homegrown. The two most common commercial tests are Compass, created by ACT, and Accuplacer, produced by the College Board. These tests cover a range of subjects and most are available online. The problem for students is that they rarely prepare for them and sometimes only learn about them once they arrive on campus. The best strategy is to avoid these tests by scoring high enough on *entrance* exams or having a high enough high school GPA. However, some

institutions require all incoming freshmen to take them. High schools cannot prepare their students well, but they can research the tests being given at the colleges their students most often attend. If any students will need to take a commercially produced test students can be referred to online sites that give advice on preparing for them. If teachers give their students access to this information and the opportunity to take a practice test, this can help.

Typical Freshman Schedules

Looking at sample schedules is an excellent way to help students get a feel for the first year of college. Below is one example. For other sample student schedules, see pp. 147-152 in the book.

Example of First-Year Schedule at the University of Oregon: Spring Quarter					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:00					
10:00	EC 101		EC 101		EC 101
11:00	ENG 207		ENG 207		ENG 207
12:00		AAD 252		AAD 252	EC 101 (discussion)
1:00					
2:00	ASTR 122		ASTR 122		ASTR 122
3:00	PEAE 231		PEAE 231		
AAD 252: Art & Gender (4 credits)		ASTR 122: Birth & Death of Stars (4 credits)		ENG 207: Shakespeare (4 credits)	
EC 101: Contemporary Economic Issues (4 credits)		PEAE 231: Aerobics (1 credit)			

IV. KSUS Standards and Sample Materials from College

This section contains the complete Knowledge and Skills for University Success (KSUS) standards which describe what will be expected of students in their first-year college courses. These standards are the result of three years of research done by the top twenty US universities and reflect the insight of hundreds of faculty who teach entry-level college courses. The book contains an entire chapter for each of six different disciplines (English, mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences, second languages, and the arts), but due to the space restraints of a summary, there are only excerpts of the English standards here. For the full set of standards, see pp. 175-245 or downloaded them for free at http://www.s4s.org/UUS_Complete.pdf starting on page 18. Note that each section contains two parts: a *narrative* which explains the foundational *skills* of that discipline and a *list* of the *content* standards students should master. Both sections are important. A dominant theme is the importance of the habits of mind such as critical and analytical thinking; problem solving; an inquisitive nature; a willingness to accept critical feedback; an openness to possible failures at times; an ability to cope with frustrating or ambiguous learning tasks; expressing oneself clearly; drawing independent conclusions; and use of technology. Many faculty considered these to be more important than content knowledge. It is not enough for students to simply know something; they need to be able to do something with that knowledge. A high school that adopts these standards will be taking an important first step in preparing its students for college success.

KSUS Standards: English Knowledge and Skills – The Foundational Skills

Reading, Comprehension, and Literature

Successful students connect reading with writing and thinking. They see reading as an active process – they ask questions, make notes, summarize, and critique the material. They also know how to think critically, take and defend a position, and paraphrase a reading assignment. Students should come to the university with a familiarity with a range of world literature as well as exposure to nonliteracy sources (like the Magna Carta). They should distinguish between different literacy forms (novel, play, poem, essay, and short story) as well as different genres (comedy, epic, tragedy, romance, and others).

Writing and Editing

Students need to learn grammar and to use proper sentence structure. They should understand how grammar helps to improve the effectiveness of communication. Students need to be able to write coherently, consider their audience, and support their ideas and arguments. Successful students know how to craft an outline before they write and edit their writing once a draft is complete. They should understand that all of these steps are critical in the writing process.

Information Gathering

Students should be able to not only take notes during a lecture, but to do more than create a transcript of what was said. They need to be able to take in the information, analyze it, and record what is meaningful. A lot of information gathering takes place outside of the classroom. Successful students should be able to create a research plan, be disciplined enough to carry it out, ask appropriate questions, and find reliable sources to answer those questions.

Analysis, Critique, and Connections

Students need to be able to think analytically about the information they collect. More specifically, they need to be able to categorize information by theme, go beyond the facts to make connections, move between the general and the specific, and to think comparatively. Furthermore, successful students know how to reflect critically. They accept constructive criticism, integrate their personal experiences into course material, and they assert their opinions and ask bold questions.

Orientation Toward Learning

Time management is crucial for success in college. Students should know how to budget the necessary time for reading and study. Students who participate in public discourse – reading newspapers and following world events – are ready to participate in academic discussions. To truly engage with their instructors, students need to move beyond the material presented in class. To fully discuss a piece of literature, students need to have a basic understanding of that work's place in history. Students need to be open-minded and consider a range of viewpoints. Successful students exhibit a willingness to push ahead, apply themselves, and work hard.

KSUS: English Content Standards (Note that this is an excerpt – only the Writing section of English is here)

Writing

A. Successful students apply basic grammar conventions in an effort to write clearly. They:

- A.1. Identify and use correctly and consistently parts of speech, including nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions, adjectives, and interjections.
- A.2. Use subject-verb agreement and verb tense consistently and correctly.
- A.3. Demonstrate consistent, correct, and appropriate pronoun agreement and use of different types of clauses and phrases, including adverb clauses, adjective

clauses, and adverb phrases.
B. Successful students know the conventions of punctuation and capitalization. They: B.1. Use commas with nonrestrictive clauses and contrasting expressions. B.2. Use ellipses, colons, hyphens, semi-colons, apostrophes, and quotation marks correctly. B.3. Capitalize sentences and proper nouns correctly. B.4. Consistently avoid run-on sentences and sentence fragments.
C. Successful students know conventions of spelling. They: C.1. Use a dictionary and other resources to see how to spell new, unfamiliar, or difficult words. C.2. Differentiate between commonly confused terms, such as “its” and “it’s” or “affect” and “effect.” C.3. Know how to use the spell-check and grammar-check functions in word processing software while understanding the limitations of relying on these tools.
D. Successful students use writing conventions to write clearly and coherently. They: D.1. Know and use several prewriting strategies, including developing a focus, determining the purpose, planning a sequence of ideas, using structured overviews, and creating outlines. D.2. Use paragraph structure in writing as manifested by the ability to construct coherent paragraphs and arrange paragraphs in logical order. D.3. Use a variety of sentence structures appropriately in writing, including compound, complex, compound-complex, parallel, repetitive, and analogous sentence structures. D.4. Present ideas to achieve overall coherence and logical flow in writing and use appropriate techniques such as transitions and repetition to maximize cohesion. D.5. Use words correctly, use words that convey the intended meaning, and use a varied vocabulary.
E. Successful students use writing to communicate ideas, concepts, emotions, and descriptions to the reader. They: E.1. Know the difference between a topic and a thesis. E.2. Articulate a position through a thesis statement and advance it using evidence, examples, and counterarguments that are relevant to the audience or issue at hand. E.3. Use a variety of methods to develop arguments, including compare-contrast reasoning, logical arguments (inductive-deductive), and alternation between general and specific. E.4. Write to persuade the reader by anticipating and addressing counterarguments, using rhetorical devices, and developing an accurate and expressive style of communication that moves beyond mechanics to add flair and elegance to writing. E.5. Use a variety of strategies to adapt writing to different audiences and purposes, such as including appropriate content and using appropriate language, style, tone, and structure. E.6. Distinguish between formal and informal styles – for example, between academic essays and personal memos. E.7. Use appropriate strategies and formats to write personal and business correspondence, including appropriate organizational patterns, formal language, and tone.
F. Successful students both use and prioritize a variety of strategies to revise and edit their written work to achieve the greatest improvement in the time available. They: F.1. Employ basic editing skills proficiently to identify obvious mechanical errors, clarify and improve the structure of the piece, and sharpen language and meaning. F.2. Review ideas and structure in substantive ways to improve depth of information and logic of organization. F.3. Reassess appropriateness of writing in light of genre, purpose, and audience. F.4. Use feedback from others to review their written work.

University Work Samples

Because the KSUS standards are general documents that require more detail, there are a variety of actual work samples from college classrooms which reflect these standards. These help to concretely illustrate the standards by showing the type of work students are expected to produce to meet those standards. The samples in the book can be useful to students, teachers, administrators, and even parents. Each sample contains four parts: a syllabus for the course; the assignment (an exam, essay, etc.); a student work sample; and faculty comments. Below is an excerpt of one of these samples. To see the entire four parts for the example below or for samples in other disciplines, see pp. 250 – 300 or go to <http://cepr.uoregon.edu/cepr.samples.php>.

Excerpt of the Syllabus for Rural Communities in History

Class Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:05am-9:20am

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30am – 11:00am, and other times by appointment

Objectives: This course examines rural communities in Europe and the US from the late Middle Ages to the twentieth century. We will be considering how groups in different places and times organized their social lives. Studying their communities will enable us to reflect on the communities we grew up in and are a part of today. By the end of this course you should be able to: 1) describe different types of communities in history and in the world today; 2) give a brief history of rural communities in Europe and the US from 1500 to the present. This course also introduces you to the academic discipline of history. By the end of this course you should also be able to: 1) describe what history is and what historians do; 2) consider texts critically; 3) construct a persuasive argument based on evidence.

You should expect to: Come to class, read assignments before class, prepare for class using discussion question handouts, and contribute to group discussion.

Texts: Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style*. Natalie Zemon David, *The Return of Martin Guerre*. Course Reader. Steven Hoch, *Serfdom and Social Control In Russia*. John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie*. Readings available on the internet.

Grading: You will be graded on: 1) your knowledge of history from class, 2) your ability to think critically, to speak and write clearly, and to construct an argument based on evidence. Breakdown:

Attendance and Class Participation: 20%

Paper 1 (2-3pp): 10%

Paper 2 (4-5pp): 15%

Exam 1 (covers the first 8 weeks): 10%

Presentation Preview: 10%

Exam 2 (covers the second 6 weeks and includes essay questions): 15%

In-Class Participation (10 minutes): 20%

History Writing Center: The History Department has a writing center to assist you in writing papers for History courses...

Plagiarism/Cheating: Any student who plagiarizes or cheats on any assignment faces penalties that may include...

Questions/Problems: Please visit me during my office hours (or other times by appointment).

EXCERPT OF THE SYLLABUS: Part 1 – RUAL COMMUNITIES IN EUROPE

Aug 28 Introduction to the course. History and Sources. Timeline of World History, Western Civilization.

Aug 30 Read: Coras, 86-103. Class Topics: Why Should Anyone Believe Anything at All?

Sep 4 Read: Davis, 1-61; Strunk and White, 1-14. Class Topics: Medieval Agriculture. Guerre’s France. Strunk and White on Usage.

Sep 6 Read: Davis, 62-125. Topics: Peasant Communities. Law and Community. Strunk and White on Composition.

Sep 11 Read: Strunk and White, 66-85. Topics: Davis and Coras. Communities in Davis. Strunk and White on Style. Writing a history paper.

Sep 13 **Paper 1 due: 2-3 page paper about Davis.** Topics: The practice of history. Thinking historically. Asking questions. Electronic history sources

Sep 18 Read: Finlay, 553-571. Topics: Disagreements among historians. Constructing an argument. Finlay vs. Davis.

Sep 20 Read: Davis, 572-603. Topics: Davis vs. Finlay. Critiquing an argument. Writing an argumentative paper.

Sep 25 Read: Hoch, 1-14. Topics: Intro to Hoch. Questions about Paper 2. Reading academic books.

Sep 27 **Paper 2 due: 5-6 page paper about Martin Guerre.** Topics: Types of history: cultural, demographic, social, etc. Asking questions.

Excerpt of the PAPER 2 ASSIGNMENT: MARTIN GUERRE

Due: Tuesday, September 27 at the beginning of class

Assignment: This paper is to be based on Jean de Coras's "A Memorable Decision," Natalie Zemon Davis's *The Return of Martin Guerre*, Robert Finlay's "The Refashioning of Martin Guerre," and Natalie Zemon Davis's "On the Lame."

Your assignment is to assess Davis's and Finlay's arguments about what happened in the case of Martin Guerre. Answer one or more of the following questions: What do you think actually happened in this case? Do you believe Davis's narrative or Finlay's? Do you find some parts of both of their arguments believable? What do you find convincing in their accounts? How do they use Coras's narrative differently? Be sure to support your argument with evidence from the sources. Feel free to talk to me or visit the History Writing Center.

Length: 5-6 pages, typed, double-spaced

Writing: Your paper should have the following:

1. An introduction that presents your thesis – the argument that you are going to make—and previews your main points.
2. A body that gives evidence from the readings and explains how it supports your thesis.
3. A conclusion that restates your thesis and briefly reviews how you supported it.

Follow the rules for usage and composition in Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style*. Edit your own work.

Grading: I am looking for: 1) a strong solid argument supported by evidence; 2) good organization: your thesis is presented in an introduction, is developed and supported throughout, and leads to a solid conclusion; 3) a satisfactory understanding of the source's content; 4) correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

EXCERPT OF A SAMPLE STUDENT PAPER

[first paragraph] It is hard to extract the truth from a story like Martin Guerre. It seems as though much is left to the imagination. Reading three different perspectives of the story just made me even more cautious and confused as to what is the real truth. After studying all the authors I have to come to the conclusion that Bertrande was not as innocent as she seemed but rather a key participant in Arnaud du Tilh's scheme. Although others may disagree, I believe there is more to the story than just the account given by Coras. It is not as black and white as Finlay interprets it. There are four key points to look at when looking at Bertrande's role in Arnaud's plot: the "touch of a man" on a woman, the characteristics of Bertrande's personality, her actions during the trial, and her independence as a woman. I believe that Bertrande participated in Arnaud's plot in ways that would only benefit herself and that may be the reason that she is looked at as dupe. She finally decided to go along with the accusations that Arnaud was not her real husband but in fact she was just covering for herself. Therefore, I believe Bertrande was an accomplice in Arnaud's scheme to impersonate Martin Guerre.

[last paragraph] As a result of analyzing all the interpretations of Martin Guerre I have come to the conclusion that Bertrande was in fact the accomplice of Arnaud. There is substantial evidence to support my theory such as Bertrande's personality, her actions in and out of the courtroom, her independence and the fact that she would have recognize the real Martin by his touch. The story of Martin Guerre is not as black and white as it seems. Looking at the story with an open mind is all that is needed to understand my argument. Coras's account is not the truth, but rather the evidence he had and how he interpreted it. Bertrande was a calculating, intelligent, woman who succeeded in her plot to have Arnaud become her new husband.

Excerpt of the FACULTY COMMENTS

This paper gives a very good idea of how a college student should be able to think about a difficult issue, formulate an answer, and support an argument with evidence from the past. The assignment was not easy; we had read three different accounts of a very confusing historical event: a man in late medieval France was accused of impersonating another woman's husband. One of the accounts was written shortly after the event; the other two were written by historians in the last twenty years. Students had to weigh the evidence and the interpretations and make an argument about what they believe actually happened. The paper shows that the student was able to perceive events and circumstances from the vantage point of people who lived five hundred years ago with historical empathy. (Social Sciences Standards I.A.5 and I.C.4) The student evaluated different historical interpretations and chose the one she thought was most reliable. (Standards I.C.7 and VII.C.3) She then constructed an argument that supported the thesis she had chosen. Organizationally, the student laid out the paper's thesis and previewed the main points of the argument in the first paragraph. The paper addressed each point, providing evidence from the sources. Quotations and important pieces of information are cited in parentheses. The student even provided possible counterarguments and responded to them. At the end she brought all of the arguments together. (Standards VIII)

In the Appendix is a self-assessment (Checklist for College Readiness) that students can use to determine how prepared they are for college and teachers can use to determine the challenge level of their courses. The checklist contains *specific* indicators of college readiness. It is *not* designed to be comprehensive, it is intended to be illustrative of what students are expected to know and be able to do in college. The checklist is composed of a series of statements, by discipline, that have been written by university faculty who teach first-year courses. It is written in language that students can understand. They can rank their performance level for each item from 0 (New knowledge) to 3 (Mastery). Below are some sample statements from the checklist. Note that the entire checklist covers the six disciplines described in the KSUS standards and that each statement may cover more than one standard. For the full checklist, see pp.303-336 or call (877) 766-2279 for a free copy (it will be up on their website soon).

Sample items from the CHECKLIST FOR COLLEGE READINESS

English

- I know the definition and function of each part of speech – noun, verb, adjective, pronoun, preposition, and interjection. I know how to change a word from one part of speech into another (for example, an adjective into an adverb) by altering suffixes.
- I can use a thesis to add structure to an essay. I understand how to go from having a thesis to developing individual points that support the thesis. I know how to make connections throughout my essay between my evidence, my individual points, and my thesis.

Mathematics

- Solve the following system of equations: $2x-3=15$, $3x+5y=32$
- The volume of a cylinder is 16π cubic inches. If the height and the diameter of the cylinder are equal, what is the radius?

Natural Sciences

- I am able to organize and present experimental data in a variety of ways, including in tables, graphs, and figures. I have a good sense of how different forms of data and information are best presented so that other people can understand what I have done.
- I understand how Mendel's laws relate to the movement of chromosomes into separate gametes during meiosis. For example, the woman with type AB blood will produce eggs of the types: _____. This can be explained because the A and B forms are on different _____ and segregate into different _____ during meiosis.

Social Sciences

- I am able to review US history, then define general criteria or principles for choosing the top 20 historical events/people that shaped the society and the world. I can then show the connections between the early historical events and the modern society.
- I can read Laud Humphrey's *Tearoom Trade* and critique its implications for ethical principles such as informed consent, confidentiality, full disclosure, and J.S. Mill's Least Harm Principle.