

Career Academies

PHASE 1 EVALUATION REPORT



Greater Twin Cities
United Way

BIG CHALLENGES REQUIRE BIG IDEAS

Collaborate

WE LISTEN

we are experts in convening community, and believe deliberate conversations with our nonprofit partners, the community, and donors lead to innovation.

Connect

WE CO-CREATE AND TEST

emerging ideas and strategies with our nonprofit partners.

Create Change

WE AMPLIFY

and scale promising strategies that drive results, impact change, and significantly disrupt inequities by income, race or place.

INNOVATION FOR IMPACT



CAREER ACADEMIES HISTORY & OVERVIEW

With support from donors who share our passion for the long-term vitality of our community, Greater Twin Cities United Way set out in 2015 to re-shape how our schools prepare students for success. We founded Career Academies to give every kid a shot at a meaningful career, while ensuring key industries have the skilled workers they need.

With support from the Pathways to Prosperity Network and Jobs for the Future (JFF) out of the Harvard School of Education, we have aligned school districts, colleges and employers behind three bold goals:

1. Diminish education disparities for low-income students and students of color.
2. Develop graduates with skills and credentials to meet employers' talent needs.
3. Drive family-sustaining employment for low-income students and students of color.

Career Academies does this by bridging classes and real-world career experiences and opportunities to earn college credits and industry credentials. GTCUW provides specialized funding, coaching and a peer-to-peer community of practice focused on building equity-driven, sustainable career pathways with local partners.

EVALUATION BACKGROUND

A formal evaluation study led by Smarter People Planning looked at the impact of Career Academies in five partner districts: Saint Paul Public Schools, White Bear Lake Area Schools, Burnsville Public Schools, Bloomington Public Schools, and Minneapolis community and Technical College. The evaluation covered the span of the 2015-2018 school years.

EVALUATION IMPACT ON DISTRICTS

As a result of the evaluation, schools reported they were able to better analyze course indicators relating to enrollment and equity. Using the data provided, districts were able to analyze attendance and GPA trends broken down by race and socio-economic status. The ability to access this data helps districts make targeted decisions to ensure the success of all pathway participants.

In addition, districts reported utilizing the data to tell their story of change and success and make the case for continued support from multiple stakeholders and funders. They noted that an evaluation of this scale may not have occurred without support from an external evaluator.



49%

STUDENTS OF COLOR

\$3,000,000

IN COLLEGE TUITION

3 MORE
DAYS OF
SCHOOL

\$2.80

INCREASE IN HOURLY WAGES

KEY RESULTS

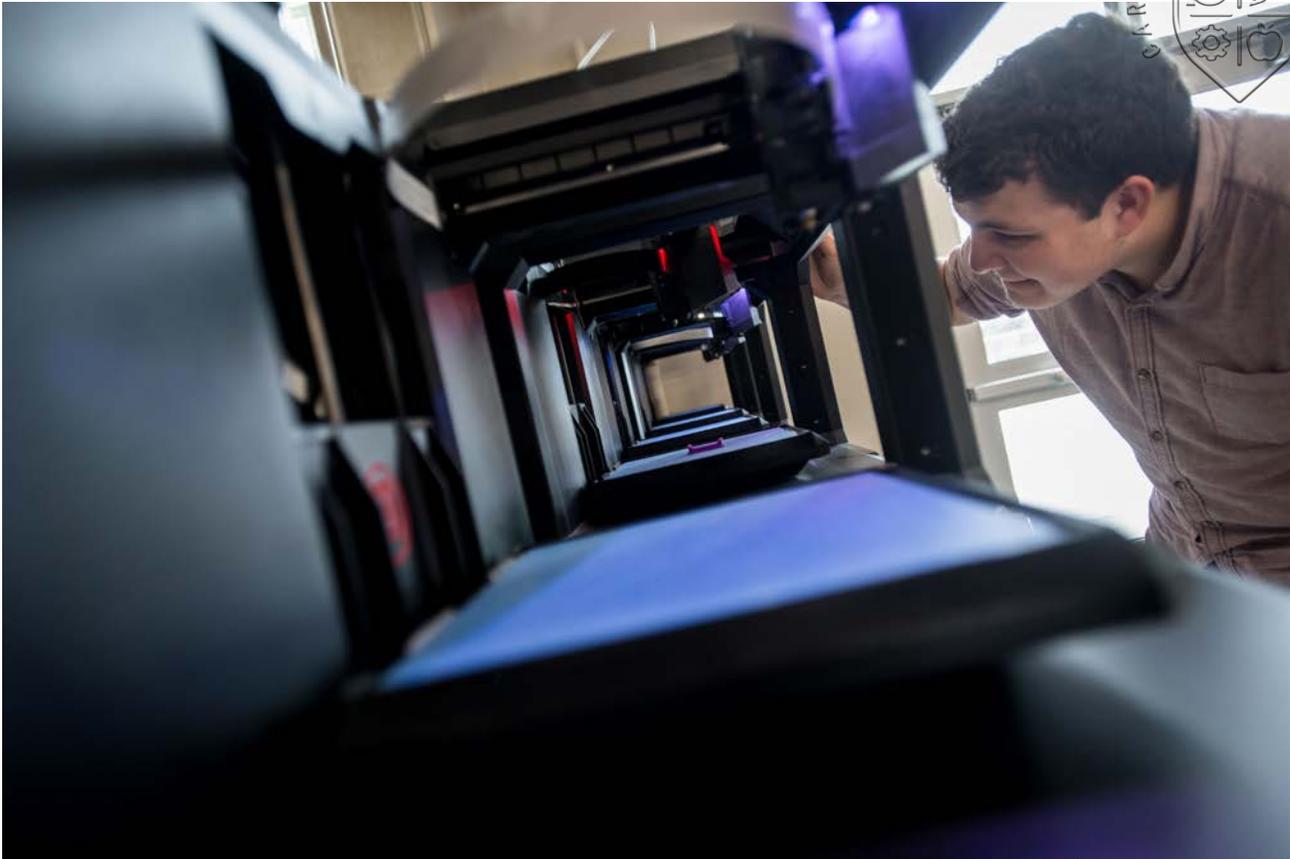
Since 2015, over 8,000 students have been engaged in Career Academies programming. **49% of students enrolled were students of color.** This far exceeds the statewide participation rates for students of color in similar statewide programs, which average 13% in concurrent enrollment programs. Students earned 9,891 college credits, **saving over \$3 million in college tuition** by accessing college credits through their high school programs.

For low-income (FRL-recipient) Career Academy students, there was a statistically significant average attendance rate increase of 1.7 percentage points. This means that Career Academy students attend almost **3 more days of schools, or receive about 24 more instructional hours**, than their non-Career Academy peers. Research

demonstrates that attendance is an important factor in student academic achievement. We are excited to see this finding in the early stages of implementation as an indicator of positive movement and trends.

Additionally, 87% of CA students feel equipped to solve complex problems and 84% of students felt confident in their ability to set goals for themselves.

Career Academies shows a promising trend in wage growth. Within one district partner, there was a statistically significant difference in wages earned between Career Academies and non-Career Academies students. This partner showed a **\$2.80 increase in hourly wages** for Career Academies students. This demonstrates important progress toward closing the wealth disparities gap.



FUTURE OF CAREER ACADEMIES - 2020 & BEYOND -

The evaluation results underscore the impact of the Career Academies approach and make a case for continued investment. GTCUW is excited to launch Phase 2 of the Career Academies initiatives, focused on 3 main goals.

1. BROADEN AND DEEPEN CAREER PATHWAY PROGRESS.

At scale, Career Academies is looking to add two more school districts and 8 more pathways. We will also build on the success in existing pathways to ensure more students who face the most barriers can enter wealth-building pathways.

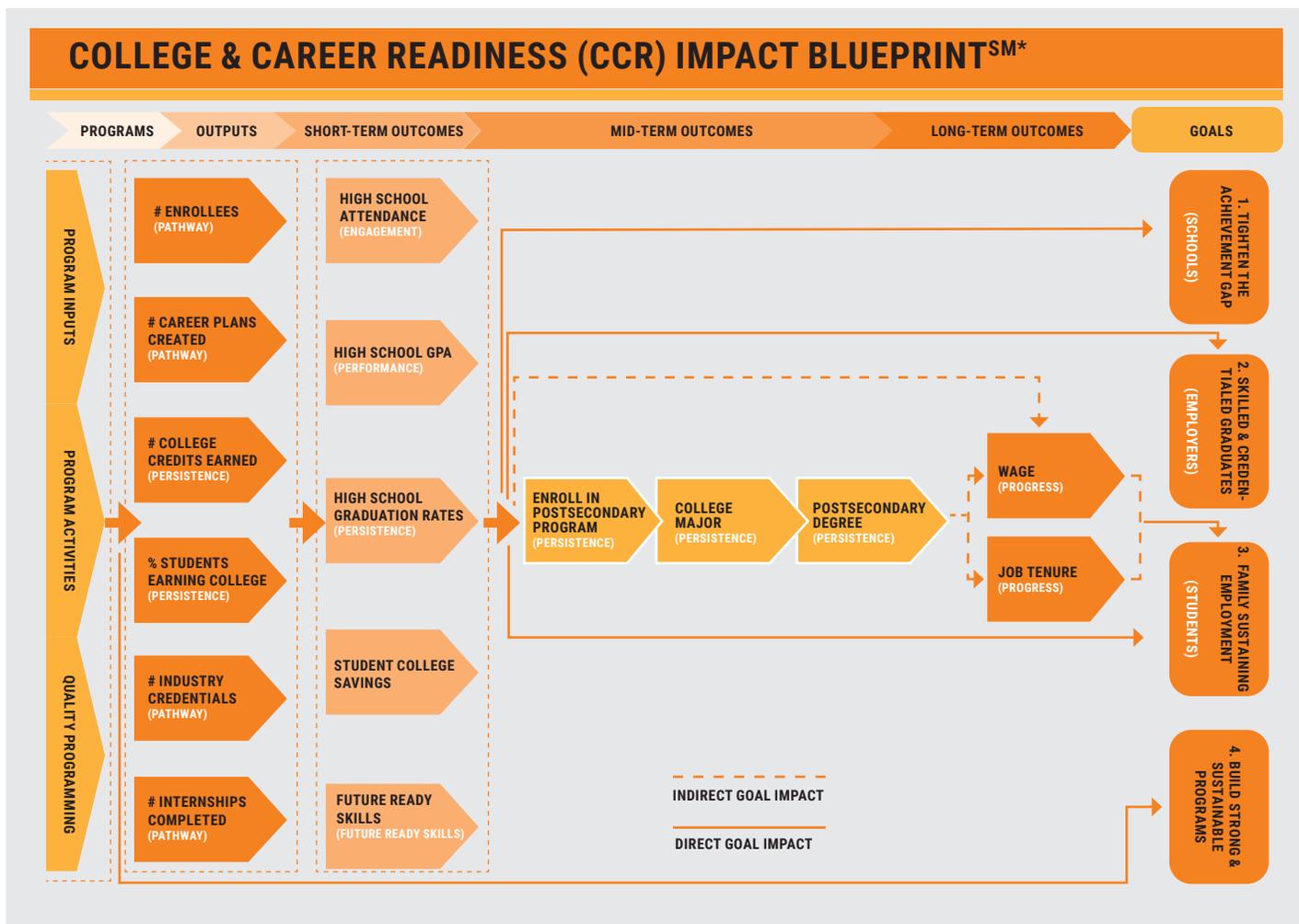
2. ENSURE SEAMLESS STUDENT TRANSITIONS.

Career Academies will expand access to relevant work experiences, train employers in delivering quality work experiences, and improve alignment among high school and post-secondary.

3. CREATE A STATEWIDE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE.

GTCUW will ignite a regional strategy to scale career pathways. These efforts will include convenings to share best practices, a playbook outlining how to build equitable career pathways in Minnesota, and support the long-term sustainability of pathways across the state.

CAREER ACADEMIES PHASE 1 THEORY OF CHANGE



EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluator and school partners utilized a host of data collection and analysis tools, including:

INDIVIDUAL STUDENT DATA

- The evaluator held data sharing agreements with each district to access individual student-level data. Data collected included course enrollment information, high school GPA, and attendance. The evaluator created a matched comparison group for CA students, working with school district staff to identify similar comparison students not enrolled in career pathway programming, allowing us to better understand the impact of participation in career pathways.

- In partnership with the Minnesota Department of Education, we accessed information on student post-secondary enrollment, jobs, and wages to understand the long-term impact of CA.

AGGREGATE STUDENT & PROGRAM DATA

- School administrators completed an annual monitoring dashboard, which provided aggregate level information on program activities and progress against goals.

STUDENT & STAFF VOICE

- To capture and prioritize the voices and experience of students, districts administered an annual student survey to all Career Academy students. This survey captured student feedback, views on college and career, and measured student confidence and competence in 21st century skills.
- Each year, the evaluator completed focus groups with students and faculty. Rapid feedback was provided to program administrators following each district's focus groups.