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Background

Mission
The College Crusade of Rhode Island was founded 26 years ago as one of the first statewide programs in the nation to combine early, sustained intervention with scholarship support. Our mission, updated in our 2012-2017 Strategic Plan, is to increase high school graduation, college and career readiness, and college completion for youth in Rhode Island’s low income communities. Our mission stands on a foundation of fundamental beliefs, which are also articulated in the strategic plan:

- knowledge is power
- all students can learn and be successful
- persistence pays off
- opportunity can impact poverty
- parents are a key to their child’s success
- parent input is important
- anyone can go to college with the right support
- high expectations yield high results
- every student has unlimited potential and can be empowered to achieve their dreams
Interventions and supports
With steady grant support from the U.S. Education Department’s GEAR UP program, The College Crusade has become the Rhode Island’s largest and most comprehensive college readiness and success program. Last year we:
- served 3,962 middle and high school students from communities with the highest poverty rates in the state
- engaged over 1,400 parents in our family programs
- provided $3.1 million in cash and donated scholarships to 843 ‘Crusaders’
- served 665 students through our college transition and completion services

Crusaders join our program in the sixth or seventh grade and receive ongoing support throughout middle and high school and to and into post-secondary. Ninety-seven percent (98%) of our students were eligible for free or reduced lunch at the time of enrollment and 94% are from minority families.

Advisory services
The College Crusade places 25-full time Advisors in 33 middle and high schools. Our Advisors are a consistent presence in the schools and are considered essential members of the school team. They get to know students well through individual meetings. They also provide expanded learning opportunities four days a week after school, including homework assistance, life skills, financial literacy, early college knowledge, and career exploration programs. They help to lower barriers to educational success by providing personalized educational support and motivating students to take rigorous courses, graduate from high school on time, and make a successful transition to college and career. College Crusade Advisors (many of whom are former Crusaders) are a diverse group of young professionals who understand the challenges that young people in disadvantaged communities face. They serve as advocates for students and their families and often become the one trusted adult that students can turn to for support beyond the classroom.

Integrated Support Services
To compliment activities provided by our Advisors, our Integrated Support Services team organizes a comprehensive array of more than 60 interventions and supports to meet students’ academic, personal development, career exploration and college readiness needs. These activities include intensive reading, writing and mathematics support; hands-on science and engineering programs; study skills trainings; college visits, fairs and shadowing; residential college programs; career visits and speakers; tutoring and homework clubs; SAT test preparation; getting to college workshops; financial aid and financial literacy sessions for students and parents; career exploration workshops; adventure education programs; and life skills development.

Post-secondary Support Services
As part of the 2012 Strategic Plan the College Crusade an established College Success department. The office includes an Associate Director and a Transition Counselor. The Associate Director collaborates with policy leaders and higher education program partners, develops and implements programs, and oversees all college completion activities. Early on in the development of our college success program partnership we identified the need to fully integrate college success initiatives with our college readiness programs as a high priority.
In responding to this challenge, we developed an innovative new position, a Transition Counselor to address a service void between the time a student graduates from high school with college acceptances in-hand, and the time they actually matriculate in college. Our Transition Counselor guides high school graduates through the transition to college and connects them to higher education support services offered by our partners. Transition counseling services include assistance with financial aid, college admissions and transfers, placement exams, course registration, career exploration, and connecting students to services offered by our higher education partners (discussed later in this section).

The Transition Counselor also tracks the progress of former participants who had made plans for college but did not attend, or who began attending college but dropped out.

**Family Engagement**

Increasing family engagement was identified as a priority in our Strategic Plan because students are much more likely to succeed when families take an active interest in their academic progress and assist them with setting and achieving goals. Our Family Engagement Program has grown exponentially over the two past years. The total attendance for our parent programs was 4,999 last year, with an unduplicated count of 1412 parents participating. We offer over 100 workshops a year to engage, empower and educate families to advocate for their child’s academic success and social development, and support their child’s readiness for postsecondary education. In addition, we offer open houses; conduct one-on-one meetings; organize family forums; host coffees for parents and principals; convene a Parent Council; offer the “16 Summers” college planning program; and orient parents to online mathematics supports available via Khan Academy.

**Achieving impact through systemic partnerships**

Preparing youth to be citizens of our nation and leaders of the future workforce in a global, information-based economy is a much larger challenge than any one organization or agency could accomplish on its own. Given this reality, and the fact that Rhode Island is a “city-state” with the second-most urbanized population in the country, we have chosen to approach our work through an integrated system of partnerships at the state, college, district/school, and community levels.

**State-level partnerships**

The College Crusade’s partnerships with the Office of Post-Secondary Commissioner (OPC) and The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) are critical as we strive to align our work to the broader statewide public policy direction of these agencies. We continuously monitor state education policy and regulatory developments and assess the implications that these changes have for our collective efforts to prepare all Rhode Island students to be college and career ready.

**District and school partnerships**

The College Crusade formalizes its partnerships with the communities we serve through annual Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) at both the school district and the individual school levels to ensure alignment with school improvement plans and/or school transformation models. Each individualized MOU specifies mutual operational understandings, data sharing agreements, measures of success, and evaluation strategies. This approach reflects our belief that authentic
partnerships with the schools will increase the impact on our students and lead to greater integration of our programs with each district’s infrastructure of supplemental educational supports for students and their families.

**Impact**

The College Crusade’s commitment to provide interventions and supports that align with public policy and are executed in the context of carefully articulated agreements with school and district partners has enhanced the effectiveness of our college readiness program. We see evidence of this impact in improvements in standardized tests and increased high school graduation and college-going rates.

**Increased proficiency on standardized tests**

Rhode Island was one of 14 states that field tested the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) assessments in March 2014. Approximately 9,000 Rhode Island students took the assessments, with representation from every district in the state. Full scale implementation of the PARCC assessment will occur in the spring of 2015. Information from the first assessments will establish baseline data that will be used to assess progress in the future.

As Rhode Island transitions to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) the College Crusade worked with educators and curriculum development specialists to align all of its mathematics and English curricula to the CCSS. We continue to ensure alignment with the CCSS as we add new academic offerings and/or refine existing programs.

**Increased high school graduation rates**

As the following chart shows, the four-year graduation rate for Crusaders in 2014 was 14.0 percentage points higher than the rate for all other students in the state’s urban school districts. In addition, the four-year rolling rate for 2011-2014 graduates is 9.2 percentage points higher. Looking at the graduation rate over multiple years is important because it increases the size of the student population and helps to produce more statistically reliable data.
Increased college-going rates
As the following chart shows, Crusaders also went on to higher education at much higher rates than their peers in the urban districts. In 2013, 72.6% of Crusaders went on to a two- or four-year college within one year of high school graduation, 20.3 percentage points higher than the most recent results reported for students in Rhode Island’s urban districts.

College scholarship partnerships
Since the inception of our program, we recognized the pivotal role that scholarships play with regard to motivating low-income students and families to aspire to postsecondary education and supporting their success once they arrive on campus. The College Crusade connects systemically to each of our state institutions of higher education (Rhode Island College, The University of Rhode Island and The Community College of Rhode Island) and to its eight private colleges (Brown University, Bryant University, Johnson and Wales University, New England Institute of Technology, Providence College, Roger Williams University, Rhode Island School of Design, and Salve Regina University). Currently, we maintain long-term scholarship collaboration agreements with all 4-year institutions in the state and nine schools outside of Rhode Island wherein they donate scholarships to Crusaders who attend their respective schools. These partnerships are essential to our success given that the vast majority of Crusaders who go on to college do so in state. With the support of these partners, we have provided $30 million in cash and donated scholarships to over 3,800 Crusaders since the first class entered college in 2001.

Impact: improving college persistence rates
The College Crusade interventions and supports and scholarship program are designed to ensure that Crusaders are ready for the challenging transition from high school to college. First-year persistence rates are the best indicator of a successful transition. Crusaders’ performance on this indicator provides additional evidence that our comprehensive approach is working. The following chart is an analysis of Crusader persistence rates from 2009-2012, which was completed by our external evaluators at the Center for Labor Markets and Policy at Drexel University. It shows that the first-year persistence rates for Crusaders at the state’s public colleges were 12 percentage points higher than the rates for all students at the state’s public colleges and 2.9 percentage points higher than the rates for all students at the state’s private colleges. The performance of these students is impressive when considering that 93% of
Crusaders are eligible for Pell Grants, as opposed to just 33% at the state’s public colleges and even lower rates at most of the state’s private colleges.

**Crusaders persist in college at higher rates**

*Average first-year persistence rates for first-time, full-time freshmen, 2009-2012*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Crusaders</th>
<th>All freshmen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>URI</td>
<td>81.1%</td>
<td>96.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIC</td>
<td>76.1%</td>
<td>87.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCRI</td>
<td>70.9%</td>
<td>85.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total RI public colleges</td>
<td>73.8%</td>
<td>87.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 8 RI private colleges</td>
<td>62.2%</td>
<td>84.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** Difference between rates is statistically significant at p < .01.
** Difference between rates is statistically significant at p < .05.
Source: Data collection and analysis by the Center for Labor Markets and Policy at Drexel University.

College completion partnerships

*College advisory and support programs*

While we are pleased with Crusaders’ first-year persistence rates, our ultimate goal is college completion. In 2012, The College Crusade established college completion partnerships with each of the state public colleges as part of the state’s College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) initiative, a U.S. Education Department program overseen by the Office of Post-Secondary Commissioner. The goals of each of these partnerships are the same: to increase college completion for low-income students. Each of the partnerships incorporates college success advisors combined with wrap-around student supports, though the way they are implemented varies in ways that reflect each institution’s culture and experience in the field. Last year, we served 200 first and second year college students through these new initiatives.

**The Rhode Island Partnership Project**

The College Crusade is a member of The Rhode Island Partnership Project, a statewide effort overseen by OPC. We have focused on efforts on supporting the development of a One-stop Shop for current, returning and new students. The initiative is called ‘Completion yoU.’ Its approach, which is informed by the Graduate Philadelphia model, is to coordinate the work of existing programs, optimize their outreach and effectiveness, and streamline processes to better address student needs in areas such as career pathways, internships, school selection, personal
development, financial literacy and assistance, and academic guidance. As part of this initiative, the state began offering a 15-week Gateway Course in January 2014. The course provides students with an academic support team to help them develop and maintain an individualized learning plan that includes personal, academic and career goals. It also supports students in addressing the logistics that come with enrolling in a degree program, including financial, academic and personal challenges. The pilot course was offered to students across the state, about a quarter of who were Crusaders.

**Dual/Concurrent enrollment partnerships**
Dual and concurrent enrollment provides an excellent opportunity for students to experience the rigors of college level courses while earning both high school and college credits. With the support of a grant from the RI Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner in late 2013, we began providing scholarships for Crusaders who enroll in a dual or concurrent enrollment program at one of the state’s three public colleges.

Upon receipt of the grant, The College Crusade’s President & CEO and Associate Director for College Readiness and Persistence formed a working committee, bringing college, district, and union leaders together with representatives from RIDE and the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner to design the new program.

As part of our dual enrollment initiatives, we worked with our partners at CCRI to provide a three-credit College Success Course designed to assist students in the transition to college. The course focuses on practical tips and strategies that will help students succeed, with particular emphasis on attitude, study habits and time and stress management. As part of the course, students create a personal success plan, develop various learning strategies, and are introduced to the array of support services that are available at the college.

**Other national, regional and community partnerships**
Our new strategic plan places a strong emphasis on partnerships to ensure policy alignment and to reinforce our relationships with other community- and faith-based organizations in the cities we serve. We view these partnerships as a priority since they enhance our capacity to provide high quality services to our students and families. The College Crusade’s President and CEO is on the Advisory Board for the College and Career Readiness and Success Center at American Institutes for Research in Washington, D.C. Our Associate Director for College Readiness and Persistence serves as a Regional Council Member at Large for the College Board. At the state level, staff are actively participating in the following networks that support college and career readiness and success, including: Partnerships for Success; RIDE’s Community Support Network; College Goal Rhode Island; Providence Children’s Youth Cabinet; Providence School Department’s Community Partners Committee; Central Falls Square Mile Coalition; and Segue Institute for Learning.

**A commitment to evaluating impact**
The College Crusade has an unwavering commitment to being data-driven in our operations and has consistently used high quality data to analyze our progress toward our goals and objectives and to make ongoing program improvements. As part of our enrollment process, the parent of every Crusader signs a release that enables us to receive their child’s grades, attendance, performance on standardized tests, and a number of other data points throughout their middle
and high school years. For the past 15 years, we have received this information on our students from the schools, districts, and/or RIDE, where all Crusaders are coded in the Data Warehouse. Following are the key data points we report on for our RI GEAR UP program, in addition to the major indicators cited earlier.
## Our Strategic Objectives: Baselines, Targets & Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase the percentage of participants who graduate from high school in 4 years</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the percentage of former participants who are enrolled in college within one year</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain the positive differential in first-year persistence rates between former participants and all students at the state’s public colleges</td>
<td>+7.3%</td>
<td>+7.3%</td>
<td>+12.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the percentage of Crusaders who pass Algebra I by the end of 9th grade</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the percentage of Crusaders who take 2 years of mathematics beyond Algebra I by 12th grade</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the percentage of Crusaders who take the PSAT in 10th grade</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the percentage of high school Crusaders who are promoted to successive grade levels on time</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the percentage of Crusaders and parents of Crusaders who demonstrate knowledge of available financial aid and the costs and benefits of postsecondary education</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the percentage of Crusaders who have knowledge of and demonstrate necessary academic preparation for college</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the percentage of parents of Crusaders who actively engage in activities associated with assisting students in their academic preparation for college</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the percentage of Crusaders indicating that they aspire to obtain a 4-year degree, and the percentage of parents of Crusaders who have this aspiration for their children</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the percentage of Crusaders who have indicated the presence of developmental assets vital to leadership and youth success</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain the high proportion of Crusaders who recognize the relationship between career and postsecondary needs</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Baselines and targets for all indicators in this report were set in 2011 as part of our 6-year GEAR UP grant application to the U.S. Department of Education.*
Enhancing our evaluation capacity

The College Crusade hired an Associate Director for Evaluation and Information Technology Systems to assess each of our interventions and supports and to work closely with our external evaluators at the Center for Labor Markets and Policy at Drexel University (CLMP). The College Crusade has a long-term evaluation contract with CLMP to conduct a quasi-experimental study of our program. These studies are considered the gold standard by the Institute for Education Sciences’ What Works Clearinghouse for evaluation in our field leading to evidence-based decisions at the program management level.

The initial phase of the study follows a group of 249 Crusaders who were enrolled as sixth graders in 2007-2008 and who entered college in 2014-2015. The study uses propensity matching to develop a carefully matched comparison group of non-Crusaders from the urban districts who were as similar to Crusaders at the time of enrollment in sixth grade as scientifically possible with regard to gender, race/ethnicity, NECAP scores, eligibility for free or reduced lunch, IEPs, school attendance and school climate. The comparison group of 249 students was drawn from a pool of 3,136 non-Crusaders for whom we had detailed student-level information for from the state of RI’s longitudinal database, aided by detailed data sharing agreements with RIDE, the urban school districts, the RI DataHUB, and membership to the National Student Clearinghouse. The latter allows us to collect student-level enrollment data at the postsecondary level. The study will follow six additional cohorts in this manner as they advance through middle and high school and into college, so additional information will continue to roll out in the coming months and years.

The initial findings show large, statistically significant differences between the initial cohort of Crusaders and the comparison group for:

The percent of sixth graders who advance to the 12th grade in 2013: Crusaders: 80.7%; Comparison group: 71.9%; Differential: 8.8***

The percent of sixth graders who graduated high school on time by 2014: Crusaders: 74.7%; Comparison group: 66.7%; Differential: 8.0**

The percent of sixth graders who enrolled in college in 2014: Crusaders: 56.2; Comparison group: 41.0; Differential: 15.3***

*** p< .01; ** p< .05

The findings also show a strong correlation between the degree of participation in Crusade programs and level of impact on the major indicators. Follow-up analyses addressing formative questions on the relation between specific program participation and the selected outcomes in addition to analyses identifying characteristics of participants for whom the programs was most effective.
The importance of using a system of "on-track" and early warning indicators for at-risk students

A 2012 publication, "College Readiness Indicator Systems: Building Effective Supports for Students," by the Annenberg Institute of School Reform emphasizes the importance of building and maintaining an effective college readiness tracking systems to monitor and support individual student progress. The need for such systems is highlighted in a 2005 study by Balfanz and Herzog, which indicates that most future drop-outs may be identified as early as sixth grade (the entry point for most Crusaders). In fact, more than half of sixth graders who shared the following three characteristics eventually dropped out of school: they attended school less than 80% of the time; received a low final grade from their teacher in behavior; and failed either mathematics or English.

The College Crusade places a high value on building individual student capacity. We carefully monitor the progress of Crusaders across the four domains as they move through each grade level and provide personalized feedback to students and their families. Balfanz’s research indicates that disengagement from school can become so great in the middle grades that students have almost no chance for postsecondary attainment; it also identifies ninth grade as pivotal to students’ educational outcomes. In the light of this and other research, The College Crusade’s “on-track” protocols currently focus on the transition from elementary school to middle school, and the transition from middle school to high school. We identify students who are “off track” with respect to academics and attendance, and develop customized interventions to support them.

Our EWS system utilizes a 6-point scale with 0 being the lowest level of risk and 5 being the highest. If a student scores a 1 (substantially below proficient) or 2 (partially proficient) on standardized state English or Mathematics tests, they would get one point on the EWS scale for each subject. Similarly, students whose English or mathematics grades are less than 70 would get a point for each subject. Finally, students who are chronically absent (more than 18 days in a year) would get a point.

High school Advisors will receive the EWS scores for their students in August, just prior to the start of the new academic year. Middle school Advisors will have access to their EWS reports once first quarter grades are available. (We are in dialogue with RIDE, which is considering gathering grades for elementary school students. If this change is effected, we will use these grades for our system and provide middle school Advisors with EWS reports in August.)

Advisors will use the EWS reports to work with individual participants, recruiting them to programs that meet their needs and referring them to school-based programs that can help them. They will also develop ‘contracts’ with participants and their families identifying the steps they agree to take to get back on track. A link to the contract is available on the system, right next to each participant’s EWS score.
Using research to operationalize a definition of college and career readiness

The College Crusade is fully committed to providing students and their families with the tools they need to graduate from high school prepared to successfully pursue postsecondary education. However, it has become increasingly clear to us that fulfilling our mission in the context of an evolving state and national educational policy environment requires that we become very precise about what we mean by “College and Career Readiness.”

Over the past three years, The College Crusade’s College Readiness and Postsecondary Success Initiative Team has made an extensive study of the national and local research on college and career readiness (see attached references). In our research, we found the work of six organizations to be particularly helpful to us as we developed our definition of college and career readiness: American Youth Policy Forum, College Board, Educational Policy Improvement Center, Annenberg Institute for School Reform, Nellie Mae Education Foundation, and the College and Career Readiness & Success Center. Collectively their research findings are important sources for us as we implement our program and strategic organizational initiatives. We include brief summaries of their work below.

The American Youth Policy Forum
The American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF), a well-known and respected Washington, DC-based organization, provides this definition of college and career readiness:

“AYPF takes a broad view of the concept of college and career readiness, expanding it to include the concept of success, not just readiness. By this definition, readiness means being prepared to successfully complete credit-bearing college coursework or industry certification without remediation, having the academic skills and self-motivation necessary to persist and progress in postsecondary education, and having identified career goals and the necessary steps to achieve them. Readiness also requires the development maturity to thrive in the increasingly independent worlds of postsecondary education and careers, the cultural knowledge to understand the expectations of the college environment and labor market, and the employer-desired skills to succeed in an innovation-based economy. In order for students to be successful in this broader framework of expectation, they need rigorous academic preparation, college and career planning, academic and social supports, employer-desired skills, and personal resources.

It is also important, in the discussion of college and career readiness, to recognize that youth will choose their own paths in life, with some young people charging forward on a traditional four-year college pathway and others moving equally quickly to pathways that are more technically or occupationally oriented.”

AYPF (Hooker and Brand, 2009)

AYPF’s definition is consistent with our view, and the views of increasing numbers of experts, that college and career readiness are complementary, not competing themes and that there is an inextricable connection between education, career preparation and workforce development.
To achieve our goal of preparing all of our students for postsecondary school and career success, we intentionally promote a culture of college and career readiness by using integrated, comprehensive strategies that reflect a set of high expectations for academic achievement, career awareness, and personal social development.

The College Board
The bedrock values beneath the programs The College Crusade offers are strongly aligned with “The Eight Components of College and Career Readiness Counseling” recently published by The College Board. These components:

“chart a comprehensive, systemic approach for school counselors to use to inspire all students to, and prepare them for, college success and opportunity – especially students from underrepresented populations. The eight components build aspirations and social capital, offer enriching activities, foster rigorous academic preparation, encourage early college planning, and guide students and families through the college admission and financial aid processes. By implementing these eight components, school counselors provide information, tools, and perspective to parents, students, schools and their communities that build college and career readiness for all students.”

The College Board (2010)

The eight elements include:

- College aspirations
- Academic planning for college and career readiness
- Enrichment and extracurricular engagement
- College and career exploration and selection processes
- College and career assessments
- College affordability planning
- College and career admission processes
- Transition from high school graduation to college enrollment

The Educational Policy Improvement Center
We have also found the work of renowned researcher Dr. David Conley, of the Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC) at the University of Oregon, particularly helpful to us as we developed our new framework. In April 2012, Conley presented at the College and Career Ready Summit held in Washington, DC, sponsored by The National High School Center at The American Institutes for Research. At this forum he highlighted the importance of students taking “Ownership of Learning” and identified the structure in which this ownership takes place:

- **Know Yourself**: Be self-aware. Find out your interests, passions, skills and ambitions.
- **Set Goals**: Know what you need to achieve based on self-awareness.
- **Be Motivated**: Have the mindset to achieve your goals
- **Persist**: Don’t give up, especially when something does not come as easily to you.
Monitor Performance: Know how well you are really doing. Gauge your true skill level.

Ask for Help: Know when you are stuck, then get help. Don’t view this as a weakness.

Show Self-Efficacy: Learn how to control the things you can control. Then, control them.

Conley’s work also identified the following key attributes students need to succeed in college. They include:

- **Key Cognitive Strategies**, which describe the ways of thinking that are necessary for college-level work. They include problem solving, inquisitiveness, precision/accuracy, interpretation, reasoning, research, and intellectual openness.

- **Key Content Knowledge**, which refers to the need for students to master writing skills, algebraic concepts, key foundational content, and “big ideas” from core subjects.

- **Academic Behaviors**, which consist largely of student skills and self-monitoring. Examples include time management, awareness of one’s current level of mastery and the selection of appropriate learning strategies.

David Conley’s work mirrors The College Crusade’s epistemological belief that that taking ownership of learning is an absolutely vital for Crusaders to achieve school success and realize their college completion dreams.

**The Annenberg Institute for School Reform**

The “College Readiness Indicator System” work of The Annenberg Institute (Fall 2013) provides an important conceptual framework for both school districts and college readiness and success organizations such as The College Crusade. Their research deepened our understanding of quantitative and qualitative methods of gauging college readiness. In particular, their framework stresses that contextual understanding and ‘non-cognitive’ skills, such as academic tenacity, are just as important in developing ‘on-track’ indicators as measures of academic achievement, including standardized test scores and grades. The College Readiness Indicator System design serves as a model for our program alignment as well as our approach to using data.

**The Nellie Mae Education Foundation**

Drawing on the work of The National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessments, The Nellie Mae Foundation’s publication “Ready for College and Career? Achieving the Common Core Standards and Beyond through Deeper, Student Centered Learning” (March 2014) will be helpful to us as we continue retrofit our academic programs and interventions to align to the Common Core State Standards. The Nellie Mae report “posits that truly preparing students for college and career calls for multiple pathways, new approaches, a broader set of skills and dispositions than the standards articulated in The Common Core.” This research has important implications for our comprehensive approach, which emphasizes four core domains of college and career readiness and success.
College and Career Readiness & Success Center
The College and Career Readiness & Success Center at The American Institutes for Research has developed a comprehensive and highly organized overview of key themes for college and career readiness and success that is particularly helpful for community-based organizations such as The College Crusade. Their “College and Career Readiness and Success Organizer” (May 2014) provides a systematic treatment of four key strands, each framed by an overarching question:

- **Goals and expectations.** *What should learners know and be able to do to achieve college and career readiness?*
- **Outcomes and measures.** *How do we know when learners are meeting expectations for college and career readiness and success?*
- **Pathways and supports.** *What do institutions need in order to enable learner readiness for college and career?*
- **Resources and structures.** *What should institutions provide to enable learners to achieve college and career success?*

Their approach reflects a composite of essential, interconnected considerations that are equal in importance. It provides us with unique and crucial insight into the key relationships to consider in developing and implementing our programs.

The College Crusade’s four domains of college and career readiness

Drawing upon the research described above, as well as the work of numerous other researchers cited at the end of this document, we have developed a model featuring four highly interrelated domains which The College Crusade believes are essential to support students’ secondary and post-secondary school success:

- Academic achievement
- Career pathways and employability skills
- Personal-social development
- Financial literacy for college and career

This model reflects our broader organizational focus on preparing young people as individuals and developing their personal capacity to take on a variety of challenges and responsibilities. Helping students to build ownership and motivation for achieving their college dreams across these four domains is the cornerstone of all of our program offerings. This approach also provides us with a realistic operational framework for developing both student-level and program-level outcomes and measures to gauge progress.

**Academic achievement**

When students join the program at the start of middle school, our primary emphasis is on building academic skills and content knowledge. As our state and nation transition to the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC), it is important that our interventions and supports remain up-to-date. For this reason, we have been working with education consultants over the past two years to align our academic programs to the CCSS, with special emphasis on mathematics and English language arts.
Career pathways and employability skills
Emphasizing the relationship between education and career opportunities is integral to the design of College Crusade programs. Urban students often indicate that they do not understand the relevance of what they are studying in school. From the time they enter middle school until they graduate high school, we expose Crusaders to a diverse group of professionals, who discuss their career paths and how their work relates to their educational experience. Many of these career speakers are College Crusade alumni, who are compelling role models for our students. Our Advisors also administer various career inventory tools to help students reflect on careers that align with their talents and provide them with a road map of the educational requirements for entry into fields that interest them.

Personal-social development
It is essential to help students develop grit and social competencies to support their overall success. Through various strategies, we help students learn to self-manage their time and priorities, and to develop the leadership skills, independence, and resiliency associated with success. We also stress character development across our program offerings to help students build the personal and civic qualities they need to be productive members of society. While there is no magic formula for predicting postsecondary success, our current data strongly suggests that developing the “whole student” is an essential part of the process.

Financial literacy and college and career knowledge
Two-thirds of Crusaders will be first generation college students from families that lack “college knowledge.” The College Crusade provides ongoing support to students and families to help them manage the complex college application and admissions processes. We also recognize the critical role that financial literacy plays in this process and have placed greater emphasis upon developing these skills over the past several years. Recently, we have identified comprehensive, developmentally appropriate curricula that will equip parents and students with the tools they need to understand the cost of postsecondary education and navigate the financial aid process while developing strategies for saving, investing and borrowing.

Analysis of college and career characteristics and indicators
As we prepare our students to be college and career ready, our goal is to inspire Crusaders to have high expectations of themselves and, at the same time, provide them with tools to gauge their own readiness with regard to both quantifiable indicators and qualitative measures.

College Crusade programs are designed to develop “comprehensive readiness” as opposed to focusing on one dimension as the sole determinant of readiness. While we anchor our students in as much academic rigor as possible, our holistic approach also emphasizes “softer” non-cognitive skills of resiliency, problem solving, communication and work ethic. While there may not be the level of predictive validity for non-cognitive traits when compared to academic test scores, grades and overall academic achievement, the literature suggests that taking a comprehensive approach via multiple domains has substantial merit.
Key characteristics of college and career ready middle & high school Crusaders

In articulating our college and career readiness model, we have identified the following characteristics that reflect the foundational aspects of our work as they relate to the four domains described above.

Academic Achievement
- Applies acquired knowledge
- Participates in rigorous college level and advanced coursework
- Thinks critically, applies learning and solves problems
- Possess strong literacy, mathematics and science skills
- Exhibits on-line research skills including media and library use
- Utilizes good organizational and study skills
- Possess digital literacy skills

Career Pathways & Employability Skills
- Creates a resume and awards/honors summary sheet
- Understands the importance of professional/workplace behavior
- Communicates effectively and has the ability to speak with confidence to adults
- Understands the content of selected career options and the educational requirements for entry into the fields
- Acknowledges the importance of adapting to workplace environments and cultures
- Understands variations of workplace expectations and cultures
- Develops and maintains a network of supports and references
- Manages time efficiently and prioritizes responsibilities

Personal-Social Development
- Maintains a high level of self-awareness
- Sets personal goals and aspirations for college and career
- Makes responsible and informed choices
- Self-manages time, work tasks and projects
- Takes initiative and self-directs personal efforts
- Demonstrates persistence in school and at work
- Collaborates with others and works as a team member
- Demonstrates leadership abilities when called upon to do so
- Possesses a sense of civic responsibility and identifies ways to help others
- Makes wise and intelligent decisions about the use of social media
- Pursues healthy relationships and avoids drugs and alcohol use

Financial Literacy and College & Career Knowledge
- Understands the financial aid process
- Distinguishes the difference between merit and needs-based financial aid
- Understands the importance of planning ahead to pay for college and related costs
- Knows the total cost of attendance for college
- Understands savings and investment options
- Has a bank account and regularly manages their finances
- Differentiates between “needs” and “wants” in relation to financial resources
Key indicators of college and career readiness for middle and high school Crusaders
We have also developed a set of specific indicators to identify Crusaders who possess the college and career readiness characteristics described above.

**Academic Achievement**
- Maintains a 3.0 Grade Point Average
- Demonstrates proficiency in the NECAP in both English language arts and mathematics
- Scores a 1550 on the SAT
- Is on track with district Portfolio and Proficiency Based Graduation Requirements
- Meets annual course work requirements
- Enrolls in an AP course or a dual enrollment course
- Takes the PSAT in the 10th grade

**Career Pathways & Employability Skills**
- Develops a resume by the end grade 9
- Obtains a career/technical certificate in accordance with the Rhode Island’s Career and Technical Education regulations
- Completes the Harrington O’Shea Career Interest Inventory Tool by 10th grade
- Participates in an internship by 12th grade
- Attends 10 hours of the Choices program
- Takes part in a Career Day and/or completes 10 hours of Saturday CruClub
- Participates in a leadership development program

**Personal-Social Development**
- Maintains 95% attendance rate
- Attends 4 hours of life skills workshops annually
- Demonstrates persistence, problem-solving skills, resiliency, and perseverance as observed by Advisor
- Exhibits self-awareness, leadership, and decision making skills as observed by Advisor
- Participates in a service learning and/or community service project
- Volunteers in the community on an annual basis
- Works cooperatively and collaboratively in a team as observed by Advisor
- Shows evidence of their ability to seek resources and support as observed by Advisor

**Financial Literacy and College & Career Knowledge**
- Completes and submits a FAFSA form
- Completes 5 hours of the “Getting To College Workshop”
- Applies to 4 or more institutions of higher education
- Completes the College Crusade’s annual Orientation and Student Assessment
- Participates in 5 hours of the Money 101 program
- Completes 8 hours of financial literacy training
- Displays competence in personal financial choices as observed by Advisor
- Applies for scholarships
- Receives the maximum Crusade scholarship according to the tiered scholarship incentive
Summary

The College Crusade is firmly committed to using research, data, evaluative feedback and other information on an ongoing basis to refine our college and career readiness interventions and supports and to monitor the individual and collective progress of our 3,962 Crusaders. As a mission-driven, learning organization, we continually assess our core competencies and operational priorities within the context of our Strategic Plan. We regard this paper as a working document that helps us to align our support strategies with research and the best practices in the field. We will update this document on a regular basis based on emerging research and on the lessons we learn in the field.
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