1818 Advanced College Credit Program

Principals’ Impact Study

2014 Report

Introduction

In the spring of 2014, the 1818 Advanced College Credit Program conducted a study of the impact of the 1818 Advanced College Credit Program on partner high schools’ students and the schools themselves from the perspective of the partner schools’ administration. Principals, and administrators were queried in a survey regarding the ways in which their participation in 1818 Advanced College Credit Program has impacted their students and their high school. Principal respondents indicated an overall positive experience with the 1818 ACC Program, a positive impact on their students’ teachers’ schools’ and personal experience, and high recommendations to future 1818 ACC students.

Methodology of the Study

The Program Director of the 1818 Advanced College Credit Program and the Assistant Director developed the research instrument heavily dependent on the NACEP “Principal Impact Survey” template. They converted the questions to a questionnaire, utilizing the Qualtrics on-line survey tool. The survey contained 18 questions, addressing school demographics, and the impact of the 1818 ACC Program’s presence in the school from academic, personnel, and marketing perspectives. Each survey focused questions from the perspective of the subject group.

The researchers conducted the entire study electronically. Principals received an email invitation on May 13, 2012 and subsequently every week after to participate in the survey. The survey results were confidential, but not anonymous, as the researchers held email addresses and could identify respondents and non-respondents.

Subjects

The study included the 92 principals of the 92 active partner high schools in the 1818 Advanced College Credit Program during the 2013-2014 academic year.
The majority of respondents to the survey, 72% or 13 schools, claimed 10 or more years of experience with the 1818 Advanced College Credit Program. While 17% or 3 schools identified as being a partner between 6-10 years. The remaining respondents noted that they have partnered with the 1818 ACC Program for 3-5 year, 6% or 1, and 1-2 years, 6% or 1, respectively.

In terms of student enrollment, forty-four percent of the principals (8) serve schools with enrollments of 500 – 1250 students; 22%, (4), 250-499 students; 17% (3), 1250 or more students; and 17% (3), 250 students or less. Respondents predominantly serve suburban schools (56% or 10 principals), but 22% serve rural schools (4 principals) and 22% (4 principals) work in urban schools.

Eleven of the eighteen respondents serve in private schools and seven in public schools.

**Rate of Responses**

Researchers received 18 responses from the possible 92 active partner high schools in the study, for a response rate of 19%.

**Summary of Responses**
In terms of impact, respondents overwhelmingly had positive perceptions of the 1818 Advanced College Credit Program’s relationship with their institution. All eighteen schools indicated either strongly agreed (74%) or agreed (21%) that the relationship between Saint Louis University and their institution was a collegial partnership.

Similarly, all schools responded with as strongly agreeing (63%) or agreeing that the 1818 Advanced College Credit Program provides collegial professional development opportunities to their instructors.

In response to questions about the partnership between the two institutions, there was a strong response rate in a variety of categories in the support the 1818 Advanced College Credit Program offers. Eighty-nine percent (16) noted their programs supported by the 1818 Advanced College Credit Program in terms of Professional Development; 72% (13) noted Library Access as a support; 78% (14) felt supported in terms of conference offerings; 72% (13) found support in terms of Campus Visits; 67% (12) acknowledged support in terms of teacher scholarships; 22% (4) believed the partnership supported by technology resources; and 17% (3) felt support in financial aid counseling and academic advising.
Principals had a positive view of the benefits the 1818 Advanced College Credit Program offered to instructors. Overall there were no disagreeing or strongly disagree responses to any of the questions. In terms of aligning secondary and college curriculum seventeen either strongly agreed (13) or agreed (4) with only one individual being neutral. Again eighteen administrators either strongly agreed (13) or agreed (5) that the program improves college readiness of the instructors’ courses. Finally, sixteen agreed (4) or strongly agreed (12) that instructors developed subject-area expertise with only two remaining neutral.

Fourteen strongly agreed (78%) and 3 (17%) agreed that participation with Saint Louis University resulted in improved academic rigor at the high school. When asked for additional information on how the 1818 Advanced College Credit Program improved academic rigor, 100% of respondents referred to the partnership created college course standards and the expectation of college work in the school. A majority (83% or 15 schools) agreed that the program create a higher level of student accountability. One administrator selected other commenting, “We need to do it this way, because of the expectation set by SLU.”
When asked about the perception of impact the 1818 Advanced College Credit Program had on parents of students in the participating high schools, fourteen administrators (78%) strongly agreed (5) or agreed (9) that parents developed a better understanding of college expectations. Four of the respondents were neutral (22%) and no respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Overall the relationship and benefits of the partnership was highly rated by the responding administrators. The result of the partnerships was favorably viewed in terms of supporting schools with 22 strongly agreeing and 11 agreeing that the program both helped the school offer a greater number of rigorous classes and offer prerequisite courses that prepare students for upper grade college courses.

In terms of the participation helping the schools demonstrate to parents the elevated challenge of the work and the elevated prestige the school receives due to the partnerships 28 strongly agreed with these statements, 4 agreed, and 4 remained neutral. Finally, the 18 schools strongly agreed and agreed that because of their partnership with the 1818 Advanced College Credit Program that more students continued in post-secondary education and more succeeded in their post-secondary education.

**Analysis of the Responses**

Principals’ responses to the “Impact Study” questions came as no real surprise. The Program Director of the 1818 Advanced College Credit Program remains in close contact with school principals through electronic and personal communications, professional development days, summer pre-service training, annual Principals Summit, and the 1818 ACC Advisory Board. She regularly solicits feedback on particular topics, and frequently receives unsolicited feedback on issues she may not have known to be issues. The generally positive tenor and tone of the survey responses comes as no surprise.
Respondents provided additional feedback when asked if there were any additional comments or ways they would like to see the relationship develop.

In terms of continuing developing the partnership of our programs there was a mixture of praise and suggestions. Two noted suggestions regarding the qualifications set forth by the program for adjunct instructors. One individual commented, “I do wish it were easier to get teachers approved, but I realize it is beyond the scope of the Program itself given the state restrictions.” The other individual stated, “Allowing teachers who are experienced and qualified teachers not to have to take specific university courses if they can demonstrate they are qualified to teach the courses.” Overall a resounding desire to grow the program course offerings was well documented among respondents.

All seven comments were positive in manner. One stated, “I appreciate the rigor and support SLU offers in my school. By far, they enable us to set and maintain high standards.” Others noted the Program’s “professionalism is second to none,” “willingness to work with [the high school] in order to provide exceptional opportunity for students,” “and one noted “quality, professional, and person-centered staff.”

The scarcity of actual responses also comes as no surprise. The Program Director realized at the time of distribution of the survey that many of the principals would set it aside, to get to it at a “less busy time.” However, everyone who has ever been a high school principal knows that time rarely comes. The Program Director interprets the lack of response as more of a comment on her poor timing of the survey in the last month of the school year, than a commentary on the impact of the 1818 Advanced College Credit Program in its partner high schools.

However, the responses to one pair of questions on the survey require immediate consideration. The principals clearly do not adjust their expectations in any way for the time they require of their teachers as high school teachers, and the extra time the teachers need to serve as high school adjunct instructors for Saint Louis University. While the 1818 ACC Program does not require full time duty from the high school adjuncts, the program does exert some additional demands on their time and energy. The topic of “expectation of efforts” clearly needs to be an on-going conversation between the 1818 ACC office and officials in 1818 ACC partner high schools.

Conclusions

The 1818 Advanced College Credit Program has only conducted one other formal impact study from among its partner school principals prior to this study. The program does, however, note and document unsolicited feedback, whether through phone calls, emails or personal contacts. The use of impact studies such as the “Principals’ Impact Study” provides quantifiable feedback that can only serve to aid the leadership of the 1818 Advanced College Credit Program in providing sustainable and continuous quality improvement. Because of the need to comply fully with NACEP standards as part of the accreditation application, the 1818 ACC Program staff
surveyed not only principals, but teachers and guidance counselors as well. In the future, these groups will be surveyed on a three-year rotation, repeating teachers next year (2013), following with principals again in two years (2014), and completing the cycle with guidance counselors in three years (2015).