



## **Evidence Document**

for Higher Learning Commission Reaccreditation

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**Document Title:** Early Access Academy

**Office of Origin:** Diversity Affairs

### **Document Summary:**

College Access Initiative facilitates school- and campus-based outreach for high school students and retention support for current college students. The Initiative will host week-long academic residential programs to expose junior high students to academic fields, related careers, student life and college opportunity. Students would attend the ACT Academy, a college readiness program for high school students to help improve their ACT scores, navigate the admissions and financial aid process, and more.



## EARLY ACCESS ACADEMY

College Access Initiative facilitates school- and campus-based outreach for high school students and retention support for current college students. Our vision for growth is to begin serving students sooner, with goals to increase early exposure to college opportunity, to support college-going goals, and to maintain a culture of expectation as the students move through high school.

College Access Initiative hopes to pilot a summer program series that will begin with a 50-student cohort of 7th and 8th graders from Pine Bluff-area junior high schools, continue the following year with the same students as 8th and 9th graders, and finally channel them into our ACT Academy for high school students. The students would attend week-long academic residential programs on the U of A campus each summer.

During the first summer, 7th and 8th-graders would engage in diverse academic programming designed to expose them to academic fields, related careers, student life and college opportunity. The second phase of the pipeline program would return the entire cohort, then as 8th and 9th graders, to campus for a college preparatory academy focused on reading, synthesis, and reasoning skills that are critical to effective study habits, higher-level academic work, and college success. These broader learning objectives would frame an on-grade-level PSAT and PLAN curriculum designed to introduce students to standardized college entrance exams. The academic counseling component of the program would involve early college coaching and mentoring, which would be continued throughout the next academic year through regular school outreach.

In the third phase of the pilot, the cohort would attend our ACT Academy, a college readiness program for high school students that helps them improve their ACT scores, navigate college admissions and financial aid processes, and to be assertive, effective self-advocates with respect to their college goals and needs.

Throughout the three-year pilot, the students would be advised and mentored by college readiness and retention professionals and by college students who represent the unique challenges that first-generation, low-income and underrepresented college students experience. Students' academic performance and progress before, during, and after the program will be evaluated, along with the evolution of their college expectations and goals, and ultimately their college-going and success. A gift of \$75,000 would provide for two years of this pilot program; Diversity Affairs would support the students in the third year and beyond.