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# NEW MEXICO EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS: The College and University Perspective

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## Introduction: A 2016 Study on Early College High Schools in NM

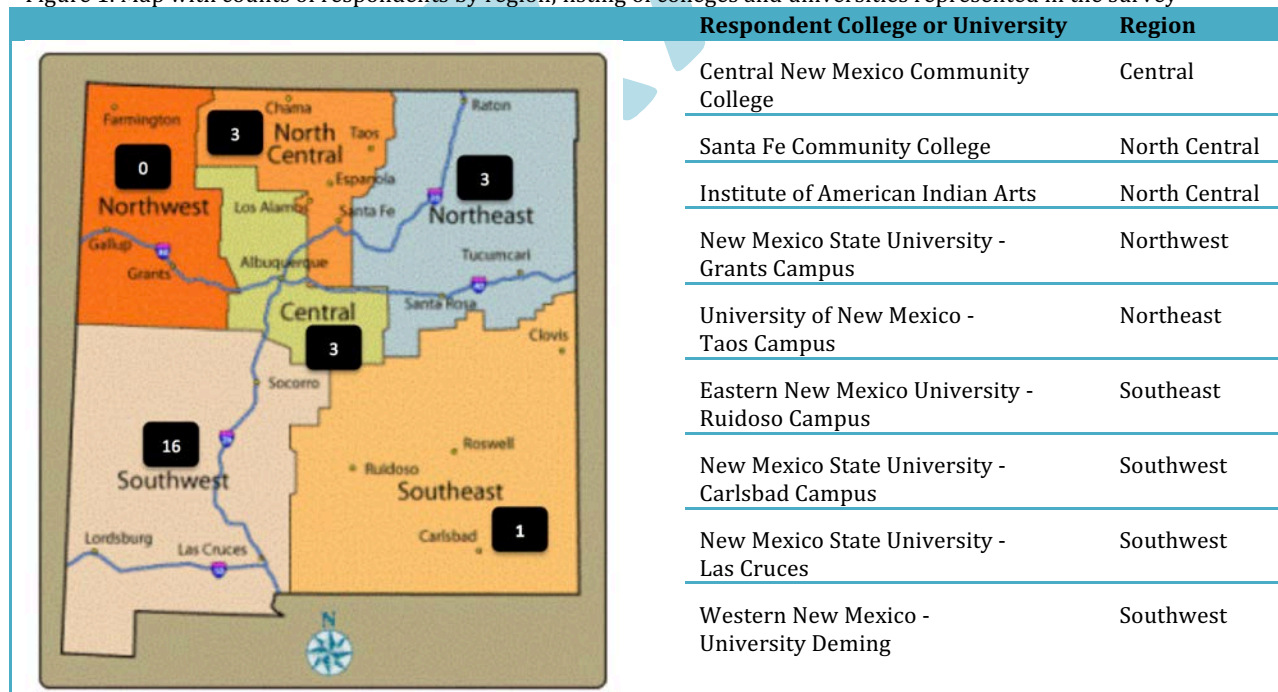
The Early College High Schools (ECHSs) in New Mexico are designed to propel students toward high school graduation while simultaneously earning college credit toward career certifications and two-year degrees. Models vary, but typically students start the acceleration in grades 9 and 10 by completing a significant percentage of their high school course requirements for graduation. Then, in grades 11 and 12, they attend a local community college, college, or university to earn a 2-year degree or workforce credential prior to their high school graduation. Currently there are 21 self-identified ECHSs in New Mexico (see list in Appendix A). The formal definition of an ECHS is listed in Appendix B.

In 2016, the New Mexico Department of Public Instruction commissioned a study to document the current needs of ECHS programs and the nature of the ECHS models that had evolved in the state. Survey data were collected from three respondent groups in New Mexico: K-12 school districts, colleges and universities, and businesses and community organizations.

### The College and University Perspective

This report represents the component from this 2016-17 study documenting the perspectives of the colleges and universities. A survey was conducted with recruitment of colleges and universities organizations accomplished by requesting the local ECHS principals to reach out to their partners and by conducting a web search of all New Mexico community colleges and 4-year colleges and universities. Survey results represent 26 respondents, representing 9 community colleges, colleges and universities, with the largest number of respondents from the Southwest regions of the state (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Map with counts of respondents by region; listing of colleges and universities represented in the survey



## Dual Credit

The respondents indicated that 100% of the nine respondent colleges and universities said they worked with K-12 high schools to offer Dual Credits. Interestingly, at two of the campuses, the respondents did not agree, with some saying yes, and others saying no to the questions about working with K-12 on dual credit.

## ECHS Partner

Five of the nine respondent colleges and universities reported that they were not currently partnering with an Early College High school. One of the respondents indicated that such a partnership was in process and would be created shortly.

## Workforce Sectors Addressed by Respondent Institutions

The workforce sectors addressed by the nine (9) institutions represented in the survey results vary considerably. Workforce credentials are offered by six of the 9 institutions in the three sectors of human services; law, public safety, corrections & security; and science, technology, engineering & mathematics. Meanwhile, eight (8) of the 9 institutions offer workforce experiences in health science, while six (6) offer such experiences in the sector of arts, A/V technology and communications. The sectors least represented in college and university credentialing were Government and public administration and health sciences. Sectors for which the 9 institutions are least likely to offer field experiences are manufacturing and marketing.

Table 1. Sectors in which respondents' institutions offer credential and workforce experiences.

Sector	Count of the colleges and universities that offer workforce credentials	Count of the colleges and universities that offer workforce field experiences
Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources	4	4
Architecture & Construction	3	5
Arts, A/V Technology & Communications	4	6
Business Management & Administration	4	5
Education & Training	4	5
Finance	4	4
Government & Public Administration	2	3
Health Science	2	8
Hospitality & Tourism	5	4
Human Services	6	3
Information Technology	5	4
Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security	6	3
Manufacturing	4	2
Marketing	4	2
Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics	6	3

## Current ECHS Partnerships/Relationships

Of the nine higher education institutions represented by the 26 survey respondents, four currently have existing partnerships with one or more Early College High Schools, and a fifth is in the planning stages for such a partnership. Those institutions are listed below along with their partner ECHSs (see Table 2).

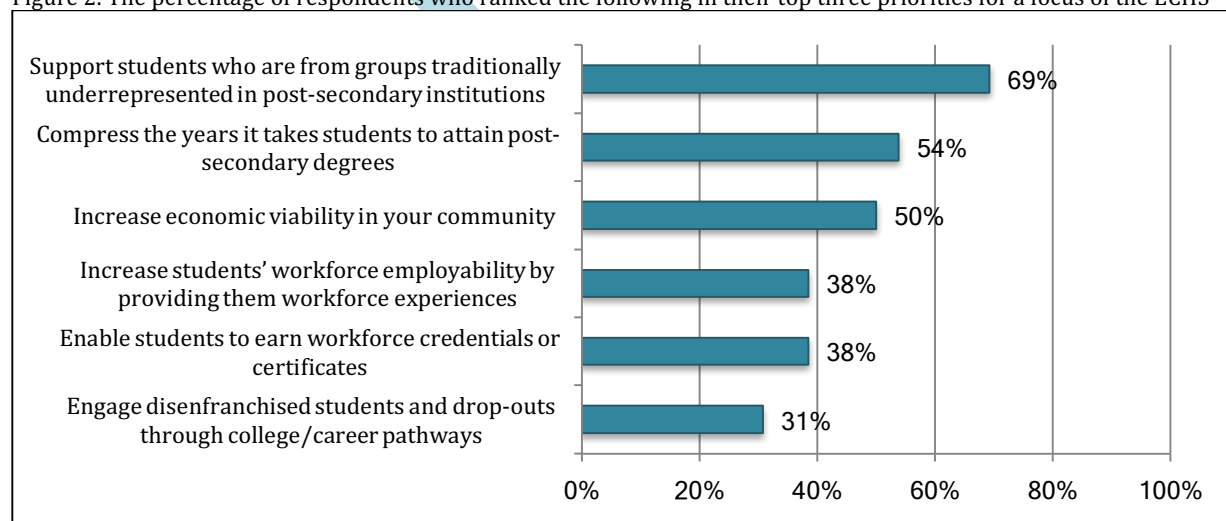
Table 2. Respondent New Mexico higher education institutions with ECHS partners.

Respondent Colleges and Universities with ECHS partners	ECHS Partners
Central New Mexico Community College	College and Career High School (Albuquerque)
	Early College Academy (Albuquerque)
New Mexico State University - Carlsbad Campus	Carlsbad Early College High School (Carlsbad)
	Artesia High School?
New Mexico State University - Las Cruces	Arrowhead Park Early College High School (Las Cruces)
	Carlsbad Early College High School (Carlsbad)
Santa Fe Community College	Santa Fe Community College (Santa Fe)
	The Masters Program (Santa Fe)
University of New Mexico - Taos Campus	In process of working with Taos Academy to become an ECHS

## The Purpose of the ECHS from the College/University Perspective

When asked to rank a list of potential focuses for the ECHSs, the top selections were to: support students who are from groups traditionally underserved in post-secondary institutions (e.g., minorities, first generation college students, students who speak English as Second Language), compress the years it takes students to attain post-secondary degrees, and increase economic viability in the local community (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. The percentage of respondents who ranked the following in their top three priorities for a focus of the ECHS

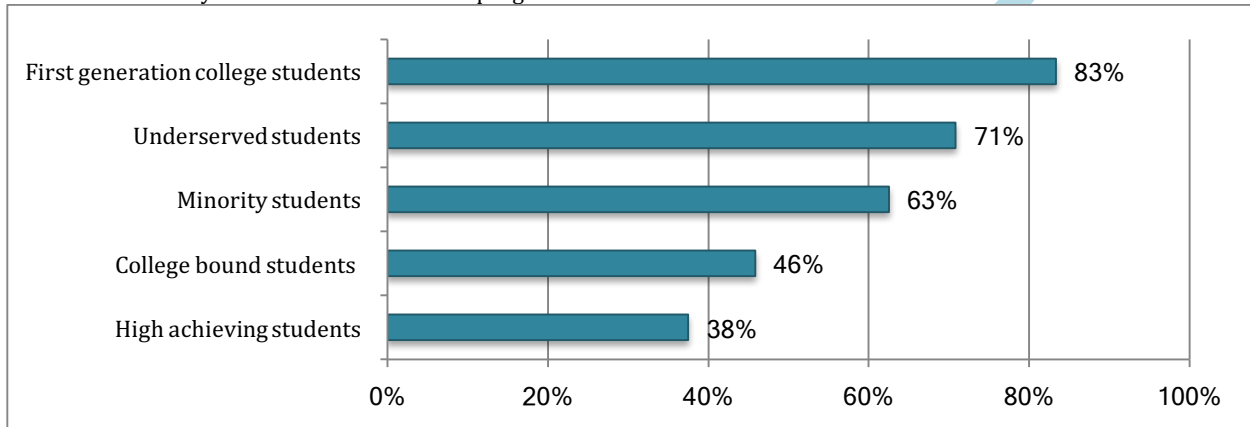


n=26

## Student Groups Targeted

When respondents were asked to rank groups of high school students in terms of which group would benefit most, the group that the largest percentage of respondents included in their top three choices was first generation college students, followed by underserved students and minority students. The reader should keep in mind that minority students are represented in the other four categories (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. The percentage of respondents selecting the following groups of students in their top three categories of students most likely to benefit from the ECHS program.



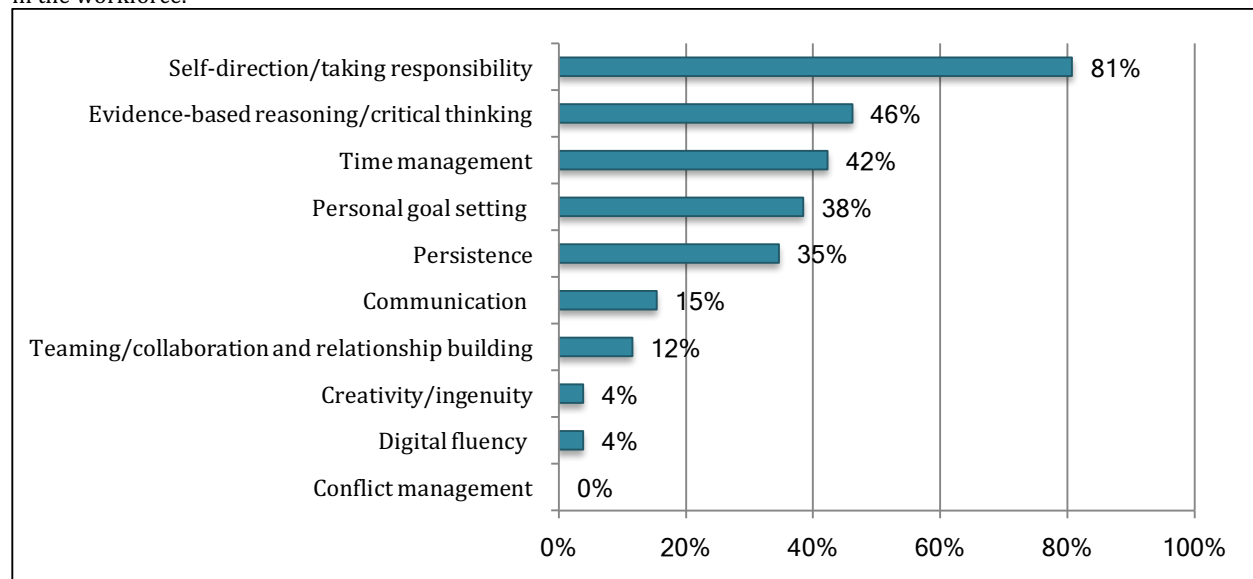
n = 24



## Skills Essential for Students to Be Successful in the Workforce

Colleges and university respondents were also asked about the key skills they believe are most critical for students' success in the workforce. The skills that the respondents included in their top three rankings were self-direction/taking responsibility (81%), evidence-based reasoning/critical thinking (46%), and time management (42%). Personal goal setting and persistence ranked just behind them garnering (38%) and (35%) respectively in respondents' top three rankings. See Figure 4 for all rankings.

Figure 4. The percentage of respondents who included following in their top three most critical skills for students' success in the workforce.



n = 32

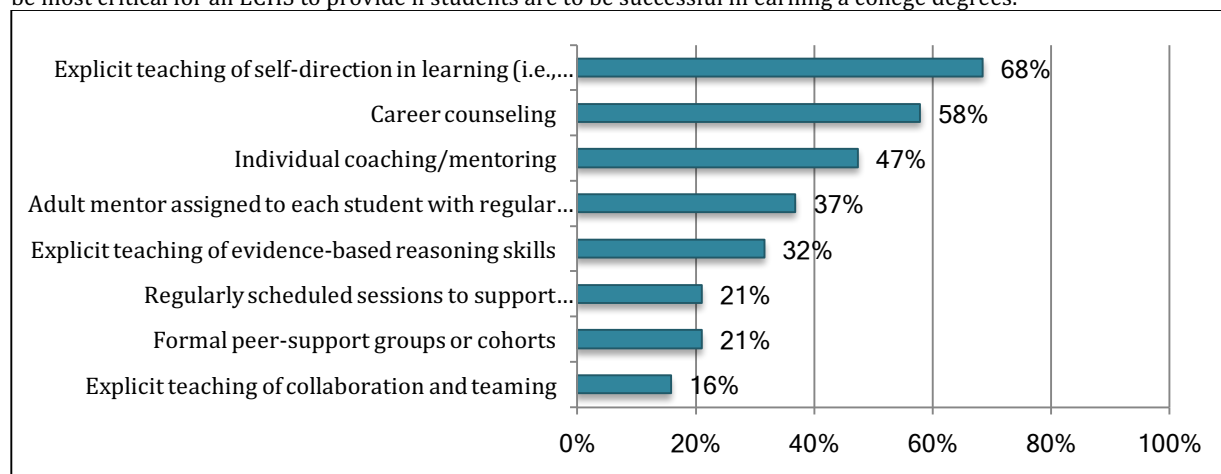
When asked to add to this list of essential skills, respondents added the following:

- All of the above are critical skills, including conflict management, critical thinking, teaming and collaboration, and goal setting. I had a hard time choosing only 6.
- Personal organization.
- Reading and writing college level and the rest of the choices.
- Soft skills; the importance of being in class on time and coming to class prepared; team work is essential.

## Skills Essential for Students to Be Successful in Earning a College Degree

The higher education respondents were also asked to rank the top five student supports they believed to be most critical for an Early College High School to provide if its students are to be successful in earning an Associate's Degree or two years of college credit. The results aligned with the prior question, as their top priority was the explicit teaching of self-direction in learning (i.e., growth mindset, pre-planning for assignments, managing own learning, self-evaluation against standards or rubrics, ownership of own learning), followed by career counseling and individual coaching/mentoring (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. The percentage of respondents who included the following in their top three student supports they believed to be most critical for an ECHS to provide if students are to be successful in earning a college degrees.

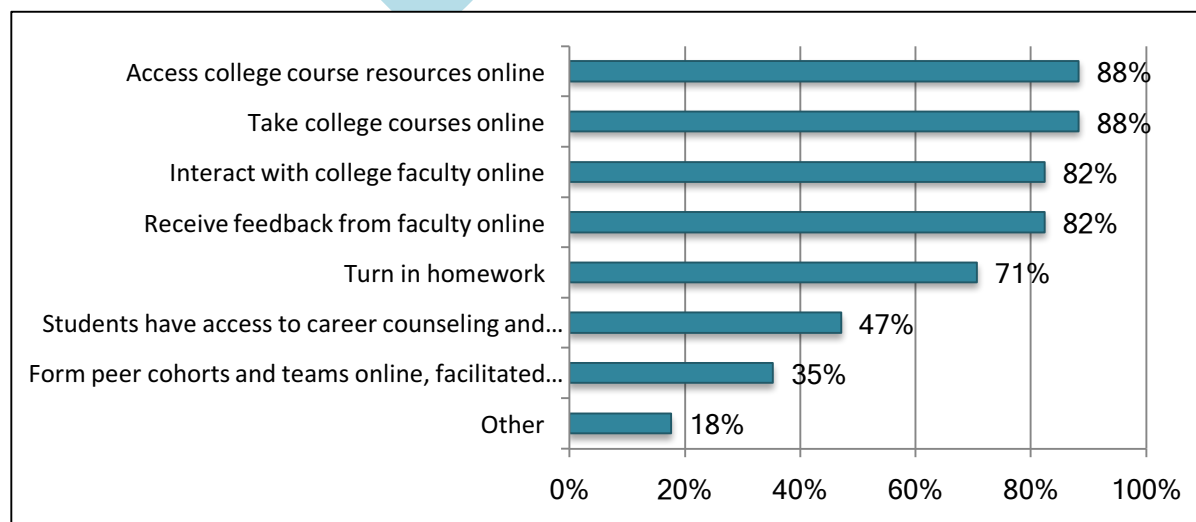


n=19

### Use of technology by ECHS students

Technology is being used by the colleges and universities to support, amplify, and extend early college services to ECHS students. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of respondents indicated that through their college, ECHS students can access college course resources online and take college courses online. Eighty-two percent said that their ECHS students use technology to interact with college faculty online and receive feedback from faculty online. In addition, 71% of respondents said that students can turn in homework digitally. And, less than 50% of respondents said students have access to career counseling and services online and that they form peer cohorts and teams online, facilitated through the college. See Figure 6.

Figure 6. Percentage of respondents who indicated that the following are being used to support, amplify, and extend early college services to ECHS students.

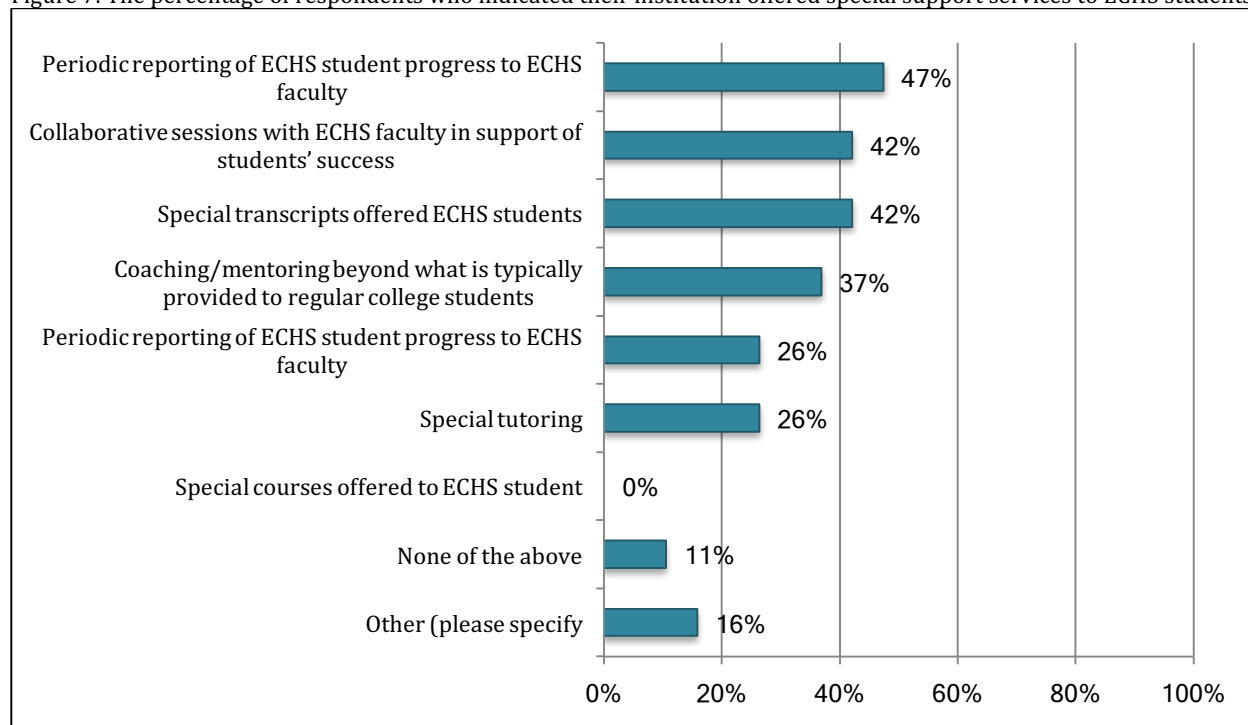


n = 17

## Special Support Services Offered to ECHS Students by the College/University

The most frequently reported special services offered to ECHS students were periodic reporting of ECHS student progress to ECHS faculty, collaborative sessions with ECHS faculty, and special transcriptions for ECHS students (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. The percentage of respondents who indicated their institution offered special support services to ECHS students.



n=19

In reference to special services offered by the higher education institutions, the other category included these services noted by respondents:

- Business Council; an academic coach assigned to ECHS students located at the high school site; support team of high school and college administrators.
- ECHS students are treated like full college students. There is one Academic Coach embedded within the ECHS and that is the only true special consideration given to ECHS students.
- Tutoring accommodations are provided (if needed), and one-on-one advising.

## Operational Aspects of the Partnership

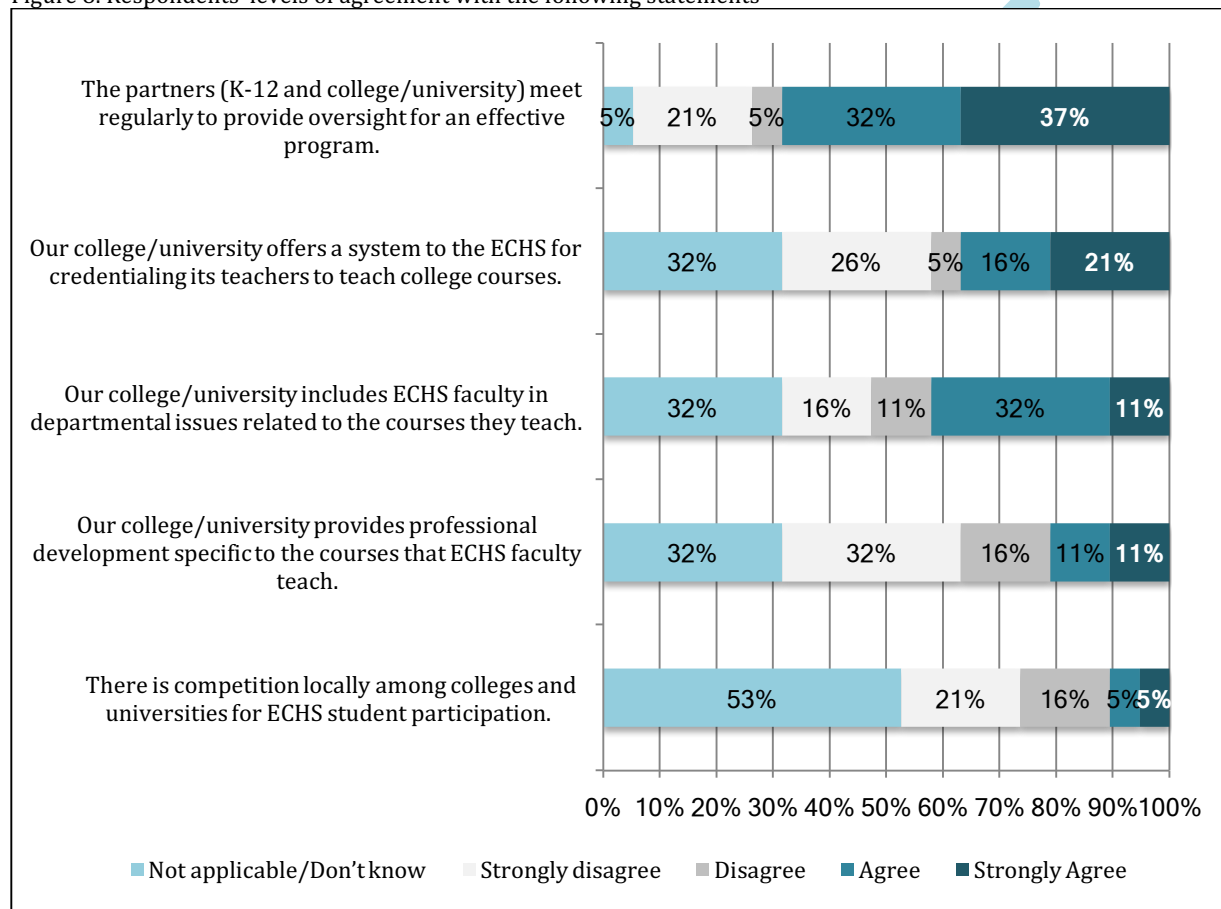
In describing operational aspects of their ECHS partnership the higher education respondents indicated their levels of agreement/disagreement with a number of statements (See Figure 8. First off, 69% of the respondents agreed (32%) or strongly agreed (37%) that the higher education and ECHS administrators were meeting regularly to provide oversight to their joint work.

When asked three questions about collaboration with and support of ECHS faculty, approximately one-third of all respondents answered “not applicable or don’t know.” On the first of those questions 37% of respondents said that their institution of higher education includes ECHS faculty in departmental issues related to the courses they teach. Second, 22% of respondents agreed that their institutions provided

professional development specific to the courses that ECHS faculty teach. Third, 43% agreed that their institution offers a system to the ECHS for credentialing its teachers to teach college courses. Interestingly, different respondents from the same institution answered this set of questions differently, which might indicate a lack of communication.

When presented with the statement, “There is competition locally among colleges and universities for ECHS student participation,” 53% checked “not applicable/don’t know,” with only 10% agreeing that there is competition.

Figure 8. Respondents’ levels of agreement with the following statements



n=19

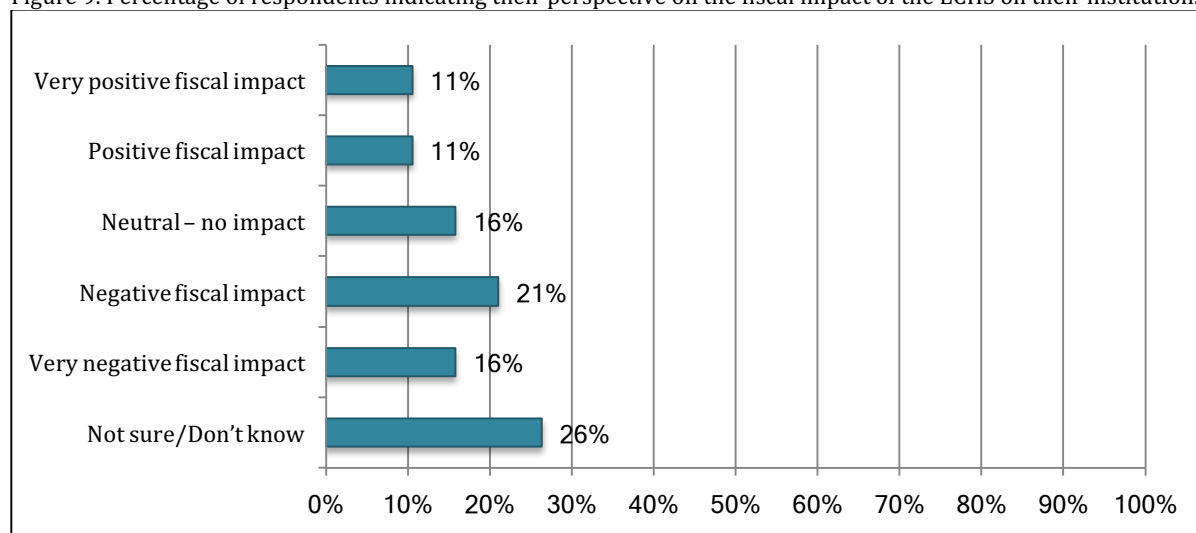
## Fiscal and Operational Impact of the ECHS on the College/University

The respondents’ perspectives on the fiscal impact of the ECHS on their institution were mixed, with 22% reporting a positive impact, 16% neutral, 37% reporting a negative impact, while 26% not sure or don’t know (see Figure 9).

Those indicating a negative impact explained some of the fiscal implications:

- ECHS students use our science labs and consumables at the college's expense.
- Lack of lab fees paid by the ECHS student impacts (the college's) budget negatively.
- We look toward long-term goals of getting the student to graduate with a certificate or degree to make the financial investment worth it.

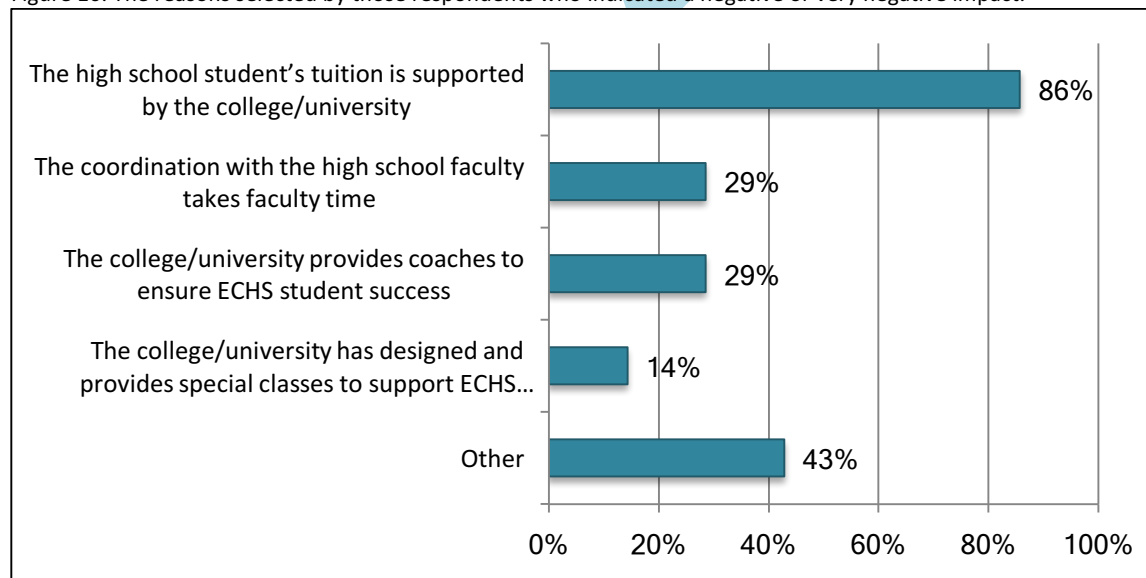
Figure 9. Percentage of respondents indicating their perspective on the fiscal impact of the ECHS on their institution.



n=19

Respondents indicating a very negative or negative impact were asked to indicate the reasons for their positive response. While 86% said that “the high school student’s tuition is supported by the college/university, 29% said “the coordination with the high school faculty takes (college/university) faculty time,” and 29% said that the college/university provides coaches to ensure ECHS student success (see Figure 10).

Figure 10. The reasons selected by those respondents who indicated a negative or very negative impact.



n = 7

Respondents selected all that apply so percentages will not add up to 100%.

Those respondents that marked the other category offered alternative reasons:

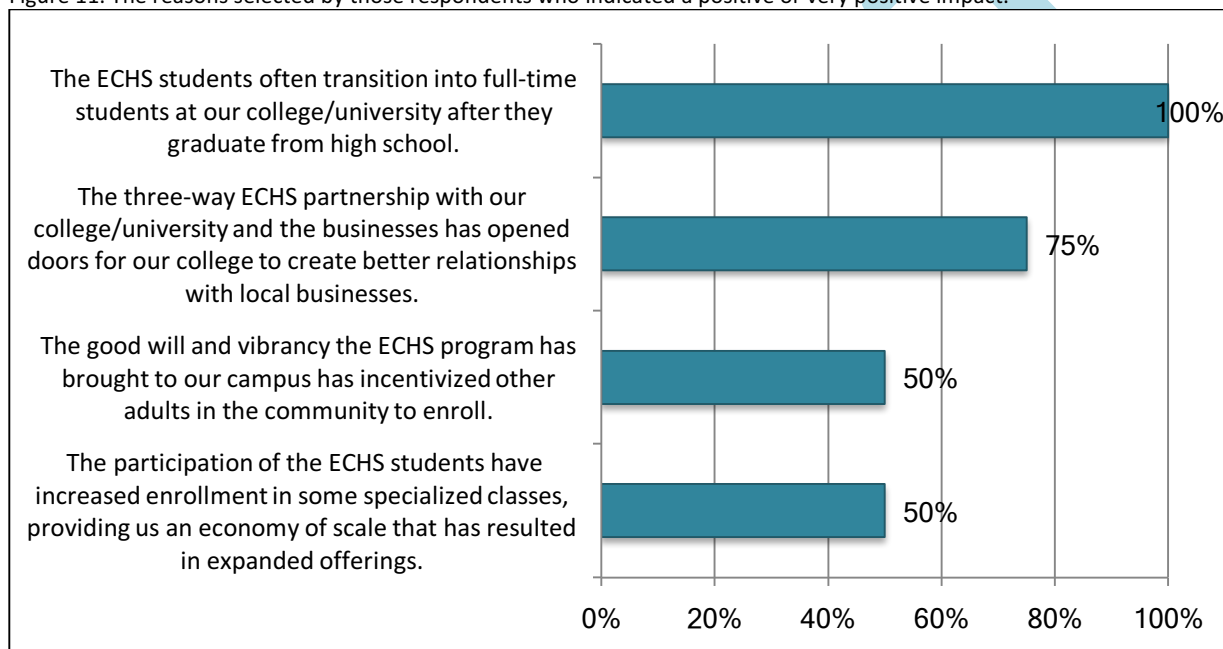
- ECHS students use our science labs and consumables at the college's expense.
- Lack of lab fees paid by the ECHS student impacts budget negatively

- We look toward long-term goals of getting the student to graduate with a certificate or degree to make the financial investment worth it.

In a similar fashion, the respondents who indicated a positive or very positive fiscal impact were asked why. All four of the respondents who noted a positive or very positive fiscal impact said, “The ECHS students often transition into full-time students at our college/university after they graduate from high school.” Despite this response, when asked if they knew what percentage of ECHS graduates from spring 2016 are currently enrolled as full-time students with their university, 17 out of 19 respondents (89%) said they did not know.

Three of the four (75%) said that the ECHS “opened doors for the college/university to create better relationships with the local businesses.” See Figure 11 for a full list of respondents.

Figure 11. The reasons selected by those respondents who indicated a positive or very positive impact.



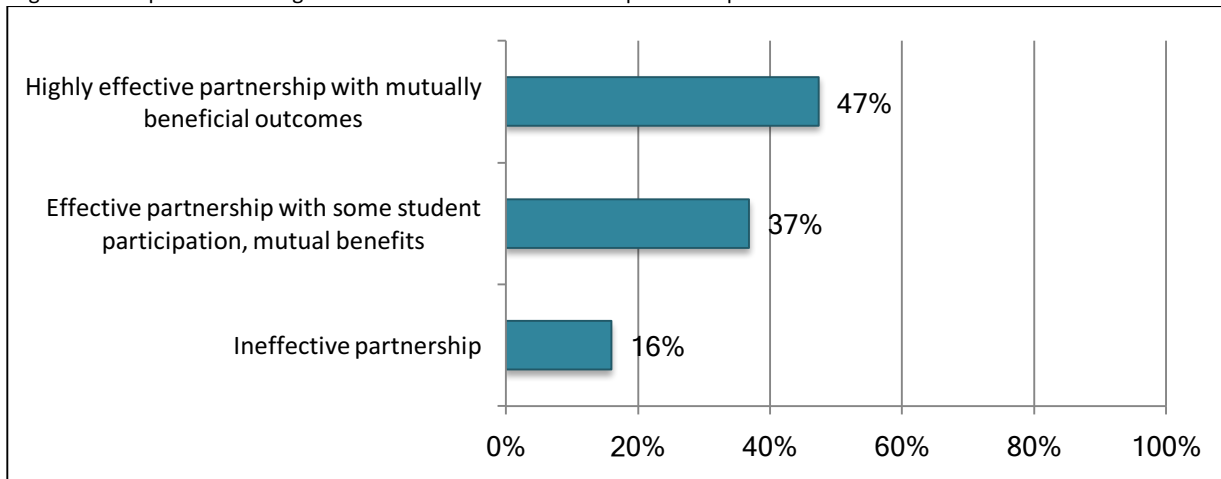
n = 4

Respondents selected all that apply so percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Effectiveness of the Partnership

The 19 respondents from these college and universities who indicated that they did have a partnership with an ECHS were asked to describe the effectiveness of the partnership. Eighty-four percent (84%) described that partnership as either “highly effective with mutually beneficial outcomes” (47%) or “effective, with some student participation and mutual benefits (37%). The remaining 16% described it as ineffective (see Figure 12).

Figure 12. Respondents rating of the effectiveness of the ECHS partnership



n = 17

Those who deemed the partnership ineffective made these comments:

- A significant drain on the colleges financially because Early College students do not pay tuition or course fees such as science lab fees.
- I do not see it effectively functioning at this time.
- I don't think there is integration in the expectations from the Early College High School. The High School just expects the college and faculty to change and lower standards for students.



## Strengths and Challenges to the ECHS Partnership

*Strengths.* The college and university respondents offered strengths of their ECHS partnership in a range of categories including the benefits of the student experience on the college campus, increased communication and collaboration, and the dedication of the stakeholders involved. Other categories included the value of the combined enrollments, the opportunities presented students, and the quality of the programs. Two respondents indicated that there were no strengths to the program. A full set of responses is listed below, organized by category (see [Table 3](#)).

**Table 3. Respondents list of strengths of their ECHS partnership**

Category	
<b>Students' experiences on college campuses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The ECHS program is located on our campus. The students are entrenched in the college culture. The high school teachers teach the high school subjects and then students go out on campus and take their college classes with other adult students and CNM faculty.</li> <li>▪ The ability for students to progress through higher education fluidly.</li> <li>▪ Highly collaborative, student-centric, flexible and innovative scheduling to accommodate college coursework.</li> </ul>
<b>Communication and collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Communication and community support</li> <li>▪ Consistent communication, leveraging of resources, true sharing of students</li> <li>▪ Outreach</li> <li>▪ Strong collaboration and communication</li> <li>▪ Improved collaborative relationships</li> <li>▪ The business community is highly engaged with our ECHS.</li> </ul>
<b>Dedicated stakeholders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Dedicated faculty and staff, committed parents and students.</li> </ul>
<b>Combined enrollments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Enrollment of ECHS has improved overall enrollment in some of our smaller programs such as engineering and enabled higher-level math classes to "make.."</li> <li>▪ </li> </ul>
<b>Valuable outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Giving these students the opportunity to graduate high school with enough credits to earn an associates degree.</li> <li>▪ Students graduate more confident in their ability to continue their education and complete additional coursework or degrees. They have become more aware of CNM as an option for their education.</li> <li>▪ The ECHS opportunity seems to be beneficial to an equitable number of the students involved.</li> </ul>
<b>Quality of programs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Project Lead the Way implementation in support of programs of study.</li> <li>▪ Their students have a lot of potential, it needs to be developed. Do not over test or try to over place the students, they do not need to be rushed into courses they are not ready to take.</li> </ul>
<b>None</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I see no strengths. They use are facilities and equipment, but do not provide anything back financially.</li> </ul>

*Challenges.* The college and university respondents also offered the challenges they encountered in their ECHS partnership. The most frequently mentioned categories of challenges were finances and space issues. Some respondents indicated a negative impact on other college students' access to courses and listed financial challenges. Other challenges were more operational included course offering limitations at high levels of coursework, career counseling for ECHS students, lack of communication, and faculty credentialing. The programmatic challenges included the need for policies on which college courses count for core high school credit, and several comments on the level of standard and the expectations for the ECHS student. For example, at times students do well in their college courses, but upon high school graduation, they do not meet minimum college admission requirements. Another example is the culture shift of having high school students on campus and the expectation that standards are lowered for ECHS students in college courses. A full set of responses is listed below, organized by category (see [Table 4](#)).

**Table 4. Respondents list of significant challenges their college/university faces in partnering with an ECHS**

<b>Category</b>	
<b>Finances</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course fee funding not covered by dual credit agreement,</li> <li>• Early college is a huge financial burden that is hurting our college. Early College needs to reimburse the college for the use of facilities, and for tuition and course fees.</li> <li>• Financial resources to accommodate the ECHS needs, space is limited</li> <li>• I'm not aware of any specific challenges except that funding is an issue for all educational institutions.</li> <li>• Lack of financial contribution makes student not pay a lab fee that is used to support labs. It is not right that Early College Students are not paying this necessary fee.</li> <li>• Limited funding</li> </ul>
<b>Space issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use of the college's physical space which can impact space for non-ECHS students</li> <li>• Space issues</li> <li>• Laboratory space is in high demand.</li> <li>• Space and scheduling</li> <li>• We have NO ROOM for regular classes, and often regular college classes are FILLED by ECHS students and we cannot serve our regular students.</li> </ul>
<b>Faculty credentials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty credentials</li> <li>• Providing credentialed faculty for all of the courses needed when funds are too limiting to allow the hire of additional fulltime faculty.</li> </ul>
<b>Lack of Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It would be beneficial for PED and HED to align and standardize what college courses could count for core high school credit.</li> </ul>
<b>Support services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career counseling</li> </ul>

Table 4 cont'd

Category	
<b>Level of standards or expectations for ECHS students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students who do well in their college courses while enrolled in high school, but upon graduation, do not meet the minimum admissions requirements for regular undergraduate admissions, e.g., cumulative high school GPA.</li> <li>It's a cultural shift to have a high school located on a college campus.</li> <li>Expecting college faculty to lower standards.</li> <li>Many college professors do not like the idea of high school students this is why they are not teaching for the public school system</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication</li> <li>Lack of communication with faculty.</li> </ul>
<b>Support services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Career counseling</li> </ul>
<b>Course offerings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some limited course offering in highest-level coursework.</li> </ul>

Eight-one percent (81%) of the 19 respondents indicated that ECHS students taking courses through your college or university to earn various types of Associates Degrees were NOT limited by the lack of a full complement of offerings at your college/university. Twenty-two percent (22%) indicated that students were somewhat limited by course offerings.

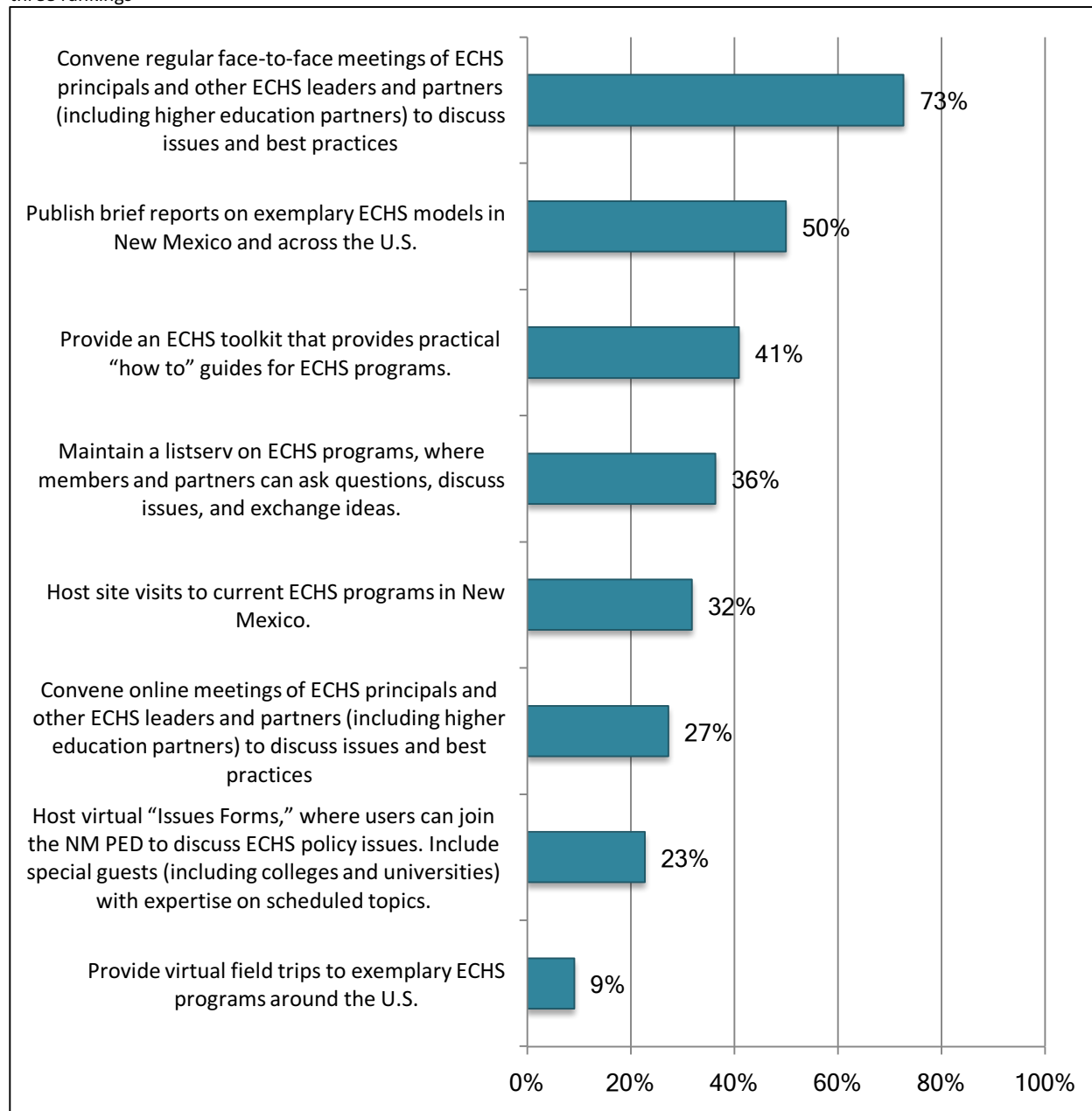
In response to a question about options for students wanting to pursue degrees or certificates that are not offered locally, respondents mentioned the following options: independent studies under direction of faculty, virtual learning through college/university outside of the locale, and noted that all dual credit partner schools have the ability to partner with multiple institutions.



## Recommendations

Given that the New Mexico Public Department of Education is interested in supporting school districts and their partner colleges and universities (as well as their business partners), respondents were asked to rank options for technical assistance from the state in terms of value to their college/university.

Figure 13. The percentage of respondents that ranked the following options for technical assistance by the NM PED in their top three rankings



n=22

In addition, the respondents offered a range of recommendations to the New Mexico Department of Education to improve the ECHS program. Their recommendations included ideas for how to better serve individual students, a call for increased opportunities to meet to exchange ideas and best practices with

others in New Mexico, recommended changes in payment responsibilities, and the importance of sound policies, practices, and strategic planning to ensure a high-quality implementation and the security and safety of ECHS students on the college campuses.

Table 5. Recommendations for other means of support that the New Mexico Public Education Department should consider related to ECHSs

<b>Category</b>	
<b>More student-centered services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By asking more questions on how education can be provided to all types of students to be successful after they graduated from high school.</li> <li>• By offering a career path during their 8th grade year and following that path. Whether it is college or a technical schools.</li> </ul>
<b>Increased opportunities for meetings, exchanges, and communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convene regular face-to-face meetings</li> <li>• Organize meetings among ECHS professionals in New Mexico, to exchange ideas and best practices.</li> <li>• Professional development opportunities.</li> <li>• Best practices workshops.</li> </ul>
<b>Fiscal issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ECHS needs to start paying for the services ex. Tuition and course fees) they receive from their partner colleges and universities. If they don't, they will hurt partner colleges and universities financially and the whole thing will be bad for higher education.</li> </ul>
<b>Importance of policies and planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seriously insist on a plan before the programs are developed. Everything is an afterthought as it is. No available classrooms, no proper facilities, no security of high school aged children. 40-year old men sit in classes next to 14-year-old girls and no student accountability.</li> </ul>

## Final Comments

The final comments by respondents are listed below. They include comments on the importance of communication, equity concerns, perceived negative fiscal implications, additional career pathways they would recommend be offered, concerns about the ECHS concept of acceleration, the need for small college classes and faculty experienced with challenged students, and the affirmation that ECHS models vary across the state.

### Importance of communication

- Clear, clean, concise, collegial communication and interaction is imperative between the ECHS and the College/University hosting them.
- There is not much communication between our Early College High School and our faculty at the department level. I recommend a liaison committee that would meet regularly to discuss issues.
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### Equity concerns

- Early College High Schools adapt themselves much easier to larger population areas. That means much of New Mexico would be underserved.

- Cannot serve our regular students.

#### Negative financial implications for the colleges/universities

- New Mexico should provide financial support to higher education and early college program.
- The ECHS needs to pull their weight financially. ECHS students need to pay tuition and course fees like all other students have too. If an ECHS is located on a partner college or university facility, they need to pay rent to that partner. Right now, ECHS is a financial drain on its partners and it is not fair to all of the regular college students in New Mexico. Why should regular college students have to pay tuition and Early College students don't. It is unfair. I think if the word got out to regular college students that there were Early College students in the classroom and they didn't have to pay tuition, but they got the same education, and think those regular college students and their parents would be outraged.

#### Additional career pathways

- I love having the College and Career High School students on our campus and in our classrooms. It would be nice to see more career and technical pathways including culinary arts, business and computer information systems promoted to students. As mentioned earlier, alignment and standardization of PED and HED core requirements would be beneficial, i.e. ENGLISH 1101 could substitute for English 12.

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#### Concern about acceleration

- I think that high school students should be and enjoy high school instead of adding so much pressure to students especially in community colleges there are too many adults surrounding the campus.
- It is a very bad idea being that there is essentially no roadmap, feasibility study, or strategic plan.

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#### Need small classes and experienced faculty

- It is a fact some students struggle at an Early College High School but I think that having small ratio of a teacher to student is a plus. It might help their self-esteem to be encouraged to be successful. It would help if their staff has had some experience with all types challenge students. Staff needs to have at least seven years experience with challenge students.

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#### Unique models

- This survey seemed to assume that all ECHS models utilize similar characteristics. The model employed at our site is fairly unique within the state and many of the questions in the survey did not apply to us.

## Appendix A: List of ECHSs in New Mexico

Currently Early College High Schools are self-identified in the state of New Mexico. Table 6 represents those ECHSs that have had a principal or administrator complete the survey. Table 7 includes a list of those ECHSs in the state that did not have a principal or school administrator complete the survey and thus, is not represented in the report findings.

Table 6. The Early College High Schools represented in the report

District	Early College High School	City
<b>Carlsbad Municipal Schools</b>	Carlsbad Early College High School	Carlsbad
<b>Albuquerque Public Schools</b>	College and Career High School	Albuquerque
<b>Albuquerque Public Schools</b>	Early College Academy	Albuquerque
<b>Las Cruces Public Schools</b>	Early College High School	Las Cruces
<b>Sandi Park</b>	East Mountain High School	Sandia Park
<b>Middle College High</b>	Middle College High	Gallup
<b>Penasco Independent Schools</b>	Penasco High	Penasco
<b>Las Cruces Public Schools</b>	Rio Grande Preparatory Institute	Mesilla
<b>Las Vegas City Schools</b>	Robertson High	Las Vegas
<b>Farmington Municipal Schools</b>	San Juan College High School	Farmington
<b>Taos Academy</b>	Taos Academy	Taos
<b>The Master Program</b>	The Master Program	Santa Fe
<b>Roswell Independent Schools</b>	University High	Roswell
<b>Walatowa High Charter Schools</b>	Walatowa Charter High	Jemez Pueblo

Table 7. The Early College High Schools not represented in the report

District	Early College High School	City
<b>Silver Consolidated Schools</b>	Cliff High School	Cliff
<b>Silver Consolidated Schools</b>	Opportunity High School	Silver City
<b>School of Dreams Academy</b>	School of Dreams Academy	Los Lunas
<b>Gadsden Independent School District</b>	Alta Vista Early College High	Anthony
<b>Hobbs Municipal Schools</b>	Hobbs High School	Hobbs
<b>Los Alamos Public Schools</b>	Los Alamos High School	Los Alamos
<b>Mesa Vista Consolidated Schools</b>	Mesa Vista High School	Ojo Caliente
<b>Raton</b>	Raton Public Schools	Raton
<b>Shiprock</b>	Shiprock High School	Shiprock
<b>Pojoaque Valley Public Schools</b>	Pojoaque Valley Public Schools	Santa Fe

## Appendix B: Draft Definition of Early College High School

The New Mexico DPE is in the process of formalizing a definition of an Early College High School (ECHS). Listed below is the current draft.

### **Draft of the PDE Definition of Early College High School (ECHS)**

An Early College High School means a local educational agency in a partnership with at least one institution of higher education that:

- Allows participants to simultaneously complete requirements toward earning a regular high school diploma and to earn not less than 12 credits toward a college-level certificate, associate degree, or bachelor's degree at the partner institution of higher education.
- Ensures that Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are integrated into a structured program of study which meets local and state graduation requirements
- Provides a program of study toward a postsecondary credential or degree without tuition cost to the participant or the participant's family.
- Focuses on improving the academic achievement of low-achieving students and youth underrepresented in higher education by giving admissions preference to low-income students, such that the proportion of low income students in the student body is at least as high as that of the district in which the ECHS is located.
  - National School Lunch Program (NSLP) data shall be used as an indicator of poverty. Different combinations of available NSLP data may be used as a poverty measure for education program purposes. For example, NSLP data might include a combination of data from household applications (free and reduced price lunch forms) in addition to direct certification data available under the Community Eligibility Provision of the NSLP.
- Uses a lottery or other blind admission processes are used to ensure equitable access.
- Operates in partnership with local business and industry and leads to work readiness credentials
  - Programming includes meaningful work-based learning experiences
  - Career technical education courses use Common Career Technical Core Standards (CCTCS) to support core academic growth
- Accelerate participant learning beginning in ninth grade
  - Advanced Placement and dual credit courses are used to help high school students make a seamless transition into college.
  - Innovative, interactive, research-based support structures encourage positive outcomes for participants.