

# **STRETCHING MINDS AND RESOURCES**

## **20 Years of Post Secondary Enrollment Options in Minnesota**

**by**

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## Executive Summary

Minnesota's pioneering Post-Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) is now 20 years old. Minnesota was the first state to give high school juniors and seniors the right to apply to colleges and universities, and if accepted, to take courses, full or part time, with state funds following them, paying tuition and book charges. Many states have adopted or adapted this legislation. PSEO programs can help deal with several important policy challenges: (1) The rising cost of higher education for families and states; (2) The importance of students not only entering, but graduating from some form of post-secondary education; and (3) Increasing the number and percentage of students fully prepared for college when they graduate from high school. This study examines the impact for students and the broader education system.

### Key findings include:

#### **PSEO has produced many benefits**

- Participants most frequently cite the following benefits: **learning more than in high school, saving time and money, and feeling more academically prepared for college.**
- PSEO also appears to have helped stimulate improvements in the overall K-12 system. These improvements include more Advanced Placement and "Colleges in the Schools" courses. Nationally, the number of AP Tests taken increased by 491% between 1986 and 2004. In Minnesota, this increase was 988%. PSEO has also helped fuel a 10-fold increase in "College in the Schools" participation (compared to a doubling of on-campus PSEO participation). "College in the Schools" participation has risen from approximately 1,200 in 1991-92 to 14,000 plus in 2004-05.

#### **PSEO enjoys strong support from participants**

- **97%** were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with their experience.
- **86%** of participating students would definitely participate in PSEO again.

#### **PSEO has strong support from Minnesota residents**

- Statewide, **82%** of those surveyed either strongly support or support PSEO

#### **PSEO is benefiting many students, but some improvements are needed**

- Since 1985, more than 110,000 Minnesota students have used PSEO on college campuses. The majority of participants are female, white and middle to upper income. Access by other demographic groups could be improved.
- Students consistently suggest two improvements for the PSEO program. First, they recommend making more information about the program available to students and families. Second, they recommend more clarity about what courses will transfer from one institution to another.

### Key recommendations of this report

- Create new public-private partnerships to provide more information to families about PSEO.
- Remind district and school officials about PSEO requirements.
- Provide more slots and create more flexible admissions policies for PSEO students at some colleges and universities.
- Study and share experiences of students who have used PSEO, AP, IB and College in the Schools programs, to help families make better decisions.
- Encourage more high school students to participate in PSEO, College in the Schools, AP and IB programs.

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## **Introduction: Why Report on Post-Secondary Options Now?**

Twenty years ago, Governor Rudy Perpich proposed what has become known as Post Secondary Enrollment Options. Once enacted it became instantly controversial. When legislators approved the law during the 1985 session, one major education group lobbyist was quoted by a national education reporter as believing the law was “the most devastating piece of legislation in the past 20 or 30 years.” (Wehrwein, 1985)

Much has happened in the twenty years since 1985. Part of the reason for this report is that 2005 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Post-Secondary Enrollment Options program. Any major change in policy, no matter how well-intentioned, deserves scrutiny from time to time. After twenty years, it seemed like an appropriate time to review the evidence and gather some additional information.

There are probably more important reasons for renewed discussion of the Post-Secondary Option. PSEO can help Minnesota students and the state deal with several critical challenges:

- the rising cost of higher education
- the need for more students to graduate, not just attend two and four year higher education institutions
- the significant number and percentage of Minnesota public high school graduates who take remedial courses on entering Minnesota public colleges and universities

Over the last twenty years, there has been a broader recognition in Minnesota and in the nation that to get a good job, young people need not only to graduate from high school, but if at all possible, earn a degree at a post-secondary institution. National statistics show that young people who complete a post-high school degree earn significantly more money.

The college level premium – the earnings level advantage of college educated workers over high school graduates – in 1979 was 36 percent for men and 34 percent for women. By 1997, however, the premium increased to 67 percent and 72 percent for men and women respectively. The wage premiums for those with “some college” also have doubled. (Carnavale and Desrochers, 2002)

Clearly, just getting through high school is not enough – whether preparing for life and work, or preparing for college. As Northwestern professor James Rosenbaum wrote: “Less than 40 percent of students who plan to go to college actually earn a two- or four-year degree within 10 years of graduating from high school. Do you know what it takes to succeed in college? The simple answer is that if you take hard classes, do all of your homework, and get good grades in high school, you will be ready.” (Rosenbaum, 1994)

U. S. Census figures show that over an adult’s working life high school graduates earn an average of \$1.2 million, associate degree holders earn about \$1.6 million, and

bachelor's degree holders earn about \$2.1 million" (Porter, quoting Day and Newburger, 2002)

Education beyond high school does not just benefit individuals. There is value for the entire society. "Increases in a country's overall educational attainment causes (sic) increases in their overall rate of economic growth." (Carnevale and Desrochers, 2002)

There are many other benefits of higher education. College graduates have increased personal/professional mobility, improved quality of life for their children, higher levels of savings, and more hobbies and leisure activities. Research also shows a positive correlation between completion of higher education and good health, not only for oneself, but also for one's children. (Porter, 2002)

While there is ever greater recognition that education beyond high school is vital, the fact is that many families find it difficult to afford higher education. As will be clear later, many students report that using PSEO allows them to save two precious resources: time and money.

Finally, PSEO deserves more attention because of the role it can play in helping get students more fully prepared for college. A series of reports show that while the majority of students graduating from Minnesota public high schools are "ready for college," in the core academic areas of reading, writing and mathematics, more than 1/3 who enter Minnesota public colleges and universities must take remedial or "developmental" courses. (Minnesota State Colleges and University, 2002, 2005) These include students from affluent suburban districts, as well as other districts statewide. Table 1 shows remediation rates for selected high schools.

Many high schools – including some well-known suburban and urban high schools – have significant percentages of students graduating who take remedial courses when they enter Minnesota public post-secondary institutions.

Some small public rural high schools have very low remediation rates. Statewide, 36% of students who graduated from Minnesota public high schools in 2000-2002 and entered a Minnesota public college or university within a year took at least one remedial course. But in more than 50 rural high schools, the percentage of graduates taking remedial courses is 24 percent or less. No large urban or suburban high schools are in the "top 50." (Nathan, 2006) Here are two examples:

Melrose Public High School, Melrose, Minnesota: Only 19% of Melrose graduates who entered Minnesota public colleges and universities took a remedial course. Melrose principal Chad Doekott notes that for a number of years, 45-55% of the juniors and seniors have taken one or more of the College in the Schools Courses. This year, ten such courses are offered at the high school, comprising 18 sections.

Furthermore, as Doekott explained, many additional students take Tech Prep courses at Melrose. These are accepted at a number Minnesota Technical Colleges. This means that well over 50 percent of the students at Melrose are taking at least one college level course. According to the principal, "Offering these advanced courses definitely

contributes to the school's strong record. Many graduates return and tell me that because they took such courses before college, they started college 'well ahead of the game.'" (Doetskott, 2005)

**Table 1: Remediation Rates**

School District	High School	Total Number of Graduates in Classes 2000-2003	% of Graduates Enrolled at MN Public High Education	% of Graduates Enrolled at MN Public Higher Education Institutions Who Took Developmental Courses
Anoka-Hennepin	Blaine Sr.	2,222	55%	41%
Bloomington	Kennedy Sr.	1,222	57%	44%
Burnsville	Burnsville Sr.	2,473	55%	38%
Edina	Edina Sr.	1,870	30%	29%
Inver Grove Heights Schools	Simley Sr.	972	60%	41%
Minneapolis	Abraham Lincoln High School	122	34%	86%
Minneapolis	North Sr.	660	39%	59%
Minneapolis	Roosevelt Sr.	656	55%	70%
Mounds View	Irondale Sr.	1,425	48%	39%
North St. Paul-Maplewood	North Sr.	1,523	52%	48%
North St. Paul-Maplewood	Tartan Sr.	1,293	56%	41%
Richfield	Richfield Sr.	940	58%	41%
Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan	Rosemount Sr.	1,227	51%	43%
St. Paul	Arlington Sr.	919	46%	60%
St. Paul	Harding Sr.	1,367	47%	48%
St. Paul	Highland Park Sr.	918	43%	47%
Wayzata	Wayzata High	2,546	41%	31%
White Bear Lake	White Bear Lake South Sr.	2,593	55%	49%

Minnesota New Country (Charter public) School – MNCS – also has an outstanding record. Less than 15 percent of graduates at the Minnesota New Country (charter public) School took remedial courses when they entered Minnesota public higher education institutions, 2000-2002. Virtually all Minnesota New Country School students participate in Post-Secondary Enrollment Options (including Lars Johnson, who wrote a paper for this report, available in the appendix). Doug Thomas, who helped start MNCS, believes PSEO is "a very valuable part of our effort to fully prepare students for further education and life beyond classrooms."

Several studies have found that students who entered post-secondary institutions with prior college credits:



- Earned more credit or passed more units than those entering without college credit
- Had a higher grade point average
- Had a higher graduation rate (Martinez and Klopott, 2005)

There are many ways to encourage and assist more high school students to take college courses. The Post-Secondary Enrollment Options is one of them. The authors believe this report is timely, not only because of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, but also because of the law's potential to help deal with some of Minnesota's most important problems.

## **Methodology**

Several methods were used to gather information about PSEO for this report.

### A statewide poll was carried out by Mason-Dixon Polling and Research, Inc.

The Center for School Change commissioned Mason-Dixon Polling and Research to examine public attitudes toward the Post-Secondary Options act. Mason-Dixon was selected because they do polling for a major Minnesota metropolitan area newspaper and a major Minnesota radio station. This suggests they are a very reputable group. The authors wish to make clear that this poll was neither commissioned by, nor connected to, any other organization. A total of 625 Minnesotans were surveyed, representing a stratified random sample of registered voters.

### A survey of PSEO participants was conducted

The PSEO Participant Survey was emailed to the PSEO coordinator at each of the twelve participating post-secondary institutions. The coordinators in turn distributed the surveys to the PSEO students at their respective institutions. Some surveys were distributed electronically and some were distributed on paper, at the discretion of the coordinator. The PSEO students completed the surveys and returned them directly to the Center for School Change, either by email or by post. In several instances the PSEO coordinators collected the surveys from their students and returned them as a group. Table 2 shows which post-secondary institutions participated, as well as how many students responded from each.

### Other Information Gathering

In preparing this report, CSC interviewed officials dealing with PSEO at 21 Minnesota higher education campuses and reviewed web-based material regarding PSEO from 27 of Minnesota's higher education institutions. CSC also worked closely with several individuals at the Minnesota Department of Education. These staff members ran data analyses using state databases and provided other information cited throughout the report. Eleven former PSEO participants were also asked to write brief essays describing their experiences, positive and negative, with the program. Finally, CSC conducted a literature review in Minnesota and nationally to set the context for findings in this report.

**Table 2: Post-Secondary Institutions Participating in the 2005 PSEO Survey by Type of Institution**

<b>Post-Secondary Institution</b>	<b>Students Responding</b>
<b>Community/Technical Colleges (6)</b>	<b>237</b>
Century College	19
Hibbing Community College	3
Inver Hills Community College	68
Minneapolis Community & Technical College	18
Normandale Community College	118
Ridgewater Community College	11
<b>Private Colleges (2)</b>	<b>18</b>
College of Saint Scholastica	14
Gustavus Adolphus	4
<b>State Universities (2)</b>	<b>17</b>
Mankato	5
Moorhead	12
<b>University of MN (2)</b>	<b>85</b>
Duluth	11
Twin Cities	74
<b>Total Students Participating</b>	<b>357</b>

## History of PSEO in Minnesota

In 1985 Minnesota became the first state in the country to formalize a student’s right to apply to eligible post-secondary schools and receive both college and high school credit. Post Secondary Enrollment Options was just one part of a package of school reforms pushed by then Governor Rudy Perpich, a Democrat. This package also included the high profile and more controversial proposal that allowed students to enroll in non-resident school districts (open enrollment). PSEO benefited from the heated debate over open enrollment, which left the PSEO policy comparatively under-scrutinized. The PSEO portion of the package also enjoyed strong and crucial bi-partisan support of key legislators, House Republican Connie Levi and Senate Democrat Tom Nelson.

According to one observer and writer on the politics of educational choice in Minnesota, Connie Levi was instrumental in ensuring that the PSEO provisions in the package remained strong and intact. “Many reform items in ‘Access to Excellence’ languished in committee; others were scaled down into incremental adjustments. That this did not

happen to the post-secondary section was primarily due to the interest and involvement of one lawmaker, Representative Connie Levi ..." (Mazzoni, 1987). Support for the PSEO proposal continued Connie Levi's leadership in efforts to provide college coursework for high school students. In 1982, she sponsored a law that allowed school districts to form partnerships with post-secondary institutions and offer college courses for high school students. Few districts acted on this option, which moved Levi toward support for the more comprehensive, mandatory PSEO approach.

The stated purpose of the PSEO program, as spelled out in the original legislation, is "to promote vigorous academic pursuits and to provide a wider variety of options to high school students by encouraging and enabling secondary pupils to enroll full-time or part-time in nonsectarian courses or programs in eligible post-secondary institutions." (MnSCU, 2001)

### **Other Studies on PSEO**

During the program's 20 years, six major studies have been completed. Reported here are the results of Center for School Change polling and surveys completed in 2005. Two major studies were published in 2001 – one by the Center for School Change and another by MnSCU. In 1997, a longitudinal study of 500 randomly selected PSEO students was completed by University of Minnesota doctoral student Doug Mullin. A major program review was undertaken by the Legislative Auditors Office in 1996. The legislation authorizing PSEO also called for a study one year after the program began; this study was completed in 1986. (Boyd, 2002; MnSCU, 2001; Office of Legislative Auditor, 1996; Mullin, 1997)

Most of these studies focus on the usage patterns and the family and student experience. Less research has been done, however, on the academic or financial impacts of the program. To the extent that academic impact is explored, it is based on GPA's of PSEO students and on student and family self-reports (via surveys). MnSCU and the Minnesota Department of Education have estimated financial impacts for families, the state and the federal government, but further research is needed to fully understand the financial implications.

### **National Context**

While almost no two states handle secondary student access to college courses in exactly the same way, support for and participation in this option among lawmakers and families is strong and growing nationwide. Recent CSC polls of Minnesotans, for example, show 82% of residents support the program.

In 1985, Minnesota began the movement to formalize high school student access to college courses. But it wasn't until around 2000 when states across the country accelerated their use of dual or concurrent enrollment programs (Hoffman 2005). One recent study estimates that currently 10 to 30 percent of high school juniors and seniors

across the country have taken at least one college course before graduation (Hoffman, 2005). This percentage is consistent with a 2001 MnSCU estimate that 20% of Minnesota high school seniors earn college credits before graduating (MnSCU, 2001).

States have a variety of reasons for adopting PSEO programs. Rationales include:

- Preparing students for the academic rigors of college
- Providing more realistic information to students about the skills that they will need to succeed in college
- Exposing traditionally non-college-bound students to college
- Providing curricular options to students
- Improving motivation through high expectations
- Lowering the cost of post-secondary education for students
- Promoting institutional relationships between colleges and high schools. (Bailey and Karp, 2003)

State level PSEO policies vary across the country based on a number of factors – whether or not the program is mandatory for secondary schools and/or post-secondary schools; how credits are awarded; how much state oversight is given; admissions requirements and targeted student populations; location of courses; instructor requirements; and who is financially responsible (Karp. et al, 2004). In twelve states, these policy decisions are not addressed at the state level. In these states individual districts and post-secondary institutions reach agreements to cooperate as they see fit.

Minnesota is one of 18 states that have comprehensive programs. Comprehensive programs according to the Education Commission of the States are programs that: allow students to enroll in post-secondary course at minimal or no cost; permit course credits to be applied at both the high school and post-secondary institutions; and contain few restrictions on eligible courses for student enrollment (ECS, 2001). According to MnSCU analyses, Minnesota’s program provides more control to students and provides more generous financial support than most states (MnSCU, 2001).

National research on PSEO falls in to the same basic patterns as Minnesota research, according to two recent national reports (Hoffman, 2005 and Karp et. al, 2004). Much of the available data is on usage patterns and student satisfaction, although this data is not consistent from state to state (Hoffman, 2005).

Data from some states with large programs, like Florida, is leading national education thinkers to look toward programs like PSEO as a tool for increasing the number of students from ethnic minority groups who receive college degrees (Hoffman, 2005). Seventy-percent of African American students in Florida who have taken at least one college course in high school enroll in post-secondary education compared with 45% of those who have not taken college course work. For Hispanic students these percentages are 69% and 54% respectively.

Admission standards vary considerably from state to state, but generally they require students to be academically advanced, based on a variety of measures in order to enroll. Academic requirements for PSEO students in Minnesota are established by the post-

secondary institution and are in all cases, except technical colleges, more stringent than the requirements for those students applying for admission post high school graduation. But some states are beginning to re-think the type of high school student that will benefit from and succeed in college courses. Some states, for example, require students to have high academic achievement only in those academic areas in which they plan to enroll. This type of policy, for example, allows students who excel in one subject (such as math) to take advantage of advanced college courses in math, even if the student is not in the top third of his class overall. Some states that are using dual/concurrent enrollment programs to bring more low-income students and students of color in to post-secondary education have also chosen to provide additional support to these students.

Some states are beginning to incorporate dual/concurrent enrollment into their efforts to reform and reshape high schools (Hoffman, 2005). Many states are re-assessing the high school experience. These states are concerned that students are not graduating college ready, even from suburban schools, and that many students are not adequately challenged during high school, particularly during their senior year. Dual/concurrent can address these issues by giving students college experiences before they graduate and allowing students to make efficient use of their final years of high school. A recent report by Jobs for Future raises the possibility that lines between high school and college can be further blurred or removed altogether. This idea moves states away from separate K-12 and post-secondary schools to a comprehensive "P-16" system.

Finally states and families across the country see the dual/concurrent enrollment approach as a way to save not only time, but also money. Clearly families and students understand that by completing some college coursework during high school they will save on college costs. But states that have significant investments in post-secondary education, as well as K-12 education, can save money. At a time when state resources are particularly stretched, a policy approach that improves academic achievement at both the high school and college levels and saves money is very appealing. While consistent national data about cost savings is not currently available, state level analyses show millions of dollars in savings for families and states. For more information on cost savings, see Finding 9 of this report.

## Findings

### Finding 1:

#### **There is strong statewide support among Minnesota residents for Post Secondary Enrollment Options.**

Earlier in 2005, the Center for School Change commissioned Mason-Dixon Polling and Research to examine public attitudes toward the Post Secondary Options Act. Mason-Dixon was selected because of their strong reputation. They do polling for a major Minnesota metropolitan area newspaper, and a major Minnesota radio station, although this poll was neither commissioned by nor connected to, either of those organizations. Mason-Dixon described Post Secondary Options to survey respondents as follows: "Post Secondary Options Program allows students to take courses while still enrolled in high school, with tax funds paying the cost of tuition and books." Those polled were asked how familiar they are with the program (those results are described later in this report) and then the following question:

How do you feel about this program? Do you strongly support it, support it, oppose it or strongly oppose it?

**Table 3: Support for PSEO program**

	State	Sex		Age		Region		Child in School	
		Men	Women	<50	50+	Mn/Stp	Rest	Yes	No
St Support	38%	28%	47%	39%	37%	43%	32%	38%	38%
Support	44%	51%	38%	47%	41%	41%	48%	51%	41%
Oppose	8%	9%	7%	6%	10%	7%	8%	5%	9%
St Oppose	3%	4%	2%	2%	4%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Undecided	7%	8%	6%	6%	8%	6%	9%	3%	9%

Statewide, 82% of those surveyed either strongly support or support the program, compared to 11% who oppose, or strongly oppose the program. Support levels are highest among women (85%), people under 50 (86%), and people with children in school (89%).

In this survey, 625 registered Minnesota voters were interviewed statewide by telephone. They represent a random sample of voters. Mason-Dixon reports that the results have a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points. This means that there is a 95 percent probability that the "true" figure would fall within that range if the entire population were sampled. The margin for error is higher for any subgroup, such as a regional or gender grouping. (Mason-Dixon Polling, 2005)

**Finding 2:  
Students are benefiting from PSEO.**

The message from PSEO students and their families is consistent and clear – they strongly endorse PSEO. The fall 2005 Center for School Change survey of 357 PSEO students found that 97% of the students surveyed were either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their experience. This high level of satisfaction has remained virtually unchanged since the program began in 1985. The first major study of PSEO participation, completed after the program’s first year, found that 95% of parents and student participants were satisfied or very satisfied with the program (MDE, 1987). Four studies conducted during the intervening years show consistent results. In 2001, a Center for School Change study showed satisfaction levels remained at the same extremely high level (Boyd, et. al 2002). In 1996, the Legislative Auditor’s Office completed a major review of the program and found that seventy-three percent of the students they surveyed were “highly” satisfied (OLA, 1996). Ninety-seven percent of the 500 randomly selected PSEO participants in a 1997 study rated the value of the program as “good” or “very good.” (Mullin, 1997)

The 1996 Legislative Auditor’s study and a 2001 study by MnSCU also gauged satisfaction levels among post-secondary school PSEO administrators. Satisfaction among these administrators has been climbing. In 1996, 71% of PSEO post-secondary administrators thought the program was performing satisfactorily. By 2001, this percentage had risen to 98% (MnSCU, 2001).

In surveys conducted by CSC in both 2001 and 2005, students cited a number of specific benefits shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Benefits of PSEO**

	2005	2001
Learning more than in high school	94%	77.8%
Saving money because tuition was free	92%	86.2%
Saving time because getting high school and college credit at the same time	91%	84%
Feeling more academically prepared for college	85%	79.6%
Knowing what to expect in a college environment	85%	77.9%
Being challenged more than in high school	81%	75.2%

Students report a number of academic benefits from participation. For example, 92% of those students completing Mullin’s survey in 1997 indicated that they had enrolled in post-secondary education and 96% were expecting to graduate with a college degree. According to this same study, 94% of students reported a positive impact on their educational development, 82% on study habits and 89% on preparation for post-secondary matriculation (Mullin, 1997). The Legislative Auditors Office found in 1997 that more than 70% of students reported the following benefits from participation: they became better prepared academically, they learned more than they would have in high school, and they grew more knowledgeable about what to expect in college (OLA, 1996).

Several studies have found that students who entered post-secondary institutions with prior college credits

- Earned more credit or passed more units than those entering without college credit
- Had a higher grade point average
- Had a higher graduation rate. (Martinez and Klopott, 2005)

Students also were asked by CSC, "If you were to do it over again, would you choose to participate in the PSEO program...definitely, probably, uncertain, probably not, or definitely not?" In 2005, 86% said "definitely," 12% said "probably," and only 1% said "probably not," or "definitely not." In 2001, 87.2% had the same response, "definitely", 9.5% said "probably yes." Less than 1% said "probably not," or "definitely not."

Behind these numbers are thousands of real students who have benefited individually from the program. Students from low, middle and higher income families and from across the state illustrate in their own words below the diversity of benefits they received from participation in PSEO.

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Back in 1986, I had only good things to say about my education at Winona Senior High School. I saw PSEO as a way to complement my advanced high school courses with a bit of variety like courses on Asian history, Latin American politics, and French. I took one class a quarter for two years.

PSEO as offered a bit of freedom at the end of my high school day as a number of us car pooled over to Winona State University. I wasn't prematurely disconnected from the high school, in fact I was elected to serve as the president of the WSHS Student Council my senior year.... my head start at WSU combined with my father's death from cancer, made the choice to continue at WSU rather than attend St. Olaf where I was also accepted an easy choice. With one summer session, even a study abroad term overseas, I managed to graduate in 3 years. (Clift)

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I took courses at Bethel College (now Bethel University). It was a wonderful place to do the program because they were very welcoming and tried to make PSEO students feel like part of their community. We were allowed to register before the undergraduate students to insure that we got all of the courses we needed in order to graduate. While at Bethel I took Basic Economics, Statistics, American Politics and Government, College Writing, Intro to Psychology, Information Technology & Applications, Harp Lessons, and Basic Communications. I was also able to be involved in campus activities and extra curricular activities. I joined Bethel's dance team, which was a great way to meet people since I was not living on campus. I was also involved with Bethel's orchestra and had the opportunity to play in their big Christmas concert. (Falk)

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Looking back, I couldn't be more pleased about my decision to do PSEO. I loved being in those college courses and being academically challenged for once in my life. I was also happy that I decided to do my PSEO work at St. Thomas. I knew that St. Thomas was where I wanted to go to college, so it really gave me an extra head start. Not only did I know my way around campus, but I was familiar with the psychology department and some of the professors when I actually started school there. The only thing I didn't like about PSEO was that I had to drive so far to go to class. I live in Wyoming, Minnesota and would drive 30 miles to attend classes at St. Thomas. It was a hassle, but was well worth it in the end.

(Coopersmith)

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Enrolling in the PSEO program gave me an advantage compared to others who did not have the same experience. I was able to see the important relationship between what I learned in high school and the effect it had on college. Because of that I became more mature, focused more in classes and was ready for college when I entered my freshman year. I completed my PSEO program with 24 credits. Because of PSEO I completed college in three years. During that time I was able to study abroad in Toledo Spain for one semester. I graduated from the University of Minnesota with two Bachelor of Arts in International Relations and Spanish. (Nyembwe)

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In my two years of participation in the PSEO program, I took courses at a private college, two public universities, and a community college. I took a total of 29 college credits: Introduction to Prose literature, Introduction to Biology, and English Composition at Mankato State University, College Algebra at Dakota County Technical College, Calculus I and Computer Science I at Gustavus Adolphus College, and Spanish I (5 credits) at University of Minnesota; my cumulative GPA across all these courses was 4.0. I am very glad I took courses at a variety of schools, both public and private. It gave me the opportunity to explore my options in secondary education prior to starting as a full time student and certainly influenced my decision to attend Macalester College, a private liberal arts college. (Lars Anderson)

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Being raised on a farm in rural Crookston with four other siblings, money was certainly not in abundance for my family and I was fully aware that if I chose to continue my education, I was going to be the one to pay for it. Therefore, by enrolling in the PSEO, I would get a year of college paid for plus still be able to attend my high school events. I took my college classes in the morning and was back at the high school in the afternoon to eat lunch with my friends and attend my extracurricular activities. I really had the best of both worlds...

The most difficult situation I experienced, which I was glad when it was over, was standing in front of my classmates who were four to five years older than me and presenting my speeches in Speech class. Talk about intimidating but I survived and I was happy when the class was over. If there was one thing to change about my PSEO experience, I would not have taken that class.

However, having most of my generals finished by the time I attended Concordia, I was able to start taking classes in my major my first year which allowed me to

graduate with four majors and one minor. I didn't, however, graduate early which was my choice not to. I wanted to stay at Concordia for the full four years and finish with my classmates. (Rupp)

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I enrolled in the AP courses at Eden Prairie High School in the fields of English, American History, European History, Calculus, Physics, Biology, Spanish, was a member of the high school choir for four years, and took art classes; therefore I never had what our school called a "free period.",... I looked at the option of PSEO, as a way I could supplement my high school education.

...I finally determined that my high school career should be supplemented by additional art classes, via the PSEO option. My junior year of high school, I enrolled, first semester at Normandale Community College in Bloomington, Minnesota....I took a painting course. I loved this option as it allowed me to explore every interest that I had. I was able to stay enrolled in my AP classes, stay committed to choir, fulfill the Profiles of Learning, and remain in my Varsity sport of swimming while still taking these art classes. Now, many people would say this schedule was crazy. However, for me, art was a way of relaxing and developing a different part of myself that AP classes and the Profiles of Learning could not. (Swiggum)

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I saved an entire year of tuition costs because I enrolled in post secondary. I believe that without this benefit I would not have been able to afford a private school education in college. For this reason alone, I am extremely grateful for post secondary enrollment options. During my experience at RCTC I took classes in art, economics, English, political science, sociology, and speech. The classes proved to be a much larger challenge for me, but for once in my life I felt like homework was actually work. I received 34 credits in the year I was enrolled and was able to maintain a 3.6 GPA compared to my 3.9 I had in high school. I feel that this reflects the increased challenge, but my extra work should also be considered so that it doesn't understate the difficulty of college courses. My high school classes required very little out of school work. My year at RCTC involved an average of two hours of homework for each hour of class, not including hours spent preparing for projects and tests. The extra time spent out of class reflects the increased challenge I experienced during the college courses. I was extremely happy with my transition into the college life. I was expecting it to be difficult to make friends because I was still a "high school" student, but I found people to be extremely accepting. The only thing I wasn't expecting was the difficulty of maintaining friendships with the friends I did have at my high school. We had different lives and different stories to be told. Simply put, the things we had in common in the past were a thing of the past. It was a challenge to stay close with them when I was developing friendships with new people, but I also think it was a good experience because it prepared me for what would have inevitably happened a year later. (Thiesen)

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I...appreciated the freedom that I had to choose my classes and make my own schedule. I received great experience from that, and when it was time for me to make my schedule in college I was able to do it without much difficulty. I liked the fact that my professors

did not treat me like I was in high school; but they treated me like the rest of their college students. I enjoyed having an option to play sports at the college or still play sports at my high school. I also enjoyed being able to tutor students at the college; sometimes I tutored post secondary students, other times college students. It was a great way to keep up with the subjects I was good at and also help someone else. I really appreciated that my credit counted for high school and college. I went into college my freshman year with forty-nine credits which made me a second semester sophomore. (Sheppard)

**Finding 3:  
Most PSEO students are performing at very high levels.**

Early in the debate over PSEO, some opponents questioned whether high school students would take college courses seriously and perform at acceptable levels once they enrolled. For this study information on this issue was obtained from two University of Minnesota campuses (Twin Cities and Duluth), and Normandale Community College. When CSC asked, other institutions said that statistics comparing grade point averages of PSEO and more traditional students were not available. However, according to MnSCU, "On average, PSEO students attending courses at college and university campuses consistently earned higher grades than college and university students taking the same courses." (MnSCU, 2001) At all three campuses responding to CSC's request, PSEO students had a higher grade point average than the freshman class.

**Table 5: PSEO and College Freshmen GPA Comparisons**

Fall 2004		GPA
UMD Freshman Class		2.575
UMD PSEO Students (Aker, 2005)		3.36
Normandale Freshman Class		2.64
Normandale PSEO Students (Smith, 2005)		2.95
Spring 2005		GPA
UMD Freshman Class		2.35
UMD PSEO Students (Aker, 2005)		3.20
Normandale Freshman Class		2.67
Normandale PSEO Students (Smith, 2005)		2.94
UM Twin Cities 2004-05		GPA
Freshman Class		3.07
PSEO Students		3.48

What do these higher grade point averages say about PSEO students? Definitive judgments are difficult. More research is needed. But it is possible to note that whatever else is happening, PSEO students on these campuses are not trying to “just get by.” Their grade point averages are almost a full half point higher than the typical freshman on the Twin Cities campus, and almost a full point higher on the Duluth campus.

Admissions standards may be part of the explanation. Within the MnSCU system in all cases, except technical colleges, PSEO students are required to meet higher academic admission standards than students who enter these institutions after high school graduation. In any event, the vast majority of the students who participate are clearly capable of on-campus college coursework.

**Finding 4:  
Student participation continues to grow, but some segments of the student population are under-represented.**

During the 20 years of its existence, over 110,000 students have directly taken advantage of the opportunities afforded by PSEO to pursue vigorous academic coursework and alternative educational options on college campuses (MDE, Etheridge 2005). Usage has steadily risen from 3,523 students in 1985-86 to 7,471 in 2004-05. Table 6 details the program’s growth. MnSCU estimated in 2001 that 20% of Minnesota high school seniors earned college credits before graduating (MnSCU, 2001).

**Table 6: Students participating in Post Secondary Enrollment Options on college campuses (MDE, Etheridge, 2005)**

1985-86	3,523	1992-93	5,443	1999-00	7,147
1986-87	3,945	1993-94	6,218	2000-01	7,098
1987-88	5,035	1994-95	6,663	2001-02	7,211
1988-89	5,876	1995-96	6,393	2002-03	7,546
1989-90	5,860	1996-97	6,566	2003-04	7,169
1990-91	6,668	1997-98	6,999	2004-05	7,471
1991-92	7,546	1998-99	7,115		

Public school participants in PSEO are disproportionately female and affluent. The gender gap is significant and growing. In 2004-2005, 67% of participants were female, up from 64% in 1996 (MDE, 2005; OLA, 1996). Statewide females made up 48% of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade public school students in 2004-05. PSEO students, on average, also have higher family incomes. While 24% of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders statewide qualify for free and reduced lunches, only 13% of PSEO participants do so.

In 2004-2005, students of color were under-represented in PSEO programs and over-represented in Area Learning Centers or ALCs (an option designed for students who are experiencing difficulties in traditional district schools). For example, African-American students are 8% of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders, 4% of PSEO students and 18% of ALC students. The proportions are similar in the Hispanic student population. Four percent of all 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students, 2% of PSEO students and 6% of ALC students coming from this demographic group. This disparity has developed since 1996 when the Legislative Auditor study reported that 10% of both eligible students and PSEO participants were ethnic minorities. One national study that looked at local program evaluations found that Minnesota is not alone. These evaluations showed that “dual enrollment programs predominately serve white, middle-class students, with the exception of a few programs that specifically target minority or low-income students.” (Martinez and Klopott, 2005)

**Table 7: Demographics of PSEO, Area Learning Centers (ALC) and Statewide 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Graders**

	11-12 Grade Public School Students	11-12 Grade Public School Students in PSEO	11-12 Grade Public School Students in ALCs
All Statewide -	149,734 (100%)	5,990 (4%)	31,771 (21%)
Female	72,278 (48%)	3,984 (67%)	14,168 (45%)
Free/Reduced Lunch	36,434 (24%)	786 (13%)	9,347 (29%)
Special Needs	21,969 (15%)	223 (3%)	4,396 (14%)
White	121,010 (81%)	5,210 (87%)	20,531 (64%)
African-American	12,443 (8%)	229 (4%)	5,723 (18%)
Hispanic	5,713 (4%)	92 (2%)	2,044 (6%)
American Indian	3,352 (2%)	59 (1%)	1,110 (4%)
Asian	8,206 (6%)	402 (7%)	2,462 (8%)

According to the 1996 Legislative Auditor study, students in the Twin Cities metropolitan area are more likely to make use of the program and proximity to a post-secondary institution is a predictor of high enrollments. Most PSEO students attend MnSCU institutions (community colleges, technical colleges or state universities). In 2004-2005, 74% of all PSEO students took their coursework at MnSCU campuses.

**Table 8: PSEO Participation by Institution Type (2004-2005) (MDE, 9/19/05)**

Institution Type	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Technical Colleges	551	7%
Community Colleges	2,656	34%
State Universities	777	10%
University of Minnesota	948	12%
Private Colleges	1,065	14%
Combined Comm./Tech	1,750	23%

CSC surveys of PSEO students found that proximity to home was the most often cited factor for students when choosing their post-secondary institution. Eighty-one percent of surveyed students in CSC’s 2005 survey listed this as a reason for choosing their PSEO post-secondary institution. Given the large number and geographic dispersion of MnSCU campuses across the state, it is not surprising that the vast majority of students complete their PSEO coursework there.

**Finding 5:**

**Special education students are among those taking advantage of PSEO, although participation rates appear to be declining.**

PSEO has helped a number of students with special needs make the transition from high school to college. Information for this study was gathered at a meeting with about 80 parents of high school students with special needs. The meeting was convened by PACER, an information and advocacy group that works with families whose children have some disability or special need. Asked if they were familiar with opportunities offered by the Post-Secondary Options program to their children, less than 10% of the parents raised their hand.

In 2004-05, 3% of the public school students participating in PSEO were classified as special needs. Statewide 15% of eligible students (11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders) were placed in this category (MDE, 2005). Participation rates appear to have declined from a 1991 study which found that eight percent of the reported participants in PSEO had some form of disability or special need. The majority of PSEO students with disabilities were attending technical colleges. In fact, the 1991 report showed that 26% of PSEO students at technical colleges were students with disabilities or special needs. (Lange and Ysseldyke, 1991).

There is considerable anecdotal evidence demonstrating the value of this program for special needs students. For example, Tim Skaja, Director of Student Support Services at Anoka Technical College, described several PSEO programs at his institution that include students with special needs. Of the 60 students in the program each year, Skaja estimates that roughly 20% are students with special needs. These students have had particular successes in the areas of welding, machine trades, automotive, and emergency medical technician.

Through a partnership with District 11, the Anoka Technical College has a high school on campus. The Secondary Technical Education Program (STEP) is not just a high school, but a way of transitioning students to college. Eleventh and 12th grade students can attend college classes either full-time or part-time. By earning college credit while still in high school, some PSEO students are even able to graduate from high school and two-year college simultaneously. (Skaja, 2005)

Dena Russell, interim director of Admissions and PSEO Coordinator at Minneapolis Community and Technical College says that her institution typically has 100 to 130 students per semester under PSEO. Perhaps five to ten of them are students with special needs. It "works very well with some students, and simply does not work for others," she reported.

MCTC has partnered with the Minneapolis Public Schools on a program called "Transition Plus." MCTC houses two Transition Plus counselors from the Minneapolis district, who help students with special needs. These students must meet the same requirements that other high school students must meet when applying to MCTC. Typically these students are ages 18-21. Russell reports that students with special needs have had success at MCTC in a variety of fields, including culinary arts, jewelry-making, liberal arts and barbering.

### **Finding 6:**

#### **PSEO has had a positive impact on the larger K-12 system.**

In addition to the direct impact of the program for those students participating, the PSEO law has promoted "vigorous academic pursuits" in indirect ways as well. In response to the law, high schools across the state have expanded opportunities for students to earn college credit while in their high school. An important education finance policy was first advanced in this Minnesota law -- money followed the student to an education provider other than a school district. Under Minnesota's program, the appropriate proportion of state aid is removed from school districts when a student enrolls in a PSEO course and funding is then "moved" to the post-secondary institution where the student takes his or her courses.

Districts in Minnesota have responded to this financial incentive by increasing the number of "college-level" courses available to students. Such programs can keep students and their state aid in the district. Districts have added Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses to their offerings. Nationally, the number of AP tests taken increased by 491% between 1986 and 2004. In Minnesota, this increase was 988% during the same time period. In addition, many school districts have responded to PSEO by developing their own agreements with post-secondary institutions to provide college credit courses in high schools (or "college in the schools" programs). (Minnesota Department of Administration, 2005) The number of students participating in these programs has increased even more rapidly, ten-fold, from 1,200 in 1991-92 to an estimated 14,000 in 2004-05 (MDE, Etheridge, 2005). So, PSEO has helped

encourage school districts to make “vigorous academic pursuits” available to many more students in their school buildings.

**Table 9: Increase in AP Tests (College Board, 2005)**

	Number of Students Who Took AP Tests		Number of AP Tests Taken	
	Nationally	Minnesota	Nationally	Minnesota
<b>1986</b>	231,378	1,970	319,224	<b>2,483</b>
<b>2004</b>	1,101,802	17,437	1,887,770	<b>27,007</b>
Percent Change	<b>376%</b>	<b>785%</b>	<b>491%</b>	<b>988%</b>

In 1996 the Legislative Auditor asked Minnesota high school principals about the impact of PSEO. Asked about how PSEO affected their school, 64% said it had increased communication with post-secondary institutions, 28% reported it had no impact, and only 1% said it had decreased their communication. (OLA, 1996)

Jerry Ness, Superintendent of the West Central Public Schools, near Fergus Falls, and president of the Minnesota Rural Education Association, agrees that PSEO has encouraged many districts to improve. Ness recently described the impact of providing more options, such as Post Secondary Enrollment Options: “You have to be innovative to survive. Giving students more choices among schools has made us much better.”

Ness explained how his district has responded to PSEO: “To combat post secondary options, we’ve made partners out of them, rather than enemies.” (Ness, 2005). He listed several agreements with post-secondary institutions that his district has negotiated:

- Courses available at Alexandria Tech
- Colleges in the Schools with Fergus Falls Community College
- Using the same software in certain courses as is used in post-secondary institutions, so that students are more familiar with what they will encounter later in their educational career.

Ness reports that the same kind of response is happening in many rural districts. (Ness, 2005)

Gregg Allen, former principal and superintendent in the southern Minnesota district of Nicollet, described how his district responded to Post Secondary Options. With two post secondary institutions less than 15 miles away, “We had to do something.” (Allen, 2005)

Nicollet cooperated with Fond du Lac Community College to offer 16 credits a semester in courses that earned both high school and college credit. Before beginning the program, Allen interviewed students to see what they were seeking. “It wasn’t just more challenging courses. They wanted to be treated more like adults. So we changed the schedule for them, set up a separate lounge, and began offering the courses between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.”



Response was very positive, from both the students and their parents. Every Nicollet junior and senior took at least one of these courses and a number of juniors and seniors spent most of their time in concurrent courses. Allen notes "Parents and students really rose to the occasion. The students asked to be treated more like adults – and when we did it, they showed us that they were ready." Allen hopes to create a similar program in Osakis, where he was recently hired to be superintendent. (Allen, 2005)

Benefits from competition can run several ways, promoting new partnerships in ways not previously expected. "There's something important that you're missing. There's another benefit from the Post Secondary Option program that you have not described. The benefits of competition can go two ways." That's what a western Minnesota school administrator explained, as he discussed the PSEO.

The administrator agreed that Post-Secondary Options has encouraged many high schools to increase the number of advanced, challenging classes. As he put it, "That's true. Schools do this to retain students, who might otherwise attend a nearby or local college." He continued, "But the program also has encouraged some colleges to become more responsive and cooperative with high schools."

Apparently, as the high school in his district began losing students to nearby colleges, the district administration asked if these post-secondary institutions would be willing to work with them to create what are often called "College in the Schools" courses. These courses, taught in the high school, offer both high school and college credit. The number of these courses has increased around the state since implementation of PSEO, along with Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses.

Initially, this administrator reported, neither nearby local higher education institution was interested in cooperating. So the district contacted another Minnesota state university that he had heard was open to this idea. They were interested. Together the university and school district planned and began offering new "college in the schools" courses, right in the high school. These courses were quite popular.

Hearing about this, a nearby community college changed its mind. Now its administrators are willing to help the high school offer more challenging, college-level courses in the high school. These new courses are valuable new options for students. And the collaboration has helped high school teachers, who are working with college faculty to offer the courses. Sometimes competition creates winners and losers - as in a basketball or football game. But in this case, it seems everyone has won.

### **Finding 7:**

**While students have many college credit options available, little is known about the comparative benefits of these options.**

As the Minnesota Departments of Administration and Education have pointed out, Minnesota high school students currently have a variety of options for earning college credit while still in high school. These include the Advanced Placement program, operated by the College Board in New York, the International Baccalaureate Program

operated by a group in Switzerland, "College in the Schools" courses offered in a number of Minnesota high schools, along with the Post-Secondary Enrollment Options Program. Each program has advantages and disadvantages.

Options are important for students and families and having such a large variety of college level coursework available is valuable. At the same time, it is important that students and families understand the advantages and disadvantages of each. AP, IB and College in the Schools offer important opportunities to many students. They are taught right in the student's high school. A student need not arrange transportation to a sometimes distant post-secondary institution. Students can easily be involved in a full range of after school activities, while still taking these courses. Students also can continue to see their friends during the school day. All of these are valid and important advantages.

A potential disadvantage from the students' viewpoint, especially for the AP and IB courses, is that they are judged, for college credit purposes, on how well they do in a single test given at the end of the course. This situation has been criticized by a National Academy of Sciences Committee, which examined IB and AP courses. "Using several sources of evidence of student progress also can provide a more accurate picture of what students know compared with a single measure, such as an examination. The single end of year examinations as found in AP do not adequately capture student learning." (National Academy Committee, 2002).

One PSEO participant explained the issue this way: "I attended a Twin Cities suburban high school and took several AP courses my sophomore and junior years including AP Calculus, World History, US Government, and US History, before going to full-time PSEO my senior year. While I enjoyed some of my AP classes, it did not seem fair to have your college credit depend on one exam at the end of the school year." (Falk, 2005) Throughout high school and college, whether students earn credit for a course is determined by various projects, several examinations and other measures. While acknowledging the value of advanced, challenging course work, such as that frequently available in AP/IB courses, the National Academy Committee has advanced an important disadvantage in the AP/IB approach.

The National Academy Committee also raises concerns about the "excessive breadth of coverage," or, as a *New York Times* story put it, "courses crammed in too much material at the expense of understanding." (Arenson, 2002)

It appears that no comparable national examination of "College in the Schools" courses has been completed. But a Minnesota State College and University study raised other concerns about some of these courses. It noted, "Most College in the High School students are awarded grades that, on average, are significantly higher than grades that college faculty award to on-campus PSEO students who take similar courses." It noted that for the 1999-2000 school year, the grade point for all PSEO courses taught by college or university faculty was 2.92, compared to the average of College in the High School courses taught by high school teachers of 3.16. (MnSCU, 2001) In some cases, College in the Schools students may be involved in "grade inflation" and getting a slightly inaccurate view of how college professors will view their work.

Another issue is teacher qualifications. In many post-secondary institutions, faculty members specialize in a particular area – such as Physics, Chemistry, Modern American History, Ancient Greek Mythology, etc. High school teachers often are expected or required to teach a much broader array of courses. This can make it more difficult for high school faculty to stay up to date on the latest developments in their field. High schools have some outstanding faculty. But because of different responsibilities within various institutions, college faculty may have more in-depth and updated knowledge of their subject matter.

Reacting, in part, to concerns raised by high school teachers, administrators and other educators, the Minnesota Legislature has allocated millions of dollars to help make AP and IB stronger, more attractive options. For example, funds are available to

- help students pay the cost of taking AP and IB exams
- train teachers to offer AP, IB or College in the Schools courses.

What about the advantages and disadvantages of participating in PSEO? This report already has noted the major advantages that high schools students describe: “Learning more than in high school, being more challenged than in high school, saving time and money, and learning what to expect in a college environment.”

What about disadvantages? The two most frequently cited disadvantages, listed by 21% of the students surveyed in 2005, were “transportation between my home/high school and the PSEO institution, and scheduling problems between my high school and post-secondary institution.” Thirteen percent of students in 2005, and 11.8% in 2003 listed not being “able to participate in sports, music or other extra-curricular activities.”

The internet and other communications technology provide new opportunities to provide courses. This delivery mechanism can be used for AP, IB, College in the Schools and PSEO courses. For example, the University of Minnesota, Morris and Northwestern College in St. Paul provide PSEO courses via the internet. (Boever, Bosmans, 2005) During the 2004-05 school year, Northwestern enrolled about 500 PSEO students via the internet. The college expects about a 25% increase in PSEO distance learning enrollment during the 2005-2006 year (Mattson, 2005). Emerging technology expands the range of courses available to students, but also raises questions. How is student performance in high school or college impacted by taking coursework online, instead of in a high school or college classroom? Are some kinds of students more likely to succeed using this approach?

Options are important. The availability of the three “within-high school” options – AP, IB and College in the Schools -- in addition to PSEO is very valuable for many, many students. These options can provide an important challenge for high school students, along with rewarding professional opportunities for high school faculty. However, good information about options can help families make the best decisions about which options are best for their children.

### **Finding 8:**

#### **Some students continue to experience resistance and hostility from high school leadership and faculty who are not eager to see students participate in PSEO.**

Seventeen percent of PSEO participants surveyed by CSC in 2005, and 22.5% of those in 2001 listed "unhelpful or unsupportive" teachers and counselors as a problem. The MnSCU report describes this issue frankly: "We were provided with many anecdotal examples of how secondary school administrators had discouraged PSEO participation." (MnSCU, 2001) These included:

- Some high schools would not incorporate PSEO grades into high school class rank.
- Some high school ranking systems rewarded students for taking honors classes in the high school, but not PSEO courses.
- In at least one community, local high schools students were required to miss two high school hours in order to attend one college course.

As the MnSCU report noted, "Although state law does empower high school students to pursue PSEO courses without the approval of secondary school administrators, in reality high school students often find it difficult to challenge the authority of these administrators." (MnSCU, 2001)

Several of the PSEO participant papers that are part of this report speak eloquently to this issue. One woman learned that, although her grades would normally make her the class valedictorian, the high school planned for the first time in the year she graduated not to name a valedictorian. It was not until a law suit was threatened that the school changed its mind, awarding her valedictorian status. Despite her very high grades, participation in sports and other service activities, she was not named to the school's National Honor Society. District administrators strongly, publicly criticized the PSEO program. (Anderson, Lindsay 2005)

Another inner-city student reports that he was told initially that he could not participate in the PSEO program because he did not have a high enough grade point average and needed recommendations from two high school teachers. As he points out, he DID have grades qualifying him for PSEO – and PSEO does not require recommendations from teachers. Subsequently, he did enroll in the PSEO program. Because of PSEO, "I graduated from the University of Minnesota in 3 years, with two Bachelor of Arts in International Relations and Spanish." (Nyembwe, 2005)

A Rochester area student who "enjoyed many things about being a post secondary education options student" wrote:

The unpleasant experiences mainly came from trying to get into the program. The advisor at my high school did not encourage me to come to the program, and I had a real fight on my hands to try to get his signature. The only reason he signed the necessary paper was because I was only going to go part-time. I know that your high school has to approve for you to go to the program, but they try to deny you the chance of going because of the money they lose to the

program. A high school advisor can refuse to sign the paper work without giving you a reason, and the state should do something to make it more difficult for high schools or school districts to do that. (Sheppard, 2005)

It's important to note that of the eleven people who contributed essays, only 3 reported problems with their high school. In the statewide surveys, about 20% of students reported such problems. The majority of students did not report such problems, but some did. It is also important to recognize that these essays and the surveys are from students who participated in the program. Little is known about those students who are not in the program either because they do not know about it or have been discouraged from participating.

**Finding 9:**

**There appear to be financial benefits to individual students, their families and state taxpayers, but these benefits need further examination.**

In 2001, MnSCU estimated that the state government, the federal government, parents and students saved \$45 million. State savings account for nearly \$32 million of this total and family/students savings approximately \$11 million. These analyses took into account the retention rate within the system, state subsidies to post-secondary institutions and state financial aid (MnSCU, 2001). These figures are for MnSCU institutions which account for approximately 74% of PSEO enrollments. Additional savings would be realized for programs at the University of Minnesota and to a lesser extent at private colleges.

Programs in other states show similar savings. Washington State's Running Start program was modeled on Minnesota's PSEO program. Washington state high school juniors and seniors may take up to 18 hours of community college courses at no cost. As in Minnesota, dollars follow students. The Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges estimated that allowing high school students to earn college credits saved the state \$34.7 million in 2001-2002. (Kazis, 2004)

**Finding 10:**

**Students and families lack information about PSEO.**

Several sources suggest that more information about PSEO would be valuable. First, in CSC surveys of students their consistent, number one recommendation is "make more information available." In a 2001 survey, 1,658 Minnesota PSEO participants responded to a survey the Center for School Change (CSC) sent out. These students attended a variety of post-secondary institutions throughout the state. Among other questions, students were asked: "What ways, (if any) could the PSEO program be improved?" The single strongest recommendation was that "More information should be distributed to students about the PSEO program." This was selected by 56% of the respondents. The second most frequently selected response was "More information about which credits

may/may not transfer to other colleges/universities.” Fifty percent of students mentioned this as a way to improve the program.

In 2005, the Center for School Change repeated this survey. Again, we asked PSEO participants from throughout the state about how to improve PSEO. Once again, the single most frequent suggestion was to provide more information. This time, 52% of the respondents cited “More information should be distributed to students about the PSEO program.” Forty-seven percent requested more information about which credits would transfer.

These findings suggest some progress between 2001 and 2005. However, the fact remains that more than 50% of respondents in both surveys, as well as in the Mullen survey, recommended more information about the program. (Mullen, 1997)

The Minnesota State College and University System report also cited the need for more information about PSEO. “MnSCU should work with the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning to develop informational materials, including websites, about the options available for high school students to earn college credits.” (MnSCU, 2001) Twenty-three Minnesota higher education institution websites were examined for this report to determine what information is available about PSEO. This is especially important because every admissions office contacted was extremely busy. So having information on the web can save time for students, families and colleges/university staff.

Information and ease of access varied widely. On some websites, getting information about PSEO was extremely easy. On others, it was much more difficult to find. Especially helpful websites included a search feature such as the one found on the websites for Normandale Community College and the University of Minnesota. On these sites, typing in “Post Secondary Options” brought a user immediately to the relevant information, which was clear and well presented. The University of Minnesota - Twin Cities campus website included information about PSEO at all University of Minnesota campuses around the state, along with information about a number of metro area institutions. Contact information and phone numbers were provided.

The Minnesota State College and University report describes a current dilemma that higher education officials face in sharing information about PSEO:

Post-secondary administrators were very sensitive, though, to a dilemma they faced on maintaining relationships with secondary school administrators. On the other hand, colleges and universities need to develop positive, working relationships with secondary schools so that high school students would be counseled to consider their post-secondary programs. On the other hand, college and university administrators were sympathetic to the challenges that high school students faced in convincing secondary school administrators that PSEO was an attractive alternative...We were provided with many anecdotal examples of how secondary school administrators had discouraged PSEO participation. (MnSCU, 2001)

A statewide Minnesota poll, conducted in February, 2005, found that the vast majority of Minnesotans do not feel they are very familiar with the program. The question was as follows:

Post-Secondary Options allows students to take college courses while still enrolled in high school, with tax funds paying the cost of tuition and books.  
 Are you very familiar, somewhat familiar, not too familiar, or not at all familiar with this program?

**Table 10: Familiarity with PSEO**

	State	Sex		Age		Region		Child in School	
		Men	Women	<50	50+	Mn/Stp	Rest	Yes	No
Very familiar	37%	28%	45%	47%	27%	40%	32%	48%	32%
Somewhat Familiar	37%	39%	35%	31%	42%	32%	44%	37%	37%
Not too familiar	11%	13%	9%	13%	10%	11%	11%	8%	12%
Not at all familiar	15%	20%	11%	8%	21%	17%	13%	7%	19%

Six hundred twenty-five registered Minnesota voters were interviewed statewide by telephone. They represent a random sample of voters. Mason-Dixon reports that the results have a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points. This means that there is a 95 percent probability that the “true” figure would fall within that range if the entire population were sampled. The margin for error is higher for any subgroup, such as a regional or gender grouping. (Mason-Dixon Polling, 2005)

In summary, students and families are currently at the mercy of school administrators and counselors that have a financial incentive to keep students out of PSEO and in their classrooms. Some districts and schools clearly do a good job of informing students and families about their PSEO opportunities, but the current approach is often described as requiring McDonald’s™ to inform customers about Burger King’s™ products. This approach clearly isn’t getting enough good information about PSEO into the hands of all students and families.

**Finding 11:**

**In some cases, access to PSEO may be limited unnecessarily by admissions criteria and institutional caps.**

According to Danielle Tisinger, Associate Director of Advanced High School programs, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, there were more than 700 well qualified students applying for 500 spots at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus for fall, 2004-

2005, and more than 100 applications for the 50 spots available for spring 2005 semester. Apparently in the late 1990's, a decision was made at the University of Minnesota to limit the number of PSEO applicants because of "misplaced fears."

These include the idea that PSEO students were not doing well. As noted in Finding 3, PSEO students, on average, have a higher grade point average at the University of Minnesota. This was also true in the mid-1980's. Secondly, there was a fear that PSEO students would take courses that traditional freshman were seeking. Again, Tisinger felt this issue had been resolved, so that traditional freshmen were not losing places to PSEO students.

In the early 1990's, Minnesota's Community College system made a decision to modify admission into PSEO. Then, in 1995, the MnSCU system adopted Board Policy 3.5, stipulating in part that at state universities and community colleges, PSEO enrollment would be available on a space-available basis, enrollment would be limited to juniors in the upper one-third of their class and to seniors in the upper one-half of their class. Students who did not meet these criteria could be considered for participation "through special appeal by the high school principal or counselor." (MnSCU, 2001)

These changes came about for several reasons.

- Some PSEO students were not succeeding in their college work. They apparently were not ready for the greater freedom and less structured environment of college.
- Some school district administrators were displeased about students leaving their schools to take higher education courses. Administrators felt that sometimes students took less demanding courses, or courses available in the high school. Administrators also were not pleased about the loss of funds. These concerns were described, for example, in the 1996 Office of Legislative Auditors' study (OLA, 1996).

No one wants students to fail, whether it is in high school or college. Clearly, as many of the papers included in this document note, PSEO is not an appropriate option for all students. However, sometimes class rank, test scores and grade point average are not good indicators of a student's potential. One of the things that legislative testimony showed in the late 1980's was that some of the most successful PSEO students were those who had not done especially well in high school. Here are several examples offered by Darryl Sedio, who was Coordinator of the University of Minnesota's Advanced High Studies program at the time:

- Craig K – ranked in the bottom 26 percent of his high school class. His high school grade point average was 1.88. His University of Minnesota grade point average is 3.9
- Lynn J – ranked in the bottom 40 percent of her high school class. High school grade point average was 2.1. University of Minnesota grade point average: 3.0. She found a career direction through a PSEO course and did research on campus in a psychopharmacology lab.



- Pete M – ranked in the 59<sup>th</sup> percentile of his high school class – 41% of his high school class had a higher grade point average. Pete’s high school counselor called the University of Minnesota twice to question whether Pete should be enrolled in PSEO. Pete maintained a 4.0 grade point average at the University of Minnesota.
- Laura L – ranked in the bottom 1/4 of her high school class. There was a significant disparity between Laura’s high school grades and tests of scholastic aptitude. Her high school grade point average was 1.78, and her University grade point average was 3.2. (Sedio)

Current policies make it very difficult for such students to enroll in PSEO in most Minnesota institutions, unless they have a strong recommendation from their school. But in some cases, students like this will not receive recommendations from high school administrators. Indeed, in one case cited above, a high school counselor strongly recommended that the student not be admitted.

As discussed earlier in this report, leading education reformers and policymakers are beginning to advocate for more flexibility in determining which students are likely to succeed in dual or concurrent enrollment programs (Hoffman, 2005; Fitzpatrick and Berman, 2005). Jobs for the Future, for example, supports the use of PSEO as a policy tool to increase post-secondary success among under-represented populations. As Florida’s program demonstrates, this approach can be highly successful. However, caps on enrollments and rigid enrollment requirements can make it difficult to broaden participation. Minnesota’s minority students are less likely to participate in PSEO than their white counterparts. In order to address this issue, post-secondary institutions may need to re-examine whom they admit.

To their credit, some institutions are looking at various factors. A number of PSEO coordinators agreed that they would sometimes admit students for one or two courses who did not have a strong GPA or test scores, but appeared to have an unusual skill or aptitude. These students generally were admitted “on probation” and given a term to show that they were ready for college level work. But information about such exceptions does not appear on most higher education websites.

Florida, for example, has encouraged average achievers to take advantage of their dual enrollment program and has a wide diversity of student participants. This program has been shown to increase the percentage of minority students who go on to post-secondary education. Other states allow students to demonstrate proficiency and take college coursework in just one or two academic areas (Fitzpatrick and Berman, 2005). Another approach would be to allow students who do not meet current admissions criteria to show what they can do. This might mean allowing students to enroll in just one or two courses, with the understanding that they would have to earn at least a B average to continue.

The possibility of greater failure rates is real. But so is the possibility of helping some young people, like the ones described above, who are not well-suited to existing high

schools. This will require somewhat greater flexibility and careful consideration on the part of some of Minnesota's post-secondary institutions.

## Recommendations

Student experiences and research reported earlier lead to the report's final recommendations.

1. Significantly more information needs to be provided about PSEO. The Minnesota Department of Education and Minnesota Office of Higher Education, as neutral parties, should take the lead in this effort. Here are several ways this might be done:
  - a. Colleges and universities might place information on the "home page" of their website that is entitled "Information for high school students." This could include both information about traditional admissions, and information about PSEO.
  - b. A new partnership might be created involving the Minnesota Department of Education, Minnesota Office of Higher Education, business community, Minnesota Minority Education Partnership, various communities of color and the news media. The focus of this effort would be to more effectively communicate information to families and students about the Post-Secondary Enrollment Options program, as well as other opportunities to take college-level courses while in high school.
2. Minnesota Department of Education officials should remind district and school officials about the details of the PSEO law. Specifically, district and high school faculty need to understand that students have a right to apply for PSEO without obtaining permission from high school faculty or administration.
3. Some higher education institutions should strongly consider expanding the number of PSEO slots available and increasing the flexibility of admissions requirements. It appears that at some institutions, a certain number of qualified potential PSEO students were not admitted because the institution had placed a limit on the number of such students. Moreover, evidence suggests that some students who do not meet current admission requirements can excel in PSEO. More flexible criteria at some institutions could allow some of these students to participate in the program.
4. Research should be carried out to examine the success rates of students participating in various forms of Advanced High School programs. These programs include IB, AP, College in the Schools and Post Secondary Enrollment Options. Since the state provides funds to help support these programs, it is important to know what happens to those who participate 5-10 years after they graduate from high school.
5. More high school students should be encouraged to participate in PSEO, College in the Schools, AP and IB programs. Each of these programs has advantages

and disadvantages, but each helps students reach important goals. Students differ in their needs, priorities and maturity. More students taking challenging courses in high school means more students ready for college. It means less time and money spent on remediation. It means more students not only entering, but graduating from some form of post-secondary education.

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## **Appendix 1: Student Essays**

### **Overcoming Obstacles for Challenging Education**

**By Lindsay Anderson**

August 25<sup>th</sup>, 1997 was not only my 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, and the day I would take my driver's exam, but it was also the day of my first college class. During my driver's exam, I feared failing and having my mom drop me off at college for my first day of College Algebra. Fortunately, I passed the exam and drove myself to my first class. After this class, I knew I would go full time in the PSEO program my junior and senior years of high school. I knew that I would potentially be giving up on my chance at Valedictorian, but the college provided the challenging environment that I was lacking at high school. I was bored in high school and the professors and classes at Southwest State University provided the environment where learning was rewarded. My professors knew I was PSEO and not once tried to bring me down because of it. They were always encouraging me to take harder classes, tutor other students, etc. This response, as compared to the response I received from my high school, sparked my aspiration to continue learning.

Before I started the PSEO program my junior year, I developed a spreadsheet of my junior and senior year high school requirements and my first and second year requirements at the University of Minnesota – Carlson School of Management. With this spreadsheet, I was able to select classes that satisfied both high school and college requirements to utilize all of my PSEO classes. I completed the following classes my junior and senior years of high school: College Algebra, Trigonometry, Calculus, Sociology, Accounting, Intro to Computers, Fundamentals of College Writing, Fundamentals of Public Speaking, Business Statistics, Intro to Arts, Literature: Human Diversity, Cultural Anthropology, Intro to Government and Politics, Management Principles, Environment Science, Chemistry, Microeconomics, Macroeconomics, The Rural World (History), and Psychology.

The positive response I received from the college was challenged with the negative responses I received from high school teachers, administration, and classmates. The high school administration not only bad-mouthed the program in school, but also in the local newspaper. What I learned from the constant attacks from teachers and fellow students was how to defend my beliefs, however unpopular they may be at the time. This lesson, although extremely difficult at my young age, has been advantageous in my current business career and personal life.

In addition to the negative comments from students, teachers, and faculty, another negative response from the high school was my in admittance to the National Honor Society. At that time, I was ranked first in my class, was involved in Student Council, varsity Speech, and varsity Golf. Regardless of my high academic standing, record setting golf and speech experience, and excellent credentials and recommendations, I was not admitted in the honor society. Although extremely painful at the time, this taught another valuable life lesson at an early age. Because of political agendas, the better candidate is not always selected.

The final negative response by my high school related to my Valedictorian status. When I started the program, I thought I was giving up on my shot at Valedictorian. I knew the challenging college classes I would be taking and knew the risk that my GPA would fall. At the end of fall semester my senior year, however, we realized that I was going to be Valedictorian. The school, also knowing that I, a PSEO student my junior and senior years of high school, was going to be the Valedictorian, decided that for the first time in school history would not use the Valedictorian title. With threat of law suit, the school decided they would continue to use the title and I graduated as Valedictorian of my high school and spoke to my high school class. The moment when I spoke to my class after surviving the constant attacks about PSEO, lack of entry

into the "honor" society, and threat of eliminating the Valedictorian title, was a moment of triumph. All of the attempts by my school, an institution which is suppose to be for the betterment of students, to hold me down had been unsuccessful, and I was a stronger and more determined person as a result.

I would strongly recommend the PSEO program to any high school student interested in the program, regardless of the negative responses I received from my high school. I would forewarn any student interested in the program about the negative responses they will probably receive from their high school. This program, however, will not only provide them with the quality, challenging education they are striving for, but it will also strengthen them as a person. My hope is that this program is expanded across the US. I currently travel across the US doing technology consulting, and every person I tell about this program wishes they would have had this program in their home state. By expanding this program, we provide an avenue for our gifted students to excel academically, which should be the ultimate goal of any school.

Anderson is a Senior Consultant at Deloitte.

**No Post Secondary Thoughts**  
**By Steven Clift**

This is new for me. It is hard to imagine being part of a 20 year anniversary for anything. It was 20 years ago that I was part of the inaugural class of high school students afforded the opportunity of the Post Secondary Enrollment Option.

Back in 1986, I had only good things to say about my education at Winona Senior High School. I saw PSEO as a way to complement my advanced high school courses with a bit of variety like courses on Asian history, Latin American politics, and French. I took one class a quarter for two years.

PSEO as offered a bit of freedom at the end of my high school day as a number of us car pooled over to Winona State University. I wasn't prematurely disconnected from the high school, in fact I was elected to serve as the president of the WSHS Student Council my senior year.

I recall those first PSEO meetings at Winona State and how other high school students were exercising their choice for different reasons. Some of the full-timers were uninspired or bored with the high school experience, others doubtful of parental support for college were looking to save a buck, and many like me, were looking for some extra variety.

I recall my father, a recent former Winona school board member, being quite proud. He was dying of cancer, but could see his kids taking on the world. In fact a couple years later, my brother attended WSU part-time his junior year and full-time except for one high school course his senior year. My youngest brother did not utilize PSEO, it wasn't for him. I think that is what choice is all about.

In my case, my head start at WSU combined with my father's death from cancer, made the choice to continue at WSU rather than attend St. Olaf where I was also accepted an easy choice. With one summer session, even a study abroad term overseas, I managed to graduate in 3 years. A few months later, I managed to land a job as a committee clerk in the Minnesota Senate before heading off to graduate school the next year at the University of Minnesota.

Now, two decades later, with my first child is about to be born, I am thinking more about day care and early education. On the 20th anniversary of PSEO, I will again become an enthusiastic supporter of this innovative program if my child decides that it is choice that works best for their education.

Steven Clift is an on-line strategist and public speaker focused on the role of information and communication technology in democracy and community engagement. He has spoken in 25 countries.



**PSEO Experiences**  
**By Kimberly L. Coppersmith**

Schoolwork has always come easy to me; especially in high school. I never felt challenged in my high school classes. This is why I became interested in the PSEO program. When I first began to consider PSEO, everybody thought I was nuts. My friends could not understand why I would want to "miss out" on my senior year in high school and even my parents thought I might be "rushing" my education. Upon careful consideration, I made the decision to do part-time PSEO at the University of St. Thomas. This would hopefully allow me to stay connected with my friends and at the same time be challenged in a few college level courses. For my entire senior year, I took two classes at the high school in the morning and then drove down to St. Thomas for one class. During the fall semester, I took General Psychology and in the spring I took Social Psychology (I'm a psychology major). Classes at St. Thomas are held every other day, so I only had to drive down to St. Paul on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Looking back, I couldn't be more pleased about my decision to do PSEO. I loved being in those college courses and being academically challenged for once in my life. I was also happy that I decided to do my PSEO work at St. Thomas. I knew that St. Thomas was where I wanted to go to college, so it really gave me an extra head start. Not only did I know my way around campus, but I was familiar with the psychology department and some of the professors when I actually started school there.

The only thing I didn't like about PSEO was that I had to drive so far to go to class. I live in Wyoming, Minnesota and would drive 30 miles to attend classes at St. Thomas. It was a hassle, but was well worth it in the end.

Overall, I would say that PSEO is a great thing but may not be the right decision for everybody. I never felt particularly connected to my high school so I had no problem only being there half days during my senior year. Getting ahead on my college education was more important to me than hanging out with my friends at school. Because of my PSEO work, I will be able to graduate a semester early from St. Thomas and get a head start on grad school.

I would definitely recommend PSEO to anybody who feels it is right for them. It is a great way to save a lot of money and to get a head start on a college education. It also offers a more stimulating alternative for high-achieving high school students who don't feel challenged in their classes.

Coopersmith currently is a full time college student at St. Thomas.

**PSEO**  
**by Clinton Dietrich**

It was relatively late in my junior year of high school that I made the decision to take advantage of the Post Secondary Enrollment Options program. Though PSEO was an option some of my family members had encouraged me to consider for a number of years, I always discounted it, thinking I would prefer to spend twelfth grade with my classmates at White Bear Lake Area High School. It was not until roughly half way through eleventh grade that the idea of PSEO suddenly struck me as appropriate. As I looked forward to what was in store for me if I spent my senior year of high school at White Bear, I realized I would not be as challenged, and therefore not as rewarded in the end, by spending my senior year there rather than at a rigorous college or university.

I decided that if I were to take advantage of PSEO, I would only do so as a full time student at a college or university that I would want to continue at for the full four years of an undergraduate education. Up until the point at which I decided to pursue PSEO, I had thought of Luther and Saint Olaf colleges as my top two choices of where to pursue my undergraduate education. Unfortunately, taking advantage of PSEO meant forgoing attending either of those two schools. Luther College is located in Decorah, Iowa, so is of course not a PSEO eligible school, and Saint Olaf College chooses not to admit PSEO students. I made some telephone calls to determine what small, and preferably private, liberal arts colleges did enroll PSEO students on a full time basis, and discovered that a peer institution of Luther and Saint Olaf, Gustavus Adolphus College, did so. Once I learned what was available to me at Gustavus, I immediately chose it as the institution I wanted to attend through PSEO.

I did not encounter any opposition in pursuing my plan of attending Gustavus Adolphus College as a Post Secondary Enrollment Options student. Truthfully, though aunts, uncles, and my maternal grandmother had all encouraged me to take advantage of PSEO, I was sure my mother would not want me to leave home a year early to live on my own—even if in a supervised residence hall setting—two hours away from her. My mother had no idea I had developed an interest in PSEO, so when I sprang on her my fully formed plan to apply to Gustavus as a PSEO student, I was very surprised that she fully supported my decision without any worry or hesitation. Likewise, I was pleased to find my guidance counselor and my teachers at White Bear did not try to dissuade me (or my state funding) from leaving the school a year early.

Attending Gustavus Adolphus College was a wonderful experience. My status during my first year there as a Post Secondary Enrollment Options student had relatively little effect on my experience, and what effect it did make was insignificant. I can think of only three things, on an institutional basis, that set me apart from the rest of the first-year class that year. To begin with, all PSEO students were assigned to the last session of on-campus registration during the summer before our entrance. While I do not know the reason for this, it had no negative effect on me, as I was able to get into all of the classes I wanted and was, if I remember correctly, the first individual out of the hall where registration was held. Also, because public education money was being sent to Gustavus to pay for my education, I was not allowed to take any courses in the Department of Religion my first year. As I was not interested in a Religion major or minor, and had the following three years to fit in the one religion course required of me to graduate, that posed no difficulty. Finally, Gustavus had established a rule that would not allow PSEO students to compete in intercollegiate athletics, so that it would not appear that the school was recruiting talented young high school athletes for its sports teams. Again, that rule had no effect on me, as I did not have any interest in participating in intercollegiate athletics.

One thing did take me by surprise the first night of first-year orientation. As the residents of my floor in Pittman Hall met with our resident assistant for the first time, he

announced to the group that there were two people living on the floor who were PSEO students! Though I had no intention of keeping my PSEO status a secret, I did not intend to inform everyone on my floor the first day I met them that I was only 17 and still technically a high school student. In the end, the announcement had no negative effect on my experience. When my roommate and I returned to our room, he said that he wouldn't have guessed I was younger than he, and that it was cool that I was able to take advantage of the PSEO program. However, with the cat out of the bag, my age and PSEO status did lead to countless jokes, and such incidences as a dinner with a large group of Gusties at a chain restaurant in Mankato where, as "the young one", I was cajoled into having to sit in the chair placed in the aisle while my friends took the comfortable places in the booth.

If I recall correctly, five other PSEO students entered Gustavus at the same time I did. There was a small camaraderie among us, given the fact that four of us ended up together in the same first-term seminar and that pairs of us seemed to be purposely assigned to residence hall rooms across the hall from each other. However, we were provided with no special guidance by faculty or staff, did not have any PSEO student activities held for us, or were in any other significant way treated as a group. Therefore, our status as PSEO students was the only common denominator we all shared, and we largely went our own ways socially and academically during our four years at Gustavus.

Academically, I had some great opportunities I would not have had if I had spent the twelfth grade at White Bear Lake Area High School. I was able to take U.S. Government and Politics with a professor who was a member of the Minnesota House of Representatives. I took Human Sexuality with two professors who were also practicing psychologists in the community—one a research psychologist at the Saint Peter Regional Treatment Center, the other a therapist at a local mental health agency. And I was able to take a January Term course entitled Scandinavia During World War II, which examined both the history of the Scandinavian nations' involvement in the war as well as the literature produced in reaction to it. The course involved a cross-disciplinary approach I rarely encountered in high school and covered a topic that never would have been dealt with. Even courses at Gustavus that might have been considered "run of the mill" were beneficial as they provided a greater level of stimulation than I would have encountered in many—if not all—of the classes I could have taken during twelfth grade at White Bear.

Socially, the Gustavus experience was definitely superior to the environment I would have been in as a high school student. Living away from home, relatively on my own but with the resources of the college's Residential Life program available to me should I have needed them, definitely encouraged my personal growth. Furthermore, I was surrounded by a group of people largely more mature and more committed to academic success than I would have been had I remained at White Bear. The existence of social and political advocacy groups on the Gustavus campus provided for me an avenue for action on my own beliefs that was not available at all at White Bear. And though both White Bear Lake Area High School and Gustavus Adolphus College were largely populated with white, middle class youth, there was a level of diversity at Gustavus unmatched at White Bear. It was not only diversity of race or country of origin, but also of religion (even though Gustavus is affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America), politics, life philosophies, sexual orientation, and the like.

I have never regretted my decision to take advantage of the Post Secondary Enrollment Options program. I cannot say that without PSEO I would not have ended up at Gustavus Adolphus College or an institution like it after graduating from high school, but I can say that it kept me in Minnesota at a time in my life—the transition from high school to college—when leaving the state was a very conceivable notion for me. The Post Secondary Enrollment Options program afforded me the opportunity to take a risk, challenging myself academically and socially

at a well-regarded liberal arts college while still only a high school senior, and because of that risk I was, and continue to be, rewarded greatly. I know that I would not be the person I am today without it, and I am glad to know that, if I were a Minnesota high school student today, I would still have the opportunity to do so.

## **PSEO and Advanced Placement Classes** **By Briana E. Falk**

I enrolled in PSEO for the opportunity to take courses at a more advanced level as well as for the great opportunity of receiving college credit. It was also a chance for me to figure out the areas I was truly interested in, giving me the chance to take classes in different disciplines. I have always been interested in a wide variety of subjects and by taking some of my general education courses early I have been able to double major at my current institution.

I took courses at Bethel College (now Bethel University). It was a wonderful place to do the program because they were very welcoming and tried to make PSEO students feel like part of their community. We were allowed to register before the undergraduate students to insure that we got all of the courses we needed in order to graduate. While at Bethel I took Basic Economics, Statistics, American Politics and Government, College Writing, Intro to Psychology, Information Technology & Applications, Harp Lessons, and Basic Communications. I was also able to be involved in campus activities and extra curricular activities. I joined Bethel's dance team, which was a great way to meet people since I was not living on campus. I was also involved with Bethel's orchestra and had the opportunity to play in their big Christmas concert.

I have nothing negative to say about PSEO and no regrets about being involved with the program, except for maybe wishing I had taken more courses. I believe that PSEO is a wonderful program that gives students a chance to excel beyond what they could achieve at their high school. It also provides an atmosphere of higher learner for those high school students that want to go beyond what their high school can offer. At Bethel I was around students who wanted to learn and excel, along with professors who were able to teach at a level not attainable in a high school because of the maturity and drive of the students. It was an incredibly positive learning environment.

I would definitely recommend PSEO to other students. I feel as though PSEO gave me the opportunity to grow in ways my high school could never provide. I also would recommend PSEO above AP courses. I attended a Twin Cities suburban high school and took several AP courses my sophomore and junior years including AP Calculus, World History, US Government, and US History, before going full-time PSEO my senior year. While I enjoyed some of my AP classes it did not seem fair to have your college credit depend on one exam at the end of the school year. With PSEO you are actually in a classroom with other college students and get credit and a grade for the work you put into the class. It also provides the opportunity to be at an institution of higher learning with tremendously talented professors and helps the transition from high school to college.

My one recommendation to students thinking about being in the program is to double check with the institution you plan to attend and make sure that all of the credits will transfer before taking the classes. I currently attend Wheaton College in Illinois and all of my credits transferred from Bethel, but it is always a good idea to check. Otherwise the only thing I would change about the program is to inform more students about the opportunity. I learned about PSEO through family friends, but my high school did not highly publicize the program or its advantages which is a shame because so many more students should be taking advantage of this program.

Thank you so much for the opportunities PSEO has provided for me. It is a wonderful program that has opened doors for me and should be an example for other states to follow. Falk attends Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

## **My Experiences as A PSEO Student**

**Lars Johnson**

**10/17/2005**

As my sophomore year of high school drew to a close, I became interested in Post-Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO). PSEO appealed to me because it gave me the opportunity to take classes in a college environment, with college kids. As a student who had attended a small, project-based school, I felt this exposure to a structured classroom environment, and college students with more traditional education backgrounds would help me in my own preparation for college. Additionally, many of the colleges and universities I was applying to considered the grade point average of their applicants. I wanted to have a transcript of letter grades to supplement my college applications, and show that I could succeed not only by the standards of my project-based high school, but also by the standards of a grade-giving institution. I felt that a letter-grade transcript would help validate the other projects I had done in high school, showing that I was a student of "A-level work", even though no grades were given for my projects.

In my two years of participation in the PSEO program, I took courses at a private college, two public universities, and a community college. I took a total of 29 college credits: Introduction to Prose Literature, Introduction to Biology, and English Composition at Mankato State University, College Algebra at Dakota County Technical College, Calculus I and Computer Science I at Gustavus Adolphus College, and Spanish I (5 credits) at University of Minnesota; my cumulative GPA across all these courses was 4.0. I am very glad I took courses at a variety of schools, both public and private. It gave me the opportunity to explore my options in secondary education prior to starting as a full time student and certainly influenced my decision to attend Macalester College, a private liberal arts college.

While I liked the opportunities afforded me by PSEO, and enjoyed my time in the classroom, there were times I felt disconnected from my high school community. My high school, Minnesota New Country School (MNCS) in Henderson, MN, was already forty-five minutes away from my home town of Northfield, MN, and the additional driving involved in attending college classes at a number of universities caused me to further split my time between several towns. Looking back, it would have been nice to take classes at the local Northfield colleges. Carleton and St. Olaf only offer courses to students through the "Northfield Honors Program". Students taking courses in Northfield and the surrounding area (including students of charter schools, they told me) can take one course each semester of their senior year at either of the colleges. Neither college participates in the PSEO program.

When my sister was considering PSEO in her junior and senior years of high school, I strongly encouraged her to take courses close to school and home, or correspondence courses. I told her that I wished I had been more involved in my school community in high school, and spent less time in the car driving to my PSEO classes on so many different campuses. My sister ended up taking five classes at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities her senior year: two day classes on campus her fall semester (scheduled one after another to cut back on commute time), and one night class and two correspondence courses her spring semester. From what she tells me, this arrangement worked out well for her. She was able to push forward and keep herself academically stimulated her senior year, while at the same time staying connected to friends and community at her high school.

As a current full time college student, I am very grateful for my experiences in the PSEO program. The courses I took offered me additional challenge beyond that which I could find in my existing high school program. My involvement in PSEO kept me engaged towards the end of my high school career and encouraged me to pursue further education after graduation. Instead

of feeling like I was biding time my senior year and waiting to graduate, I felt like I was getting a head start on life. When I started school full time at Macalester College in the fall of 2003, I felt immediately the benefits of my PSEO experiences. The college environment was not a new thing to me and, with "learning the ropes of the system" out of the way, I was able to get more from the lectures and labs. Nothing has prepared me for college better than actually attending college. I am so grateful to have had this opportunity.

## **My Personal Experience as A PSEO Student** **By Bondo Nyembwe**

In my senior year of high school, I heard about a program called PSEO. I became curious and investigated what this program was all about. I scheduled an appointment with Mrs. B... who chaired the selection committee of PSEO at a Minneapolis area public school. During our meeting, I asked her why I was not selected to be in the PSEO program. Mrs. Benson replied, "It is a program for students who will go to college and the classes are very difficult." I asked her what the requirements were to enter the program. Students need to have a 3.2 GPA and must be recommended by two teachers she replied. I meet both requirements and I want to join the program. Mrs. Benson said, "I will see if there is an open seat". Two days later I was the last person admitted in the PSEO cohort for that semester.

My interest to join the PSEO program at the University of Minnesota was influenced by two factors. First to improve my academic English and second, to have an idea of what college was about. In September of 1996 when I joined the PSEO program, I had only been in the United States for ten months. As a senior, I planned to attend college but I was limited in my academic English. I was aware of my weaknesses in the language and I knew I had to find help. The PSEO program I joined was called Commanding English. This program recruited the top 15% of ELL students who aspired to attend college after high school graduation. Shortly after classes started, I became convinced that I made the right choice. The first day of class we received two books and we had to read fifty pages for the next class. I was intimidated because I was a slow reader compared to the rest of my classmates. In addition I did not want to fall behind and fail the class. The classes were interesting and I was enjoying the concept of taking college classes at their demanding pace.

After attending two weeks of classes at the University of Minnesota, I started getting an idea of the college experience. The reading assignments became a familiar routine, writing was no longer a chore but enjoyable. At that time, I realized that I needed to work hard on my writing skills in order to be ready for college. Throughout the program I learned how to write better, express my ideas in a concise way, present the finding of the reading, improve my reading velocity and summarize the main points of a chapter or a book. These are difficult tasks for an ELL student to do during his first year. However, I knew that it was important for me to improve both my academic English and my communicative competencies in order to do well in college.

Many of the courses I took reinforced the need of academic English in the classroom. The commanding English program focused on improving the English skills of future college students both in reading and writing. I was able to complete 24 credits during my PSEO. Here are the names of the courses I took: Literature of an American Immigrant Experience, college reading/writing, Development college Reading, Writing lab, Reading content areas, and General Arts. I am grateful for the opportunity I had to complete these courses without a financial burden.

I had an exceptionally positive experience as a PSEO student because of the program structure. We were 25 students in our cohort and we moved together as a group. The first class was offered at the high school by a professor from the University, and then we relocated on campus. After the first quarter we took some classes with other college students (native speakers of English). Keeping our cohort moving as a group helped us to support and know each other. Many of us who completed the program relied on friends and perseverance of our individual work.



Enrolling in the PSEO program gave me an advantage compared to others who did not have the same experience. I was able to see the important relationship between what I learned in high school and the effect it had on college. Because of that I became more mature, focused more in classes and was ready for college when I entered my freshman year. I completed my PSEO program with 24 credits. Because of PSEO I completed college in three years. During that time I was able to study abroad in Toledo Spain for one semester. I graduated from the University of Minnesota with two Bachelor of Arts in International Relations and Spanish. I highly recommend any PSEO program to current high school juniors and seniors. I strongly suggest that the program communicate to the parents or guardian of students the benefit of the program and offer students a lot of support in order to make their experience meaningful.

Bondo Nyembwe is Director, Center for Training and Careers, an alternative high school for immigrants and refugees. The school is affiliated with the Minneapolis Public Schools and is located at 3400 E. Lake Street in Minneapolis.

**PSEO: What a positive experience**  
**By Stephanie Rupp**

One reason I chose to participate in PSEO is because so many of my classmates were. I guess I wanted to follow the crowd. The second reason I chose PSEO, was because the University of Minnesota, Crookston was a laptop computer college and I was able to have my own laptop computer for the year, with no expenses, which brings me to the third reason why I chose to do PSEO. Being raised on a farm in rural Crookston with four other siblings, money was certainly not in abundance for my family and I was fully aware that if I chose to continue my education, I was going to be the one to pay for it. Therefore, by enrolling in the PSEO, I would get a year of college paid for plus still be able to attend my high school events. I took my college classes in the morning and was back at the high school in the afternoon to each lunch with my friends and attend my extracurricular activities. I really had the best of both worlds.

I finished most of my generals at UMC, including Introduction to Technology, Composition I and II, Technical Writing, Introduction to Psychology, Introduction to Sociology, Introduction to Geography, Ethics, and Speech. I truly enjoyed the classes I participated in because they were challenging and I was out of the atmosphere of the high school and treated as an adult. I enjoyed the new responsibilities and accepted the challenges that PSEO provided which later on prepared me for when I continued my education at Concordia College, Moorhead. The most difficult situation I experienced, which I was glad when it was over, was standing in front of my classmates who were four to five years older than me and presenting my speeches in Speech class. Talk about intimidating but I survived and I was happy when the class was over. If there was one thing to change about my PSEO experience, I would not have taken that class. However, having most of my generals finished by the time I attended Concordia, I was able to start taking classes in my major my first year which allowed me to graduate with four majors and one minor. I didn't, however, graduate early which was my choice not to. I wanted to stay at Concordia for the full four years and finish with my classmates.

I would certainly recommend PSEO to high schools students but not all. It might be the perfect fit for some who are mature enough, ready to accept the challenges that college provides, wanting different electives/opportunities, academically excelling, and those who just don't enjoy what high school is about. I am not implying that these were the reasons I chose to do PSEO, but being a teacher, I would strongly recommend those who display these characteristics to keep them excited and interested in continuing their education.

Stephanie Rupp was a 1996-1997 PSEO participant at University of Minnesota, Crookston. She currently is a public school teacher in the Rochester, Minnesota area.

## **The Educational Experience: Reaching Unknown Potential** **By Cassandra Sheppard**

When I was a junior in high school I participated in the post secondary education options program at Rochester Community and Technical College as a full-time student. I am now twenty years old and am a junior in college, with senior standing. For many years, my mother and I had the misconception that you had to pay money to be in the program, which we found out was not true the first semester of my sophomore year. I wanted to start the program the second semester of my sophomore year; but the program was only for juniors and seniors, so I had to wait. My mother felt like I wasn't being challenged enough at the school I was attending, so she suggested that I do the program as a part-time student. When I got into the program, I got a taste of college life and decided to change to a full-time student.

I enjoyed many things about being a post secondary education options student, especially the fact that I did not have to pay for it. I liked the fact that if I wanted to buy the books I was using for class, that I could for a cheaper amount than what was being sold in the school store. I also appreciated the freedom that I had to choose my classes and make my own schedule. I received great experience from that, and when it was time for me to make my schedule in college I was able to do it without much difficulty. I liked the fact that my professors did not treat me like I was in high school; but they treated me like the rest of their college students. I liked that I was on the colleges schedule and not my schools schedule, that way I started school earlier and ended before mine did. I also appreciated that I had to keep track of what my credits were counting for; I had to make sure that I had all of my English, Science, History, etc... taken care of. I can now keep track of my credits for my major without much trouble, while other students have problems sometimes.

I enjoyed the choices of classes that I could take. RCTC required that post secondary option students take an entrance exam to see where they placed. This told the student what class they tested into, however; if you did not test into a class above 1100 then that student was not able to take that subject at the college, and that made you ineligible to be a full-time student. I enjoyed having to option to play sports at the college or still play sports at my high school. I also enjoyed being able to tutor students at the college; sometimes I tutored post secondary students, other times college students. It was a great way to keep up with the subjects I was good at and also help someone else. I really appreciated that my credit counted for high school and college. I went into college my freshman year with forty-nine credits which made me a second semester sophomore.

The program is a very good program, but there were some unpleasant experiences that I went through. The unpleasant experiences mainly came from trying to get into the program. The advisor at my high school did not encourage me to come to the program, and I had a real fight on my hands to try to get his signature. The only reason he signed the necessary paper was because I was only going to go part-time. I know that your high school has to approve for you to go to the program, but they try to deny you the chance of going because of the money they lose to the program. A high school advisor can refuse to sign the paper work without giving you a reason, and the state should do something to make it more difficult for high schools or school districts to do that. I also did not like that a three credit class counted for one year and a semester credit. Three credit classes are just as difficult as four credit classes, and they should count the same.

Looking back at my experience in the post secondary education options program, I do not regret ever doing it. I gained so much valuable experience from it that I would not have gotten from going to regular high school. I was able to experience college life, which gave me an unquenchable desire to go to college after graduation. I am able to take my experience, speak to

high school students about college and give them options that they did not even know existed. My only regret is that I was not able to take all of the classes that I could have taken, and that I did not make use of the transfer guide more. I do recommend this program to every high school student I run into; it has changed my life and it will change the life of so many others.

Cassandra Sheppard currently is a junior in college with Senior standing

## **Using PSEO to Supplement My High School Career**

**Amber Swiggum**

**Carleton College**

**22 November 2005**

The Post-Secondary Educational Option that was offered to me allowed me to explore areas of myself and my talents that I did not have the capability to do at my high school. I graduated from Eden Prairie High School in 2002 and am currently a senior, African/African-American Studies major at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota. During my high school career, the Minnesota "Areas of Learning" was just passed as I entered my sophomore year. Therefore, we, the class of 2002, were the first class affected by these new standards.

In high school I tried to explore as many areas of studies that I could "get my hands on." I enrolled in the AP courses at Eden Prairie High School in the fields of English, American History, European History, Calculus, Physics, Biology, Spanish, was a member of the high school choir for four years, and took art classes; therefore I never had what our school called a "free period." In addition to these classes I was taking, the Profiles of Learning, while a great idea, required a student like myself to choose a subject in which to "drop" in order to fill the requirements for all the "learning areas" and still be involved in choir, AP courses, and an additional language. Due to this new legislation, I looked at the option of PSEO, as a way I could supplement my high school education.

I debated which subject I would enroll in PSEO for, and I finally determined that my high school career should be supplemented by additional art classes, via the PSEO option. My junior year of high school, I enrolled, first semester at Normandale Community College in Bloomington, Minnesota. It is at this school that I took a painting course. I loved this option as it allowed me to explore every interest that I had. I was able to stay enrolled in my AP classes, stay committed to choir, fulfill the Profiles of Learning, and remain in my Varsity sport of swimming while still taking these art classes. Now, many people would say this schedule was crazy. However, for me, art was a way of relaxing and developing a different part of myself that AP classes and the Profiles of Learning could not. In this aspect, enrolling in this painting class has influenced me to this day. Although at Carleton College I am not active in the art department, in my leisure time I use art as a medium to express myself and allow for my creativity to develop.

In my high school, the use of PSEO in this manner was unusual. I was not looking for college credit, or to be able to graduate early from college. However, the painting class I took prepared me just as well for life beyond high school. As my second semester of my junior year began and as my schedule was now busy with visiting colleges and completing college applications, I choose not to enroll in PSEO any longer. It simply would have been too much with a full load at high school.

One thing I would suggest for future students using the PSEO option is to discuss this opportunity with students like myself; that is, using the PSEO option to supplement a high school education. I believe a liberal arts education is one that will prepare myself and others, to be leaders in our inter-connected world. Using the PSEO option to develop this liberal arts education is something that will appeal to many students. The liberal arts education I had in high school allows me to this day excel in what I do. And most importantly, it has taught me to love learning.

## **PSEO at Rochester Community And Technical College** **By Virginia R. Theisen**

Throughout my life I excelled academically. Starting in the third grade I found school to be less challenging than for other students. Over the years I became more involved in many advanced classes and extra-curricular activities in order to challenge myself more in school. When I was a junior in high school I became interested in PSEO as an option to change my life. After exploring the option throughout my junior year I finally decided take a leap of faith and enrolled at Rochester Community and Technical College (RCTC) as a full-time post secondary student. I felt this would be the best decision for me in the long run for many reasons including heightened academic challenges, social challenges, and the financial benefits.

Growing up I also found myself extremely involved with students that were older than me. I rarely spent time with students in my grade because I felt like I was more mature socially. The majority of my close friends graduated when I was a sophomore in high school, which meant that my junior year was when they started college. I felt as if I should have been experiencing college at this time, too. The maturity gap I felt within my graduating class played a large part in my decision to separate from the high school and begin attending RCTC.

The financial aspect did not play a large part in my decision to enroll in the post secondary program, but the appeal was hard to ignore. I knew I wanted to attend a private college, but that the cost of a private college was considered to be out of range for my family. I am currently a senior at University of St. Thomas – St. Paul and I will be graduating in May, 2006, an entire year early. I saved an entire year of tuition costs because I enrolled in post secondary. I believe that without this benefit I would not have been able to afford a private school education in college. For this reason alone, I am extremely grateful for post secondary enrollment options.

During my experience at RCTC I took classes in art, economics, English, political science, sociology, and speech. The classes proved to be a much larger challenge for me, but for once in my life I felt like homework was actually work. I received 34 credits in the year I was enrolled and was able to maintain a 3.6 GPA compared to my 3.9 I had in high school. I feel that this reflects the increased challenge, but my extra work should also be considered so that it doesn't understate the difficulty of college courses. My high school classes required very little out of school work. My year at RCTC involved an average of two hours of homework for each hour of class, not including hours spent preparing for projects and tests. The extra time spent out of class reflects the increased challenge I experienced during the college courses.

I was extremely happy with my transition into the college life. I was expecting it to be difficult to make friends because I was still a "high school" student, but I found people to be extremely accepting. The only thing I wasn't expecting was the difficulty of maintaining friendships with the friends I did have at my high school. We had different lives and different stories to be told. Simply put, the things we had in common in the past were a thing of the past. It was a challenge to stay close with them when I was developing friendships with new people, but I also think it was a good experience because it prepared me for what would have inevitably happened a year later.

If I had to do it all over again, I would choose the same path. I look back on high school and feel like I may have missed out on some memories, but that is just one negative result from my choice. I gained more knowledge and maturity than I ever expected I would, and I saved the money necessary for me to receive the college education I wanted from a private school. The program was ideal for me, but that 's just me. I would recommend post secondary to anyone who is up for the challenge, because academically and socially it truly was. I was seeking out

these challenges so I loved everything about it. I wouldn't change anything about PSEO, because without it I wouldn't be the person I am today.

Thiesen is a senior at St. Thomas University, St. Paul, Minnesota

## Appendix 2 PSEO Participant Survey Summary 2005

### When did you enroll in the PSEO Program?

	U of MN	State University	Comm. College/ Tech School	Private	Unknown or Other	All
11th grade only	17% (15)	24% (4)	21% (53)	20% (6)	100% (1)	20% (79)
12th grade only	48% (42)	41% (7)	57% (143)	69% (20)	0% (0)	55% (212)
11th and 12th grade	35% (31)	35% (6)	22% (57)	10% (3)	0% (0)	25% (97)

### 1. Why did you choose to enroll in the PSEO Program?

	U of MN	State University	Comm. College/ Tech School	Private	Unknown or Other	All
To take courses not offered at my high school	72% (64)	70% (12)	53% (134)	59% (17)	100% (1)	59% (228)
To save money on future college costs	81% (71)	82% (14)	90% (229)	93% (27)	100% (1)	88% (342)
To have more freedom	72% (64)	76% (13)	75% (190)	70% (20)	0% (0)	74% (287)
To help decide whether or not to attend college after graduation	7% (6)	35% (6)	87% (22)	7% (2)	0% (0)	9% (36)
To be in a less restrictive learning environment	56% (49)	53% (9)	58% (148)	70% (20)	0% (0)	58% (226)
To follow the advice of my high school counselor/teacher	14% (12)	12% (2)	16% (41)	14% (4)	0% (0)	15% (59)
To follow the advice of my parents	33% (29)	17% (3)	41% (103)	37% (10)	0% (0)	37% (145)
To be with my friends	3% (3)	6% (1)	10% (26)	3% (1)	0% (0)	8% (31)
To be in a more adult environment	37% (59)	70% (12)	73% (185)	79% (23)	0% (0)	72% (279)
Other (please explain)	34% (30)	12% (2)	22% (56)	17% (5)	0% (0)	24% (93)

### 2. Why did you choose your particular PSEO Institution?

	U of MN	State University	Comm. College/ Tech School	Private	Unknown or Other	All
The course offerings suited my interests and goals	64% (56)	53% (9)	45% (114)	59% (17)	100% (1)	51% (197)
It was close to my home or high school	60% (53)	82% (14)	88% (222)	76% (22)	100% (1)	81% (312)
It was the only school I could attend because of transportation restrictions	8% (7)	12% (2)	14% (36)	17% (5)	0% (0)	13% (50)



**Stretching Minds and Resources : 20 Years of Post Secondary Enrollment Options in Minnesota**

It was the only school in my geographic area	0% (0)	6% (1)	6% (15)	0% (0)	0% (0)	4% (16)
The school has a good reputation	76% (67)	24% (4)	36% (90)	72% (21)	0% (0)	47% (182)
My friends were attending this school	15% (13)	12% (2)	23% (58)	7% (2)	0% (0)	19% (75)
I might want to attend this school after high school graduation	60% (53)	53% (9)	21% (54)	55% (16)	0% (0)	34% (132)
I missed the deadline for other schools	4% (4)	0% (0)	9% (23)	7% (2)	0% (0)	7% (29)
Other (please explain)	8% (7)	24% (4)	10% (26)	3% (1)	0% (0)	10% (38)

**3. What benefits (if any) do you see yourself gaining from your PSEO participation?**

	U of MN	State University	Comm. College/ Tech School	Private	Unknown or Other	All
Learning more than in high school	88% (77)	70% (12)	77% (196)	76% (22)	100% (1)	94% (308)
Being challenged more than in high school	86% (76)	82% (14)	79% (199)	83% (24)	100% (1)	81% (314)
Feeling more academically prepared for college	86% (76)	82% (14)	84% (213)	83% (24)	100% (1)	85% (328)
Saving time because getting high school and college credit at the same time	89% (78)	94% (16)	90% (229)	97% (28)	100% (1)	91% (352)
Knowing what to expect in a college environment	89% (78)	82% (14)	83% (210)	86% (25)	100% (1)	85% (328)
Feeling more directed towards a specific academic/career interest	57% (50)	53% (9)	37% (94)	55% (16)	0% (0)	44% (169)
Saving money because tuition was free	88% (77)	88% (15)	92% (234)	97% (28)	100% (1)	92% (355)
Feeling more confident in own academic abilities	68% (60)	76% (13)	54% (137)	57% (17)	0% (0)	59% (227)
None	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Other (please explain)	6% (5)	6% (1)	2% (6)	0% (0)	0% (0)	3% (12)

**4. Did you have any of the following problems (if any) while using the PSEO program?**

	U of MN	State University	Comm. College/ Tech School	Private	Unknown or Other	All
Teachers/counselors at my high school were unsupportive or unhelpful	19% (17)	24% (4)	14% (36)	28% (8)	0% (0)	17% (65)
Instructors/staff at my PSEO were unsupportive or unhelpful	7% (6)	0% (0)	10% (25)	3% (1)	0% (0)	8% (32)
Not able to participate in sports, music or other extra-curricular activities	24% (21)	6% (1)	10% (25)	17% (5)	0% (0)	13% (52)

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Transportation between my home/high school and my PSEO institution is difficult	38% (33)	12% (2)	14% (36)	38% (11)	0% (0)	21% (82)
Not able to enroll in the postsecondary classes that I wanted	25% (22)	0% (0)	14% (36)	24% (7)	0% (0)	17% (65)
Credits did not transfer from my postsecondary institution so my high school	1% (1)	0% (0)	3% (8)	3% (1)	0% (0)	2% (10)
Scheduling problems between my high school and postsecondary institution	29% (26)	17% (3)	19% (49)	14% (4)	0% (0)	21% (82)
Postsecondary classes were more difficult than I anticipated	14% (12)	6% (1)	10% (26)	10% (3)	0% (0)	11% (42)
Postsecondary classes were less challenging than I anticipated	11% (10)	6% (1)	16% (40)	10% (3)	0% (0)	14% (54)
None	19% (17)	35% (6)	40% (100)	28% (8)	100% (1)	34% (132)
Other (please explain)	6% (5)	6% (1)	4% (9)	7% (2)	0% (0)	4% (17)

**5. What is your overall level of satisfaction with the PSEO Program?**

	U of MN	State University	Comm. College/ Tech School	Private	Unknown or Other	All
Very Satisfied	69% (61)	65% (11)	61% (155)	70% (20)	100% (1)	64% (248)
Satisfied	26% (23)	35% (6)	36% (90)	31% (9)	0% (0)	33% (128)
In Between	3% (3)	0% (0)	3% (8)	0% (0)	0% (0)	3% (11)
Very Dissatisfied	0% (0)	0% (0)	1% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	1% (1)

**6. Did you intentionally avoid a class through PSEO enrollment?**

Yes 21% (80)  
No 79% (309)

*If yes, why did you want to avoid the class?*

It was too difficult	9% (7)
It was too easy	9% (28)
It would be a waste of time	45% (36)
The quality of instruction was poor	50% (40)
Disliked peers	14% (11)
Other (please explain)	18% (14)

**7. With regard to your personal experience, what ways (if any) could the PSEO Program be improved?**

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	U of MN	State University	Comm. College/Tech School	Private	Unknown or Other	All
Ensure that all credits will transfer between my PSEO institution and high school	11% (10)	17% (3)	24% (62)	21% (6)	0% (0)	21% (81)
More information about which credits may/may not transfer to other colleges/universities	31% (27)	24% (4)	53% (135)	55% (16)	0% (0)	47% (182)
Reducing scheduling conflicts between my PSEO institution and high school	32% (28)	12% (2)	22% (57)	17% (5)	0% (0)	24% (92)
Making transportation easier between my PSEO institution and high school	39% (34)	24% (4)	17% (43)	24% (7)	0% (0)	23% (88)
Better counseling system to support me at my PSEO institution	17% (15)	12% (2)	14% (36)	7% (2)	0% (0)	14% (55)
Better counseling system at my high school to help me as a PSEO participant	20% (18)	17% (3)	17% (44)	24% (7)	0% (0)	19% (72)
More information should be distributed to students about the PSEO Program	43% (38)	47% (8)	54% (136)	70% (20)	0% (0)	52% (202)
None	13% (11)	29% (5)	9% (24)	0% (0)	100% (1)	11% (41)
Other (please explain)	9% (8)	6% (1)	4% (9)	7% (2)	0% (0)	5% (20)

**8. If you were to do it over again, would you choose to participate in the PSEO Program?**

	U of MN	State University	Comm. College/Tech School	Private	Unknown or Other	All
Definitely	86% (76)	88% (15)	86% (217)	79% (23)	100% (1)	86% (332)
Probably	14% (12)	12% (2)	11% (28)	14% (4)	0% (0)	12% (46)
Uncertain	0% (0)	0% (0)	1% (2)	7% (2)	0% (0)	1% (4)
Probably Not	0% (0)	0% (0)	1% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	1% (3)
Definitely Not	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)

## Appendix 3 PSEO Participant Survey Summary 2001

### *Percent of Students Receiving an A or B in 75- 100 % of their classes*

U of MN	State University	Comm. College/Tech College	Private	Unknown or Other	All
58.5% (120)	65.9% (145)	62.9% (748)	60% (21)	44.4% (4)	

### *When did you enroll in the PSEO Program?*

	U of MN	State University	Comm. College/ Tech College	Private	Unknown or Other	All
11 <sup>th</sup> and 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	38.5% (79)	27.7% (61)	33.2% (395)	25.7% (9)	22.2% (2)	32.9% (546)
12 <sup>th</sup> grade only	53.2% (109)	60.5% (133)	55.6% (661)	48.6% (17)	33.3% (3)	55.7% (923)
11 <sup>th</sup> grade only	6.8% (14)	10.9% (24)	10.3% (122)	22.9% (8)	11.1% (1)	10.2% (169)
Blank	1.5% (3)	1% (2)	.9% (11)	2.9% (1)	33.3% (3)	1.3% (20)

### *Why did you choose to enroll in the PSEO Program?*

	U of MN	State University	Comm. College/ Tech College	Private	Unknown or Other	All
To take courses not offered at my high school	75.5% (154)	54.5% (120)	59.3% (705)	51.4% (18)	11.1% (1)	60.2% (998)
To save money on future college costs	73.2% (150)	83.6% (184)	80.9% (962)	88.6% (31)	44.4% (4)	80.3% (1331)
To have more freedom	71.7% (147)	66.4% (146)	73.6% (875)	62.9% (22)	22.2% (2)	71.9% (1192)
To help decide whether or not to attend college after graduation	3.9% (8)	9.5% (21)	9.7% (115)	5.7% (2)	11.1% (1)	8.9% (147)
To be in a less restrictive learning environment	61.5% (126)	50.9% (112)	62.2% (740)	42.9% (15)	22.2% (2)	60% (995)
To follow the advice of my high school counselor/teacher	8.3% (17)	11.4% (25)	13.4% (159)	8.6% (3)	22.2% (2)	12.4% (206)
To follow the advice of my parents	19% (39)	26.4% (58)	30.5% (363)	31.4% (11)	44.4% (4)	28.6% (475)
To be with my friends	5.9% (12)	6.4% (14)	8.1% (96)	5.7% (2)	0 (0)	7.5% (124)
To be in a more adult environment	69.3% (142)	62.7% (138)	69% (820)	62.9% (22)	55.6% (5)	68% (1127)
Other (please explain):	25.4% (52)	19.5% (43)	18.8% (224)	14.3% (5)	11.1% (1)	19.6% (325)

**Why did you choose your particular PSEO institution?**

	U of MN	State University	Comm. College/ Tech	Private	Unknown or Other	All
The course offerings suited my interests and goals	67.8% (139)	38.6% (85)	41.1% (489)	57.1% (20)	33.3% (3)	44.4% (736)
It was close to my home or high school	59% (121)	71.8% (158)	78.4% (932)	54.3% (19)	33.3% (3)	74.4% (1233)
It was the only school I could attend because of transportation restrictions	7.8% (16)	22.3% (49)	20.4% (242)	5.7% (2)	11.1% (1)	18.7% (310)
It was the only school in my geographic area	1.5% (3)	10% (22)	15.6% (185)	0 (0)	11.1% (1)	12.7% (211)
The school has a good reputation	63.4% (130)	29.1% (64)	29.2% (347)	62.9% (22)	11.1% (1)	34% (564)
My friends were attending this school	17.1% (35)	11.8% (26)	18.3% (217)	14.3% (5)	0 (0)	17.1% (283)
I might want to attend this school after high school graduation	52.2% (107)	39.5% (87)	23.8% (283)	40% (14)	11.1% (1)	29.7% (492)
I missed the deadline for other schools	0 (0)	1.8% (4)	5% (60)	5.7% (2)	0 (0)	4% (66)
Other (please explain):	13.2% (27)	10.5% (23)	7.7% (91)	25.7% (9)	22.2% (2)	9.2% (152)

**What benefits (if any) do you see yourself gaining from your PSEO participation?**

	U of MN	State University	Comm. College/ Tech	Private	Unknown or Other	All
Learning more than in high school	83.9% (172)	78.2% (172)	76.9% (914)	80% (28)	44.4% (4)	77.8% (1290)
Being challenged more than in high school	85.9% (176)	80.9% (178)	72.5% (862)	77.1% (27)	44.4% (4)	75.2% (1247)
Feeling more academically prepared for college	84.9% (174)	81.8% (180)	78.3% (931)	82.9% (29)	55.6% (5)	79.6% (1319)
Saving time because getting high school and college credit at the same time	80% (164)	84.1% (185)	84.9% (1009)	85.7% (30)	55.6% (5)	84% (1393)
Knowing what to expect in a college environment	81.5% (167)	76.4% (168)	77.7% (924)	80% (28)	55.6% (5)	77.9% (1292)
Feeling more directed towards a specific academic/career interest	46.8% (96)	41.8% (92)	37.1% (441)	48.6% (17)	44.4% (4)	39.2% (650)
Saving money because tuition was free	83.4% (171)	86.4% (190)	87.1% (1036)	80% (28)	44.4% (4)	86.2% (1429)
Feeling more confident in own academic abilities	55.1% (113)	56.8% (125)	54.2% (644)	68.6% (24)	44.4% (4)	54.9% (910)
None	1% (2)	.5% (1)	.3% (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	.4% (6)
Other (please explain):	5.9% (12)	3.6% (8)	3% (36)	5.7% (2)	11.1% (1)	3.6% (59)

**Did you have any of the following problems (if any) did you experience while using the PSEO Program?**

	U of MN	State University	Comm. College/ Tech	Private	Unknown or Other	All
Teachers/counselors at my high school were unsupportive or unhelpful	21.5% (44)	23.2% (51)	23% (273)	11.4% (4)	11.1% (1)	22.5% (373)
Instructors/staff at my PSEO were unsupportive or unhelpful	6.8% (14)	9.5% (21)	7.9% (94)	8.6% (3)	11.1% (1)	8% (133)
Not able to participate in sports, music or other extra-curricular activities	22.4% (46)	11.4% (25)	10% (119)	14.3% (5)	11.1% (1)	11.8% (196)
Transportation between my home/high school and my PSEO institution is difficult	23.9% (49)	14.1% (31)	10.3% (123)	14.3% (5)	11.1% (1)	12.6% (209)
Not able to enroll in the postsecondary classes that I wanted	18% (37)	35.5% (78)	13% (154)	11.4% (4)	0 (0)	16.5% (273)
Credits did not transfer from my postsecondary institution to my high school	2.4% (5)	2.7% (6)	2.6% (31)	5.7% (2)	0 (0)	2.7% (44)
Scheduling problems between my high school and postsecondary institution	20.5% (42)	22.3% (49)	18.3% (217)	20% (7)	0 (0)	19% (315)
Postsecondary classes were more difficult than I anticipated	8.8% (18)	7.7% (17)	7.7% (91)	5.7% (2)	11.1% (1)	7.8% (129)
Postsecondary classes were less challenging than I anticipated	12.7% (26)	20.5% (45)	13.2% (157)	11.4% (4)	0 (0)	14% (232)
None	17.1% (35)	18.2% (40)	28.2% (335)	34.3% (12)	33.3% (3)	25.6% (425)
Other (please explain):	9.8% (20)	5% (11)	5.6% (66)	11.4% (4)	0 (0)	6.1% (101)

**What is your overall level of satisfaction with the PSEO Program?**

	U of MN	State University	Comm. College/ Tech	Private	Unknown or Other	All
Very Satisfied	63.4% (130)	54.1% (119)	62.1% (738)	68.6% (24)	44.4% (4)	61.2% (1015)
Satisfied	29.8% (61)	42.3% (93)	33.4% (397)	25.7% (9)	22.2% (2)	33.9% (562)
In between	2.9% (6)	3.2% (7)	3.2% (38)	2.9% (1)	0	3.1% (52)
Dissatisfied	2% (4)	.5% (1)	.6% (7)	0	0	.7% (12)
Very Dissatisfied	.5% (1)	0	.1% (1)	0	0	.1% (2)
Blank	1.5% (3)	0	.7% (8)	2.9% (1)	33.3% (3)	.9% (15)

**Did you intentionally avoid a class through PSEO enrollment?**

17.6% Yes	82.4% No
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*If yes, why did you want to avoid the class?*

10.3% (30)	It was too difficult
24.4% (71)	It was too easy
55.3% (161)	It would be a waste of time
41.9% (122)	The quality of instruction was poor
13.7% (40)	Disliked peers
18.9% (55)	Other (please explain):

**With regard to your personal experience, what ways (if any) could the PSEO Program be improved?**

	U of MN	State University	Comm. College/ Tech College	Private	Unknown or Other	All
Ensure that all credits will transfer between my PSEO institution and high school	20% (41)	19.1% (42)	24.3% (289)	17.1% (6)	11.1% (1)	22.9% (379)
More information about which credits may/ may not transfer to other colleges/ universities	44.9% (92)	42.3% (93)	52.6% (625)	54.3% (19)	44.4% (4)	50.2% (833)
Reducing scheduling conflicts between my PSEO institution and high school	17.1% (35)	22.7% (50)	23.8% (283)	17.1% (6)	11.1% (1)	22.6% (375)
Making transportation easier between my PSEO institution and high school	29.8% (61)	14.5% (32)	16.8% (200)	17.1% (6)	22.2% (2)	18.2% (301)
Better counseling system to support me at my PSEO institution	12.7% (26)	26.8% (59)	20.3% (241)	8.6% (3)	33.3% (3)	20% (332)
Better counseling system at my high school to help me as a PSEO participant	26.3% (54)	35.5% (78)	31.4% (373)	8.6% (3)	22.2% (2)	30.8% (510)
More information should be distributed to students about the PSEO Program	49.3% (101)	55.9% (123)	57.4% (683)	60% (21)	55.6% (5)	56.3% (933)
None	6.8% (14)	6.8% (15)	8.9% (106)	11.4% (4)	11.1% (1)	8.4% (140)
Other (please explain):	13.2% (27)	8.6% (19)	5.3% (63)	5.7% (2)	0 (0)	6.7% (111)

***If you were to do it over again, would you choose to participate in the PSEO Program?***

	State University	Comm. College/Tech College
Definitely Yes	84.1% (185)	87.2% (1037)
Probably Yes	12.3% (27)	9.5% (113)
Not Certain	2.7% (6)	1.6% (19)
Probably Not	.5% (1)	.6% (7)
Definitely Not		.2% (2)
Blank	.5% (1)	.9% (11)