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YSU NEWS

YSU News

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YSU backs program to open a high school on campus

A plan to open a high school on the campus of Youngstown State University next school year has won the support of the YSU Board of Trustees.

The Youngstown Early College, which will be operated in partnership with the Youngstown City School District, will be the first high school of its kind on the campus of a public university in Ohio.

"Our hope is that this school becomes a model for other urban school districts and universities across the state and the country," said Tony Atwater, YSU provost and vice president for academic affairs.

"This project positions YSU to play a national leadership role in promoting academic success in urban communities at both the secondary and post-secondary levels."

Youngstown Early College, with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the KnowledgeWorks Foundation, provides a transition between high school and college that many urban students currently do not get in traditional high school settings.

The program calls for opening a high school in Fedor Hall on the YSU campus at the start of the 2004-05 academic year with 100 freshman high school students from the Youngstown public schools. Each fall, a new entering class of 100 students would be added until YEC reaches a maximum of 400 early college high school students, freshmen through seniors.

Students will enroll in a combination of high school courses at YEC and college courses at YSU. In the first two years, students would attend mostly high school classes taught by YEC faculty. In years three and four, students would primarily enroll in regular university classes taught by YSU faculty. Each YEC student will have the goal of completing at least 60 semester credit hours of college before graduating from YEC.

"This is a whole new way of looking at high school," said Robert Bolla, dean of YSU's College of Arts and Sciences.

The concept has already been approved by the Youngstown Board of Education, which will provide most of the funding for the school through per pupil state subsidies. The program also has won the support of U.S. Rep. Tim Ryan of Niles, D-17th, the Youngstown-Warren Regional Chamber, Mahoning Valley Vision for Education and Tom Shipka, chair of the YSU Academic Senate.

YSU and the Youngstown City School District will now develop a memorandum of understanding that will establish the fiduciary responsibilities of each party. That memorandum will need the approval of YSU trustees before the school can open.

A handful of YSU administrators and trustees this fall visited various similar high school-college programs across the country, from Pittsburgh to Phoenix, and they all came away impressed and convinced that the concept can work in Youngstown.

"This is an opportunity to make a difference not only in the lives of the students who participate but the families that will be impacted and the community," said Eugenia Atkinson, a former YSU trustee and a supporter of the program. "We can't afford to say no to this."

Youngstown Early College is part of an effort by the Gates Foundation to help start 60 Early College High School programs nationwide by next school year. The University of Dayton and Dayton City Schools opened the Dayton Early College Academy this year. Other programs under development in Ohio include Lorain County Community College, Columbus State Community College and Kenyon College.

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