



# Evaluation Brief #55

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## Academy of the Canyons

Catherine Parker, M.A., Daylene M. Meuschke, Ed.D., and Barry C. Gribbons, Ph.D.



*Photo 1 AOC students reading*

Academy of the Canyons (AOC), a middle college high school, just completed its 18<sup>th</sup> year of operation on the College of the Canyons campus in the Dr. Dianne G. Van Hook University Center. AOC opened its doors in August 2000. AOC is a collaboration between the William S. Hart Union High School District and College of the Canyons designed to provide a supportive, flexible, and academically enriched environment for students whose needs are not being met by the large comprehensive high schools. AOC was awarded a six-year accreditation through 2021 by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and was named a National Blue Ribbon School in 2015.

***Brief History of Middle College High Schools.*** The first middle college high school was founded in 1974, by La Guardia Professor Janet Lieberman, on the campus of La Guardia Community College in New York City to help remove the barriers between high school and college and provide an alternative for students at risk of dropping out of high school (U.S. Department of Education, 2003; La Guardia Community College, 2004). Today there are more than 40 middle college high schools across the nation (Middle College National Consortium, 2018). Currently, the California Community College system funds 13 middle college high schools which are serving almost 4,000 students (CBEDS, College of San Mateo website, 2018). The two initial sites in California were Los Angeles Southwest and Contra Costa community colleges and were founded in 1988.

***AOC's Student Population.*** Academy of the Canyons is open to high school students in grades 9-12 who "...are looking for a unique high school experience" that affords them the opportunity to complete high

school requirements and take college courses at College of the Canyons' Valencia campus (AOC brochure). Prior to Fall 2009 AOC was open to 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. Beginning Fall 2009, AOC added grades 9 and 10. The goal for total student enrollment for the middle college high school is 400 students. As of Fall 2017, the goal was surpassed with an enrollment of **409**, which is more than twice the enrollment of 191 in Fall 2005. Recruitment focuses on students who meet at least one of four criteria: students who are under-represented in the college environment, students who have high potential but are low performing, students of lower socio-economic status, and first generation college students. AOC's student body in 2017-18 included 67 percent who were ethnic minority, excluding White not of Hispanic origin. AOC's diverse student population closely reflects the demographics of the greater Santa Clarita Valley. Specifically, about 32 percent of the student population identifies themselves as White; 23 percent identifies as Hispanic or Latino; about 37 percent identifies as Asian; one percent identifies as African-American; and six percent identifies as multi-racial. Over the past five years the most significant change in the ethnic composition of the AOC student body has been an increase in the Asian population (27 percent - 2013 to 37 percent -2017), with a concurrent decline in the White population (45 percent in 2013 compared to 32 percent in 2017). About four percent of the population has a primary language other than English. Of that population roughly 40 percent speak Spanish as their native language and 30 percent speak Korean. Other languages spoken by the English Language Learner (ELL) population at AOC include Vietnamese, Tagalog, and Russian.

Providing students who are first generation college students, ethnic minority, low-income, and / or have lower academic performance this opportunity is a component of the early college high school initiative, as well as the mission of the middle college high school. The student body is smaller than traditional high schools, which allows students to get to know each other and their teachers better than they might at a traditional high school. All AOC students are enrolled in "Advisement," a college readiness class designed to "...support students academically and socially in the college setting" (AOC brochure). The faculty member for the class serves as the students' advisor throughout the school year. This class fosters interaction and communication between students and teachers since students are enrolled in Advisement with their teacher/advisor as one of their high school classes.

### ***AOC students:***

- Are selected based on a thorough application process, and may include an interview with prospective students and parents.
- Complete at least four high school courses and between 4 and 11 college units per semester depending on the grade level (the \$46/ unit college tuition is waived for all high school students).
- Earn dual credit for college courses, which is recorded on both their college and high school transcripts.

- Use college support services, such as the library, computer labs, tutors, counseling and career centers.
- Take regular high school classes in addition to the college classes.
- Complete College of the Canyons Counseling-111, which addresses topics such as “the

responsible student, career interest, choosing a major, goal setting, learning styles, time management, utilizing college services, and educational planning.” Students also complete Counseling-110, which helps students with career planning.

Typically, AOC students have shown potential to succeed. However, their academic success to date may indicate a need for a more focused and smaller learning environment. Many times the profiles of AOC students are those who:

- Show potential for succeeding in college.
- May have a discrepancy between their standardized scores and grades.
- Show adequate social adjustment within the high school, but may be disconnected from the high school environment.
- Are not tied to the home campus through participation in athletics.
- May be creative, artistic, and / or individualistic (Source: AOC Student Profile).

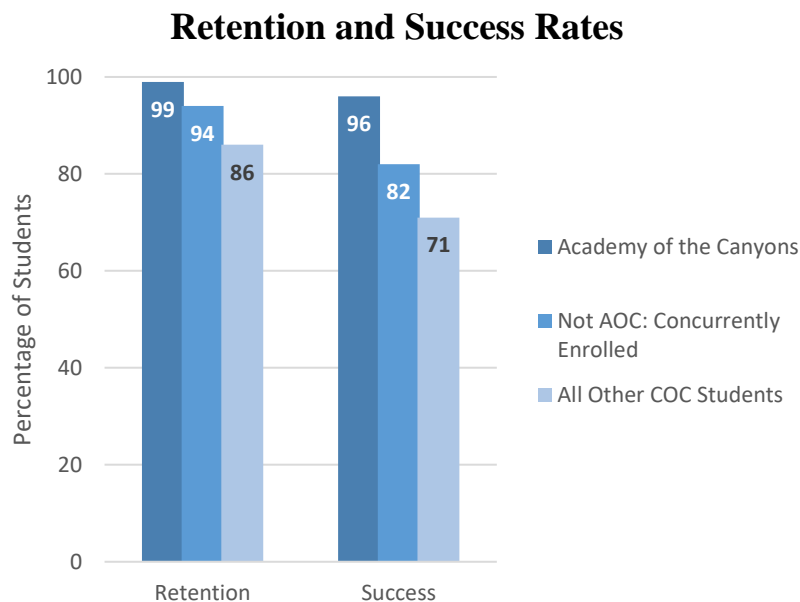
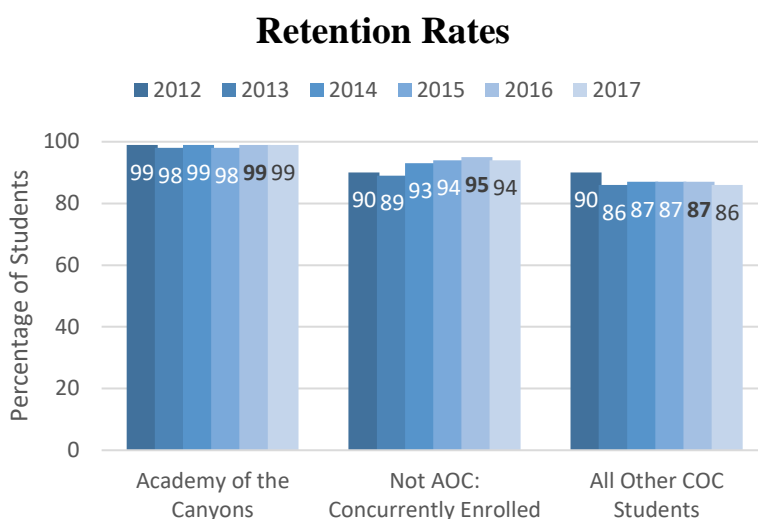


Figure 1 Fall 2017 Retention and Success Rates for AOC students compared to Concurrently Enrolled Students (Not AOC) and other COC students

Recently, Academy of the Canyons was evaluated using outcome measures that were based on students’ success in college courses. Two measures used were students’ retention (completing the college courses without withdrawing) and success (passing the college courses with a “C” or better). AOC students were compared to other (not AOC) concurrently enrolled students and all other (non-high school) COC students

in the same college classes. As is evidenced by Figure 1, AOC students outperformed other COC students in the same classes. ***In Fall 2017, the success rate for AOC students was 14 percentage points higher than other concurrently enrolled students (not AOC) and 25 percentage points higher than other COC students in the same classes!*** Historically, success rates for AOC students have been higher than all other COC students enrolled in the same courses for the past 18 years. High success rates of AOC students (see figure 3) could be attributed to a number of factors including the support services and resources available through the counseling and advisement services at AOC, a peer tutoring program implemented in 2012-13 at AOC, the majority of the students attending in 2013-14 and forward attended AOC for all four years of their high school career, accelerated math and English courses offered at COC, and availability of COC services such as the Tutoring/Learning/Computing Lab and Supplemental Learning workshops.



*Figure 2 Retention Rates for AOC students compared to Concurrently Enrolled Students (Not AOC) and other COC students: Fall 2012, Fall 2013, Fall 2014, Fall 2015, Fall 2016, and Fall 2017.*

Figure 2 illustrates retention rates over time for AOC students compared to other concurrently enrolled students (not AOC) and other COC students in the same college classes. Overall, AOC retention rates were higher than other concurrently enrolled students (not AOC). AOC students also had higher retention rates than other COC students in the same classes (as high as 13 percentage points higher).

## Success Rates

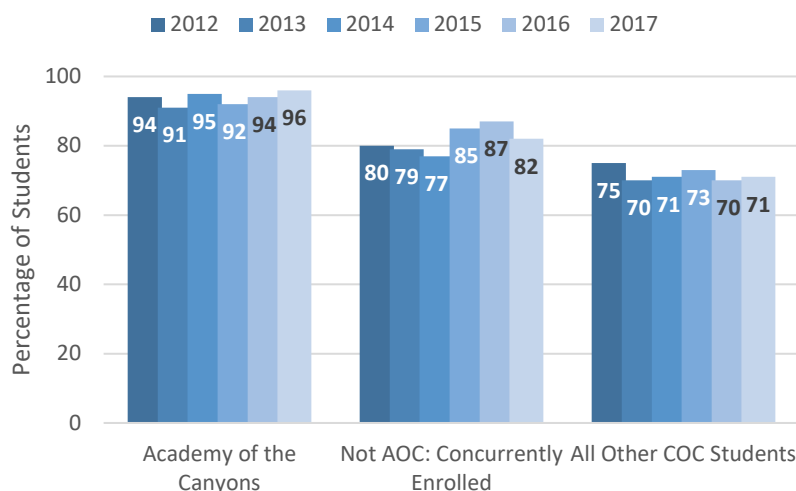


Figure 3 Success Rates for AOC students compared to Concurrently Enrolled Students (Not AOC) and other COC students: Fall 2012, Fall 2013, Fall 2014, Fall 2015, Fall 2016, and Fall 2017.

Figure 3 illustrates success rates over time for AOC students compared to other concurrently enrolled students (not AOC) and other COC students in the same college classes. Success rates for *AOC students* in Fall 2017 **remain high at 96 percent**. *AOC student success rates have been consistently higher than other COC students by almost 20 percentage points over the past six years!* Historically, AOC success rates have been higher than non-AOC, concurrently enrolled students. Additional analyses comparing AOC 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students with 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students showed that success rates were 99 and 94 percent, respectively in Fall 2017. The difference in success rates is likely due to the difference in courses taken by each group. For example, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students are permitted to enroll in a limited selection of classes. AOC 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students enroll in a wide variety of courses. Courses taken by AOC juniors and seniors at COC in Fall 2017 with the highest enrollments included Spanish-101 (Elementary Spanish I), Math-211 (Calculus I), Math-140 (Introductory Statistics), Math-104 (Precalculus), and Anthropology-101 (Physical Anthropology).

During the Fall 2017 semester, AOC students enrolled in courses from 38 different departments (see Table 1), including 199 enrollments in physical education, 161 enrollments in math, and 97 enrollments in computer applications and web technology.

Table 1 AOC Enrollment at COC by Academic Department – Fall 2017

Department	Enrollments	Department	Enrollments	Department	Enrollments
Administration of Justice	4	Culinary Arts	1	Math	161
Anthropology	35	Dance	4	Media Entertainment Arts	39
Architecture	1	Engineering	1	Music	22
Art	47	Environmental Studies	1	Philosophy	4
Astronomy	1	French	6	Photography	13

Department	Enrollments	Department	Enrollments	Department	Enrollments
Biology	9	Geography	10	Physical Education	199
Business	8	Geology	7	Physics	12
Chemistry	13	German	3	Political Science	2
Chinese	9	Graphic and Multimedia Design	2	Psychology	42
Cinema	30	History	22	Sign Language	13
Communication Studies	5	Human Resources	1	Sociology	14
Computer Applications and Web Technology	97	Italian	1	Spanish	51
Computer Science	22	Kinesiology	1	Theatre	4

### UC and CSU Transferable Units Completed

***UC / CSU Transferable Units Successfully Completed.*** An analysis was done to determine the number of UC and CSU units successfully completed by AOC students during the Fall 2017 semester (Note: successfully completed is defined as passing UC / CSU transferable courses with a “C” or better). Overall, the median number of UC and CSU units successfully completed by all AOC students during the Fall 2017 semester was seven. The median number of UC and CSU units successfully completed by 11th and 12th grade AOC students during the Fall 2017 semester was eight. While there are restrictions on the range of college classes that AOC students in grades 9 and 10 can take, the median number of UC and CSU units successfully completed by 9th and 10th grade students during the Fall 2017 semester was three. Note: According to California State law, dually enrolled students are not permitted to enroll in more than 11 college units per semester.

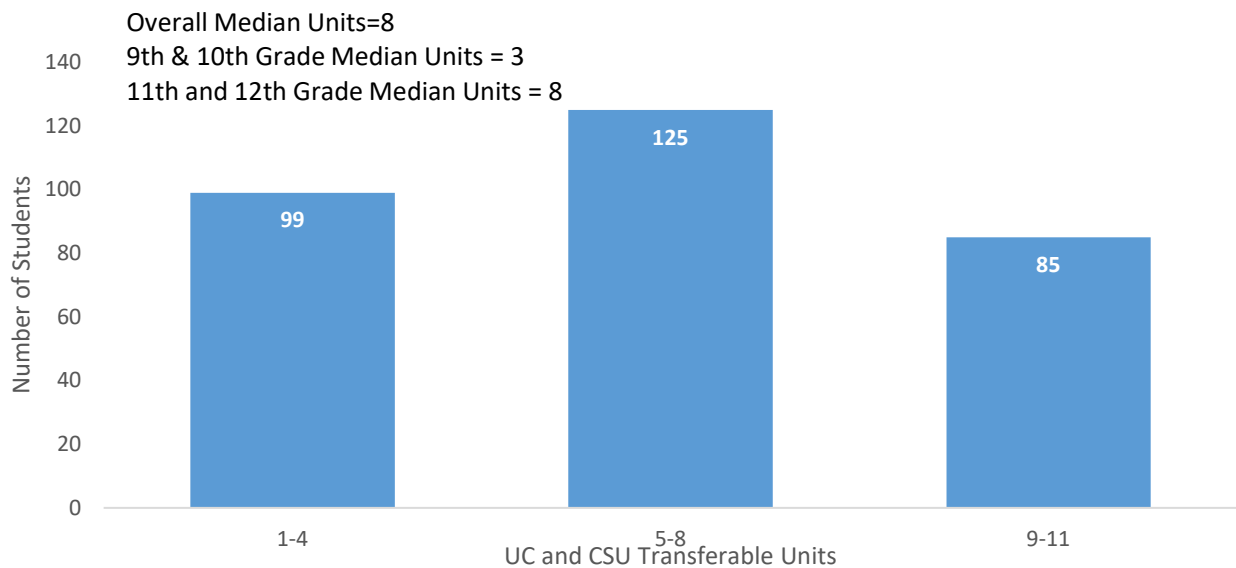


Figure 4 UC and CSU Transferable Units Successfully Completed by AOC Students Present During the Fall 2017 Semester (Grades 9-12).

### Notable Highlights in 2017/18:

- A little over half of AOC graduating seniors earned at least one associate degree
- One AOC graduating senior earned five associate degrees
- 100% graduation rate
- Post-graduation plans indicated by AOC students were to attend College/University (63 percent) and to attend community college (37 percent)
- A little over half of graduating seniors earned a 4.0 GPA
- For the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) English Language Arts assessment, 97% “Exceeded Standard” and for the math assessment, 91% “Exceeded Standard”. AOC outperformed all schools in the Santa Clarita Valley and most in California

### Post-Secondary Enrollment

Two-thirds of the graduating class of 2016/17 earned at least one Associate Degree right before graduating from AOC. Of the 2016/17 AOC graduates who continued their education, 52 percent attended only COC, 47 percent attended a four-year institution only, and one percent attended a two-year (not COC). Note: Post-secondary enrollment data is as of July 2018.

See Figure 5 for overall percentages of enrollment at COC, other two-year colleges and at four-year colleges for the 2016/17 AOC graduates.

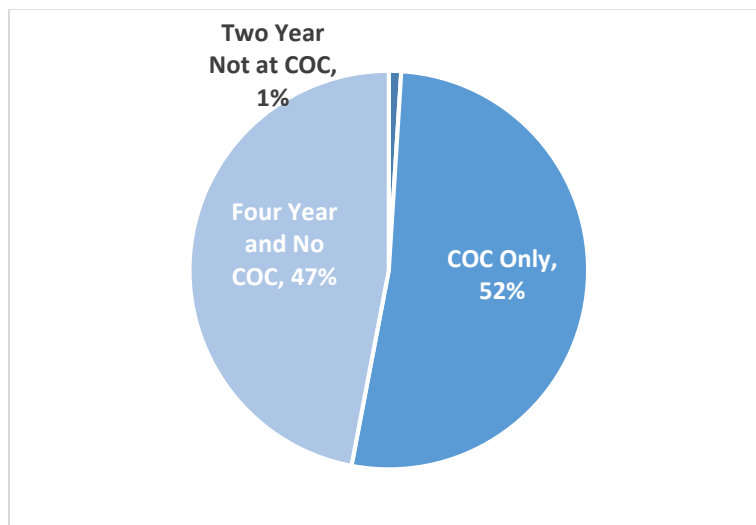


Figure 5 Percent of AOC Alumni Enrolled in College: Graduating Classes of 2016/17

## References

Parker, C.A., Meuschke, D.M. & Gibbons, B.C. (2017, November). Evaluation Brief #54. Academy of the Canyons.

***For more information on Academy of the Canyons, please contact Principal Dr. Pete Getz at 661-362-3056 or visit [Academy of the Canyons](#).***

For more detailed information on this evaluation brief, stop by the Institutional Research office located in BONH-223, or call Catherine Parker, Research Analyst at 661.362.5879 or Daylene Meuschke, Dean of Institutional Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness at 661.362.5329.