

# Evaluation Brief #53

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## Academy of the Canyons

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*Photo 1 AOC students at their graduation*

Academy of the Canyons (AOC), a middle college high school, just completed its 16<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, 2016). Currently, the California Community College system funds 12 middle college high schools which are serving over 3,000 students (CBEDS, College of San Mateo website, 2016). 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 2015, the goal was nearly reached with an enrollment of **394**, which is about 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 2015-16 included eight percent who were low-income and 61 percent who were ethnic minority, excluding White not of Hispanic Origin. 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-010, which helps students with career planning

\*As of Summer 2013

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).

### Retention and Success Rates

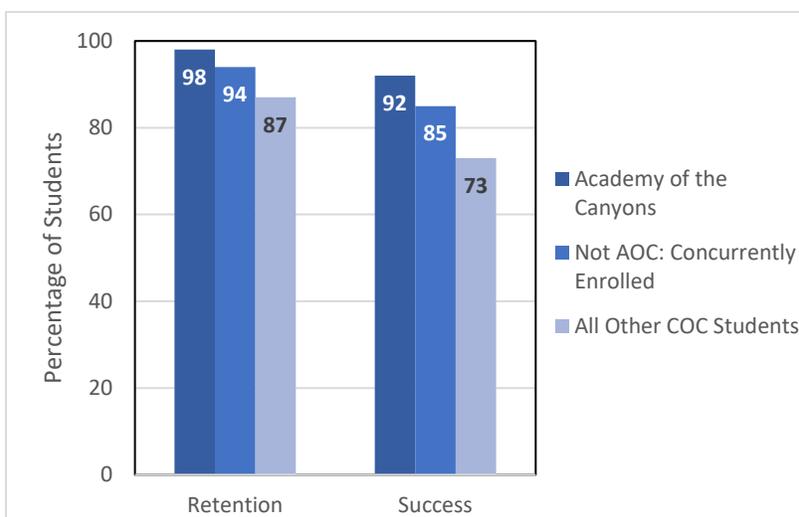


Figure 1 Fall 2015 Retention and Success Rates for AOC students compared to Concurrently Enrolled Students (Not AOC) and other COC students

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 2015, the success rate for AOC students was seven percentage points higher than other concurrently enrolled students (not AOC) and 19 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 15 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 new peer tutoring program implemented in 2012-13 at AOC, the majority of the students attending in 2012-13 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.

### Retention Rates

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 12 percentage points higher).

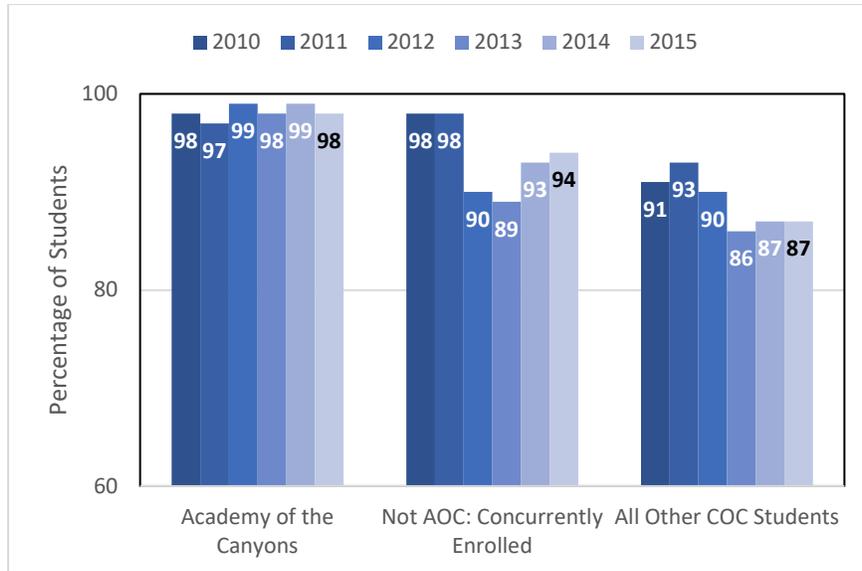


Figure 2 Retention Rates for AOC students compared to Concurrently Enrolled Students (Not AOC) and other COC students: Fall 2010, Fall 2011, Fall 2012, Fall 2013, Fall 2014, and Fall 2015.

### Success Rates

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 2015 **remain high at 92 percent**. **AOC student success rates have been consistently higher than other COC students by more than 10 percentage points over the past six years!** Historically, AOC success rates have been higher than non-AOC, concurrently enrolled students; however, in Fall 2010 and Fall 2011 success rates were slightly lower for AOC students compared to other 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 100 and 91 percent, respectively in Fall 2015. 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 2015 with the highest

enrollments included Math-211 (Calculus I), Chemistry-151 (General Chemistry), Biosci-107 (Molecular and Cellular Biology), Math-102 (Trigonometry), and Math-104 (Pre-calculus).

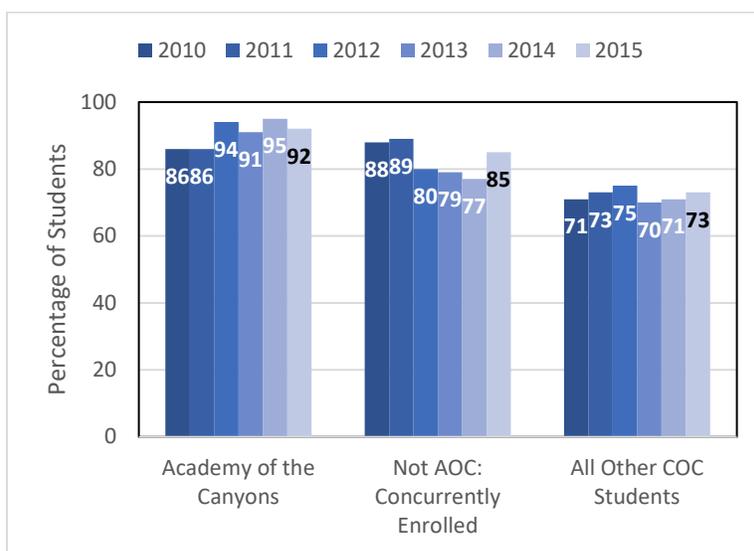


Figure 3 Success Rates for AOC students compared to Concurrently Enrolled Students (Not AOC) and other COC students: Fall 2010, Fall 2011, Fall 2012, Fall 2013, Fall 2014, and Fall 2015.

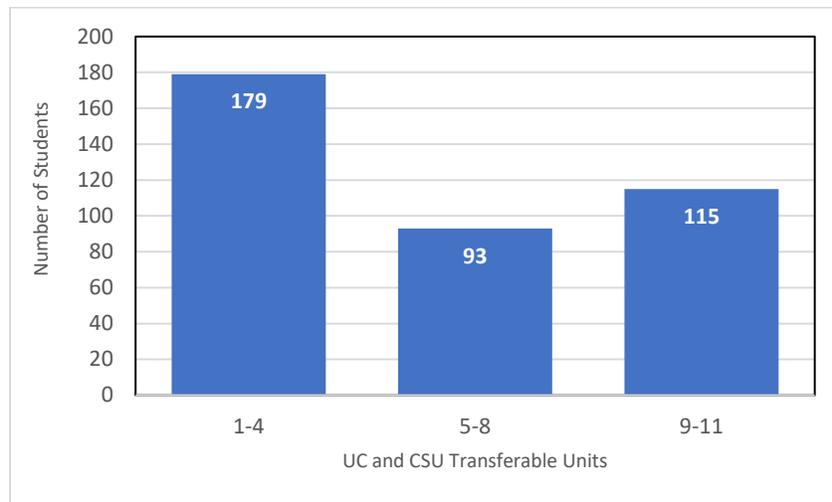
During the Fall 2015 semester, AOC students enrolled in courses from 37 different departments (see Table 1), including 189 enrollments in math, 182 enrollments in physical education, 83 enrollments in computer applications and web technology, and 49 enrollments in chemistry.

Table 1 AOC Enrollment at COC by Academic Department – Fall 2015

Department	Enrollments	Department	Enrollments	Department	Enrollments
Administration of Justice	4	English	1	Music	23
Anthropology	5	Engineering	1	Philosophy	5
Art	44	French	6	Photography	5
Astronomy	1	Geography	9	Physical Education	182
Biology	47	Geology	4	Physical Science	2
Business	8	German	2	Physics	14
Chemistry	49	Graphic Multimedia Design	2	Political Science	1
Chinese	2	History	32	Psychology	33
Cinema	26	Health Science	9	Sign Language	6
Communication Studies	10	Human Resources	1	Sociology	11
Computer Applications and Web Technology	83	Italian	1	Spanish	10
Computer Science	16	Kinesiology	1	Theatre	4
Dance	13	Math	189	Welding	1
Early Childhood Education	1	Media Entertainment Arts	18		

## 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 2015 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 2015 semester was six. The median number of UC and CSU units successfully completed by 11th and 12th grade AOC students during the Fall 2015 semester was nine. 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 2015 semester was four. 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 2015 Semester (Grades 9-12).*

### ***Notable Highlights in 2015/16:***

- 2015 National Blue Ribbon Award recipient
- 100% graduation rate
- Twenty-six of the graduating seniors in the 2015-16 academic year earned their Associate Degree
- Post-graduation plans indicated by AOC students were to attend College/University (57 percent) and to attend community college (39 percent)
- For the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) English Language Arts assessment, 76% “Exceeded Standard” and for the math assessment, 57% “Exceeded Standard”. AOC outperformed all schools in SCV and most in CA

## Postsecondary Institutions Attended

Over the past 10 years, AOC graduates have enrolled in more than 130 postsecondary institutions. In addition, AOC graduates earned just over 2,000 certificates, Associate, Bachelor, Master, and Doctorate degrees in a variety of areas (1,279 unduplicated awards earned). The top ten postsecondary institutions in which AOC graduates have earned degrees and/or certificates from are College of the Canyons, California State University Northridge, University of California Irvine, University of California Santa Barbara, University of California Los Angeles, University of California San Diego, University of California Davis, California State University Channel Islands, University of California Riverside, and San Francisco State University.

Of the alumni who continued their education, 41 percent attended only COC, 25 percent attended a four-year institution only, 14 percent attended COC and a four-year institution, one percent attended a two-year that wasn't COC, and an additional one percent attended a two-year (not COC) and a four-year.

See Figure 5 for overall percentages of transfers at COC or other two-year colleges and at four-year colleges in the past 10 years.

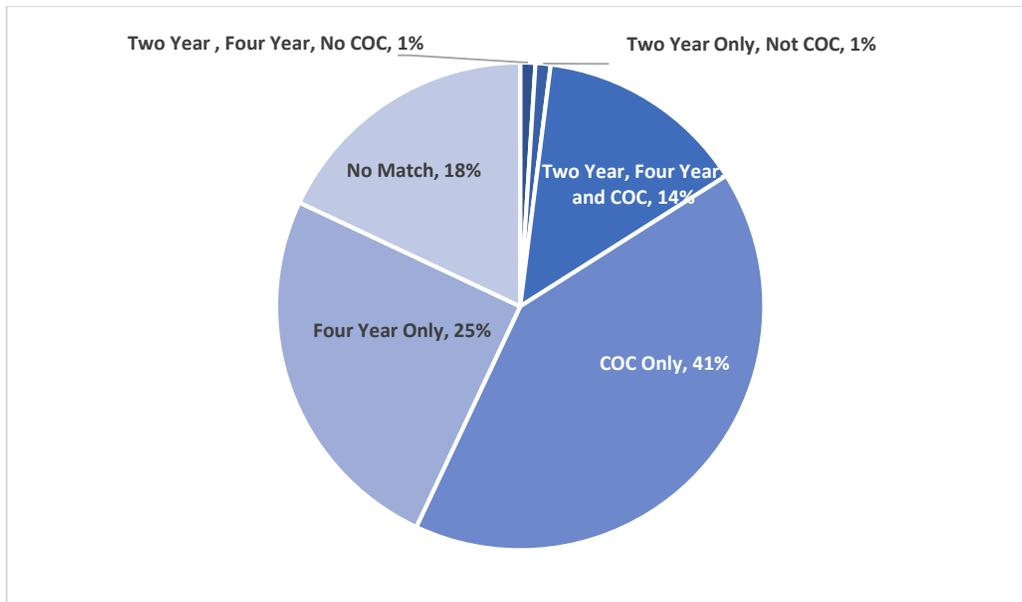


Figure 5 Percent of AOC Alumni Enrolled in College: Graduating Classes of 2005-2015

Table 2 Two- and Four-Year Institutions in Which AOC Alumni Enrolled

Institution	2 or 4 Year	Institution	2 or 4 Year
COCHISE COLLEGE	2	SACRAMENTO CITY COLLEGE-LOS RIOS CC DISTRICT	2
COCHISE COLLEGE - ARMY EDUCATION CENTER	2	ROWAN COLLEGE AT GLOUCESTER COUNTY	2
LOS ANGELES TRADE TECHNICAL	2	NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE	2

Institution	2 or 4 Year	Institution	2 or 4 Year
SACRAMENTO CITY COLLEGE-LOS RIOS CC DISTRICT	2	OCCIDENTAL COLLEGE	4
ROWAN COLLEGE AT GLOUCESTER COUNTY	2	OTIS COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN	4
NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE	2	SOUTHWESTERN U SCHOOL OF LAW	4
COLLEGE OF THE CANYONS	2	UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA-DAVIS	4
CUNY LAGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE	2	UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA - IRVINE	4
EVEREST COLLEGE - RESEDA	2	UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA-LOS ANGELES	4
UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA	4	UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA - RIVERSIDE	4
ART CENTER COLLEGE OF DESIGN	4	UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA-SAN DIEGO	4
AZUSA PACIFIC UNIVERSITY-UNDERGRADUATE	4	UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA-SANTA BARBARA	4
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY - EAST BAY	4	UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA-SANTA CRUZ	4
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY - LONG BEACH	4	UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO	4
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY - LOS ANGELES	4	UNIVERSITY OF DENVER - COLORADO	4
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY - DOMINGUEZ HILLS	4	UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT	4
CALIFORNIA POLYTECHNIC STATE UNIVERSITY	4	EMBRY-RIDDLE AERONAUTICAL UNIVERSITY - DAYTONA	4
CALIFORNIA STATE POLYTECHNIC	4	BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY - HAWAII	4
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY - CHICO	4	SCHOOL OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO	4
HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY	4	ASHFORD UNIVERSITY	4
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY - SACRAMENTO	4	LOYOLA UNIVERSITY IN NEW ORLEANS	4
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY-NORTHRIDGE	4	ST JOHN'S COLLEGE	4
SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY	4	EMERSON COLLEGE	4
SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY	4	WELLESLEY COLLEGE	4
SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY	4	SOUTHERN NEW HAMPSHIRE UNIVERSITY	4
CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY-ORANGE	4	SETON HALL UNIVERSITY	4
GOLDEN GATE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW	4	SAINT JOHN'S UNIVERSITY	4
UNIVERSITY OF LA VERNE	4	EASTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY	4
MASTER'S COLLEGE	4	LEWIS & CLARK COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES	4
MOUNT SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY	4	UNIVERSITY OF OREGON	4
EAST STROUDSBURG UNIVERSITY	4	ITT TECHNICAL INSTITUTE	4
KUTZTOWN UNIVERSITY	4	CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY - BAKERSFIELD	4
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY	4	PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY	4
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON - SEATTLE	4	NATIONAL UNIVERSITY	4

Institution	2 or 4 Year	Institution	2 or 4 Year
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA - HASTINGS COLLEGE OF LAW	4	LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY	4
THE NEW SCHOOL	4	CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY - SAN MARCOS	4
UNIVERSITY OF PHOENIX	4	WEST COAST UNIVERSITY- NORTH HOLLYWOOD	4
THOMAS EDISON STATE UNIVERSITY	4	CALIFORNIA STATE UNIV CHANNEL ISLANDS	4
PHILLIPS GRADUATE UNIVERSITY	4	UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA - MERCED	4
BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY	4		

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

For more detailed information on this research 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.