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Academy of the Canyons Evaluation Brief Number 60

College of the Canyons

Santa Clarita Community College District
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Santa Clarita, CA 91355

Institutional Research, Planning, and
Institutional Effectiveness

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Introduction

Academy of the Canyons (AOC), a middle college high school, just completed its 23rd 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 2028 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 to provide an alternative for students at-risk of dropping out of high school (U.S. Department of Education, 2003; La Guardia Community College). Today there are over 40 middle college high schools across the nation (Middle College National Consortium, 2023). Currently, the California Community College system funds 14 middle college high schools, which are serving nearly 5,000 students (CBEDS, California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2023). 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 11th and 12th 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. Fall 2022, enrollment was **392**, which is more than twice the enrollment of 191 in Fall 2005, five years after it opened. 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 2022-23 included **75 percent** who were *ethnic minority*, excluding White not of Hispanic origin and students for whom ethnicity was not reported. AOC's diverse student population closely reflects the demographics of the greater Santa Clarita Valley. Specifically, 41 percent of the AOC student population identifies themselves as Asian/Pacific Islander; 23 percent identifies as White; 25 percent identifies as Hispanic/Latinx/o/a; four percent identifies as Black/African-American; 5 percent identify as two or more races, and less than one percent American Indian or Alaska Native (excludes race/ethnicity data not reported for 7 students). Over the past seven years, the most significant change in the ethnic composition of the AOC student body has been a decline in the White population (39 percent in 2016 compared to 23 percent in 2022). Providing this opportunity to students who are first generation college students, ethnic minority, low-income, and / or have lower academic performance, 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.
- Take regular high school classes in addition to the college classes.
- 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.
- Complete College of the Canyons Counseling-110 during the Spring semester of their 9th grade year, which helps students with career planning.
- Receive high support at each grade level with advisement on how to navigate the college environment, develop college level study skills and habits, develop effective time management skills.
- Participate in peer support is fostered through group projects and peer tutors in addition to the counseling staff supporting students’ educational plans.
- Students at AOC have the opportunity to participate in clubs, including the National Honor Society.
- Typically, AOC students have a high school GPA of 3.0 or higher and have shown to be motivated, mature, independent learners.

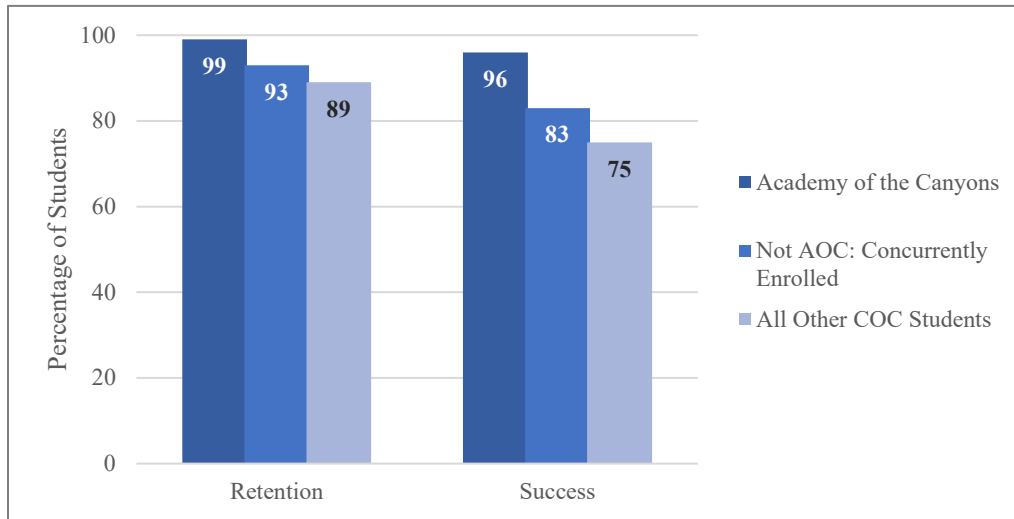


Pictured above: 2023 Academy of the Canyons Mock Trial Team for winning 1st place in the 30th Annual Antelope Valley High School Mock Trial Competition

Source: [AOC FAQs](#)

Retention and Success Rates

Figure 1. Fall 2022 Retention and Success Rates for AOC Students Compared to Concurrently Enrolled Students (Not AOC) and Other COC Students in similar courses



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 2022, the success rate for AOC students was 13 percentage points higher than other concurrently enrolled students (not AOC) and 21 percentage points higher than other COC students in the same classes.** Historically, for more than 20 years, success rates for AOC students have been higher than all other COC students enrolled in the same courses.

Consistently, 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, mental health, career readiness and advisement services at AOC; the majority of students attending AOC for all four years of their high school career (starting in 2013-14 to the present); 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. Retention Rates for AOC Students Compared to Concurrently Enrolled Students (Not AOC) and Other COC Students: Fall 2018, Fall 2019, Fall 2020, Fall 2021 and Fall 2022 in similar courses

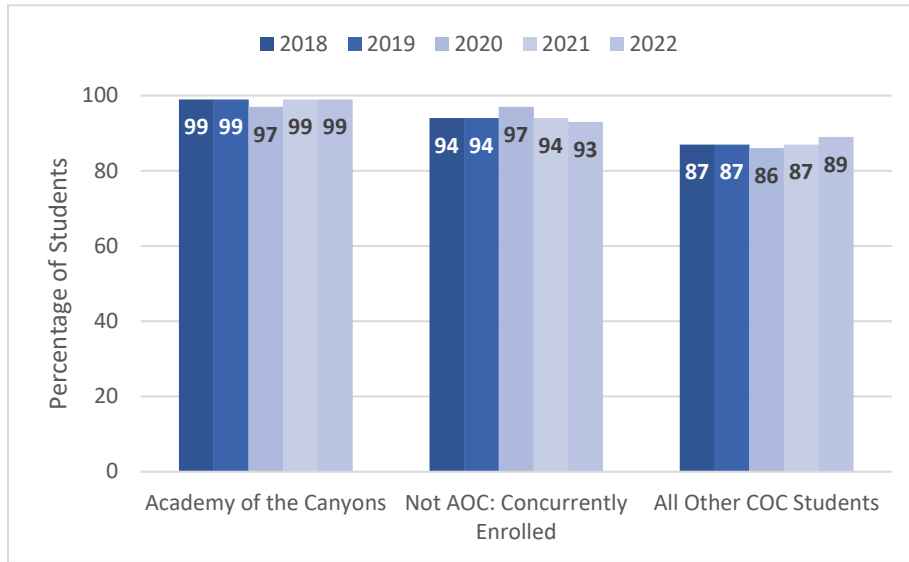


Figure 2 illustrates retention rates over time for AOC students compared to other concurrently enrolled students (not AOC) and other COC students in the same college classes. Overall, AOC retention rates were higher than other concurrently enrolled students (not AOC), with the exception of fall 2020 (first fall with COVID19 protocols), when the rates were the same. AOC students also had higher retention rates than other COC students in the same classes (10 or more percentage points higher).

Success Rates

Figure 3. Success Rates for AOC Students Compared to Concurrently Enrolled Students (Not AOC) and Other COC Students: Fall 2018, Fall 2019, Fall 2020, Fall 2021 and Fall 2022 in similar courses

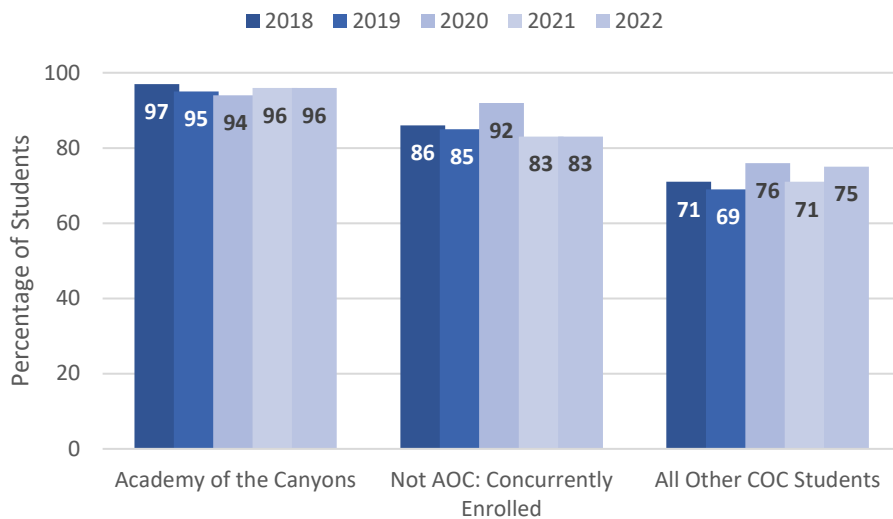


Figure 3 illustrates success rates over time for AOC students compared to other concurrently enrolled students (not AOC) and other COC students in the same college classes. Success rates for **AOC students** in Fall 2022 **remain high at 96 percent, which is consistently higher than ‘all other COC students’ by 20 or more percentage points over the past five years!** Historically, AOC success rates have been higher than non-AOC, concurrently enrolled students.

Additional analyses comparing AOC 9th and 10th grade students with 11th and 12th grade students showed that success rates were 97 percent for AOC 9th and 10th grade students and 94 percent for 11th and 12th grade AOC students in Fall 2022. The difference in success rates is likely due to the difference in courses taken by each group. For example, AOC 9th and 10th grade students are permitted to enroll in a limited selection of classes. AOC 11th and 12th grade students enroll in a wide variety of courses. Courses taken by AOC juniors and seniors at COC in Fall 2022 with the highest enrollments included Spanish-101 (Introductory Spanish), Math-140 (Introductory Statistics), Chem-151 (Preparatory General Chemistry), Math-212 (Calculus II), and Math-104 (Pre-calculus).

During the Fall 2022 semester, AOC students enrolled in courses in 42 different departments (see Table 1), including 164 enrollments in Physical Education, 150 enrollments in Math, and 100 enrollments in Computer Applications and Web Technology.

Table 1. AOC Enrollment at COC by Academic Department: Fall 2022

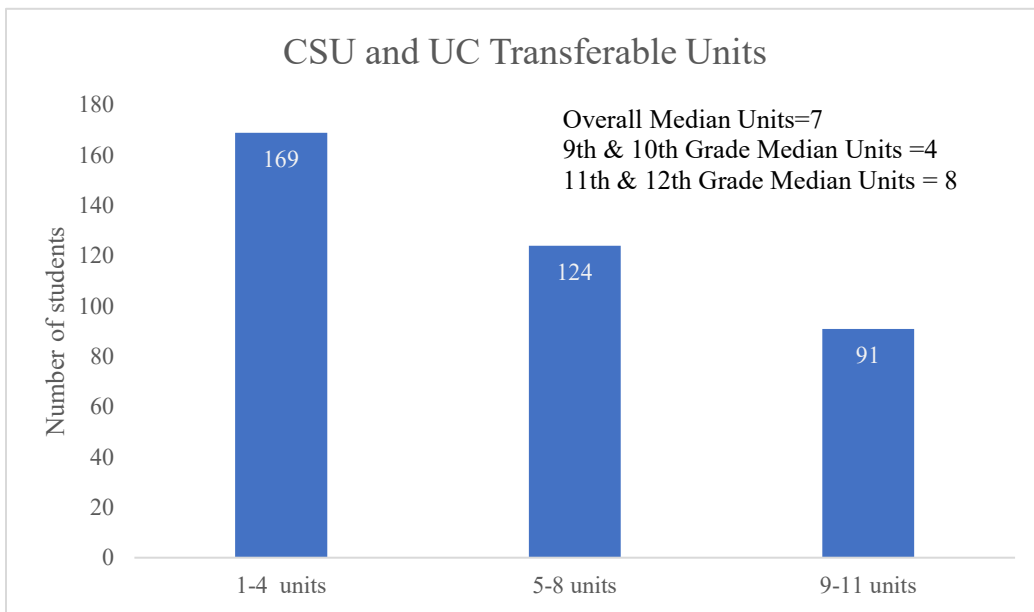
Department	Enrollments	Department	Enrollments	Department	Enrollments
Anthropology	3	Cooperative Work Education Experience	3	Noncredit Photo	1
Architecture	2	Culinary Arts	2	Ocean	5
Art	28	Early Childhood Education	2	Paralegal	2
Astronomy	6	Environmental Science	1	Philosophy	2
Automotive Technology	2	Geography	2	Photo	34
Biology	15	Geology	7	Physical Education	164
Business	6	German	1	Physics	7
Chemistry	30	Graphic and Multimedia Design	12	Physical Science	13
Chinese	2	History	7	Political Science	1
Cinema	8	Health Science	4	Psychology	35
Communication Studies	5	Italian	4	Sign Language	18
Computer Applications and Web Technology	100	Math	150	Sociology	13
Computer Science	13	Media Entertainment Arts	23	Spanish	59
Construction	1	Music	8	Theatre	14

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 2022 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 2022 semester was seven. The median number of UC and CSU units successfully completed by 11th and 12th grade AOC students during the Fall 2022 semester was eight, and in spite of restrictions on the range of college classes available to them, the median number of UC and CSU units successfully completed by AOC students in grades 9 and 10 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. CSU and UC Transferable Units Successfully Completed by AOC Students Present During the Fall 2022 Semester (Grades 9-12)



Notable Highlights in 2022/23

- 92 graduating seniors in the class of 2023
- 13 AOC graduates maintained a 4.0 GPA throughout their time at COC
- 52 AOC graduates earned a 3.5 to 3.99 GPA during their time at COC
- 58 students graduated with at least one Associate degree
- AOC graduates collectively accumulated 5,416.50 college units in four years
- 76% of the 2023 graduating class will be attending a 4-year institution
- 26% will be attending a UC institution and 13% are headed for a CSU institution
- 21% will be attending a community college



Pictured above: Academy of the Canyons College Board National Recognition Awardees recognized for academic achievements in school and outstanding performance on the PSAT. Also pictured, Academy of the Canyons Principal, Dr. Juliet Fine.

For more information on this evaluation brief, email Dr. Daylene Meuschke, Associate Vice President of Institutional Research, Planning, Effectiveness and Student Experience Redesign at Daylene.Meuschke@canyons.edu or Dr. Preeta Saxena, Director, Institutional Research, Planning and Effectiveness at Preeta.Saxena@canyons.edu.