

DOINGWHATWORKS



Slideshow

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

A University Partnership That Supports College-Going Aspirations

University Park Campus School, Massachusetts • March 2010

Topic: Helping Students Navigate the Path to College
Practice: Foster College Aspirations

Highlights

- A key component of University Park Campus School's focus on preparing students for college is its partnership with Clark University.
- The students view the two campuses as extensions of each other and feel comfortable utilizing the college campus for things like gym class and the library.
- High school students regularly engage in conversations with university students and faculty, whether through coursework on the college campus or the mentoring that Clark students provide.
- Students who meet the academic and residency requirements have the opportunity to complete their college degree at Clark tuition free.

About the Site

University Park Campus School
Worcester, MA

Demographics

40% Hispanic

32% White

21% Asian

7% Black

78% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

10% English Language Learners

12% Special Education

University Park Campus School prepares all of its students, most of whom will be first-generation college-goers, to succeed in college. The school's success is based on

- Offering a rigorous, all-honors academic curriculum that starts in grade 7 and focuses on deep thinking and active engagement;
- Collecting and reviewing a range of assessment data to make student- and school-level decisions;
- Implementing a college-going culture and providing supports to help students go to and succeed in college; and
- Providing direct assistance to students and their families in applying, being accepted, and transitioning to college.

Full Transcript

Title Page: A University Partnership That Supports College-Going Aspirations

University Park Campus School

Worcester, MA

Located in Worcester, MA, University Park Campus School (UPCS) is a 7-12 school that includes a strong partnership with a local college. Its partner, Clark University, is located only a few blocks away and is easily accessible by foot.

Slide 1: Improving the chances for success

Text: UPCS is designed around the belief that college leads to greater chances for a successful life. Clark University President John Bassett describes how the partnership between Clark University and UPCS provides the high school with more resources and opportunities to show students what college life is like.

Audio (John Bassett): One of the reasons that students coming out of a low-income neighborhood don't complete college is cultural. It's just not part of the way they look at their world—that they are going to go

to college and be a success. Having a chance not only to be in a school like University Park Campus School, but to be a partner with a university like Clark University, if they are good students, even to be able to take courses in eleventh and twelfth grade at Clark University, make them think about their life in a whole new way and increase their odds of graduating from college and being a success greatly.

Slide 2: First exposure to college

Text: UPCS wants all its students to realize that college entry is possible. Clark University Vice President Jack Foley notes that, particularly for students whose parents did not go to college, it is critical that the school exposes students to various aspects of college early and often.

Audio (Jack Foley): Many of these students here at University Park, their parents have not only not gone to college, but many of them have not graduated from high school, so they don't know what the experience is like for applying to college, going to college, and looking at careers beyond college. So that conversation that starts with Clark alumni who are working here and Clark students who are teaching here in the school is oftentimes some of the first exposure to going to college. We really work to cement that relationship by making sure that students here at University Park Campus School are on campus at Clark University quite frequently and that they see themselves as being part of that college community.

Slide 3: Taking college classes

Text: High school students who take college courses at Clark University often interact with the college students. They also have regular communication with professors and other faculty at the university. In all ways, they are the same as the college students in the classes and meet the same requirements and expectations.

Audio (Foley): So you'll see students at University Park Campus School mingled in amongst the Clark University students taking courses. So the fact that they are walking onto the campus, that they are in the classroom engaging in conversation with faculty and with students, has really brought them to be part of that Clark community, and they see themselves as really being a part of the college campus community.

Slide 4: Making college "real"

Text: Tung Nguyen, a senior at UPCS, comments that college seems more real to him since Clark is so close and he and the other UPCS students are often on the campus. As soon as they enter the high school, students are also introduced to life at the college campus.

Audio (Tung Nguyen): When I first started at University Park, I honestly didn't think very much of going to

college. It didn't seem like a real thing in my mind. It seemed like some far-off, distant idea that I probably would reach someday, but someday would be so far off that I can't even imagine it. But when I went to University Park, and saw that Clark University—a college—was so close by, the thought became real in my mind. I thought, "Wow. I can just walk outside, walk five minutes, and I would be at a college. I could walk on a college campus." And that really made things real in my mind.

Slide 5: An extension of the high school

Clark University provides the high school students with complete access to its library, computer lab, gymnasium, and other facilities. Students may use these resources freely for both school-related projects and personal endeavors, leading them to view the college campus as simply another part of the high school.

Audio (Nguyen): What's really interesting about the relationship between University Park and Clark is that students here think of it as another home or as an extension of the high school itself, because at University Park, we don't have a lot of facilities. We don't even have a gymnasium. We barely have a cafeteria. And so our school doesn't even have a gym, and so when we need to go to gym class, we just go to the Clark gym and we do everything there. And if we need to work on an assignment and we need a computer to type something on, we go to the Clark computer lab. And so that way, it feels like Clark is just another facility for us to use. It doesn't feel like this scary, huge college; it feels like home.

Slide 6: Part of the college campus

Text: Clark University President John Bassett describes the ways that Clark University can fulfill students' academic as well as social needs. As soon as they enter the high school, students get a Clark University student ID, which helps them feel like members of the college community. UPCS students use their ID cards just like the college students at Clark to access various facilities on the campus.

Audio (Bassett): The University Park Campus School students do a number of things on the campus at Clark University, even though they are part of the school. They do use the library. They do use the gym. We also have a summer camp program for people even before they are old enough to go to the school, so they feel a part of that. They are walking through the campus all the time. They do have campus IDs. They, and their families sometimes, will come to events on campus. In many ways, the goal is to make them think about their future as one of success, and going to college is part of the way of being a success in your life. So they become members of the college community.

Slide 7: Mentoring younger students

Text: The mentoring program pairs UPCS juniors and seniors with Clark undergraduates to provide support in their planning and preparation for college. As university Vice President Jack Foley notes, the program focuses on both the academic and social aspects of postsecondary life.

Audio (Foley): We also had to make sure that we were preparing students better for college life and college experience here at University Park Campus School, and we really implemented a number of different practices at the high school level that would prepare students better for college. One of those was a mentoring program where we had Clark students mentoring University Park Campus School juniors and talking with them about the college application process, college life, college experience, what college classes are like. So they were able to meet people at Clark, students at Clark, and understand better what it was like for them living at Clark, but also to see themselves making that transition and making sure that they were prepared academically, and, I guess, emotionally, for that transition to college.

Slide 8: Becoming little “Clarkies”

Text: The mentorship program benefits both UPCS and Clark students. Kimberly Surette, the former mentor coordinator and a UPCS graduate, describes the various components of the program.

Audio (Kimberly Surette): So before I was a mentor coordinator, I was a mentor. So you hang out with them outside of school. You usually bring them to the Clark cafeteria, get them some food, and then just talk about anything—tutoring, but really just exposing them to college life and what it’s like to be a college student, and just exposing them to how cool it can be.

I think actually bringing them to the campus really plays a huge role in that because then they see themselves on campus, hanging out with a college student. They actually become little “Clarkies.” They follow you around. I don’t think we had anybody go to a class, but go to seminars. Especially the kids here, it’s really easy because they already see themselves . . . they go to the gym there, they go to the library there. You’re essentially a mini “Clarkie” if you’re a UPCS student. So with this school, it’s very easy.

Slide 9: Writing college essays

Text: Both Clark and UPCS staff are involved in providing one-on-one support for students in applying to college. Mary O’Sullivan, the guidance counselor, notes that all school staff, even Principal Ricci Hall, help support students in applying to college, such as by providing edits to students’ college entrance essays.

Audio (Mary O’Sullivan): As part of our partnership with Clark University, we’ve established that getting the kids in early in the summer helps with the application process. One of the biggest fears that our seniors have

is what they are going to write about for that college essay. They don't think they have a story to tell. So what we did two years ago, we put together a three-day workshop where the seniors—it's not mandatory, but we try to get every single one of them there. They come to Clark University, and for the first two days they really work on writing that college essay. The third day, we have colleges from the area come in and meet with the students, and they do mock interviews as if they had applied to their college. They read their essays, and they actually give them advice on how to tweak that essay to make it a little bit better.

Slide 10: Relationships with alumni

Text: Clark University Vice President Jack Foley describes the number of supports that Clark students who are UPCS alumni provide for current high school students. UPCS maintains an active alumni base that also provides important feedback directly to faculty about how they can best meet their students' needs.

Audio (Foley): We have, now, alumni of University Park Campus School that have gone to college who can come back and talk with the current students here about their experiences going to college. And we have numbers of students from University Park Campus School who are currently at Clark University who are graduating from Clark University who can speak firsthand about the partnership opportunities and college access.

Slide 11: Free college tuition

Text: Students living in the Worcester, Massachusetts, neighborhood where UPCS and Clark are located have the opportunity to complete their college degree tuition-free if they meet the entrance and residency requirements. Financial concerns often play a role in deterring students from applying to college, so removal of those barriers is a tremendous motivation to these students.

Audio (Foley): The most important aspect of the partnership that really encourages college readiness and college access is the fact that Clark University offers free tuition for neighborhood students who live in the neighborhood for at least five years and are accepted to Clark University. And it's this opportunity for free tuition that really raises the prospect of going to college for young people in this neighborhood at the earliest possible age, even prior to coming to University Park Campus School. When these students are in elementary school and they are talking about going to college, we're able to say to these students and their own teachers are able to say to them, "You can go to Clark University for free if you work hard in school." And that removal of financial barrier for a lot of the students in these neighborhoods really opens the door for them to look at going to college for the first time.

Slide 12: Promising practices in college partnerships

Text: As Clark University President John Bassett explains, UPCS's partnership with Clark University plays a crucial role in helping the high school achieve its primary mission: All students will enroll and stay in college. Leaders at both institutions are committed to providing support to other schools in establishing similar successful partnerships, both within Worcester and nationwide.

Audio (Bassett): Colleges that want to have a relationship with a school system or a school like that of Clark University and University Park Campus School need, first of all, to understand what their own strengths are. Some colleges have strengths in one area, some in another. They need to know what the school's needs and populations are. They need to have some understanding of how students learn. And they need to understand the culture of the neighborhood that they are working in. And I think they can learn from the best practices of colleges like Clark with working with University Park Campus School.