2013-2014 Annual Evaluation Report of the Alaska College Access Grant Program

Prepared for
The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

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B. Introduction

The College Access Challenge Grant Program (CACGP) is a national initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and administered by the Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE). CACGP is designed to increase preparation for and success in postsecondary education[1] for low-income students. CACGP funding was unexpectedly increased in 2010 allowing for the potential to reach more students. The 2013-2014 school year is the sixth year of CACGP.

Since 2008, the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE) has served as the CACG program administrator for the State of Alaska. Alaska's CACG program has been primarily focused on one initiative known as the Alaska College & Career Advising Corps (ACAC). Alaska CACG is operating in five school districts and 15 urban and rural schools across the state. The goal of ACAC "is to increase the number of low-income students in the state who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education."[2] To assist with program administration and implementation, Alaska joined the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education's (WICHE) College Access Challenge Grant Consortium.

Five previous evaluation reports, three interim reports and two annual reports, covering the 2011-2012 program year, the 2012-2013 program year, and the first half of the 2013-2014 program year were provided to the AK CACG program by an external

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[1] For the purposes of this evaluation, college and postsecondary education and training will be used interchangeably to represent the wide range of opportunities available to students after high school.
[2] Alaska College Access Challenge Grant Program Application, Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education, July 5, 2013, pg. 3.

evaluator, Rainwater Consulting. This annual evaluation report builds upon the previous reports; considers a broader range of evidence, including interviews with program partners and review of program data; and covers the period from August 14, 2013 through August 13, 2014. The report begins with a brief description of the national CACG program and the WICHE CACG Consortium and College Access Regional (CAR) Network. Information about Alaska's CACG program is provided next. Evaluation methodologies, findings, and recommendations conclude this report.

C. College Access Challenge Grant Program

The College Access Challenge Grant Program (CACGP) is a federal formula grant program designed to encourage partnerships between local, state, and federal governments, and philanthropic organizations. The goal of the program is to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. Originally funded at $66 million in 2008, program funds were increased to $150 million in 2010. CACGP funds are awarded based on the relative number of people living below the poverty line between the ages of 5 and 17 and between the ages of 15 and 44. Grant funds may be used to promote need-based aid programs, professional development opportunities, financial literacy and debt management initiatives, outreach programs, loan cancellation or debt repayment with some restrictions, and postsecondary education and career information for students and families. States may reapply for funds annually.[3]

Section 137 of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, established a "maintenance of effort" (MOE) requirement whereby states are required to "demonstrate

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[3] "College Access Challenge Grant Programs," U.S. Department of Education, http://www2.ed.gov/programs/cacg/index.html, accessed April 1, 2014.

a commitment to affordable higher education"[4] to receive CACGP funds. Specifically, states must fund higher education at amounts that are "equal to or greater than: 1) the average amount provided for non-capital and non-direct research and development expenses or costs by the State to the public institutions during the five most recent academic years for which satisfactory data are available; and 2) the average amount provided for student financial aid for paying postsecondary education costs by the State to private institutions during the most recent academic years for which satisfactory data are available."[5]

States that are unable to demonstrate MOE may apply for a waiver, which the Secretary of Education has the authority to grant. States applying for waivers must be able to show that their state has experienced "exceptional or uncontrollable circumstances, such as a natural disaster or a precipitous and unforeseen decline in financial resources."[6] If a state does not demonstrate MOE and is not granted a waiver, it will not receive funding "until significant efforts are made to remedy the situation"[7] and are approved by ED. The Department may consider remedies that are proportionate to the reduction in total state appropriations. Alaska has met its MOE requirements every year it has participated in the program.

D. WICHE's CACG Consortium and CAR Network

To assist states with CACG program implementation, WICHE developed the CACG Consortium and the CACG Network (renamed the CAR Network in 2013). Any WICHE

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[4] College Access Challenge Grant Program Application Package for FY2013, pg. 5, http://www2.ed.gov/programs/cacg/applicant.html, accessed March 2, 2014.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.

member is eligible to participate in both the Consortium and Network. States determine the level of support they need and participate in that group accordingly. The CACG Network provides state members with the opportunity to share promising practices and identify solutions to shared challenges through semi-annual meetings, webinars, policy briefs, and for WICHE to act as a liaison to the U.S. Department of Education. In addition to Network benefits, Consortium members receive a variety of technical assistance services from WICHE including: grant development and management, program implementation support, program evaluation, and continuous expert consultation and guidance. Consortium members during the 2013-2014 grant cycle include: Alaska and Idaho, which are also Network members. Other Network members include: North Dakota and Utah.[8]

Beginning with the 2013-2014 program year, WICHE's CACG Network was reconfigured. The new entity was called the College Access Regional (CAR) Network with membership expanded to include all large-scale, federally-funded state programs promoting increased college access and success for low-income students, such as state CACG programs or projects funded through the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP). State members who chose to participate in either the CACG Consortium or the CAR Network received the same basic range of services as before, including participation in the semi-annual meetings and other technical assistance and program support as needed.

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[8] "College Access Regional Consortium and Network," Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, http://www.wiche.edu/cacg, accessed March 1, 2014.

E. Alaska's CACG Program

In 2008, ACPE began serving as the program administrator for the state's CACGP. Based on findings identified in a gap analysis conducted in 2007 by the National College Access Network (NCAN) and the related Institute on Higher Education Policy (IHEP) report, "Making Alaska More Competitive by Preparing Citizens for Work College," ACPE utilized the first year of CACGP funds to investigate and identify a peer-mentoring program tailored to Alaska's needs.[9] As a result of its investigations, Alaska developed the Alaska College & Career Advising Corps (ACAC) based on the National College Advising Corps (NCAC) "near peer" model. Using CACG funds, Alaska began piloting ACAC in March 2009 at Robert Service High School and in March 2010 in Bartlett High School, both located in the Anchorage School District. The goal of the multi-year, near-peer pilot program was to provide students from underrepresented populations with information and resources necessary to assist them in preparing for postsecondary options.

Alaska data continued to demonstrate the need for further development of a college-going culture focused on access and success through program supports such as ACAC. Alaska has the second lowest college graduation rate in the nation for first-time, full-time, bachelor's degree-seeking students with 8.2 percent graduating within four years (100 percent of normal time), and 26.6 percent graduating within 6 years (150 percent of normal time).[10] Based on data like these, AK CACG has sought to strengthen Alaska's college-going culture during the 2013-2014 program year through continuation

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[9] Alaska College Access Challenge Grant Program Application, Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education, July 5, 2013, pg. 8. IHEP recommended that Alaska implement "a peer-mentoring program to enhance college access and success." Phipps, R. 2008, *Making Alaska More Competitive by Preparing Citizens for College and Career*. Institute for Higher Education Policy.

[10] The Chronicle of Higher Education College Completion, "Alaska Public Colleges (4-Year), Graduation Rates, accessed March 1, 2014,
http://collegecompletion.chronicle.com/state/#state=ak&sector=public_four.

of the ACAC program in 19 established and new sites, utilization of the ACAC database to track student progress and program success, expansion of program infrastructure focusing on college completion, and formal convening of the Alaska Postsecondary Access and Completion (APAC) Network.[11]

ACAC guides are recent college graduates who can speak firsthand to high school students about postsecondary education expectations. They serve for up to two years as mentors/advisors at a selected high school.[12] ACAC guides help students explore career interests and provide information about postsecondary options. In addition, ACAC guides provide students and their families with technical assistance filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and other financial aid documents, completing scholarship applications, signing up for college admission exams such as the ACT and the SAT, and completing college applications. Finally, guides encourage students to change their perceptions about postsecondary education and celebrate students who are successfully admitted into postsecondary education programs.[13] Table 1 below lists the 19 ACAC school sites operating during this reporting period, and their ACAC guide. There currently are 10 ACAC guides.

Table 1: 2013-2014 ACAC School Sites and Guides

Region	School	Guide
Anchorage School District	1. Bartlett High School	Aneliese Palmer

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[11] Ibid, Alaska College Access Challenge Grant Program Application, pgs. 20-22, 22. Although the program application refers to the network as the College Access and Success Team (CAST), the name has been changed to the Alaska Postsecondary Access and Completion (APAC) Network.

[12] For the purposes of this report, the terms "mentor," "advisor," and "guide" are used interchangeably to refer to ACAC guide duties.

[13] For example see: Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education, *ACAC Toolkit,* "College 101," October 2012.

Region	School	Guide
	2. East Anchorage High School	Kurt Simonsen
	3. Service High School	Trenton Millar
Lower Kuskowim School District	4. Bethel Regional High School	Nathaniel Betz
Fairbanks North Star Borough School District	5. Lathrop High School	Martika Hubbard
	6. North Pole High School	Jesse Manchester
Kenai Peninsula Borough School District	7. Kenai Central High School	Tasha Thompson (serving schools 7-8)
	8. Nikiski Middle/High School	
	9. Skyview High School	Emily Cotton Knight (serving schools 9-10)
	10. Soldotna High School	
	11. Seward High School	Krystal Garrison (also serving as the distance guide)
Kodiak Island Borough School District	12. Kodiak High School	Bryan Rivera (serving schools 12-19)
	13. Akhiok	
	14. Chiniak	
	15. Karlik	
	16. Larsen Bay	
	17. Old Harbor	
	18. Ouzinkie	
	19. Port Lions	

To continue to serve as many students as possible while maintaining program quality and integrity, AK CACG developed four distinct ACAC models:

- **Traditional Model:** The first model is the most traditional for the peer mentor program. In this model there is one ACAC guide for one high school. East Anchorage High School is an example of this model.

- **Shared Guide Model:** The second model is one ACAC guide shared between two schools. The new site at Kenai Central High School was paired with Nikiski Middle/High School. The new site at Soldotna was paired with Skyview High School. Both of these are examples of the shared guide model.

- **Distance Guide Model:** The third model uses technology, such as Skype and email, and employs one guide at a school who also serves as a distance guide to students in high schools that are either too small to employ one guide or that are in extremely remote locations. Kodiak High School is an example of this model.

- **Blended Guide Model:** The fourth model is a combination of the traditional model and the distance guide model. There is one ACAC guide in a school who provides services to students through in-person meetings and presentations and technology options. Seward High School is an example of this model.

To accomplish the work of the AK CACG program, ACPE partnered with the organizations listed below. Primary partners are listed first and additional or potential partners second. Primary partners included:

- Anchorage School District
- Fairbanks North Star Borough School District
- Kenai Peninsula Borough School District
- Kodiak Island Borough School District
- Lower Kuskokwim School District
- National College Advising Corps
- University of Alaska Anchorage Student Affairs

- University of Alaska Statewide

- Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

Additional partners included:

- Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

- Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development

- Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act Education Consortium (Regional representatives of tribal educational resource providers)

- Alaska State Chamber of Commerce

- Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC)--Alaska's Institute of Technology

- Alaska Workforce Investment Board

- Consortium of Alaskans Supporting Higher Education

- Education Finance Council – Outreach Committee

- National College Access Network

- National College Goal Sunday

- The Foraker Group (a consortium of over 500 community-based organizations across Alaska)

- United Way of Anchorage

- Change Systems for Educators[14]

Three main goals continued to shape the activities that comprise Alaska's CACG 2013-2014 program[15] and are the subject of this evaluation. These goals are:

1. To increase awareness of college and career options.

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[14] Ibid, Alaska College Access Challenge Grant Program Application, pg. 12-13.
[15] Ibid, Alaska College Access Challenge Grant Program Application, pg. 20-22.

2. To increase the rate of enrollment in postsecondary education for all Alaskans, emphasizing disadvantaged populations.

3. To develop strategies for program sustainability.

Beginning with the 2013-2014 program year, Rebekah Matrosova, Director of Outreach and Early Awareness, took over CACG Project Director responsibilities. Greg Monrad, ACAC Program Manager, continued oversight and administrative responsibilities for the ACAC guides and program. Misty Klodt, ACAC Completions & Transitions Supervisor, continued to have responsibility for completions activities. Finally, CJ Allison, Community Partnership Manager, assisted with the creation and convening of the College Access and Success Summit and the Alaska Postsecondary Access and Completion Network[16] planning team meetings.[17]

Appendix A provides complete information about 2013-2014 project goals and objectives; activities and services; anticipated outcomes; and the status of these items as of the writing of this report.

F. Evaluation Methods

As mentioned above, WICHE provides program evaluation services to CACG Consortium members through an external evaluator. Rainwater Consulting has been subcontracted to conduct one interim and one final program implementation evaluation each year. Rainwater Consulting began program review and evaluation in August 2011. This annual evaluation report covers the period from August 14, 2013 through August 13, 2014.

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[16] See footnote 11.
[17] Ibid, Alaska College Access Challenge Grant Program Application, pg. 9.

Several different data sources have been used for this evaluation:

1. One or more in-person and/ or telephone interviews, follow-up phone calls, and/or email correspondence with the following individuals:

   - Wesley Andrews, School Counselor, Skyview High School

   - CJ Allison, Community Partnership Manager, ACPE

   - Nathaniel Betz, former ACAC Guide, Bethel Regional High School

   - Veniese Bradley-Mitchell, Regional Director, National College Advising Core (NCAC)

   - Jordan Brown, new ACAC Guide, Nikiski Central High School and Nikiski Middle/High School

   - Stephanie Butler, Director of Program Operations, ACPE

   - Eric Gebhart, Superintendent, Nenana City Schools

   - Chuck Herman, new ACAC Guide, Bethel High School

   - Martika Hubbard, former ACAC Guide, Lathrop High School

   - Patricia Jacobson, Chair, University of Alaska Board of Regents and ACPE Commissioner

   - Phil Johnson, Principal and Site Supervisor, Kodiak High School

   - Misty Klodt, ACAC Completions & Transitions Coordinator, ACPE

   - Emily Cotton Knight, returning ACAC Guide, Soldotna High School

   - Rebekah Mastrosova, Outreach Program Manager, ACPE

   - Cierra Mickens, ACAC Guide, Service High School

   - Trenton Millar, former ACAC Guide, Service High School

   - Greg Monrad, ACAC Program Manager, ACPE

   - Randy Neil, Site Supervisor, Skyview High School

   - Saichi Oba, University of Alaska Statewide Associate Vice President for Student and Enrollment Services

- Lael Oldmixon, Executive Director, UA College Savings Plan

- Aneliese Palmer, returning ACAC Guide, Bartlett High School

- Bryan Rivera, former ACAC Guide, Kodiak High School and seven village schools

- Esther Sperry, new ACAC Guide, East High School

- Kurt Simonson, ACAC Distance Guide, Seward High School

- Tasha Thompson, former ACAC Guide, Nikiski and Skyview High Schools

- Kendra Tibbs, new ACAC Guide, Lathrop High School

- Carl Krueger, Project Coordinator, WICHE

2. Review of ACAC materials including but not limited to: ACAC web-enabled database; ACAC guide orientation and training schedule and materials; site supervisor meeting agenda; ACAC Site Handbook; ACAC Guide Handbook; ACAC policies and procedures; and ACAC goals, expectations, and performance measures for guides and schools.

3. Review of materials used at ACAC sites including posters, presentations, photographs, and other information from ACAC school events.

4. Review of materials used at ACAC sites including posters, presentations, photographs, and other information from ACAC school events.

5. Program updates and ACAC school site data reports.

6. Attendance at the November 5, 2013 Alaska College Access and Success Summit.

7. In-person meeting with Greg Monrad, Misty Klodt, and Carl Krueger in Anchorage November 6, 2013.

8. Review of all APAC planning team materials: email, steering committee meeting, agendas, reports, surveys, and website.

9. November 7, 2013 site visit to Kodiak High school and meetings with Bryan Rivera, ACAC Guide; Phil Johnson, Principal; and ACAC Site Supervisor, Greg Monrad; Carl Krueger; and other school staff.

10. Participation by phone in the January 16 and the March 6, 2014 ACAC Transition & Sustainability Workgroup meetings.

11. January 30, 2014 in-person meeting with Rebekah Mastrosova and CJ Allison at the WICHE CAR Network Meeting in Salt Lake City, UT.

12. APAC Structure Sub-Committee Recommendations & NCAN Training debrief power point.

13. Alaska Postsecondary Access and Completion Network Strategic Plan draft (August 22, 2014)

G. Findings

During this evaluation period, AK CACG continued activities from the previous year while simultaneously expanding initiatives to meet the program's goal to provide students from underrepresented populations with the information and resources necessary for success in postsecondary education. There is abundant evidence that the program continues to be implemented as planned and that essential program supports have been established to ensure accountability, timely implementation, and success. In addition, the redesigned ACAC program database is fully operational and is being used by guides and ACAC staff to inform program implementation and sustainability discussions with data generated in "real-time." Last, program innovation continues to emerge with ACAC guides suggesting and implementing specific and timely themes for each month. For example, "FAFSA February" focused on helping students submit the FAFSA. In addition, ACAC guides participated in a journal club and group discussions facilitated by ACAC guide Nathaniel Betz. ACAC guides read recent research articles and had the opportunity to explore potential implications for ACAC with their peers. Interviewees were particularly complimentary of the leadership, guidance, and support

provided by ACAC leads. As mentioned in Section D, a table of the 2013-2014 project goals and activities is included in Appendix A.

The findings of this interim report focus on program expansion, ACAC Guide transition, ACAC Sustainability Work Group, and development of the statewide college access network. The four findings presented below are intended to provide an objective assessment of these program areas and provide suggestions for improvement opportunities.

Finding One: Program expansion to four new sites and implementation of the blended guide model occurred.

One of the key ACAC activities for the 2013-2014 program year was launching the ACAC program in four new sites. New guides were selected in the spring of 2013 and trained in the summer of 2013. The new guides began working with high school students in August 2013. The four new sites represented three of the four ACAC models, described in the previous section, being used during this program year. The school district, school, and guide are listed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: New ACAC School Sites and Guides for the 2013-2014 Program Year

Region	School	Guide
Anchorage School District	1. East Anchorage High School	Kurt Simonson
Kenai Peninsula Borough School District	2. Kenai Central High School	Tasha Thompson
	3. Seward High School	Krystal Garrison (blended model)
	4. Soldotna High School	Emily Cotton Knight

These four new schools represented both large and small high schools serving a diverse group of students, many of whom were low-income students. East Anchorage High School is a large high school and has a total student population of 2,128 students in grades nine through 12, of which 45 percent qualify for free and reduced lunch. Kenai Central High School, like the other high schools in the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, is smaller and has a total student population of 541 in grades nine through 12. Thirty-one percent of Kenai Central's students qualify for free and reduced lunch. Seward High School has a total population of 186 students in grades – nine through 12, of which 36 percent qualify for free and reduced lunch. Finally, Soldotna High School has a total population of 521 students in grades nine through 12. Thirty-four percent of Soldotna High School's students qualify for free and reduced lunch.[18]

As preliminary data covering August 2013 through March 2014 from these new sites show, students from every grade met with the ACAC guide. However, the highest concentration of meetings was with seniors. This may be expected in the first year of program implementation where meeting with seniors in order to help them submit FAFSA, scholarship, and college applications as well as sign up for college entrance exams was time sensitive. In addition, ACAC guides at all four schools hosted parent meetings, college visits, and college representative meetings and tracked these and other data. See the four tables below for ACAC guide meetings with students by grade at each of the new schools.

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[18] "New ACAC Schools," Data provided by ACPE from the ACAC database, retrieved April 17, 2014.

Table 3: Meetings With ACAC Guide by Grade, East Anchorage[19]

Grade	Number of students currently enrolled	Number of students meeting at least once with the ACAC Guide
Seniors	482	217
Juniors	496	190
Sophomores	573	74
Freshman	577	30

At East Anchorage High School (East), of the 2,128 students currently enrolled, 511 met with the ACAC guide at least once. There is just one guide in this school, who is required to meet the same performance measures as guides with smaller student populations. In addition, the school's career guidance counselor, who was one of the supports for the ACAC program, was unexpectedly laid off. The career guidance counselor's position was eliminated. The ACAC guide had to navigate both launching the program at a large high school and addressing the concerns of some staff that he was replacing the career guidance counselor. Despite these challenges, the ACAC guide has been able to meet with nearly 25 percent of the students at East.

Table 4: Meetings With ACAC Guide by Grade, Kenai Central High School[20]

Grade	Number of students currently enrolled	Number of students meeting at least once with the ACAC Guide
Seniors	116	101
Juniors	136	23

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[19] "East Anchorage," Data provided by ACPE from the ACAC database, October, 2014.
[20] "Kenai," Data provided by ACPE from the ACAC database, October 2014.

Grade	Number of students currently enrolled	Number of students meeting at least once with the ACAC Guide
Sophomores	136	4
Freshman	153	6

Of the 541 students currently enrolled at Kenai Central High School, 134 have met with the ACAC guide at least once. Similar to East, the ACAC guide has faced questions and concerns from school staff regarding her role. While still early in program implementation, changes in the school culture appeared to be emerging. There was more "college-going" talk and students, who may not have had support at home, seemed to see the ACAC guide as a resource.

Table 5: Meetings With ACAC Guide by Grade, Seward[21]

Grade	Number of students currently enrolled	Number of students meeting at least once with the ACAC Guide
Seniors	45	42
Juniors	55	43
Sophomores	47	7
Freshman	39	6

In Seward, of the 186 students currently enrolled, 98 met with the ACAC guide at least once. In addition, the ACAC guide in Seward piloted the ACAC "blended" guide model. This was a pilot initiative to understand how best to serve Seward high school students through an integrated approach of in-person meetings and technologically-supported

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[21] "Seward," Data provided by ACPE from the ACAC database, October 2014.

interactions. The blended guide model was conceptualized using a Moodle platform that was based on a credit-bearing, advising class at Seward High School. In order to accommodate school-wide scheduling changes, the advising class was eliminated and was replaced with noncredit-bearing, shorter blocks of advising time. As a result, the blended guide model did not unfold as expected. The ACAC guide adjusted to the change in scheduling by meeting with students using a variety of options including, but not limited to: Facebook, email, Skype, phone calls, and in-person meetings. In preparation for the 2014-2015 program year, ACAC program staff reviewed how the blended guide position could be changed. Among the items considered were increasing the use of AKCIS checklist and portfolio capabilities and increasing the use of Skype for "meetings."

Table 6: Meetings With ACAC Guide by Grade, Soldotna[22]

Grade	Number of students currently enrolled	Number of students meeting at least once with the ACAC Guide
Seniors	101	81
Juniors	137	35
Sophomores	130	10
Freshman	173	16

In Soldotna, of the 541 students currently enrolled, 142 met with the ACAC guide at least once. The ACAC guide at Soldotna is also the ACAC guide at Skyview. While she delivered services to all students, the support she provided to a small group of homeless students at both schools is worthy of note. These students did not have the

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[22] "Soldotna," Data provided by ACPE from the ACAC database, retrieved April 17, 2014.

typical, and often taken for granted, resources of most high school students, including places to sleep, enough food to eat, health insurance, or parental guidance. With the assistance of the ACAC guide, several of these students stayed in school, filled out the FAFSA, applied for college, and applied for scholarships. As a result, two of these students were in the top of their class and received notification of substantial scholarships for college.

 A final comment in this finding is important. Interviewees from a wide range of stakeholder groups felt that program expansion was one of the most significant activities for this year and for years to come. They felt strongly that continued expansion of the program was essential to meet the goals of serving low-income, first-generation students and of sustaining the program for future generations of students.

Finding Two: Six ACAC guides left the program and the transition to six new ACAC guides was successfully completed.

Two key features of the ACAC guide model are: 1) that guides are recent college graduates; and 2) guides commit to serving two years at a given ACAC site. This has been the practice of the ACAC program though there has been some allowance for guides to serve a third year. For example, Nathaniel Betz is completing his third and last year as an ACAC guide in Bethel. The purpose of a limited time commitment is to ensure that ACAC guides maintain their proximity in age and experience to high school students. However, the limited time commitment means that guides must search for other employment or make plans for their next career step during the final months of their ACAC guide service.

Of the 10 guides in the program, six guides left at the end of the 2013-2014 school year. Of these, four of guides served through the end of the 2013-2014 school year and departed as planned. The four guides who left were:

- Nathaniel Betz (Bethel)

- Martika Hubbard (Lathrop)

- Bryan Rivera (Kodiak)

- Tasha Thompson (Kenai)

Of the six guides who are leaving, two left before their two-year time commitment was completed. Krystal Garrison (Seward) left to pursue career opportunities with ACPE in its Anchorage office and fill an opening with Alaska Career Information System (AKCIS). She served as the distance guide until the end of the school year. Trenton Millar (Service) moved out of the state. He, too, served through the end of the school year.

The ACAC program took several steps to ensure a smooth transition and seamless program implementation for the next program year. These steps included developing a timeline for hiring replacement guides that began in March and concluded in June. Identifying candidates to serve as replacement guides was a multi-step process that involved several levels of screening and includes: an application, phone interviews, in-person or Skype interviews, background and reference checks, and participation in the new guide training that began on July 16.

To further assist new guides and their schools sites, departing guides produced an end of the year report which provided information about events that were held and lessons learned. In addition, departing guides provided a video "tour" of their school to introduce the new guide to key people, locations, and other useful information. Finally, ACAC staff

met with each of the departing guides on one of the last two days of employment to gather information so that it could be used to provide additional support to the school and the new guide.

The six new ACAC Guides for the 2014-2015 program year are listed below with their region and school.

Table 7: New ACAC Guides for the 2014-2015 Program Year

Region	School	Guide
Anchorage School District	East High School	1. Esther Sperry
	Service High School	2. Cierra Mickens
Lower Kuskowim School District	Bethel Regional High School	3. Chuck Herman
Fairbanks North Star Borough School District	Lathrop High School	4. Kendra Tibbs
Kenai Peninsula Borough School District	Kenai Central High School	5. Jordan Brown (serving both Kenai and Nikiski)
	Nikiski Middle/High School	
	Kodiak High School	6. Corrisa Heyes

Finding Three: The ACAC Sustainability Work Group was convened and actively explored sustainability issues and options.

An essential step in program implementation is exploring sustainability options. Toward this end, ACAC program staff convened a group of statewide stakeholders to examine possible sustainability options once federal CACG funding concludes. The 11 members of the work group are:

• Nathaniel Betz, Bethel ACAC guide

- Jennie Cox Bell, NCAC

- Deanna Blackburn, former ACAC guide

- Patricia Jacobson, ACPE and University of Alaska Board of Regents

- Misty Klodt, ACPE

- Carl Krueger, WICHE

- Rebekah Matrosova, ACPE

- Greg Monrad, ACPE and Work Group facilitator

- Saichi Oba, University of Alaska System

- Janelle Vanasse, Bethel Principal and ACAC Site Supervisor

The initial convening of the ACAC Sustainability Work Group was November 6, 2013, and participants were asked to consider a series of questions including:

- What are the current and anticipated future operating costs?

- What funding and staffing models exist in similar programs?

- What are the long-term objectives for the ACAC?

- What opportunity exists in the state to aid in sustainability?

- How do we best share ACAC's impacts and stories with potential partners or funders?

- Who are the partners to bring to the table?

- What resources are available to aid in this work?

- What opportunities exist for cost sharing or reduction?

- [W]hat are the next steps for the work group to ensure results?[23]

These questions continued to inform discussion at subsequent meetings held in January, March, and April 2014. Work group members explored several topics including

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[23] ACAC Sustainability Work Group, Minutes, October 23, 2014. pgs 2-3.

funding, cost-sharing models, grant opportunities, administration, and marketing. Several possible sustainability options emerged from these discussions and include, but are not limited to, the following four examples:

- **Option 1**: The first option is to continue to house ACAC at ACPE and identify alternative funding sources.

- **Option 2:** In the second option, ACAC would still be considered an ACPE program. However, the program would be supported by a partnership between ACPE and a non-profit or community organization and share program administration responsibilities. This option also requires identification of alternative funding sources.

- **Option 3:** The third option is to move the ACAC program out of ACPE and house it in one of the state's universities. This model aligns more closely with the NCAC model but still raises questions about how the program funding will be secured.

- **Option 4:** The fourth model is a "blended model" and maintains centralized program administration and management at ACPE. This model includes a cost-sharing component which allows for unique partnership agreements to be developed on a site by site basis. This model appeared to be gain the most favor in part because it would allow for expansion of the program at new sites at a relatively low cost and provides the option for ACAC guides to be employed by school districts rather than the state, another potential cost-saving. However, the "blended model" would require identifying and establishing relationships with several new partners simultaneously. This model would also need continued funding at the state level.

The work group explored the viability of each of these options and, as of the writing of this report, has selected to pursue the "blended model." ACPE staff are in the process of writing a draft concept paper for future funding opportunities and a draft MOU to help further define the goals and expectations of each partner in this model.

Finding Four: The Alaska Postsecondary Access and Completion (APAC) Network planning team was convened and made significant progress toward the establishment of a college access network.

On November 7, 2013, AK CACG hosted a College Access and Success Summit in Anchorage. The goals of this first meeting was to raise awareness about the need for a college access network in Alaska and to identify approximately 20 people who would be willing to serve on a network planning team. Following the Summit, 27 people from a broad range of stakeholder groups were identified to serve on the APAC Planning Team. The first meeting of the planning team was held in January 2014 and met three more times during the program year. The planning team meetings focused on developing the organizational and structural components of the APAC Network. Toward this end, the planning team developed both a goal and mission. The goal is:

"65% by 2025--Percentage of work-age Alaskans with a postsecondary credential."*[24]*

The mission of the network is to "increase the percentage of all Alaskans who complete postsecondary education, particularly credentials relevant to a robust Alaskan economy."*[25]* The goal and mission was selected based on data which show that "Alaska ranks 49th in the United States" for undergraduate credentials [26] and "65% of Alaska's fastest-growing, high-wage jobs will require some form of postsecondary credential by 2020."[27]

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[24] "Alaska Postsecondary Access and Completion Network Strategic Plan draft," prepared by ACEP, pg 3, August 22, 2014.
[25] Ibid, 3.
[26] Ibid, 4.
[27] Ibid, 4.

The planning team conducted extensive work on how to develop a college access network and sent members to the NCAN training. The planning team also utilized a Collaborative Assessment to help members strengthen collaboration, align efforts, and create an action plan. An independent contractor, the McDowell Group, which is based out of Anchorage and Juneau, was selected to conduct a programs and policy inventory in order to help the planning team understand the scope of college access efforts in Alaska. Several subcommittees have been established to, among other items, further work on structure, marketing, and a formal APAC Network convening. Despite the planning team's work, the structure was not in place to host the formal convening of the APAC Network in Spring 2014. As of the writing of this report, the APAC planning team has begun work on a Spring 2015 convening of the network.

Interviewees felt that the mission and goal of the APAC network were well-aligned to Alaska's needs and were attainable given statewide commitment in the timeframe set forth. In addition, they felt that important structural work had been completed. However, several interviewees expressed a desire to conclude structural conversations and begin work on specific strategies to improve postsecondary access and completion.
A final comment in this section is important. Several interviewees were highly complimentary of the level of administrative support the APAC planning team received from ACPE staff.

H. Recommendations

Based upon the findings of this interim evaluation, three recommendations are suggested to offer opportunities to improve the effectiveness and support the sustainability of ACAC and the AK CACG program.

Recommendation One: Engage in an in-depth analysis of the "blended" sustainability model to ensure ACAC program quality and integrity are maintained.

The ACAC Sustainability Work Group selected the blended model as the best option to sustain the ACAC program. In this model, ACPE provides program oversight and some management but shares the cost of the program with school districts and other partners. One possibility under this option is that ACPE is the program manager, but school districts are the hiring agent. ACAC Guides are school, not state, employees. A strength of this model is its flexibility to accommodate several different types of partnerships. A potential weakness of this model is that some of the possible partnerships may deflect from program quality and integrity.

Two key principles for ACAC implementation have emerged during AK CACG's administration of the program. First, strong, centralized control allows for program leads to communicate the vision and direction of the program and to reinforce these with corresponding policies and practices. For example, to ensure that ACAC Guides are meeting regularly with students to talk about the steps necessary to go to college, there is a schedule of monthly events that all guides implement. Similarly, to ensure that students are being met with on a one-on-one basis, ACAC Guides are required, as part of their performance evaluation, to reach certain targets and to enter this information in the database. The centralized management model AK CACG has used for ACAC has also allowed for ACAC leads to develop a clear set of hiring protocols for guides. Second, to a large degree, the success of the ACAC program is dependent upon the selection and placement of each guide. Guides must be suited to the rigor of being a "staff of one" in their high schools and implementing the program each year. Guides must also fit the culture of the school and the community in which they are placed.

While the blended model proposes that ACPE will maintain administration of the program, it is possible to envision scenarios where a given school district, who is the hiring agent, does not want to follow another agency's hiring protocols. Another possible scenario which could emerge is that the school district wants more control of the work that the ACAC Guide does and may want the guide to perform tasks that are outside of the ACAC scope of work.

As AK CACG staff and the ACAC Sustainability Work Group begin to draft a MOU for the blended model, they may want to conduct an in-depth analysis of the different structures this model could produce, how program quality might be affected, and develop possible structural safe-guards. For example, one structure could be that ACPE is the fiscal agent and program manager and the school district is the hiring agent. Another possible structure is that the school district is both the hiring and fiscal agent while ACPE provides technical assistance and support. Both of these structures could profoundly affect the quality of service students receive from their ACAC Guide.

Recommendation Two: Expand membership in the ACAC Sustainability Work Group.

The Sustainability Work Group has members who are from ACAC schools, the University of Alaska, NCAC, ACPE, and WICHE. There are also former ACAC guides who serve on the work group. In general, each of these members represents the education community or the ACAC program. AK CACG may want to consider expanding membership to include members of the business and philanthropic communities. AK CACG may also want to identify opinion leaders in the communities in which it has worked and ask some of these individuals to serve on the work group.

Finally, AK CACG may want to consider adding a current but experienced ACAC guide to serve on the work group. Current guides will be able to contribute unique perspectives about their work with students and may be able to provide compelling anecdotes which could help personalize the case for sustainability.

Recommendation Three: Expand the work of the APAC Network planning team to include specific strategies for improving access and success to postsecondary college and career opportunities.

AK CACG has provided essential support and resources to the APAC Network Planning Team since its inception in January 2014. As the structural framework of the network becomes clearer and as planning for the Spring 2015 formal APAC Network convening begins, the planning team and AK CACG may want to sharpen the focus on the specific strategies for achieving the network's goal of improving access and completion. Toward this end, the planning team may want to consider dedicating an equal portion of each agenda to strategies and to structure. One possibility is to feature Alaska access and completion programs at each planning team meeting. Such a strategy would allow ACPE staff to feature both its work with the ACAC Guides and the Student Success Center. The programs and policy inventory that is being conducted, and due in November 2014, may also provide understanding of other programs and policies to feature at planning team meetings and at the Spring 2015 APAC Network convening.

I. APPENDIX A:

2012-2013 GOALS and OBJECTIVES

A. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	B. ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES	C. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

1. To increase awareness of college and career options	A. Continue to operate and expand the Alaska College & Career Advising Corps at current locations, in Anchorage, Bethel, Fairbanks, Kodiak, and the Kenai Peninsula, in addition to two new locations in Anchorage and Soldotna that were established during the 2013-2014 grant year. Will also pilot a "Distance Guide" component in an effort to reach underserved students in areas that do not have an official ACAC program location.
	
	B. Formalize program transition and training procedures to help ACAC staff find replacement Guides once their term of service comes to an end and create program content modules for delivery through distance education and on the ACAC web-based platform.
	
	C. Expand student awareness of career and education options by assisting students in creating student portfolios, identifying career interests and exploring postsecondary options through the work of peer mentoring and use of the Alaska Career Information System (AKCIS) tools.
	
	D. Conduct surveys of students at participating schools regarding attitudes towards college before and after peer mentoring services have been offered.
	
	E. Plan a statewide social marketing campaign promoting the benefits of education beyond high school. This will be done in conjunction with the CAST—Alaska network.
	
	F. Increase focus on postsecondary completion through greater integration of Completion Coordinator and College & Career
		i. The Distance Guide model piloted during the 2013-2014 grant year will allow ACAC staff to track and offer college access and completion services to a greater number of students across the state, particularly in remote areas.
		
		ii. Continue to collect comprehensive data at all program locations and baseline data for the distance guide pilot:
		  - student and parent awareness of college costs and financial aid opportunities,
		  - number of students accessing AKCIS,
		  - frequency of use of AKCIS tools (portfolios, searches and sorts),
		  - rates of college enrollment and completion for students in the school districts receiving peer mentoring services,
		  - number of high school seniors who complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and
		  - registration for college entrance exams such as SAT/ACT.
		
		iii. Increase awareness of college costs and financial aid options in participating high schools.
		
		iv. Document ongoing program activities, identify lessons learned, and develop recommendations for continued expansion.
		
		v. Increase student AKCIS use by school key demographic characteristics.
		
		vi. Increase the percentage of students who take the SAT and or ACT.
		
		vii. Track the number of participants who attend Community Liaison presentations and gauge whether or not they learned about new access and success resources, and increased the likelihood of enrolling in some form of postsecondary education.

	Specialist activities and responsibilities. G. Use a Community Liaison position devoted to CACG/ACAC goals to deliver college access and success resources based on the ACAC model to schools in communities without access to an ACAC guide. This position will also provide information regarding program activities and opportunities and work to increase engagement with parents and community leaders in college access efforts.	
2. To increase the rate of enrollment in postsecondary education for all Alaskans, emphasizing disadvantaged populations	A. Develop and distribute financial aid materials and information about the postsecondary application process, for students and families. B. Host college access and financial aid events at high schools throughout the state to inform parents and address questions regarding college and career options. C. Design and facilitate greater understanding of AKCIS through statewide training in an effort to increase knowledge of education and career options. D. Inform students and parents about Alaska's new statewide performance scholarship and its requirements.	i. Document distribution of college access materials throughout peer mentor activities which may include classroom presentations, career fairs, and financial aid nights. ii. Document participation and attendees' questions and concerns at financial aid and other college and career-related events. iii. Document number of contacts between mentors and students/parents. iv. Establish and retain baseline FAFSA data for participating school(s). v. Establish and retain participating high school(s)' baseline postsecondary secondary enrollment data. vi. Compare participating high school postsecondary enrollment data to peer mentored cohort postsecondary enrollment data. vii. Increase AKCIS usage by Alaska students as the key career and education planning tool. viii. Increase academic rigor of student course selection and performance in secondary education.
3. To develop strategies for program sustainability	A. Monitor and adjust program specifications based on lessons learned from ongoing program activities. B. Replicate and expand college access endeavors across the state through the formal creation of a College Access and Success Team (CAST—Alaska) steering	i. Continue to refine uniform criteria for all ACAC locations to ensure program success and community capacity/support. ii. Coordinate statewide college access activities through the initial selection and convening of a CAST Steering

	committee and the convening of a statewide CAST Summit. Task the ACPE Community Partnership Manager to assist with the formation and development of the network. C. <u>Identify new community partners</u> to facilitate network growth, effectiveness and sustainability. D. R<u>efine toolkit and training model</u> as needed for peer mentors and college access professionals or network participants so they may better serve students at current and new locations. E. <u>Use more robust ACAC database to track student progress and program success</u> through an online platform accessible from any location in the state as well as through the new completion component. F. <u>Expand program infrastructure</u> to focus on college completion and coordination of statewide access activities through distance guide model, CAST--Alaska convenings, and Community Liaison work.	Committee Meeting and CAST—Alaska Summit. iii. Develop levels of service for different schools through the distance guide component in an effort to reach more at-risk students and ensure future program support and sustainability. iv. Identify key transition points and related intervention strategies to enhance existing program design. v. Access and track real-time student data from all program locations throughout Alaska.