

Academy of the Canyons

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Academy of the Canyons (AOC), a middle college high school, just completed its 13th year of operation on the



Pictured Above: Students from AOC's Class of 2013 who attended all four years at AOC

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 June 2015 by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

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, 2013). Currently, the California Community College system funds 13 middle college high schools which are serving approximately 2,200 students (CBEDS, Moreno Valley College website, West Hills College-Lemoore website,

College of San Mateo website, 2013). 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. As of Fall 2012, the goal was nearly reached with an enrollment of **378**, 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 2012-13 included 9 percent who were low-income, 51 percent who were ethnic minority, and 37 percent who were 1st generation college students. 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

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 2012, the success rate for AOC students was 14% higher than other concurrently enrolled students (not AOC) and 19% 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 13 years with the exception of Fall 2010 and Fall 2011 where success rates were within 2 and 3 percent, respectively. The significant increase in AOC students’ success rates for Fall 2012 compared to prior years (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

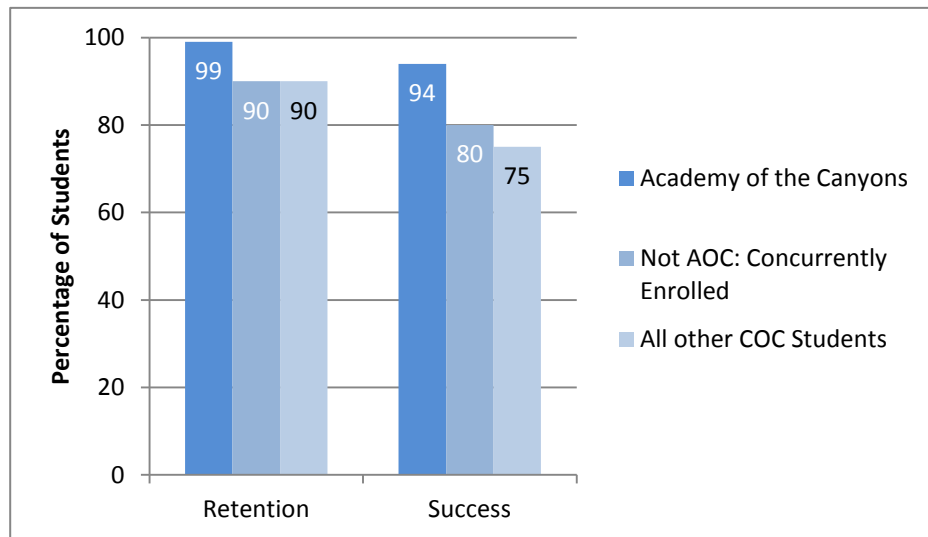


Figure 1. Fall 2012 Retention and Success Rates for AOC students compared to Concurrently Enrolled Students (Not AOC) and other COC students

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of their high school career, and availability of COC services such as the Tutoring/Learning/Computing Lab and Supplemental Learning workshops.

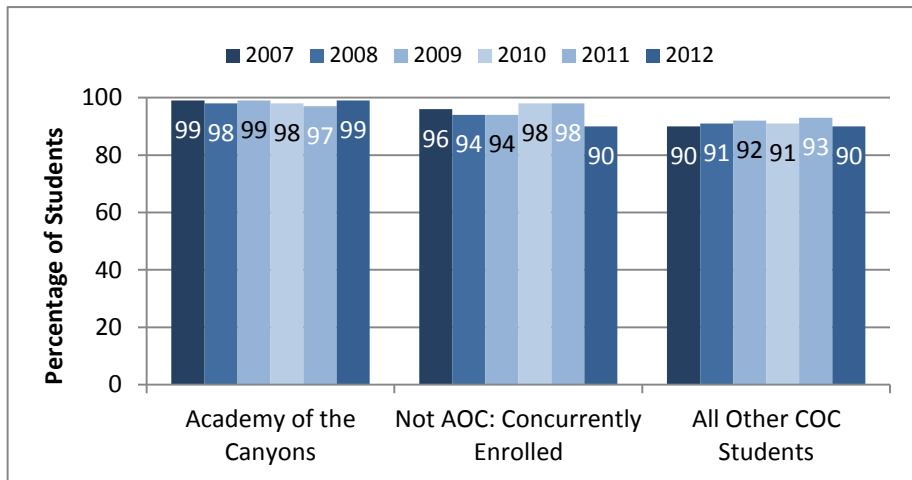


Figure 2. Retention Rates for AOC students compared to Concurrently Enrolled Students (Not AOC) and other COC students: Fall 2007, Fall 2008, Fall 2009, Fall 2010, Fall 2011 and Fall 2012.

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 or within one percent of other concurrently enrolled students (not AOC). AOC students also had higher retention rates than other COC students in the same classes (as high as 9 percent higher).

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 2012 **increased 12 percent** from Fall 2009. *AOC student success rates have been consistently higher than other COC students by more than 10 percent over the past five 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.

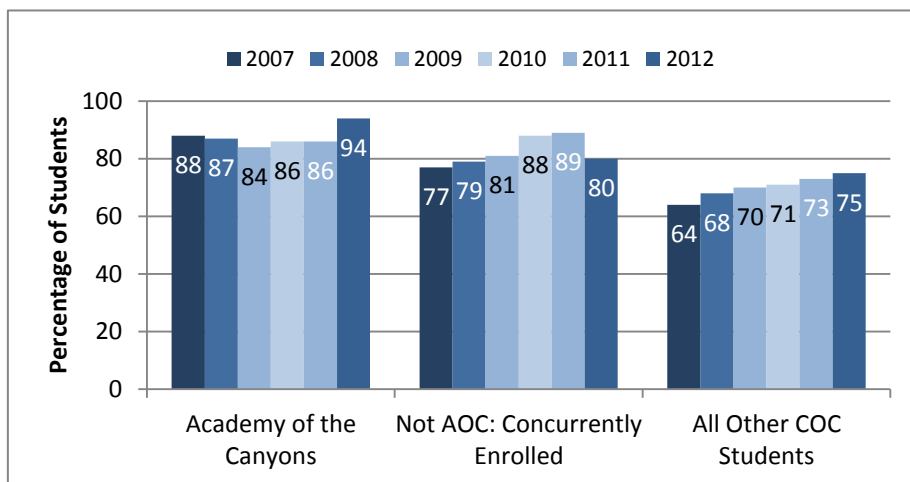


Figure 3. Success Rates for AOC students compared to Concurrently Enrolled Students (Not AOC) and other COC students: Fall 2007, Fall 2008, Fall 2009, Fall 2010, Fall 2011 and Fall 2012.

Additional analyses comparing AOC 9th and 10th grade students with 11th and 12th grade students showed that success rates were 99 and 89 percent, respectively in Fall 2012. The difference in success rates is likely due to the difference in courses taken by each group. For example, 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 2012 with the highest enrollments included Spanish-101, Math-102, Math-070, Psychology-101 and Sign Language-101. All but one of these courses, Sign Language-101, were among the top 20 most difficult courses identified in two College of the Canyons’ studies (Parker, Meuschke, & Gribbons, 2009 and Parker, Meuschke & Gribbons, 2013). It is important to note that success rates for AOC students as a whole and within groups examined, (9th & 10th and 11th & 12th) increased from a previous analysis conducted on Fall 2011 data. Additional analyses should look at course taking patterns and weighting of courses to improve comparisons between AOC, other concurrently enrolled students and all other COC students.

During the Fall 2012 semester, AOC students enrolled in courses from 35 different departments (see Table 1), including 177 enrollments in math, 173 enrollments in physical education, 83 enrollments in computer information technology, and 41 enrollment in music.

Table 1. AOC Enrollment at COC by Academic Department – Fall 2012

Department	Enrollments	Department	Enrollments	Department	Enrollments
Anthropology	5	Dance	30	Music	41
Art	35	Early Childhood Education	1	Philosophy	17
Astronomy	1	English	1	Photography	18
Biology	29	Engineering	1	Physical Education	173
Business	2	French	4	Physical Science	1
Chemistry	22	Geography	1	Physics	7
Chinese	2	Graphic Multimedia Design	3	Psychology	34
Cinema	9	History	28	Sign Language	23
Communication Studies	19	Health Science	2	Sociology	16
Computer Info Tech	83	Italian	2	Spanish	36
Computer Science	7	Math	177	Theatre	3
Culinary Arts	2	Media Entertainment Arts	10		

UC and CSU Transferable Units Completed

UC / CSU Transferable Units

Successfully Completed. An analysis was done to determine the total number of UC and CSU units successfully completed by AOC students during the Fall 2012 semester. Note: Successfully completed is defined as passing the UC / CSU transferable courses with a “C” or better. The median number of UC and CSU units successfully completed by all AOC students during the Fall 2012 semester was four. The median number of UC and CSU units successfully completed by 11th and 12th grade AOC students during the Fall 2012 semester was seven. 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 was four.

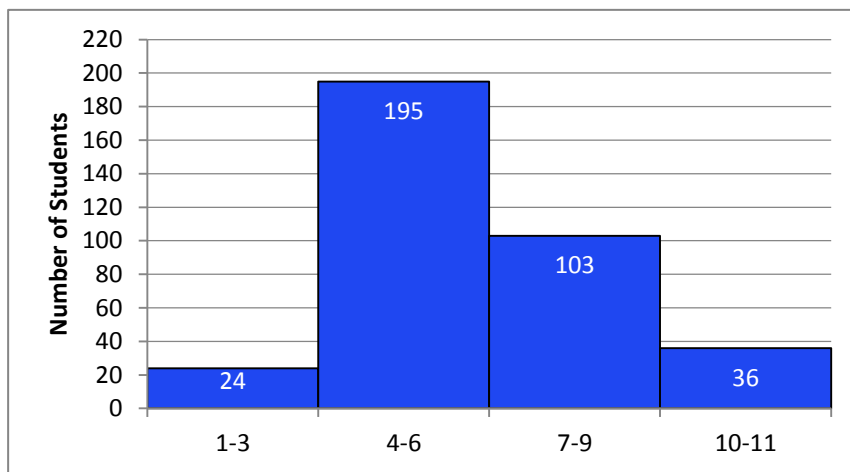


Figure 4. UC and CSU Transferable Units Successfully Completed by AOC Students Present During the Fall 2012 Semester (Grades 9-12).

Notable Highlights in 2012/13:

- 111 graduates (100% graduation rate).
- 50 percent of AOC graduates were Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) majors.
- AOC achieved a score of 938 on the API which is the highest in the Hart District.
- For the fifth year in a row AOC achieved a 100% pass rate on the California High School Exit Exam.
- The 2013 graduating class earned nearly 4,900 college units. One student individually earned 66 college units.
- 90 percent of graduates have completed one year or more of college.
- Named one of the Best Schools in America by US News and World Report for the past four years.

For more information on Academy of the Canyons, please contact Principal Jill Z. Shenberger at 661-362-3056 or visit www.academyofthecanyons.com.