Compact for Success: Achieving Student Success

Through a School University Partnership

by

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Compact for Success: Achieving Student Success

Through a School University Partnership

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the factors related to the Compact for Success partnership between San Diego State University and the Sweetwater Union High School District that have generated increases in the number of graduating seniors entering SDSU. Furthermore, the intent of the research was to find differences in support systems across schools and how might these differences contribute to different levels of results.

This study examined the factors that might be influencing improvements in results associated with the Compact for Success partnership between SUHSD and SDSU. The following two questions directed this study:

1. What key elements have influenced increases in the number of graduating Sweetwater Union High School District seniors entering a San Diego State University through the Compact for Success?

2. Are there differences in support systems across schools and how might these differences contribute to different level of results?

Participants of this study were interviewed using an individual or focused semi-structured interview setting. Participants included sophomores, seniors, teachers, counselors, and principals of two similar high schools in the SUHSD. In addition, the superintendent of SUHSD and Compact for Success Director of SDSU were interviewed.

The findings that emerged provide districts/universities with a roadmap of possible interventions that could be implemented to promote a college-going culture and college-readiness.
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CHAPTER 1—INTRODUCTION

Despite the importance of postsecondary education, many students in the United States never earn a high school diploma. Specifically, Hooker and Brand (2009) found that, in 2006, graduation rates for African American, Latino, and Native American students hovered at 55%. In addition, low-income students were 23 percentage points less likely to enroll directly into college than high-income students. Furthermore, Hooker and Brand explained many students in at-risk situations who earned their high school diplomas left high school before acquiring critical skills and competencies for college success. Cates and Schaeble (2011) reported there continues to be a persistent gap between groups of students who are more or less likely to attend college.

 Mediocre and poor learning outcomes have fueled a growing demand that educational initiatives influence student learning. Educators and researchers are seeking new ways to measure the impact of various curricular, programmatic, and pedagogical innovations on student achievement (Wiseman & Knight, 2003). This includes efforts to measure the impact that school district and university partnerships have had on K-12 student learning and college readiness.

To date, educational reform efforts have not yet met the challenges presented by an increasingly diverse, technological, and economically demanding world that calls for more thinking-oriented, student-focused learning communities (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Furthermore, school districts are constantly attempting to meet the academic demands of students in at-risk situations. These include efforts to implement traditional intervention programs, create new programs, combine intervention programs to meet the particular needs of a district, and form partnerships with other educational organizations.
One promising initiative is a movement to restructure high schools as small learning communities centered on unique and rigorous curriculum, state-of-the-art teaching practices, and partnerships between school districts and colleges/universities. Financial support from organizations like the Carnegie Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation have helped pushed this small-school model and school-college partnerships (Newmann, Smith, Allensworth, & Bryk, 2001). Several factors, including the continuing insufficient preparation of high school graduates, have rendered previous partnership efforts inadequate for meeting current educational urgencies (Nunley, Shartle-Galotto, & Smith, 2000). Furthermore, Nunley et al. (2000) argued that school districts’ inability to prepare students adequately for college has prompted school districts to rethink their educational strategies and form partnerships with colleges and universities for the purpose of supporting common goals, expanding college opportunities to graduating seniors, increasing the number of high school graduates entering college, ensuring students are college-ready, and reducing the number of college dropouts after their freshman year.

During the past decade, the collaborative efforts of school district-university partnerships have reinvented and reshaped teacher and principal preparation and produced significant changes in K-12 (Wiseman & Knight, 2003). Ayalon (2004) explained that although literature on school/university partnerships indicates that partnerships are more effective in dealing with multifaceted educational issues than individual institutions, there are still many unresolved educational constraints that hinder students from entering 4-year colleges after graduating from high school.
Research Problem

The Compact for Success is an agreement between the Sweetwater Union High School District (SUHSD) and San Diego State University (SDSU) that guarantees graduating SUHSD seniors admission into SDSU’s freshman class. Sweetwater Union High School District’s primary goal is to put a college education within the grasp of every young person who comes through its schools (Brand, 2002). Brand (2002), current SUHSD superintendent, explained that making this goal a reality is an on-going challenge, especially considering SUHSD’s demographics, which includes a large number of students who come from families without previous college experience, a high percentage of students who are English language learners (ELLs), a large percentage of Hispanic students, and large number of students participating in the free or reduced-price lunch program. Additionally, Brand explained that the SUHSD’s Compact for Success partnership, not only guarantees admission to SDSU, if certain requirements are met, but also provides opportunities for students to take college-preparatory courses and be prepared for the high demands of rigorous college classes. During a semi-structured interview, Brand explained that one of the best things that occurred with the Compact for Success was the amalgamation of all programs. The success is not based on one or two isolated interventions, but the integration of old and new programs. This was what Brand called “the spiral of success.”

Since the implementation of the Compact for Success, there have been gains in the numbers of SUHSD graduates who apply, are admitted, and attend SDSU immediately after high school; however, the reasons for the gains are unclear. In a semi-structured interview, Dr. L. Murillo (personal communication, June 15, 2013),
Compact for Success Director at SDSU, commented that there is no significant difference between a student with a higher GPA (i.e., above 3.3) and a student with a GPA between 3.0-3.2 with the Compact. The retention rates are essentially the same, the number of students placed in academic probation are the same, and the number of students expelled because of grades are the same. All measures indicate that there is no difference and therefore no need to increase the GPA for the Compact students. Although the Compact for Success clearly defines the requirements that SUHSD students need to fulfill for guaranteed admission to SDSU, it does not prescribe mayor changes, at the high schools, in curriculum, curriculum delivery, pedagogy strategies, intervention programs, or college-readiness programs for students. Yet, since this partnership was established, students are performing at higher rates than before. According to Dr. Murillo, since 2002 there has been a 600% increase in the passing rate of the college proficiency test. Hebel (2007) reported that SUHSD students had a lower dropout rate and had a higher SDSU admission rate after the Compact for Success was implemented than they did prior to the agreement. Furthermore, Hebel explained that Compact for Success students outperformed noncompact SUHSD and non-SUHSD students during their freshman year at SDSU. In addition, Compact for Success students had a higher retention rate than non-Compact students (Hebel, 2007). Since the Compact for Success is an agreement that guarantees admission for students who have met certain requirements, but does not specify any changes in curriculum and instruction, several questions remain unanswered. What is happening at SUHSD schools that causes students to achieve better results? Are SUHSD parents more involved in their children’s education? And if so, what is causing the higher level of involvement? What is helping students change their perceptions
regarding college? Why are students, who otherwise did not consider college a possibility, deciding that attending college is possible?

The 13 SUHSD high schools incorporate a variety of programs that help prepare their students for college. In addition, they implement a myriad of intervention programs that address the needs of students in at-risk situations. Some of the interventions are standards across all high schools, such as collaboration classes, support classes, and Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID). Advancement Via Individual Determination is a college readiness system for elementary through higher education that is designed to increase schoolwide learning and performance (AVID, 2013).

Collaboration classes are mainstream classes that have a higher number of special education students. There are two teachers in each classroom; the primary teacher is a regular education teacher who collaborates with a special education teacher. Support classes are designed to provide additional assistance to students struggling in English, mathematics, and 11th- and 12th-grade students who have not passed the CAHSEE. Other interventions are similar among schools, but tailored to meet the specific needs of the school, such as tutoring, peer coaching and tutoring, and college preparation classes. Yet, other interventions are unique to one or two SUHSD schools, such as parent literacy classes, Saturday Scholars, and Career Technical Education (CTE) classes that embed college preparation curriculum. It was important to clearly identify which intervention programs best addressed the needs of participating students, provide college-readiness support, and stimulated a college-going culture in order to determine which interventions should be replicated. Furthermore, it was essential to identify the programs that produce better academic results, in order to decide where funding should be directed.
Purpose of the Study

At its inception, the goal of the Compact for Success was to increase the number of college-going students by guaranteeing admission into SDSU’s freshman class (Hebel, 2007). Hebel (2007) explained that the guaranteed admission was for students who (a) completed college-preparatory course work, (b) maintained a grade-point average of at least 3.0 throughout middle school and high school, and (c) met proficiency standards for university-level work. In addition, the focus was to prepare students to meet the educational demands associated with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and graduate college-ready. Additionally, Hebel explained that the partnership would decrease the number of college students dropping out after their freshman year and increase the number of students graduating from SDSU with a 4-year degree. Finally, the partnership aimed to lower the number of SDSU freshman students needing remedial classes.

The purpose of this study was to identify the key elements that have influenced increases in the number of graduating seniors entering a 4-year college. There may be many variables involved in making this college-readiness partnership successful; therefore, it was important to interview current and previous year participants and to assess students, parents, and staff’s perceptions of the partnership and the school programs that help them become eligible to enter SDSU through the Compact.

Research Questions

This study examined the factors that might be influencing improvements in results associated with the Compact for Success partnership between SUHSD and SDSU. The following two questions directed this study:
1. What key elements have influenced increases in the number of graduating seniors at Sweetwater Union High School District entering a San Diego State University through the Compact for Success?

2. Are there differences in support systems across schools and how might these differences contribute to different level of results?

**Relevant Research and Scholarship**

Three primary areas of research and scholarship informed this study. These included: (a) partnerships between school districts and colleges/universities, (b) targeted intervention strategies implemented in high schools, and (c) the Compact for Success partnership. By examining the literature regarding school district/university partnerships in general, it was possible to identify factors that emerged from other studies as salient issues that influenced student achievement results in general. The second area related to targeted interventions provided a deeper understanding of critical features of effective intervention programs for secondary school youth. Finally, an examination of early studies of the Compact for Success helped provide a deeper understanding of the program.

**Partnership Between School Districts and Universities**

Researchers, educators, and community agency representatives are increasingly forming partnerships in efforts to improve health and educational outcomes for adolescents. As interest in these collaborative endeavors increases, participants, and those considering engaging in partnership, benefit from information regarding the qualities of successful school district-university partnerships (Bosma et al., 2010). In addition, educational reformers argue that many schools and universities that form
partnerships to increase students’ academic performance while in high school, increase the number of college-ready graduates, and raise the number of successful college students (Jeffery & Pollack, 2010).

The proliferation of partnerships between school districts and universities has prompted researchers to study the collaboration process and specific results (Kirschenbaum & Reagan, 2001). Some studies have examined school district-university collaborations to reform and restructure the schools, shape teacher preparation, and restructure and align their curriculum (Zetlin & MacLeod, 1995). Other research studies have examined partnerships that focus on providing college courses at the high schools, offering advanced high school classes during summer sessions, offering college courses to high school students at colleges or universities, or an enrichment program for middle school students (Maeroff, 1983). Furthermore, partnerships such as early college initiatives, concurrent enrollment, and dual enrollment have been conducted. High school/university partnerships are formed for the purpose of increasing the number of college-ready high school students and ensuring these students are successful once they enter college (Conley, 2007).

Some studies have examined the benefits of school/university partnerships to students and community. Some school/university partnerships provide early-college intervention programs to target minority and low-income students. Ongaga (2010) explained that partnerships promote college awareness, knowledge about programs and pathways to college, and, most importantly, a belief that attending college is possible. School and universities have formed different types of partnerships in order to address current academic demands. Early college, dual or concurrent enrollment, and various
other initiatives implemented through partnerships are difficult to define due to the many uses and objectives associated with these school-college partnerships (Zuchelli, 2010).

The literature examines several types of school district-university partnerships, including Early College programs, concurrent enrollment, and the Compact for Success model. Furthermore, the literature reviews factors needed for a successful school/university partnership. The quality of teaching is essential to effective partnerships and school programs. According to Pietre (2011), successful partners recruit, train, and nurture new teachers, raising the profile of the teaching profession as the cornerstone of all partnership efforts. In addition, successful partners provide unique opportunities to all stakeholders to create a culture of quality and meaningful results based on high expectations and a well-designed plan. These and other factors emerge as critical to making partnerships successful (Kamler et al., 2009).

**Intervention Programs**

In addition to the partnership between school districts and universities, various interventions that appeared to raise the graduation rate, improve students’ academic level, and help students become college-ready. Conley (2007) defined college readiness as the preparation level a student needs in order to enroll and succeed without remediation in a credit-bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution. In addition to helping students become college-ready, as a result of using these interventions, schools have increased student academic achievement, raised scores on standardized tests, increased attendance, helped close the achievement gap, and raised the number of students applying to and entering college (Witherspoon, 2011).
Saturday Academy is an intervention used by some schools to support the needs of students in at-risk situations. These programs are provided by school districts and school/university partnerships, and the classes may be held at either location. Witherspoon (2011) studied a middle school that implemented a Saturday Academy, designed to target students in at-risk situations. Witherspoon observed, described, evaluated, and analyzed the perceptions of students, parents, and teachers of the Saturday Academy. Witherspoon found that students participating in the Saturday Academy program had good attendance for both school and the Academy, and they were interested in pursuing higher education. In addition, students were engaged during the Saturday sessions, and there were few discipline issues compared to regular school days.

Another intervention program designed to support disadvantaged students is the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP). Cabrera, Burkum, and La Nasa (2003) reported that this program differs from many other programs in that it targets entire cohorts or schools rather than individuals or groups of students. Although GEAR UP programs vary from school to school, they are designed to be long-term programs that addressed multiple areas of students’ development. Cates and Schaeffle (2011) found that the GEAR UP program encourages students to plan to attend college, increases academic preparedness, and provides social and cultural capital to students and their families in order to help minimize the barriers to college attendance.

Summer bridge programs are also intervention programs that usually target first-generation, low-income high school students who may not graduate college-ready. Bridge programs, in contrast with other intervention programs, target individual students and are usually implemented by colleges and universities at their campuses. Often
summer bridge programs include the following elements: (a) information about colleges, (b) academic instruction, (c) tutoring, (d) study skills instruction, and (e) counseling (Gullatt & Jan, 2003). In reviewing literature regarding Bridge programs, Gullat and Jan (2003) suggested that successful bridge programs (a) establish high standards for students and staff; (b) provide individualized attention to students; (c) provide adult mentors and counselors; (d) include peer support; (e) integrate program within K-12 schools; and (f) provide long-term interventions.

**Compact for Success**

The Compact for Success is a partnership between the Sweetwater Union High School District and San Diego State University (SDSU). This partnership created initiatives to drive curricular change, promote college awareness, and infuse intervention programs that focus on making students’ college-ready and allowing them to become successful college students. The Compact for Success promotes students’ academic success beginning in the seventh grade by guaranteeing college entrance at the end of their senior year. Under the Compact for Success partnership, formed in 1999, the SDSU has guaranteed a spot in its freshman class to all Sweetwater students who complete college-preparatory course work, maintain a grade-point average of at least a 3.0 during their senior year and at the time of application, and attain proficiency standards for university-level work. Through the partnership, SDSU has sought to improve college readiness on a broader scale than that of many traditional university-based outreach programs (Hebel, 2007). Rather than help certain students from a handful of schools, as many programs do, SDSU is trying to improve preparation across California’s largest secondary-school district.
Methodology

The participants included in this study were high school students enrolled in two separate schools that are part of the Sweetwater Union High School District. Students were enrolled during the 2012-2013 school year at Hilltop High School and Chula Vista High School, both located in Chula Vista, California and part of the Compact for Success program. Both schools have similar student demographics, are located in close proximity of each other, and have similar Academic Performance Indexes (APIs). In addition, participants included freshmen SDSU students who were admitted to SDSU through the Compact for Success. Participating teachers, counselors, and administrators from both schools also worked at the aforementioned high schools. In addition, the superintendent of SUHSD and the Compact for Success Coordinator at SDSU were also participants of the study.

The methodology used in this study is the qualitative tradition of case study. Case study research involves the study of an issue—explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (Creswell, 2010). Furthermore, Creswell (2010) explained that in a case study “the investigator explores a bounded system or multiple bounded systems over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, and documents) and reports a case description” (p. 73). In this study, the case was the Compact for Success Partnership between SDSU and the SUHSD. The two schools selected provided an opportunity to look at implementation of the partnership at two high schools that served low-income communities in the district.

Data collection primarily involved the review of documents related to the Compact for Success Program and interviews of an array of informants. Documents
reviewed included the memorandum of understanding used to establish the partnership, data reports, school descriptions, program descriptions, college-promotion material, and other printed and electronic documents related to the partnership and the two high schools.

A total of 16 seniors participated from both schools. These students were purposely selected from a pool of students who met the following criteria: (a) they had been enrolled in the Sweetwater Union High School District since seventh grade; (b) they had met the criteria to qualify for the Compact for Success Program; (c) they had been accepted into San Diego State University; (d) and they had enrolled at San Diego State University and began in the fall of 2013. In addition four 10th-grade students from Chula Vista High School and three 10th-grade students from Hilltop High School participated in the study. These students were purposely selected from a pool of 10th-grade students who were on track to meet the requirements to be eligible for the Compact for Success. Furthermore, four SDSU freshmen were selected to participate in the study. These participants were selected based on the following criteria: (a) graduated from either one of the participating high schools, and (b) entered San Diego State University through the Compact of Success.

A total of eight teachers from both high schools combined participated in the study. All the teachers currently teach core academic or elective classes. Teachers were selected at random based on availability. In addition, one counselor from each high school was selected to participate in the study. The counselors were selected based on their job responsibilities. Both counselors had the responsibility to assist students with college application and scholarship process. The principals of each site participated in
the study. Furthermore, the superintendent of SUHSD and the Compact for Success Coordinator at SDSU participated in the study.

**Data Collection Procedures**

Students were interviewed in either a focus-group setting or individually, using a semi-structured protocol. High school student participants were interviewed in one of five focus groups. Two focus interviews were done for seniors at Chula Vista High School, one for seniors at Hilltop High School, and one for high school sophomores at each school. Student participants were given a choice to be interviewed as part of the focus interview or be interviewed individually. All high school participants agreed to participate in a focus interview. The questions provided students opportunities to describe experiences that have made a positive impact on their academic work while in high school. In addition, the questions allowed students to discuss the specific interventions that were or are available to them that they believe were helpful during their high school experience.

Each teacher, counselor, and principal was interviewed individually using a semi-structured protocol. The superintendent and the Compact for Success Coordinator were also interviewed individually using a semi-structured protocol. The questions provided educators an opportunity to describe their perception of why they believe the Compact for Success seems to be producing better results. Furthermore, the questions allowed educators to explain the specific student interventions they believe have the most impact on student academic performance and the key school site factors that help qualify students for the Compact of Success. Additionally, the questions provided educators an
opportunity to share their perceptions of what are the key factors, in and out of a school environment, that help students become interested in college and college-ready.

Student interviews took between 25 and 45 minutes and were digitally recorded and transcribed. All interviews were conducted at the participants’ high school during class and after school, depending on the availability of the students. Participating freshmen were interviewed at Hilltop High School at a mutually agreed time. Parent consent were obtained for all students under the age of 18, and a consent form for participants 18 years of age or older was used to gain informed consent prior to conducting the interview. In addition, the Sweetwater Union High School District Superintendent, Dr. Edward Brand, and each school principal gave written consent to interview students and to conduct the interviews at Hilltop High School and Chula Vista High School. Prior arrangements were made with students and school officials, administrators and counselors, regarding times and specific location for the interviews. Enough time was provided for each focus interview to be completed without interruptions.

Teacher, counselor, and principal interviews lasted between 30 minutes to 1 hour and were conducted at their school site. These interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. Teachers were interviewed during their preparation period, during lunch, or after school, depending on availability. Principals were interviewed during a prearranged time at their school sites. Enough time was allotted for each participant to ensure the interview was completed at one time. The superintendent and the Compact for Success Coordinator were interviewed in their respective offices at a mutually agreed time.
Data were analyzed in successive rounds as interviews were conducted. The data analysis revealed a number of categories of students and school staff’s perceptions regarding key elements influencing achievement in the Compact for Success. Transcripts of recorded interviews were re-read several times to determine new categories of factors that might be influencing student success.

Documents were collected and used to develop more detailed understandings of programs, activities, and data. At times, documents helped triangulate patterns that emerged from individual and focus-group interviews.

The findings were shared with three purposefully selected participants for a member check. These participants read the draft findings and provided useful feedback regarding their individual experiences and how they relate to the findings.

**Limitations of the Study**

Although this study was designed to identify the key elements that appear to help students meet the requirements of the Compact of Success, there were three major limitations to the study. First, the study was limited to the perceptions of a small number of students, teachers, administrator, and counselors at only two of the high schools in the partnership. In addition, even though there were data from previous years regarding the number of students applying to SDSU and the number of students becoming eligible to attend SDSU through the Compact for Success, students from previous school years, except for 2012-2013 SDSU freshmen, were not interviewed and their perceptions not measured. It is possible that if the sample universe was expanded to more students and staff, the study could have yielded different results. In addition, some participating students have attended other schools besides the participating schools. This could impact
the results of the study because students could have received different interventions at other schools.

Another limitation is that the research cannot encompass all the different factors that have an effect on students’ academic performance and college entry. The research focused on students’ perceptions regarding interventions that had a positive effect on academic performance and provide students with a greater opportunity to become eligible to attend SDSU through the Compact for Success. Other factors such as parent involvement, positive peer influence, and outside influences could also influence academic success.

A third limitation was the timing of the interviews. The interviews were performed during the last week of school in the spring semester. Results could differ if the students were interviewed at a different time of the school year. During the fall semester, students might have had different perceptions because they were just starting the year or because they just received their California Standardized Test (CST) results versus spring semester when students had just taken their CSTs, were ending their school year, had been accepted to college, and were about to graduate. Furthermore, during the last month of the school year, especially for seniors, students might have been focused on other things, such as preparing for college, graduation, and all the end-of-school activities.

**Significance of the Study**

The study provided an in-depth look at particular partnerships that generated increases in the number of students eligible to attend a California State University, as well as increases in the number of students who attended SDSU. This study may provide
school districts and universities a deeper understanding of the factors that might influence student success in school/university partnerships similar to Compact for Success. The study may guide colleges and universities as they consider developing similar partnerships that could promote academic success for their students.

Furthermore, the study adds to the body of literature on the Compact for Success partnership between SUHSD and SDSU. The study analyzed the specific factors that appear to give the Compact for Success program better results.
CHAPTER 2—LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review examined empirical studies of partnerships between schools and universities. In particular, the review analyzed the challenges and opportunities of different partnerships and how partners addressed those difficulties (Borthwick, Stirling, Nauman, & Cook, 2003; Bosma et al., 2010; Hoffman, 2003; Jeffery & Polleck, 2010; Kim, 1998; Kirschenbaum & Reagan, 2001; Morgan-Fleming, Simpson, Curtis, & Hull, 2010; Ongaga, 2010; Wiseman & Knight, 2003; Zetlin & MacLeod, 1995). Additionally, the review offered insight into different types of school university and school college partnerships and their success patterns. Furthermore, the review considered intervention strategies, employed by high schools as outcomes of these partnerships, exploring the degree to which various strategies have proven successful in preparing students for college admission and success (Bailey, Hughes, & Karp, 2003; Bosma et al., 2010; Bourke & Jayman, 2011; Burns & Lewis, 2000; Hoffman, 2003; Karp, Calcagno, Hughes, Jeong, & Bailey, 2007; Kim, 1998; Lefever-Davis, Johnson, & Pearman, 2007; Maeroff, 1983; Pitre, 2011). Furthermore, the review explored several common benefits associated with school university partnerships, including the provision of college credit opportunities, targeted remediation interventions, teacher training and professional development, access to information to all students about college opportunities, and college visits. In addition, early college initiatives, such as college credit-earning experiences, were analyzed and discussed. Finally, this review of literature examined high school university partnerships that create initiatives for curricular change, promote college awareness, and infuse intervention programs that focus on making students’ college-ready and allowing them to become successful college students. The review
concluded by reviewing future trends in school/university partnerships and their impact on educational systems (Morgan-Fleming et al., 2010).

**Overview of School Districts/University Partnerships and Collaboration**

Increasingly, university and school district leaders, and community agency representatives are forming partnerships to improve health and educational outcomes for adolescents. As interest in collaborative approaches increases, partners benefit from information regarding the necessary qualities of successful school district-university partnerships (Bosma et al., 2010). Collaboration is regarded as a vehicle to promote reform, foster professional growth, and gain academic and social benefits for students (Kim, 1998). Typically, partners work together to meet specific goals and share information about assets and needs that each brings to the partnerships. These collaborations may result in partners viewing each other as a valued resource (Wiseman & Knight, 2003).

Educational reformers argue that many schools and universities form partnerships to increase students’ academic performance while in high school, increase the number of college-ready graduates, and raise the number of successful college students (Jeffery & Polleck, 2010). In addition, Jeffery and Polleck (2010) explained that such partnership practices aim to achieve student success through equal participation in a mutually beneficial relationship. The term partnership is used in a generic sense to describe interactions between entities. The term is also used to describe particular interactions that are shared between such entities. At a 2008 National Partnership Forum, convened by Portland State University, representatives of community organizations, school districts,
and higher education discussed the term partnership and its implications (Bringle, Officer, Grim, & Hatcher, 2009). The ideas shared were summarized in the following statement:

Partnerships develop out of relationships and result in mutual transformation and cooperation between parties. They are motivated by a desire to combine forces that address their own best interest and ideally result in outcomes greater than any one organization could achieve alone. They create a sense of shared purpose that serves the common good. (Bringle et al., 2009, p. 43)

The proliferation of partnerships between school districts and universities has prompted researchers to study the collaboration process and specific results (Kirschenbaum & Reagan, 2001). Some studies have examined school district-university collaborations to reform and restructure the schools, shape teacher preparation, and restructure and align their curriculum (Zetlin & MacLeod, 1995). Further research has studied university-urban school district partnerships and the essential elements required to create and maintain effective partnerships (Borthwick et al., 2003).

Researchers have applied case study methods to investigate university-school collaboration, exploring the implications of and challenges associated with cross-institution collaboration (Kirschenbaum & Reagan, 2001). In addition, interview research methods have been employed to study partnership participants’ perceptions of essential elements for establishing and maintaining successful school university partnerships (Borthwick et al., 2003). Morgan-Fleming et al. (2010) concluded that knowledge gained from these studies of school-district/university partnerships allows districts to challenge their current practices in pedagogy, curriculum, educational policy, professional development, and the use and availability of their resources.
Public schools, colleges, or university partnerships that recognize their interdependence and the mutual benefits accrued from an alliance have become a cornerstone of educational restructuring (Lefever-Davis et al., 2007). These school/university collaborations have the potential to lead instructional change and promote positive student results at the high school and college level. Zuchelli (2010) found that underachieving students can perform at higher levels, given the right educational environment. Many of these students may be perceived as unmotivated, feel they are not likely to succeed, do not see college as a possibility for them, or see little relationship between their achievement in high school and their future success. Early college opportunities can be a key factor in motivating students to promote high achievement (Zuchelli, 2010).

**Justification for High School/University Partnerships**

Some high school/university partnerships are formed for the purpose of increasing the number of college-ready high school students and ensuring these students are successful once they enter college (Conley, 2007). Conley (2007) defined college readiness in terms of adequate preparation for college such that students can enroll and succeed, in credit-bearing general education courses at a postsecondary institution without remediation. In addition, Conley defined college success for first-generation college students as being able to graduate in 6 years or less. Furthermore, some school/university partnerships provide students college-ready opportunities, while they simultaneously earn credits toward a certificate or degree and receive high school credit. Early-college program partnerships can save time and money for students (Community College Research Center [CCRC], 2004).
Wiseman and Knight (2003) examined the benefits of school/university partnerships provided to students and their communities. These benefits reach beyond the academic success of students, addressing students’ academic, personal, and career lives. Wiseman and Knight explained that as school and university leaders realize the potential benefits to students, educational leaders have reinvented school/university partnerships to address the educational needs of the 21st century. These collaborative efforts have reshaped teacher and principal preparation and produced significant changes in K-12 settings and universities (Wiseman & Knight, 2003).

Bourke and Jayman (2011) examined personal and community benefits of a school/university transition program in Ontario, Canada. The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with 25 past and present students. Findings suggested that individual, family, and community resources were leveraged to build on students’ strengths. More specifically, participants saw themselves as having benefitted from the academic, professional, social, and interpersonal opportunities available through the partnership, gaining valuable knowledge, experience, motivation, confidence, skills, and networks that influenced their opportunities to succeed in college.

A recent case study, using in-depth qualitative interviews with 14 participants, examined Washington State’s attempt to move toward an integrated P-20 educational system that enhances transitions from high school to college (Pitre, 2011). Although Pitre (2011) acknowledged a need for increased policy cohesion and ongoing assessment to determine the effectiveness of the policy over time, he concluded that policy held potential for solving many transition-related issues. Furthermore, the study found that the subsequent initiatives were especially important to students from racial and ethnic
minorities, economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and students who have traditionally experienced barriers to academic success and educational attainment (Pitre, 2011). Darling-Hammond and Sykes (2003) cited the need for a systemic approach to improving education. Increased collaboration within and between educational organizations creates a potential benefit to both K-12 and higher education collectively and individually.

**Types of School/University College-Readiness Focused Partnerships**

School and universities have formed different types of partnerships in order to address current academic demands. This section examines the research related to two types of partnerships: early college programs, dual or concurrent enrollment programs, and other types of school/university partnerships. Early college, dual or concurrent enrollment, and various other initiatives implemented through partnerships are difficult to define due to the many uses and objectives associated with these partnerships (Zuchelli, 2010). Although the programs are described here separately, schools districts and universities may integrate components in various ways.

**Early College Programs**

Early college programs, currently being implemented in many states, are a way to link high school and college. Early college is a system of cooperation between a high school and a university or community college that allows a student to attain college credit while pursuing a high school diploma (Burns & Lewis, 2000). Early college provides students an opportunity to take college courses, taught by college professors, and receive high school and college credits. Usually, early college programs target students who are underserved and often deemed “at-risk” in a traditional high school. These “at-risk” students include low-income youth, first-generation college goers, English language
learners, students of color, and other young people underrepresented in higher education (Hoffman, 2003). Early college high schools blend high school and college in a rigorous yet supportive program, compressing the time it takes to complete a high school diploma and the first 2 years of college (Ongaga, 2010). This allows high school students to increase their opportunities to be accepted into a 4-year college, be better prepared as freshmen, save time and money in college tuition, and reduce the need to take remedial classes.

According to Ongaga (2010), some early college intervention programs target minority and low-income students. Many of these students are first generation college students who need preparation and information about college. The partnership builds college awareness, provides information about programs and pathways to college, and perhaps, most importantly, promotes the belief that attending college is possible.

**Concurrent/Dual Enrollment Programs**

Concurrent/dual enrollment programs offer community college-level courses to high school students on either the high school or college campus. Students enrolled in these courses receive academic credit on both their high school and college transcripts. Furthermore, concurrent or dual enrollment partnerships differ from other precollege credit programs because high school instructors teach the college courses during the normal school day. Such programs provide a direct connection between secondary and postsecondary institutions and an opportunity for collegial collaboration. In addition, students are better prepared for college by gaining exposure to college expectations and workload (Boswell, 2001).
Concurrent/dual enrollment allows high school students to enroll in college courses prior to high school graduation, providing them with college exposure and allowing them to earn high school and college credits (Bailey et al., 2003). In addition, concurrent/dual enrollments provide opportunities to increase the efficiency of education by reducing the time and cost of obtaining postsecondary degrees and increasing the rigor of high school instruction, thereby reducing the need for postsecondary remediation (Lewis & Overman, 2008).

A study conducted in two states provided evidence that concurrent/dual enrollment can lead to a range of positive outcomes. For example, students who had taken college classes while in high school were more likely to earn a high school degree, enroll in college, enroll in a 4-year university, enroll full time, and persist in college, compared with students without college experience (Karp et al., 2007).

When students earn college credit while still in high school, the high school dropout rate reduces, the rate of students entering college increases, the rate at which freshman college students take remedial classes decreases, and the number of students dropping out of college after their freshman year decreases (Boswell, 2001). In addition, when students earn college credits by the end of their last high school year they are more likely to finish college. Finally, the head start provided by earning college credits while in high school saves time and money for students (Boswell, 2001).

**Compact for Success Partnership**

In 1999, the Sweetwater Union High School District (SUHSD), under the leadership of the district superintendent, Dr. Edward Brand, and San Diego State University (SDSU), under the leadership of then-president Stephen Weber, formed a
different type of partnership called the Compact for Success. The partnership guaranteed admission into SDSU’s freshman class to all SUHSD students who completed college-preparatory course work, maintained a grade point average of at least 3.0 throughout middle school and high school, and met proficient standards for university college work (Hebel, 2007). According to Hebel (2007), one of the most important goals of the Compact for Success partnership is to increase the college-going rate. In addition, E. Brand (personal communication, June 16, 2013) argued that the Compact aimed to create a college-going culture and have all graduating seniors become college-ready. He explained that the Compact for Success created an environment where all students are exposed to an A-G curriculum (see Appendix A for a list of the courses required in the A-G curriculum), experienced real college-life experiences through SDSU visitations, provided knowledge about college by holding parent conferences, college fairs, and bringing college guest speakers, and by motivating students to attend college through a plethora of activities designed to provide a college-going culture.

**Factors for a Successful School University Partnership**

Successful school university partnerships require deliberate planning and ongoing attention. Pitre (2011) found that successful partners recruit, train, and nurture new teachers, raising the profile of the teaching profession as an important factor of partnership efforts. In addition, successful partners provide unique opportunities to all stakeholders to create a culture of quality and meaningful results based on high expectations and a well-designed plan. These and other factors emerge as critical to making partnerships successful (Kamler et al., 2009).
Collaborations suffer when the participants have different ideas about the roles and responsibilities of their partners (Kamler et al., 2009). Distinct goals for university and school participants should be established before collaborations begin. Selecting the right partner is also essential for a successful partnership. Imposing involvement on either a university faculty member or a high school teacher can be counterproductive. There must be buy-in from all stakeholders, and they must believe that there is a mutual benefit from the partnership (Lefever-Davis et al., 2007). L. Murillo (personal communication, June 15, 2013) explained that one of the key factors for the success of the Compact is that it was jointly created between SUHSD and SDSU. He described how the district and SDSU had buy-in into making it work, so it had the strength and collaboration of both organizations.

Finally, Lefever-Davis et al. (2007) explained that communication is the core of successful collaboration. This means that partners need to learn together and continually remind each other of their previously established common goals.

According to DeVaney and Brendel (2001), partnerships move through forming, norming, and storming stages before performing at a high level. DeVaney and Brendel described forming as the first stage building. In this stage, the partners are motivated, but they are relatively uninformed of the issues and objectives of the team. Devaney and Brendel described norming as the time when some may give up their own ideas and agree with others in order to make the partnership function. In this stage, partners take responsibility for their own actions and have the motivation to work for the success of the partnership’s goals. Finally, they describe the storming stage as the time when different ideas compete for consideration. The partnership addresses issues such as what problems
they are really supposed to solve. In this stage, tolerance is vital for the survival of the partnership. Lefever-Davis et al. (2007) explained that parity between partners is necessary for them to plan and implement projects that stimulate the collegiality needed for a true collaboration. Furthermore, establishing trusting relationships is another essential consideration in partnerships between researchers, community agencies, and schools (DeVaney & Brendel, 2001).

Bosma et al. (2010) conducted a case study, employing semi-structured group interviews and three participant observations. The research team identified themes as keys to success of this community/school/university partnership and applicable to other successful school university partnerships: (a) communication; (b) shared decision making; (c) shared resources; (d) expertise and credibility; (e) sufficient time to develop and maintain relationships; (f) distributed leadership; (g) being present and visible; (h) flexibility; (i) a shared youth development orientation; and (j) recognition of other partners’ priorities.

Zuchelli (2010) supported many of the 10 findings from Bosma et al. (2010). Specifically, Zuchelli examined an early college partnership between Allegany College and 25 local school districts. They found that the successes of the partnerships between the high schools and colleges were based on shared goals and vision, communication, cooperation, a focus on the needs and interests of students, and commitment to the success and longevity of the program. Furthermore, Zuchelli found that an effective and successful early college program relies on the strengths of the relationship between the high schools/school districts and colleges/universities.
In the mid 1980s, Chelsea Public School District had a graduation rate of 48%, and only one-fifth of graduating students expressed a desire to attend a 4-year college (Paletta, Stillings-Candal, & Vidoni, 2009). In addition, Chelsea School District had several concerns including low test score, low daily attendance, and high dropout rate. In an effort to address these issues, Chelsea Public School System partnered with Boston University. Paletta and colleagues (2009) generated findings that were consistent with those of Zuchelli (2010) and Bosma et al. (2010). The elements found as keys to the success were (a) shared philosophy and mission, (b) shared decision-making process, (c) increased professional development for teachers, (d) effective mobilization of financial resources, and (e) communication.

According to Bosma et al. (2010), although collaborative school university partnerships do not, in themselves, reduce risks for adolescent violence and school failure, positive youth outcomes are more likely to be achieved when partnerships are equipped for developing and managing effective prevention efforts and providing college-ready opportunities. Successful school/university partnerships provide an opportunity for at-risk students to overcome their challenges and be college-ready. E. Brand (personal communication, June 16, 2013) suggested that the spiral of success starts at home when a parent tells the baby “you are going to college.” In addition, Brand explained that if someone goes to a kindergarten class in an affluent area and asks them who is going to college, most likely all the hands go up. If a kindergarten class in a low socioeconomic area is asked the same question, maybe a third of the hands go up because they do not know what college is. Furthermore, Brand argued that creating and giving the
families of students in at-risk situations an environment in which they learn what college is all about is important in creating a college-going culture.

In summary, the research suggests that several elements may be useful to consider in undertaking school/community/university partnerships. While researchers found several elements to be factors that influenced the success of various collaborations, they consistently found that communication and shared vision among the partners were important factors in successful collaborations.

**Partnership Between School Districts and Universities**

School university partnerships may be valuable in promoting student academic success during high school and into college. This section examines the research related to three school/university partnerships.

**Maricopa District Partnership**

The Maricopa District, in partnership with local colleges, offered college campus-based programs. These college campus-based programs offered college courses and other noncredit classes to Maricopa high school students at the college campuses. These programs have proven to be successful in increasing graduation rates, grade point averages, and the enrollment of graduating high school students into college. A report prepared for the Phoenix Think Tank (Finch, 1997) found that 90% of the concurrent enrollment high school students graduated from high school, compared with a rate of 49% of the nonconcurrent enrollment students. In addition, 83% of the participating students attended postsecondary institutions (Puyear, Thor, & Mills, 2001). Finch (1997) indicated that concurrent enrollment students performed better during their first semester or year at the university than did the typical community college transfer students. In
Arizona State University, 29% of 2,351 freshman students earned community college credit through some form of concurrent enrollment. Finch found that nonconcurrent enrollment students experienced a decrease from their high school GPA of 2.85 to a first semester college GPA of 2.43. In contrast, concurrent enrollment students entered with a median GPA of 3.22 and finished their first college semester at 3.41 (Finch, 1997). In addition, Finch found that the national average of students earning a score of four or five on Advanced Placement tests were 13% and 18%, respectively. In contrast to the concurrent enrollment, participants in this study attained a scored 14%, and 27% attained a score of five.

**Compact for Success**

The Compact for Success is a partnership between Sweetwater Union High School District (SUHSD) and San Diego State University (SDSU). The partnership was formed in 1999, under the leadership of SUHSD superintendent, Dr. Edward Brand, and SDSU’s president, Dr. Stephen Weber, for the purpose of raising the number of high school students entering college (Hebel, 2007). According to Hebel (2007), students at SUHSD’s 13 high schools now take more than three times as many Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate tests per year than before the partnership, and more students are receiving scores high enough to receive credit at SDSU. In addition, Hebel mentioned that in the first class of graduating high school Compact participants, the percent of graduates who enrolled in a 4-year college went up from 17% to 23%. Furthermore, the number of SUHSD Compact participants who enrolled as freshman at SDSU nearly doubled from the number of students in the 1999 graduation class. This partnership has increased the number of graduates that enter college, but more
importantly it has increased the rigor of academics at SUHSD, students’ expectations, and has provided first-generation college the belief that they can be accepted into a 4-year university and that they have the academic potential to successfully complete their degree.

The longstanding Boston University-Chelsea Public School District is another example of a successful school university partnership. This partnership is unique for many reasons, but one of most recognizable features is that it is the only example of an American university engaging in the day-to-day management of a public school system (Paletta et al., 2009). Paletta et al. (2009) reported improvements in the quality of educational programs offered to students, increased test scores, gains in graduation rates, and other increased student achievement, specifically in the core academic subjects. In addition, the Chelsea High School dropout rate decreased from 16.3% in 1997 to 10.88% in 2005.

**Challenges**

School university partnerships come with unique challenges and difficulties based on the specific characteristics of each partnership (Kamler et al., 2009). Walker’s (1999) analysis of school/university partnerships identified significant possibilities benefitting both types of institutions; however, Walker also noted important challenges that should be considered during the partnership process. In particular, Walker listed six possible derailers in forming successful partnerships. These derailers are: (a) time management, (b) different expectations, (c) choice of partners, (d) inequitable distribution of power, (e) disequilibrium, and (f) communication, conflict, and trust.

**Time management.** In the K-12 system, the prescribed teaching schedule allows for little interaction with partners outside the classroom. Although college professors
have more flexibility in their schedules, there still may be an incompatibility of available time with a teaching partner. Time management is necessary to ensure equal meeting times are being provided to teachers and professors (Walker, 1999).

**Different expectations.** Partnership collaborations suffer when the participants have different expectations regarding the roles and responsibilities of their partners (Kamler et al., 2009).

**Choice of partners.** A key element of success is having willing partners. When partnerships are developed solely on the input of upper management, without any input from teachers and faculty members, there is a high risk of having the teachers feel as an imposition, rather than a partnership. This feeling may translate into unwillingness to participate in the partnership’s goal and has proven to be counterproductive (Kamler et al., 2009).

**Inequitable distribution of power.** Kamler et al. (2009) emphasized the importance of creating structures for collaboration to provide equal power distribution. Furthermore, they strongly suggest common planning time.

**Disequilibrium.** Collaboration is a process in which the participants move through several stages (Devaney & Brendel, 2001). During this process, DeVaney and Brendel (2001) acknowledged that participants may experience an uneasiness, which may spur mistrust and resentment. They encouraged regular and extensive communication to share information and provide feedback to each other.

**Communication, conflict, and trust.** Lefever-Davis et al. (2007) described communication as the core of collaboration. Without an equal relationship,
communication lacks openness and honesty. The lack of these elements causes participants to retreat from resolving conflict and building trust.

Dual-enrollment programs provide opportunities for students to take college classes while still attending high school. However, these programs face unique challenges and limitations. Berger, Adelman, and Cole (2010) explained how a challenge of dual-enrollment programs is to ensure the accessibility of classes to all students. Berger et al. explained that dual-enrollment programs in isolation do not improve student access and that despite the wide availability of programs allowing high school students to take college classes, few students take advantage of them. In many instances, high schools and school districts restrict access to dual-enrollment opportunities, for example, allowing only honor students to participate.

Puyear et al. (2001) explained that, in some cases, a challenge faced by some school university partnerships is the lack of understanding of the concurrent enrollment program by some states. Program proponents have faced some significant challenges in the state legislature and sometimes in their own districts. In an article published in 2001, Puyear et al. explained that the state was paying twice for high school students to take dual-enrollment classes that earn them college and high school credit, and college professors were questioning whether the classes even provide a college level of instruction. Puyear et al. explained how the high school and participating colleges receive funding for the same students in a concurrent enrollment arrangement. In addition, an issue was raised regarding the practice of having mixed classes; students enrolled for concurrent enrollment college classes along with regular high school students. This raises the argument that the rigor of the concurrent enrollment classes is
not as rigorous as a college class. Furthermore, some full-time college professors object to high school teachers teaching the courses instead of college instructors (Puyear, 2001).

Concurrent enrollment issues consume a great deal of time from high school and college administrators. At times, there are inconsistencies on how high schools and colleges set up concurrent enrollment courses. In addition, at times there are variations in the financial arrangements between colleges and even between a given college and different high schools. These inconsistencies and variations in basic procedures create a climate of doubt regarding the manner in which the concurrent enrollment programs are being administered (Puyear, 2001). Proper planning, clear communication, and a shared vision of what needs to be accomplished can overcome these challenges.

Pitre (2011) described that many research studies fail to mention the need for tightly coupled, collaborative initiatives between K-12 and colleges to facilitate the type of growth and change desired. He explained that the lack of effective communication can hinder successful school-college partnerships. In addition, partnerships can only be successful if there is increased collaboration between educational organizations and that participating partners have a shared intensified focus on raising the academic level of students (Pitre, 2011).

**Justification for Targeted Interventions**

Latino students, African American students, and students with low family incomes are less likely to enroll in college than White, higher income students (Cabrera et al., 2003). Even high-performing students from low-socioeconomic status (SES) families attend college at lower rates than students from higher socioeconomic status groups. Furthermore, Cabrera et al. (2003) found that college-qualified students from
low-SES backgrounds applied to 4-year colleges at a rate 17% lower than the national average for similarly qualified students. According to Hooker and Brand (2009), a student with a parent who has obtained a bachelor’s degree is 35% more likely to enroll directly into a 4-year college that a student whose parents had no college experience. In addition to parent educational level and socioeconomic level, the lower enrollment rates of low-socioeconomic students are influenced by a lower college-readiness rate among this group. The opportunity to be eligible, apply, enroll, and attend college is significantly reduced for at-risk students. At-risk students, who as a result of social, economic, political, or cultural conditions, have limited access to educational opportunities (Hill & Rojewski, 1999). Witherspoon (2011) explained that there is a strong correlation between students’ demographic characteristics, such as gender, race, ethnicity, and SES, with being at-risk. Early school experiences and family background have been assigned five factors that increase the likelihood of dropping out of high school or not entering college if the student does graduate. According to Witherspoon, these factors include changing schools two or more times beyond the normal progression, coming from a single parent household, having an older sibling who dropped out of high school, having poorer than average grades, and repeating an earlier grade. These factors limit opportunities for being successful in high school and becoming college-ready.

Although poor postsecondary student outcomes are closely related to low levels of academic preparation, there is also evidence that students who are well academically prepared also struggle to remain in college (Roksa, Jenkings, Jaggars, Zeidenberg, & Cho, 2009). Furthermore, Roksa et al. (2009) explained that even academically proficient students also have trouble persisting in college, which indicates that college readiness
encompasses more than academic skill. Cabrera, La Nasa, and Burkum (2001) argued that a critical step on the path to college is that students develop expectations to go and plan to go to college. In addition, they found that college plans and expectations are a crucial piece of the process of becoming qualified for college and college outreach programs.

Successful college-ready interventions for at-risk students need to include attainable goals that are clear, student progress that is carefully observed, high expectation for all, and understandable rules for behavior enforced by family (Rozycki, 2004). By using successful interventions for at-risk students, schools have been able to increase student achievement, raise the graduation rate, increase the number of graduates entering college, increase attendance, and increase enrollment in advanced courses (Witherspoon, 2011). On the other hand, Witherspoon (2011) argued that, although the goal of any college-ready intervention is to maximize the potential of each student and help each graduate enter college, there are factors that make college-ready interventions for at-risk students difficult to implement and manage. Some of these factors include (a) teachers who do not share the belief in the implementation of the intervention, (b) students who are nonresponsive to interventions, (c) student resources such as materials that are necessary for the success of the intervention are not supplied, (d) the hiring of ineffective teachers, and (e) lack of support from families of those students who participated in the interventions.
High School College-Ready Intervention Programs

College-ready intervention programs are implemented to allow students the opportunity to reach their individual academic potential. This section describes various intervention programs designed to prepare students for college success.

**Dual-Enrollment Program**

As a high school intervention, dual-enrollment provides potential college students the ability to learn about the norms, interpersonal interactions, and behaviors expected for college success. Furthermore, dual-enrollment programs support postsecondary academic success because, after learning about and practicing the role, students do not need to spend their initial months in college acclimating to the college classroom (Karp, 2012).

Success is defined as students being accepted into 4-year universities right after high school, first year college students not needing remedial classes, not dropping out after the first year, and students obtaining their 4-year degree in less than 6 years. High school students, after being part of a dual-enrollment program, already know what is expected of them and have experienced the difference between high school and college. In addition, Karp (2012) acknowledged that dual-enrollment, as a college readiness strategy, provides students with more authentic opportunities to practice the role of college student and makes a difference between high school and college visible to students. Furthermore, dual-enrollment helps students understand and practice college expectations. By taking college classes during their high school years, students actively practice behaviors that help them adhere to college expectations and make the high school-college transition smoother (Karp, 2012). In her study, Karp found that well-implemented dual-enrollment courses reflected the content and pedagogical structures of high-quality, equivalent
courses offered on the college campus. This intervention allowed students to actively practice behaviors that helped them adhere to college expectation. Furthermore, another study conducted in two states provided evidence that dual-enrollment can lead to a range of positive outcomes including: Students who had taken college classes while in high school were more likely to earn a high school degree, enroll in college, enroll in a 4-year university, enroll full time, and persist in college, compared with students without college experience (Karp et al., 2007).

**Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs**

The Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) program addresses the educational needs of disadvantaged students. This program differs from many other programs in that it targets entire cohorts or schools, rather than individual students or specific at-risk students or groups (Cabrera et al., 2003). Although GEAR UP programs vary from school to school, they are designed to be long-term programs that meet multiple areas of students’ development. Cabrera et al. (2003) argued that short-term programs tend to have a more narrow focus, discontinuous, and not as effective as long-term intervention programs. Although GEAR UP programs vary from site to site, most of them include 11 key elements that have proven to provide positive student results. These elements include: rigorous course taking, goal of college attendance, parental involvement, college tours beginning in the eighth grade, promoting academic skills, parent college awareness, SAT/ACT training, parent assistance with financial aid forms, involvement in student activities, and college awareness or exposure. In a study, Cates and Schaeffle (2011) found that out of the 11 elements the most important ones were the first five. In addition, the study describes that the GEAR UP
program addresses encouraging students to plan to attend college, increasing academic preparedness, and providing social and cultural capital to students and their families in order to help minimize the barriers to college attendance. Gándara and Bial (2001) suggested that GEAR UP attempts to provide students with access to the same kinds of social and cultural environment that students of a higher socioeconomic level have.

Cates and Schaefle (2011) researched four rural school districts, in a 6-year period, where the GEAR UP intervention program was implemented. All four districts had a percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch and identified as Latino higher than 70%. The results of the study showed that out of all the elements from the GEAR UP program, the most influential in students’ decisions to go to college were activities designated to welcome them in a college environment and provide them with specific information about college and planning for college. In addition, Cates and Schaefle indicated that these activities include college visits, college guest speakers, informational booklets about colleges and college preparation. Furthermore, Cates and Schaefle explained that because these elements represent specific knowledge, as well as socialization to higher education, students who are exposed to these elements tend to have a higher participation in college readiness activities such as taking the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) or taking college-track courses.

In the study, students self-reported that the most important influences in making the decision to attend college were college visits and receiving direct information about the path for college. In addition, students indicated that the college visit that most influenced them to attend college was the sixth-grade trip, and that the subsequent trips, although influential, were to a lesser degree. According to Perna (2002), this may
indicate that an early visit has a greater influence than later trips, which may support the importance of beginning college outreach or intervention programs prior to eighth grade. Additionally, Cates and Schaefle (2011) indicated that several program elements that are common in other intervention college-ready programs were not found to be significant regarding influencing students’ decision to attend college. These elements include tutoring, mentoring, after-school homework assistance, and after-school activities. Even though these elements were not significant in influencing students’ decisions to attend college, they were important in helping students become college-ready by raising academic performance.

Saturday Academy Program

There are different types of Saturday Academy intervention programs for students in at-risk situations. Witherspoon (2011) studied a middle school that implemented a Saturday Academy intervention program designed to target at-risk students. The Saturday Academy named “Smart Academy” was designed to be enrichment and accelerated nontraditional learning experienced aligned with grade level and course level expectations, state standards, and district curricular requirements. The academy used rigorous and relevant content, and the staffing had a 15:1 student teacher ratio. In addition, students did not receive homework or grades, and the expectations of the academy were for students to have a learning experience gained through lessons conducted inside and outside of the classroom and not through homework. The primary goal of the Smart Academy was to increase the reading and math skills of low-performing students, primarily the ones ranked Basic (B) and Below Basic (BB) in the state standardized tests.
Witherspoon (2011) measured the perceptions of parents, students, and teachers regarding the significance and success of the Saturday Academy program. The study focused on four areas: (a) student engagement, (b) parent engagement, (c) peer engagement, and (d) students’ perception of alignment of test scores, discipline, attendance, and grades. Qualitative research methodology consisting of interviews and questionnaires of students, parents, and teachers was used in the study. Students with the highest number of risk factors were chosen to participate in the study. Witherspoon believes the results are important to education due to the continuous growth of Basic and Below Basic SES students who are at-risk of not graduating high school or not entering college after graduation.

Witherspoon (2011) found that students participating in the Saturday Academy program had good attendance for both school and the Academy, and they were interested in pursuing higher education. In addition, students were engaged during the Saturday sessions, and there were very few discipline issues compared to regular school days. Regarding parent involvement, Witherspoon found that parents were very supportive and that they were key to ensuring students attended school on Saturday. Although parents felt the program was meaningful and that their children gained from attending, they wanted to see more tutoring, academic assistance, and tailored instruction. In addition, parents felt that educators could improve communication by sending regular progress reports, scheduling parent teacher meetings, providing parents with Academy information, and offering parents as many opportunities as possible to be engaged with their student’s school life.
Witherspoon (2011) found that teachers knew how to raise student achievement during Saturday Academy, but they also had obstacles such as time to collaborate and prepare activities. Teachers had fewer discipline issues than during their regular classes, and they attributed those to smaller classes and providing more engaging activities. Finally, the most successful element from the Academy was that all of the participants finished the program very motivated and with the desire to apply and enroll in college after graduating high school.

The findings revealed that there were several elements that parents, teachers, and students felt could improve the program. There was a desire from parents to have more tutoring directly related to the students’ academic classes and that some of the extracurricular activities could have been more appealing to students. Students felt it would be ideal to start some peer-to-peer program, such as peer tutoring or mentoring. In addition, students would have liked to have college planning included in the program, with detailed information regarding requirements for college, how to prepare for college, and how to pay for it. In conclusion, although various elements of the program needed revision, the Saturday Academy program provided students a plethora of activities and academic benefits that address the needs of students and their parents.

**Summer Bridge Program to Enhance College Readiness**

Underprepared first-year college students are less likely to graduate from college within 6 years, incur financial cost of enrolling in remedial courses, drop out after their freshman year, and experience a high degree of frustration. Furthermore, underprepared high school students are less likely to apply and enter college and to be successful in college if accepted (Kallison & Stader, 2012). These programs usually take place on
college campuses, and Kallison and Stader (2012) described summer bridge programs as an intervention to address underprepared students by providing targeted interventions to students who aspire, prepare for, and achieve college enrollment and help them become college-ready. Conley (2007) defined college readiness as the level of preparation a student needs to enroll and succeed without remediation in a credit-bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution. Furthermore, Conley recognized that being prepared for college goes beyond content knowledge. There are various measures to determine college readiness. Some states and colleges use grades and specific high school courses, others use college-readiness or placement exams, and others use cut scores on high school exit tests or college entrance exams like the ACT or SAT to establish readiness (Lloyd, 2007).

Summer bridge programs usually target first-generation, low-income high school students who may not be academically college-ready after graduation. Bridge programs, in contrast with other intervention programs, target individual students and not groups of students or schools and are usually implemented by colleges and universities at their campuses. Often bridge programs include the following elements: (a) information about colleges, (b) academic instruction, (c) tutoring, (d) study skills instruction, and (e) counseling (Gullatt & Jan, 2003). Bridge programs originated from the Upper Bound program. In reviewing literature regarding Bridge programs, Gullatt and Jan (2003) suggest that successful bridge programs (a) establish high standards for students and staff, (b) provide individualized attention to students, (c) provide adult mentors and counselors, (d) include peer support, (e) integrate program within K-12 schools, and (f) provide long-term interventions. Engle, Bermeo, and O’Brien (2006) reported similar findings in
their study of 135 first-generation college students, who participated in bridge programs while in high school, shared many of these findings.

Kallison and Stader (2012) studied seven public Community colleges and seven public universities that participated in the Texas High School Summer Bridge Program project. Each higher education institution partnered with one or more public independent school district in implementing its bridge program. Students who participated in the program were 11th- and 12th-grade students who scored below the standard for college readiness in a state-mandated high school assessment exam in English Language Arts and mathematics. Out of the 782 total participants, 64% were females, 90% were minorities, and 49% qualified for the free or reduced-price lunch program.

Each bridge program was directed to administer a pre- and postexam to determine skills gains of the participating students. Six institutions were able to provide gains analysis, and the remaining five were not allowed by the testing company to pre- and posttest due to the short duration of the program (4 weeks). For the six institutions with a valid pre- and posttest data, a t-test analysis was used to determine potential significant gains in reading, writing, and mathematics. The curricula offered varied significantly within the different institutions. Some programs offered real-life rigorous college curriculum and others developed curricula specific to the bridge programs, focusing on objectives reflected on the college-readiness exam used.
CHAPTER 3—METHODOLOGY

Chapter 2 described a wealth of literature related to school/university partnerships and intervention programs to improve college access. As well, the chapter explored research concerning the Compact for Success. However, none of the studies reviewed helped explain the specific reasons the Compact for Success was influencing greater college readiness and greater rates of college attendance. This chapter describes the methodology used in the present study to explore the reasons this partnership might be effective.

Research Questions

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following two research questions:

1. What key elements have influenced increases in the number of graduating Sweetwater Union High School District seniors entering San Diego State University through the Compact for Success?

2. Are there differences in support systems across schools, and how might these differences contribute to different level of results?

To pursue these questions, the study employed a qualitative case study design.

Research Design

This study employed the qualitative tradition of case study. A case study research design involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (Creswell, 2010). Furthermore, Creswell (2010) explained that “case study system is where the investigator explores a bounded system or multiple bounded systems over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources
of information (e.g., observations, interviews, and documents and reports) and reports a case description” (p. 73).

Merriam (1998) explained that qualitative case studies are appropriate when there might be many variables influencing a phenomenon. In this study, a variety of issues might have influenced increases in the number of SUHSD seniors entering SDSU through the Compact for Success. Case study methodology allowed the researcher to be open to a wide array of possible influences. As well, Merriam contended that case study research allows the researcher to explore multiple perspectives and shared experiences. The case study approach allowed the researcher to consider the perspectives of district, university, and school-level administrators, as well as counselors, teachers, high school students, and recent high school graduates.

To acquire information about this particular case, this study was conducted using document reviews and individual and focus group interviews from key informants. The researcher examined print and electronic documents, related to the Compact for Success. These documents included the memorandum of understanding (Appendix B) used to establish the partnership, data reports, school descriptions, program descriptions, college-promotion material, and other printed and electronic documents related to the partnership. Interviews were used to gather information at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions, or identifying standards against which existing conditions can be compared, or determining the relationships that exist between specific events (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).
Description of the Case

Case studies are designed to provide a deep understanding of a specific phenomenon or case (Merriam, 1998). This case study focused upon the implementation of the Compact for Success: a partnership between the Sweetwater Union High School District (SUHSD) in San Diego, California and San Diego State University (SDSU). The study was designed to generate a deeper understanding of the Compact for Success and the reasons the partnership has resulted in substantial increases of students meeting eligibility criteria and attending SDSU.

Description of Participating Schools

The SUHSD serves 41,426 students in the 7th through 12th grades and, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (2011-2012), is among the top 16 largest districts of California. While the Compact for Success involves this entire district, this study was not designed to examine every school within the district. In contrast, the study focused upon two of the district’s high schools: Hilltop High School (HHS) and Chula Vista High School (CVHS). These schools were selected because they serve demographically diverse groups of students and because several indicators of academic performance suggest that achievement at these schools is higher than achievement at similar schools in the district (California Department of Education [CDE], 2012). Both schools have similar demographics in terms of socioeconomic status, number of English learners, and Hispanic/Latinos students. Chula Vista High School and Hilltop High School have higher percentages of low-income student level than four high schools on the east side, but lower percentage of low-income students than the rest of all the high schools on the west side of the 805 freeway. In addition, both schools have had a
dramatic increase in the number of English learners, Hispanic students, and students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch in the last decade (CDE, 2012). This change in demographics has necessitated both schools to find innovative practices and programs that meet the new academic and social demands of their student populations. An additional factor in selecting these two schools is that both schools have a significant higher number of students meeting the requirements for admission to California colleges and universities than the other SUHSD west-side schools, specifically to San Diego State University (Sweetwater Union High School District [SUHSD], 2012).

The SUHSD is geographically divided by the 805 Freeway, which runs north-south. Many students who attend schools located on the east side of the freeway have a higher socioeconomic level than those attending west-side schools, as evidenced by the number of students participating in the free or reduced-price lunch program. In addition, west-side schools have a higher percentage of students in at-risk situations, a lower API than the east-side schools, and a lower number of students applying and attending 4-year universities immediately after high school than the east-side schools. Furthermore, east-side schools tend to have a higher parent education level, lower drop-out rate, and lower numbers of English Learners (CDE, 2012). The two schools selected for this study are located on the west side of the 805 Freeway and are centrally located within the school district. The schools are approximately 2 miles from each other and serve very similar student populations. Furthermore, both schools have traditionally competed with each other academically and in sports.

Although Hilltop High School is west of the 805 Freeway, the school has customarily performed higher that the other west-side schools. Until a few years ago,
HHS had performed academically similarly to the east-side schools (CDE, 2012), even though the school did not have a specific intervention program in place. As the student demographics changed and the number of students in at-risk situations increased, so did the need to implement targeted interventions to meet the needs of struggling, underperforming students, and to ensure graduating seniors were college-ready. According to SUHSD (2012), 60.9% of HHS students are socioeconomically disadvantaged, 76.6% are Hispanic or Latinos students, 32.9% are English learners, and 9.7% are students with disabilities. In addition, HHS had an API of 806 in 2012, which was 23 points higher than the previous year. Hilltop High School is a Foreign Language and Global Studies (FLAGS) program, and one-third of its student population participates in the program. The FLAGS program attracts close to 500 students from other school attendance areas. In addition, HHS has Information Technology and Hospitality and Tourism Academies, which enable students to pursue education through specialized paths. Students with special needs are served through several options including the Learning Center and Resource Specialist Program Learning Center, an on-site alternative center for students in at-risk situations, and the Special Abilities Cluster, which provides vocational, functional, and daily life skills for students with developmental delays and limitations. In 2011, HHS had 54 students who applied and were admitted to SDSU through the Compact for Success. Of the 54 students accepted, 52 actually enrolled and attended as freshmen at SDSU.

Chula Vista High School is also located on the western side of Chula Vista with over 2,600 students. According to SUHSD (2012), 80.0% of CVHS students are socioeconomically disadvantaged, 85.1% are Hispanic or Latino students, 51.6% are
English learners, and 9.6% are students with disabilities. In addition, CVHS had an API of 749 in 2012, which is seven points lower than the previous year. Chula Vista High School has a Creative and Performing Arts magnet program that serves over 600 students. The school is committed to providing students with challenging opportunities through which they can expand their academic content knowledge while preparing them for careers in specific pathways. The Creative and Performing Arts Program allows students to select a major from 10 different disciplines, including vocal productions, dance, music, art, and theater. Furthermore, CVHS offers targeted intervention programs such as Read 180, California High School Exit Examination prep courses, various credit recovery opportunities, including adult school classes and Apex Learning (a provider of blended and virtual learning solutions), and support classes for students in at-risk situations.

These two schools were appropriate for this study because the first research question explored the key elements that have influenced increases in the number of graduating Sweetwater Union High School District seniors entering San Diego State University through the Compact for Success. Although these schools served large populations of Latino students who met low-income criteria, they also had substantial numbers of students who were demonstrating academic success, as measured by the state accountability system. By selecting these schools, the researcher hoped to learn about the key elements of the Compact for Success that might be influencing improved student success throughout the district.

Also, these two schools were appropriate for this study because the second research question probed the differences in support systems across schools and asked how might those differences contribute to different level of results. Although, CVHS and
HHS served similar demographic groups, achievement results differed. By selecting these two schools, the researcher hoped to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of the programmatic differences among Compact for Success schools.

**Participants**

Often case studies include interviews of various individuals or groups of individuals who have knowledge or perspective related to the case (Merriam, 1998). In this study, participants included students, faculty, and administrators from CVHS and HHS. Additionally, the district superintendent, the Compact for Success Director at SDSU, and SDSU freshmen participated in the study.

**Students**

Originally, the researcher intended to interview 10 seniors from each site, but at the time of data collection (the end of the school year), fewer students were available. So instead, a total of 16 high school seniors from both sites were interviewed. Nine seniors from CVHS and seven seniors from HHS were interviewed. These students were purposely selected from a pool of students who met the following criteria: (a) they had been enrolled at Sweetwater Union High School District since seventh grade; (b) they met the criteria to qualify them for the Compact for Success Program; (c) they had been accepted into San Diego State University; (d) they had enrolled at San Diego State University and were scheduled to begin in the fall of 2013. In addition, 68.75% of the participants were Hispanic/Latino, and the gender was equally divided between male and female participants.

Additionally, a total of seven 10th-grade students were selected to participate in this study. Out of the seven students, three of them attended HHS and the other four
attended CVHS. These students were purposely selected from a pool of students who met the following criteria: (a) they were on track to meet the requirements to be eligible for the Compact for Success; (b) they had been enrolled at Sweetwater Union High School District since seventh grade. An effort was made to recruit a pool of students who reflected the gender and racial/ethnic diversity of their schools. More than 60% of the participants were Hispanic/Latino, and 86% of the students were females and 14% were males.

In addition, a total of four Compact for Success San Diego State University freshmen students were recruited to participate in this study. All students graduated from HHS the previous school year. Three of the four students were Hispanic/Latino, and all were females. Written parent consent (see Appendix C) for underage participating students and written informed student consent (see Appendix D) of students 18 years of age or older was obtained prior to high school participants being interviewed. In addition, written assent from underage students was obtained prior to the study (see Appendix E). San Diego State University students signed an Informed Consent Form (see Appendix F) prior to participating in the study.

**School Staff**

At CVHS and HHS, teachers were selected based on availability from Core of elective classes to participate in the study. Participation in this effort was completely voluntary. No external incentives or rewards were given. In addition, written consent was obtained prior to participants being interviewed (see Appendix G).

I asked each principal to provide a list of eight teachers, by department, who they thought would be good participants for the study. I sent an email to those teachers
explaining the purpose of the study. The email asked them to reply if they were interested in participating. Additionally, the email explained that the participation was voluntary and that there was no compensation. Four teachers responded from CVHS and six from HHS. I sent a consent form followed with a phone call to teachers who responded. I asked the teachers to sign the consent form and return it to me. Once I received the signed consent, I made an appointment with each teacher for the individual interview. I interviewed three teachers from CVHS and five teachers from HHS. End-of-year schedules and activities precluded me from meeting with the other teacher from each school. Every interview was conducted at the respective school sites during a mutually agreed time.

One counselor from each site participated in the study. The counselors were selected based on their involvement with the Compact for Success program and their responsibilities regarding students’ college enrollment, financial aid, and their involvement in providing college readiness support to students. I asked each principal to identify the counselor who was responsible for the aforementioned duties. I called the counselor and explained the purpose of the study and asked if they would like to participate. I sent them a consent form for them to sign and asked them to return it to me if they agreed to participate. The consent form explained that participation was voluntary and that there was no compensation. Once I had received the signed consent forms (see Appendix G), I made an appointment with each counselor for the individual interview.

The principals of each site participated in the study. Both principals were male and Hispanic/Latino. Additionally, both principals had been principals of other schools, including middle schools. The Hilltop High School principal had been at the site for
6 years, and the principal of Chula Vista High School had just completed his second year at that site. They were selected based on their role as principals. I met with each principal and explained to them the purpose of my study and why I had selected their schools for my research. Once they agreed to participate, I asked them to provide me with their written consent. Once I had obtained a signed consent form from both principals (see Appendix G), I made an appointment with each principal at their site for the individual interview.

The superintendent of SUHSD participated in the study. He was superintendent of SUHSD from 1995 through 2006 and came back to the district in 2011. He had been in education for over 38 years, 32 of those years servings as an administrator. He was chosen as a participant because he was the originator of the Compact for Success partnership and because of his role as superintendent. I met with him and explained to him the purpose of my study. Once he agreed to participate, he signed a written consent (see Appendix G), and I made an appointment for the individual interview. The interview was held in his office, and it lasted 45 minutes. In addition, he gave me written authorization to conduct the research at two of the high schools in SUHSD.

The Compact for Success program coordinator at SDSU was selected to participate in the study. He was selected because of his role as coordinator. I called him and explained the purpose of my study. He agreed to the individual interview and made an appointment. On the day of the interview, before beginning the questions, he signed a written consent form (see Appendix G). The interview was in his office and lasted 45 minutes.
**Instruments and Procedures**

Protocols were used to guide both individual interviews and focus interviews. This section describes the nature of the protocols and the procedures used during these interviews.

**Students**

High school students were interviewed in a focus group setting using a semi-structured protocol. There were two focus group interviews for seniors from CVHS. One session had four seniors and the other had five seniors. Seniors at CVHS were interviewed on May 30, 2013. At HHS, there was one focus group interview of seniors. Seniors at HHS were also interviewed on May 30, 2013. Similarly, the seven sophomore student participants (three at HHS and four at CVHS) were interviewed as focus groups, one at each school. Sophomores at both schools were interviewed on May 30, 2013. The author of this study conducted the student focus group interviews at Chula Vista High School, and a principal of a school in a neighboring district conducted the focus group interview at Hilltop High School. The interviews at HHS were conducted after school, during the last senior finals day, on a minimum-day schedule. The interviews at CVHS were conducted during senior finals, during the school day, during second, third, and fourth periods.

All of the focus groups were conducted with semi-structured interview protocols. All of the protocols received prior review and approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at San Diego State University (see Appendix H). The protocol questions provided students opportunities to describe experiences that made a positive impact on their academic work during their middle and high school years. In addition, the questions
allowed students to discuss the specific interventions that they believe were helpful
during their high school experience. Furthermore, the semi-structured interview provided
seniors an opportunity to share their perceptions of the factors they believed influenced
their completion of the requirements of the Compact for Success. Similarly, sophomore
students had an opportunity to share their perceptions of the factors they believed were
helping them stay on track for completion of the Compact for Success. Participating
students were not given any incentives or rewards for participating in the study.

The focus interviews took between 25 and 45 minutes and were digitally
recorded and transcribed. All interviews of high school students were conducted at the
participants’ school during class and after school, depending on the availability of the
student. Parent consent for all students under the age of 18 and a consent form from
students 18 years of age or older were obtained prior to conducting each interview.
Furthermore, written assent from underage students were obtained prior to the study.
Additionally, I acquired school consent to interview students and to conduct the
interviews on campus from both site principals and the SUHSD superintendent. Prior
arrangements were made with students and the school regarding times and specific
location, within the school, for the interviews. Enough time was provided for each
focused interview to ensure each one could be completed during one session and without
interruptions.

The four selected SDSU freshmen students were interviewed individually using a
semi-structured protocol. All of the individual interviews were conducted at Hilltop High
School at a convenient time for the students. San Diego State University freshmen
students were interviewed on June 14, 2013. All of the students had just completed their
freshman year at SDSU, had graduated from SUHSD, and had been accepted into SDSU through the Compact for Success. Three of the participants were Latino/Hispanic and all of them were females. The original intent was to have a more balanced gender representation, but male students were not available. The questions provided students opportunities to describe experiences that had made a positive impact on their academic work during their middle and high school years. In addition, the questions allowed students to discuss the specific targeted interventions that were available to them that they believe were helpful during their high school experience. Furthermore, the individual semi-structured interview provided students an opportunity to share their perceptions of what they believe made them eligible to be admitted to SDSU by qualifying for the Compact for Success. Additionally, students were given the opportunity to share what they believed to be the determining factor or factors for being admitted to San Diego State University. Finally, students were asked to share their perceptions, after just completing their first year of college at SDSU, of their individual college-readiness after graduating from high school. Participating students were given a $10 Starbucks card as an incentive for participating in the study.

The individual interviews took between 25 and 45 minutes and were digitally recorded and transcribed. The four SDSU freshmen student interviews were conducted at Hilltop High School, during summer school break, at a mutually agreed time depending on the availability of the student. A written consent form was obtained from each student prior to conducting the interview. In addition, written school consent was given by Hilltop High School’s principal to interview students and to conduct the interviews on campus. Prior arrangements were made with students and the school regarding times and
specific location, within the school, for the interviews. Enough time was provided for each interview to ensure each one could be completed without interruptions.

**School Staff**

Each teacher, counselor, and principal was interviewed individually using a semi-structured protocol. The questions provided participants an opportunity to describe their perception of why they believed the Compact for Success appeared to be generating better results. Furthermore, the questions allowed staff participants to explain which specific student interventions had the most impact on student academic performance. Additionally, all staff participants had an opportunity to share which interventions they believed helped students become eligible for the Compact of Success and be accepted into San Diego State University. Additionally, staff participants had an opportunity to share their perceptions on what they believed were key factors (in- or out-of-school) that motivated students to attend college. Teachers at both schools were interviewed on June 6, 2013. The principals and counselors at HHS and CVHS were interviewed on June 11, 2013. Finally, teachers, counselors, and principals had an opportunity to identify which district and site interventions should continue at their site and which additional interventions should be implemented to support college-readiness and the Compact for Success.

The interviews took between 30 minutes to 1 hour and were conducted at the educators’ school site during their preparation period or after school, depending on the availability. Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed. A consent form from the school, district, and all participants was received prior to the interview. Prior arrangements were made with all individual participants regarding time and specific
location, within the school, for the individual interview. Enough time was allotted for each participant to ensure the interview would be completed at one time.

**District Leadership and Compact for Success Director**

The Sweetwater Union High School District Superintendent, Dr. Edward Brand, and the San Diego State University Compact for Success Director, Dr. Lou Murillo, were interviewed individually using a semi-structured protocol. Dr. Brand was interviewed on June 18, 2013, and Dr. Murillo was interviewed June 17, 2013. The questions provided the Superintendent and the Compact for Success Director at SDSU an opportunity to describe their perception of the reasons for the creation of the Compact for Success partnership and why it appears to be generating better results. Furthermore, the questions allowed them to describe which student interventions they believed had the most impact on college readiness. They also had an opportunity to explain key school site factors that helped students become eligible for the Compact of Success and be accepted into San Diego State University. Additionally, the Superintendent and Compact for Success Director had an opportunity to share their perceptions on what they believed were key factors that motivate students to attend college. Finally, they had an opportunity to give input on which district initiatives, site programs, and site/district services should continue, and which additional interventions should be implemented to build students’ interest in attending college, prepare students to be college-ready, and help students become eligible for the Compact for Success.

The interview with the Superintendent took between 45 minutes and was conducted in his office during his workday. The interview was digitally recorded and transcribed. A consent form from the participant was received prior to the interview.
Arrangements were made with the participant’s secretary ahead of time regarding time and specific location, within the school district’s main office, for the individual interview. Enough time was allotted to ensure the interview would be completed at one time.

The interview with the Compact for Success Director took between 45 minutes and was conducted at the Director’s office at San Diego State University at a mutually agreed time. The interview was digitally recorded and transcribed. A consent form from the participant was received prior to the interview. Prior arrangements were made with the participant ahead of time, regarding time and specific location within SDSU, for the individual interview. Enough time was allotted to ensure the interview would be completed at one time.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the data in successive rounds as interviews were conducted. I re-read the transcripts several times to identify patterns and emerging themes. The data analysis revealed a number of categories of students and school staff’s perceptions regarding key elements that impact student success in the Compact for Success. The categories included specific targeted interventions, specific teacher, counselor, or other staff support, school activities, parent and family support, positive role models, accessible SDSU and Compact for Success information, college visitation opportunities, access to college and university information, and other influential factors.

Limitations

This research study had two main limitations. The first limitation was the limited number of student and school staff participants. If a larger number of participants had been included, the findings might have been different.
In addition, some students attended other middle schools besides the feeder school of the school studied. This could impact the results of the study because students could have received different targeted interventions at other feeder schools. The targeted interventions at other schools could have been the determinants of students being successful academically and therefore accepted into San Diego State University, through the Compact of Success, and not the interventions from the participating school.

Two measures were taken in order to minimize the limitations and increase the likelihood that the acquired perceptions were accurate representations of the factors, which influence student success. First, although the number of student and staff participants were limited, students from three different points in the system were selected to participate (sophomores, seniors, and recent graduates). In addition, participants were from two different schools that participated in the Compact. As data were analyzed, there was evidence that other interviewees expressed similar perspectives. The technique of triangulation was used to determine validity of data. According to Creswell (2010), the technique of triangulation is used to corroborate evidence from various sources.
CHAPTER 4—FINDINGS

Purpose of the Study

The Compact for Success was established in 1999 for the purpose of increasing the number of students being accepted into San Diego State University (SDSU) after graduating from a Sweetwater Union High School District (SUHSD) school (Hebel, 2007). In addition, Hebel (2007) explained that the Compact was designed to create a college-going culture in the SUHSD schools and, thus, increase the accessibility of college to those students who traditionally would not be the typical college-bound student. The guaranteed admission into SDSU’s freshman class, through the Compact for Success, requires that students (a) complete college-preparatory course work, (b) maintain a grade-point average of at least 3.0 throughout middle school and high school, and (c) meet proficiency standards for university-level work. In addition, at its inception, the focus was to prepare students to meet the educational demands associated with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and graduate college-ready. According to Hebel, other outcomes of the partnership included a decreased number of college students dropping out after their freshman year, an increase in the number of students graduating from SDSU with a 4-year degree within 6 years, and a lower number of SDSU freshman students needing remedial classes.

The purpose of this study was to identify key elements that have influenced increases in the number of graduating seniors entering a 4-year college, particularly San Diego State University through the Compact for Success. There are many variables involved in making this college-readiness partnership successful; therefore, it was important to interview current and previous year participants and to assess students’ and
staff member’s perceptions of the partnership and the school programs and services that help students become eligible to enter SDSU through the Compact. In addition, the study examined differences in support systems across schools and sought to gain perspective about how the differences might influence differences in results. Specifically, the following two questions directed this study:

1. What key elements have influenced increases in the number of graduating Sweetwater Union High School District seniors entering San Diego State University through the Compact for Success?

2. Are there differences in support systems across schools and how might these differences contribute to different level of results?

**Methodology**

The methodology used in this study is the qualitative tradition of case study. Case study research involves the study of an issue—explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (Creswell, 2010). To acquire information about this particular case, this study was conducted using individual and focus group interviews from key informants. Interviews were used to gather information at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions, or identifying standards against which existing conditions can be compared, or determining the relationships that exist between specific events (Cohen et al., 2007). Additionally, document reviews were used to deepen understanding of issues related to the Compact for Success (Creswell, 2010). The documents reviewed included materials that were posted in classrooms, flyers, banners, brochures, Compact for Success web site, agendas for events, and other material accessed in print and electronically.
The study explored one case: the implementation of the Compact for Success in the Sweetwater Union High School District in San Diego, California. To examine this case efficiently, the study focused upon two demographically diverse high schools in the Sweetwater Union High School District (SUHSD) in San Diego, California. The two schools selected were Hilltop High School (HHS) and Chula Vista High School (CVHS). These schools were selected because they serve demographically diverse groups of students and because several indicators of academic performance suggest that achievement at these schools is higher than achievement at similar schools in the district (CDE, 2012). By focusing upon these two diverse, relatively high-achieving schools, the researcher anticipated acquiring rich data about issues that might be influencing the success of the Compact. As well, because the two schools differed in academic results, the researcher anticipated learning about variations in implementation that might influence the Compact’s impact.

A total of 16 seniors and 7 sophomores from both schools participated in either focus interviews or individual interviews. Furthermore, four SDSU freshmen were selected to participate in the study. A total of eight teachers from both high schools participated in the study. In addition, one counselor from each high school was selected to participate in the study. The principals of each site participated in the study. Furthermore, the superintendent of SUHSD and the Compact for Success Coordinator at SDSU participated in the study.

Students were interviewed in either a focus group setting or individually using a semi-structured protocol. The questions allowed students to discuss the specific interventions that they believed supported them academically during their high school
experience. Each teacher, counselor, and principal, the superintendent, and the Compact for Success Coordinator was interviewed individually using a semi-structured protocol. The questions provided educators an opportunity to describe their perception of why they believed the Compact for Success seemed to be producing better results. Furthermore, the questions allowed educators to explain the specific student interventions they believed had the most impact on student academic performance and the key school site factors that helped qualify students for the Compact of Success. Additionally, the questions allowed an opportunity for educators to share their perceptions of the key factors, in and out of school, that promote college readiness.

**Background of Participating Schools (Hilltop High School and Chula Vista High School)**

This study focused upon two high schools in the Sweetwater Union High School District (SUHSD) in San Diego, California. The two schools selected were Hilltop High School (HHS) and Chula Vista High School (CVHS). These schools were selected because several indicators of academic performance suggested that achievement at these schools was higher than achievement at similar schools in the district (CDE, 2012). Both schools had similar demographics in terms of socioeconomic status, number of English learners, and number of Hispanic/Latino students. Chula Vista High School and HHS had higher percentages of low-income students than four high schools on the east side of the district, but lower percentages of low-income students than the other high schools on the west side of the district. Both schools had a significant higher number of students meeting the requirements for admission to California colleges and universities than the
other SUHSD west-side schools and some of the more affluent SUHSD east-side schools (SUHSD, 2012).

The SUHSD is geographically divided by the 805 freeway, which runs north-south. Students who attend schools located on the east side of the freeway have a higher socioeconomic level than those attending west-side schools, as evidenced by the number of students participating in the free or reduced-price cost lunch program. Although Hilltop High School is west of the 805 freeway, the school has customarily performed higher than the other west-side schools and until a few years ago, HHS had always performed academically similarly to the east-side schools (CDE, 2012). According to the School Accountability Report Cards (SUHSD, 2012), HHS serves 60.9% socioeconomically disadvantaged students, 76.6% Hispanic or Latinos students, 32.9% are English Learners, and 9.7% are students with disabilities. In addition, Hilltop High School (HHS) had an API of 806 in 2012, which is 23 points higher than the previous year. Hilltop High School is a Foreign Language and Global Studies (FLAGS) program, and one-third of its student population participates in the program. The FLAGS program brings close to 500 students from other school boundaries. In addition, HHS has Information Technology and Hospitality and Tourism academies that enable students to pursue education through specialized paths. Additionally, some of the targeted interventions that HHS offers include Read 180, California High School Exit Examination prep courses, Saturday Scholars program, lunch-time and after-school tutoring, peer and AVID (AVID, 2013) tutoring, various credit recovery opportunities, including adult school classes and APEX online learning, collaboration classes,
Structured English Immersion classes, and support classes for students in at-risk situations.

Chula Vista High School is also located on the western side of Chula Vista with over 2,600 students. According to the School Accountability Report Cards (SUHSD, 2012), CVHS served 80.0% socioeconomically disadvantaged students, 85.1% Hispanic or Latinos students, 51.6% English Learners, and 9.6% students with disabilities. In addition, Chula Vista High School (CVHS) had an API of 749 in 2012, which is seven points lower than the previous year. Chula Vista High School has a Creative and Performing Arts magnet program that serves over 600 students. The school is committed to providing students with challenging opportunities in which they can expand their academic content areas while preparing them for careers in specific pathways. Its Creative and Performing Arts program allows students to select a major from 10 different disciplines, including vocal productions, dance, music, art, and theater. Furthermore, some of the targeted interventions that CVHS offers include Read 180, California High School Exit Examination prep courses, various credit recovery opportunities, including adult school classes and APEX online learning, after-school and lunch-time tutoring, Saturday School tutoring, collaboration classes, Structured English Immersion classes, and support classes for students in at-risk situations.

**Compact for Success Background**

In 1999, the Sweetwater Union High School District, under the leadership of the district superintendent, Dr. Edward Brand, and San Diego State University, under the leadership of then-president Dr. Stephen Weber, formed a different type of partnership called the Compact for Success. Under the Compact for Success partnership, the
university has guaranteed a spot in its freshman class to all Sweetwater students who complete college-preparatory course work, maintain a grade-point average of at least a 3.0 during their senior year and at the time of application, and attain proficiency standards for university-level work (Hebel, 2007). Hebel (2007) described how this partnership created initiatives to drive curricular change, promote college awareness, and infuse intervention programs that focus on making students college-ready and allowing them to become successful college students. Furthermore, Hebel explained how the Compact for Success promoted students’ academic success from seventh grade through graduation by guaranteeing a college entrance at the end of their senior year. Through the partnership, SDSU has sought to improve college readiness on a broader scale than that of many traditional university-based outreach programs. According to Hebel, one of the most important goals of the Compact for Success partnership is to increase the college-going rate, specifically into San Diego State University.

Superintendent E. Brand (personal communication, June 16, 2013) explained, that in 1998-99 the local newspaper (the San Diego Union Tribune) criticized SDSU because it was going to admit only the students with the highest grade point averages (GPAs) and the highest SAT scores for acceptance. This meant that many graduating senior students would not qualify. According to Brand, SDSU President Weber argued that if SDSU admitted students with lower GPAs, those students would not be able to withstand the rigor of the university’s undergraduate courses. Whether students were screened out through the admission policy or through the rigors of the freshman year of college, local students who did not have strong GPAs or SAT scores would be in jeopardy. Brand perceived that this setting was ideal for proposing to President Weber the concept of
SUHSD producing better-prepared students, while simultaneously offering students an enticement for maximizing their skill sets. This enticement would be guaranteed admission into San Diego State University. According to Brand, Dr. Weber was very receptive to the idea of creating a partnership that promoted a college-going culture, prepared students with the skills required for college, and reduced tuition barriers significantly. Brand explained that there was tremendous staff involvement between SDSU and SUHSD to consummate this partnership, which President Weber named Compact for Success. According to Brand, the goal of the Compact for Success founders was to transform public education to meet the educational needs of the 21st century, in particular in the south county (where SUHSD is located).

L. Murillo (personal communication, June 15, 2013) explained that the fact that the Compact for Success was jointly created between SDSU and SUHSD was key to its success. He mentioned, “We [SDSU and SUHSD] each bought into making it work, so it had the strength of that collaboration between both organizations.” Additionally, Murillo agreed with Brand regarding the staff involvement between both educational organizations. Murillo said, “Many SUHSD teachers, counselors, and administrators have been involved with the Compact since its inception, have seen it grow, and see it as a point of pride.” Murillo also mentioned:

The purpose of the Compact was to change the culture of the district, making sure all students understood that they could go to college. We have been very successful in changing the culture with students, parents, community, teachers, and counselors.
In 1999, when the Compact for Success was formed, approximately 150 students who applied to SDSU out of 6,000 who graduated from SUHSD each year. Out of the 150 applicants, about 100 entered (E. Brand, personal communication, June 16, 2013).

E. Brand (personal communication, June 16, 1913) further explained that with the Compact, he had hoped to double or possibly triple the number of students entering SDSU after graduating from SUHSD. He said, “This year just over 1,000 students were eligible and over 600 students accepted entrance to SDSU. That is 1 out of 10 students who graduate from SUHSD go to SDSU.”

**Factors Influencing Increased College Enrollment Through the Compact for Success**

Interviews and document reviews suggest that two overarching factors influenced increased numbers of SUHSD graduates entering SDSU through the Compact for Success. First, the Compact influenced changes in students’ expectations and motivation related to college. Students who, in the absence of the Compact for Success, may have never seriously considered the possibility of attending a 4-year university, came to believe that they could reasonably expect themselves to graduate from high school, qualify to attend a California State University or University of California campus, and be accepted into SDSU. This change in students’ expectations was powerful in influencing student effort.

Second, the Compact for Success influenced changes in students’ preparedness for college. Because of the Compact for Success, SUHSD students experienced a quality of academic preparation that was not common in the district prior to the Compact (especially in the district’s low-income schools).
Factors Influencing Changes in Student Expectations and Motivation

A variety of factors influenced changes in the extent to which SUHSD students expected to attend college. These factors influenced students’ motivation to engage in the challenging work essential to prepare for college. While it might be impossible to measure the impact of these factors precisely, the interview feedback suggested that SUHSD would not have nearly as many students enrolled at SDSU if these factors were absent. This section will describe the evidence acquired related to these factors. Specifically, these factors include (a) efforts to make college seem familiar and comfortable, (b) efforts to change/strengthen the college expectations of parents, (c) the conditional guaranteed acceptance into SDSU, (d) the clear and consistent communication about college requirements, and (e) the efforts to build school cultures that constantly promoted college. While these factors overlap, each is important in describing aspects that have influenced the extent to which SUHSD students expect to attend college. For the most part, the evidence suggests that these factors are present throughout the district; however, there is some evidence to suggest that there might be some differences among SUHSD schools.

Efforts to make college seem familiar and comfortable. The Compact for Success included several elements designed to make college seem familiar and comfortable to SUHSD students. The most significant of these were college campus visits and guest speakers.

College campus visits. College visits influenced students’ interest in attending college and their motivation to excel in schoolwork. Sweetwater Union High School District has implemented several college visit opportunities as a result of the Compact.
The SUHSD superintendent explained that one of the challenges faced when forming the partnership was to create an environment where all students were exposed to college life. He explained that every seventh-grade student in the Sweetwater District attends a college visit to SDSU as part of the Compact program. During this college visit in the fall of seventh grade, students are exposed to a college-like experience. In addition, parents are invited to attend and participate, along with their children, in educational workshops, seminars, and activities geared to motivating students to attend college and giving them the road map to acceptance into SDSU through the Compact. Furthermore, sophomore students who are on track for the Compact are invited back to SDSU. During this trip they are given additional information regarding careers, entrance requirements, and financial aid. Furthermore, the college visits allow students to meet and talk to SDSU students who have recently graduated from SUHSD and in many cases from their own school. The idea behind meeting former SUHSD students attending SDSU is to allow them to meet similar young people who have been able to attend college and defy neighborhood stereotypes that college is “only for certain people.” A HHS teacher explained that the college trips are a great opportunity for students to walk around and to have a stronger connection than just reading about it.

The college visits to SDSU for 7th and 10th graders are a direct result of the Compact for Success. Every school in the Sweetwater District is expected to participate by sending their students, parents, principal, counselors, and teachers. However, there are other college trips that are unique to individual schools. Individual schools have college trips to SDSU and to other state universities and private universities. These trips are not a direct result of the Compact for Success, but do address the college-going culture that the
Compact has created in SUHSD. A CVHS teacher described a 5-day college trip he takes with his students every year. He explained, “Every year we go to 10 California State University, University of California, and private university campuses in 5 days. Kids come back excited because they have never been in a college campus.” Another CVHS teacher said, “I would set up trips where students could see other people like them and live in the same type of environment they lived in. This allows students to have a connection and realize they can also attend college.” This connection appears to be motivating students to attend college. It allows high school students to see themselves as college students. Furthermore, it helps them break stereotypic notions that college is only for certain students. When students visit SDSU and see other students from the same racial/ethnic groups, who attended the same middle schools and high schools, and who lived in the same neighborhoods, it helps them feel comfortable with the idea of attending college.

Some participants felt that the college visit provided them with an opportunity to experience college life. Students could see themselves as part of the experience of attending college. In addition, some realized that attending college was not as different or overwhelming as they imagined it. In interviews, students reported that they came back motivated to go to college and committed to fulfill the Compact for Success agreement to be guaranteed admission into SDSU. A former SUHSD graduate and current SDSU freshman said during the interview, “Visiting SDSU, I imagine myself there. I was surprised at how big the classrooms were, but at the same time, I was excited about going there.” Similarly, another SDSU student and former SUHSD graduate said, “I remember seeing the campus and the kids and thinking, ‘Oh my God, this is so cool, I want to go
When asked what the college trip meant to her, she added, “I think them taking us made me really want to go there. Every year I would think, ‘I’m almost there.’ I remember even driving by with my parents and saying, ‘Hey, I’m going to go there soon.’” After the visit, this student was able to see herself as a college student, at SDSU, and within a specific amount of time.

The feeling of being at a college campus seemed to resonate with students and appears to contribute to students wanting to attend college. Previously, many students had never set foot on a college campus nor did they have parents who had graduated from college or understood the requirements for college. When asked during the focus interview to describe an experience that motivated them to attend college and/or SDSU, a HHS senior commented, “When you think of college it seems distant. When you go and talk to students who are there, it was an enlightening experience, because college seems closer.” A CVHS senior added, “The college trip to SDSU was important. I had a campus tour and they told us what they expect out of you. It was very real to me. It made an impact.” Similarly, another HHS student said, “The college trip to SDSU through the Compact was definitely a big thing for me because it helped me decide what college I wanted to go to.”

The commonality between the three students is that the college visits fueled within them a desire to attend college. They were able to visualize themselves as college students at SDSU. Furthermore, expectations to be eligible to for the Compact were clear to them. It demystified the college experience and made it accessible to them. A CVHS sophomore commented, “Field trips are very successful. We went to SDSU because of the Compact, but it should be for all students because it motivates you to attend college.” This student felt that since the 10th grade college trip was so impactfull
for her that all students should go on field trips, not just the ones that are arranged through the Compact. She added, “If you don’t have the grades they don’t invite you, but it could be that if they invite you, even if you don’t have the grades, you might become interested and it would make you want to go.” Another CVHS student added, “Visiting the SDSU campus is great. If you already know what the campus looks like, you will be more influenced to go there. You won’t be as scared when you show up there because you already know what’s where.” This student indicated how being familiar with the SDSU campus, students, and college life in general appeared to reduce students’ uneasiness with being in an unfamiliar environment.

The teachers’ perceptions regarding college trips also suggest that the trips increase students’ interest in attending college. A CVHS teacher said:

Many of our kids only know community colleges around here, but the college trip opens their eyes and now they are talking about all the different things that they had never seen. They had no idea that they could attend college.

The SDSU college trip expands the horizons of students by showing them that students just like them are enrolled in other colleges. In addition, it familiarizes them with SDSU and makes it easier for students to feel comfortable applying at SDSU. Many SUHSD students attend the local colleges after they graduate high school because they are familiar with those colleges. Many of their older peers and family members have attended those local colleges so they do not feel anxious about attending. According to E. Brand (personal communication, June 16, 2013), the idea behind the SDSU college trips is to provide students opportunities to familiarize themselves with the university and what college life is all about. A HHS teacher said, “College trips are powerful. They
made them feel welcomed. They felt they belong and now all they do is talk about that.”

The HHS counselor added:

The SDSU trip is a great motivator to have a real college life experience. They see college kids, the campus, and they get to know how college life is and their eyes open. They get to see their potential future.

Staff and students shared that the college trips motivate students to attend college, especially the seventh-grade trip. This was evidenced by the CVHS senior when she said; “In seventh grade they took us on a field trip to SDSU. It was an eye-opener. After the trip, I really wanted to go there.” The common theme regarding college visits was students being able to see themselves as college students. College trips gave students a real-life sense of college life and showed them that college students are not much different from them. Furthermore, for many students, the college visit gave them hope to be the first one in their family to attend and graduate from college.

Similarly, Cates and Schaeffle (2011) reported that college field trips influence students desire to attend college. In their study, students self-reported that the most important influences in making the decision to attend college were college visits and receiving direct information about the path for college. In addition, students indicated that the college visit that most influenced them to attend college was the sixth-grade trip. According to Perna (2002), this may indicate that an early visit has a greater influence than later trips, which may support the importance of beginning college outreach or intervention programs prior to eighth grade.

In summary, through the Compact for Success, all seventh grade students and their parents are invited to visit SDSU. In interviews, district administrators, principals,
counselors, teachers, high school students, and recent high school graduates reported that the SDSU college visit is a key element that has influenced an increase in the number of graduating seniors entering SDSU. In addition, by having the field trips to SDSU begin in the seventh grade, the Compact may have a greater influence on the desired outcome. College visits to SDSU are implemented uniformly across SUHSD for 7th and 10th grade students. Additionally, some schools arrange additional visits to other universities in the region. Many participants indicated how the college visits allowed them to become familiarized with college life and to see themselves as part of that life. Furthermore, by seeing young college students from similar racial/ethnic groups and who lived in similar neighborhoods, SUHSD students realized that college was a possibility for anyone.

**Guest speakers.** Exposing students to guest speakers and college advisors appeared to have a positive impact on familiarizing students with college life. Participants described different settings where listening to guest speakers helped to motivate students to attend college and encouraged them to focus on academics. Guest speakers presented during school-wide assemblies and in class sessions. The guest speakers included college advisors, former students, and mentors. E. Brand (personal communication, June 16, 2013) explained that having former students, who attended SDSU, talk to current SUHSD students, and share with them what it takes to be a college student encourages the students in ways that parents may not be able to replicate. A HHS teacher echoed this perception. He explained that bringing college representatives, college clubs, and guest speakers who talked about college life exposes students to college in ways that they might not have access to at home. In addition, he commented, “Bringing guest speakers to talk about college makes a difference. It is a very effective
and easy way to motivate students. It opens up their eyes to what college is really about.” The Compact for Success Director added, “Mentors also do presentations in classes to have an impact on a large scale and also to reinforce the benchmarks for admission.”

Participants explained that hearing guest speakers share their experiences as college students was most impactful. A HHS senior contended that he perceived having guest speakers as an important element to increasing the number of students attending college. He explained that he was motivated to attend SDSU after he heard SDSU speakers do a presentation about their campus and about the different programs that are available.

Participants shared that when students learn about college life they appear to be more interested in attending college. The participants explained that when guest speakers shared their experiences in college, SUHSD students were motivated to be part of college life. A CVHS senior described how he was inspired by a guest speaker to attend college. He said:

What motivated me to go to college was during football season in my sophomore year. The coach had someone that he knew during high school years and now he plays for the Patriots. He came to talk to us and told us how he worked hard during high school and was able to go to college because of his grades. He inspired me, not to play college football, but to attend college and be successful like he was.

A SDSU freshman shared how she was motivated to go to college after hearing a presentation from a guest speaker. She said, “When the speakers talked about their experience, I wanted to have that experience as well. I wanted to be like them, go to
college, and be successful.” This illustrates that guest speakers were able to encourage students to attend college by relating to the students. Similarly, another SDSU student described how important it was to hear from former SUHSD students, who were current college students. She explained that by having someone who was in school with you a couple of years ago talk about college life is very motivational. She said:

During assemblies, students came to this school, who we recognized. [They] presented and showed slide shows of what college is about. They showed us that college is about education, but it also offers other opportunities like to study abroad, meet new people, and internships. When you have assemblies like that, I think students would be very excited. They know the students. They’ve been to school with them for a couple of years, so I think that would be very beneficial.

Participants shared that an important factor in having students feel motivated by guest speakers was selecting the right speakers. Guest speakers had to be able to reach students and provide relevant information. Speakers, who were recent SUHSD graduates or perhaps recent graduates of their high school and current SDSU students, were more impactful than other types of speakers such as faculty members. The Compact for Success strategy of having guest speakers was to help students feel comfortable with the idea of attending college by providing them with a sense of belonging. In addition, the guest speakers who motivated students had similar demographic backgrounds and lifestyles as the high school students. When asked what motivated her to attend college, another SDSU student responded, “Guest speakers from many colleges helped to motivate me, because they talked about their experiences. Motivation is very important,
because that is what many students lack the most.” A CVHS sophomore expressed how a
guest speaker made her realize that college is for anyone. She explained:

I took a class last year where my teacher invited a former student who attended
Harvard to talk to us. She showed us that it is very possible for anyone to attend a
really good school. You don’t need to attend a private or boarding school; anyone
can attend a good college.

Guest speakers were able to influence students to attend college, specifically
SDSU, by exposing college life to students and by allowing them to see themselves as
college students in a few years. A CVHS teacher added, “Bringing representatives from
colleges is very impactful. Just by the questions from students the presentations
generated, it really resonated how impactful [the guest speakers] were.”

Similarly, Cates and Schaefle (2011) researched four rural school districts, in a
6-year period, where the GEAR UP intervention program was implemented. The results
showed that out of all the elements from the GEAR UP program, the most influential in
students’ decisions to go to college, were activities designed to welcome them in a
college environment and provide them with specific information about college and
planning for college. In addition, Cates and Schaefle indicated that these activities
include college visits, college guest speakers, and informational booklets about colleges
and college preparation. Interview data from the present data pointed toward similar
findings.

In summary, it appears that having guest speakers paint a picture of what college
life is all about and share their college experiences influenced increases in the number of
graduating seniors entering SDSU through the Compact for Success. E. Brand (personal
communication, June 16, 2013) and L. Murillo (personal communication, June 15, 2013) explained that a component of the Compact is to provide SDSU college mentors and speakers. This support system is implemented across the Sweetwater District, and there appears to be the same level of implementation within both of the schools studied. Guest speakers appear to be an important component in increasing the number of graduating seniors entering college. Participants indicated that guest speakers motivated them because SUHSD students heard about college life, about the different activities/sports available in college, and they were able to relate to the guest speakers. Guest speakers were impactful because they were recent graduates from the district and sometimes the same school as the students they addressed, they had the same racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic background as the SUHSD students, they were close to the ages of the students they were addressing, and they were able to paint a picture of college life that students could relate to and be excited about. Sweetwater Union High School District students were able to relate to the guest speakers and be encouraged by them. In addition, the presentations were geared towards activities that related to students’ interests. Students were able to see themselves at SDSU, being part of that college life, and participating in those activities.

**Efforts to change/strengthen the college expectations of parents.** Frequently participants discussed ways in which parents and family members influenced college readiness. Parents of SUHSD students became aware of academic issues related to college preparation, and they encouraged their child to address those issues. As well, parents and family members influenced college readiness by articulating the expectation that their child would attend a college or university. Interview data suggest that the
Compact for Success helped strengthen parental expectations that their children would attend college, and parents communicated those expectations to their children. This section addresses how the Compact for Success helped strengthen parent expectations regarding college attendance.

Participants reported that after parents participated in Compact activities and became aware of the possibility that their children could attend college, parents’ expectation became more pronounced. Parents became more involved in school activities and in the educational progress of their child. Participants also explained that, through Compact for Success activities, parents and family members learned about the academic considerations that were important for college readiness and admission. Participants emphasized that, as a result of this knowledge, parents knew which classes students took, asked about academic performance, went to parent meetings, asked if their child needed help, and motivated their child to do better. In addition, some students reported that they felt encouraged by their parents’ positive reinforcement. For example, in the interview with a freshman SDSU student, she said, “My mom always supported me. Every time I brought in a report card with a C, she told me I could do better. She couldn’t help me with homework, but she always motivated me and encouraged me.” Similarly, another senior student from CVHS said, “My parents are always checking my grades and if I am slacking they would be like, ‘Oh, you need to increase your grades.’” A former SUHSD graduate reported that, after visiting SDSU through the Compact for Success trip, she carried the expectation of attending college throughout her high school years until she reached her goal of being accepted into SDSU through the Compact. Furthermore, she
explained that the expectation to attend SDSU after graduation was equally shared by her parents.

The superintendent explained that one of the biggest hurdles that the Compact encountered was to create a spiral of success among the Sweetwater families. He argued that success is built upon success, but for many students college is foreign. He said, “If you are a first generation American, many times you don’t have anyone in your family who has completed college. This makes it very difficult for the student.” He further explained that one of the purposes of the Compact was to create and give families knowledge of what college is all about. This new knowledge allowed parents to be more supportive and to help guide their children to meet college preparation requirements. Additionally, knowing that college was a possibility for their children, built higher parental expectations.

The students interviewed offered a variety of examples of their parents using the information they learned about college readiness to push them to excel. A senior from CVHS explained, “My mom just went to my orientation at SDSU. She always wanted me to do well and would ask, ‘How did you do on this? Do you need help?’ [She] always encouraged me to get help when I needed it.” Another sophomore from CVHS said, “My parents always push me to do the best. I’m in choir and travel the country. They tell me that if I get good grades, they’ll let me go. If I do good in school, they’ll give me a prize.”

Additionally, the Compact for Success exposed students to the possibility of attending college, regardless of their parents’ educational background, economic situation, or past expectations. The Compact, through the 7th and 10th grade college visits, created an expectation for students to follow the prescribed requirements of the
Compact and attend SDSU after graduation. In addition to the college visits, the Compact includes activities that provide college information and resources for parents. These resources help parents be supportive of their children’s education and increase their expectations. In addition, these activities help educate parents on how to better support their children. The Compact for Success Director explained that parent support has nothing to do with parent education level. Parent support does not necessarily mean having a deep understanding on how the educational system works, but rather supporting their students with the day-to-day challenges. He said:

Even if parents did not go to college or even graduate from high school, it is important that they are supportive at their own level. That parents ask questions like [or make statements like], “Have you done your homework,” “Turn off the TV tonight,” and “We need to prepare you for college.” Ensuring parents attend parent nights, meetings, and other activities. It is an important task to create a college-going culture at home. Creating an environment at home that says, “We value education, and we are willing to support you in every facet of your journey.” As parent expectations are strengthened, parent involvement also increases. The realization that their child could go to college regardless of their current home situation provides a sense of empowerment. Parents transfer this empowerment to the student and continuously remind their child what is needed to fulfill the Compact requirements. Additionally, parents begin talking to their child about what college they plan to attend after their senior year. Attending college after high school becomes the expectation and this becomes a powerful change in the home dynamics for many students.
According to some participants, one of the most influential determinants of college attendance was their perception that their parents always expected them to attend. The parental expectation was to do well in school and attend college. In addition to the expectation there was a culture of support and encouragement. Even when parents could not help them directly with academics, students felt supported and pushed to do well in school. In the interview, the principal of HHS said,

Some parents take it for granted that their kids are going to college and they instill that in their kids, since they are young, so it is not a question of if they are going to college, but rather which college are they going to attend.”

A freshman SDSU student said, “My parents have always been very strict with education. Because of that, I was really influenced in doing well in school all the time. They supported me with everything with school. They would ask, ‘Are you taking honors, accelerated?’” Likewise, a CVHS sophomore said, “I never had a choice. My mom just said, ‘You are going to college.’ I accepted going to college, because I had no other choice. It was expected.” The SUHSD superintendent mentioned, “The spiral of success starts at home when the parent tells the little baby in their arms you are going to college.”

A critical component of the Compact for Success is the expectation that every student could potentially be eligible to attend SDSU. This district-wide expectation is constantly shared with parents/families, and, in turn, parents share this expectation with their students. The CVHS principal said that he found the grade-level parent meetings to be very meaningful. He explained that these meetings served to inform parents on what was needed for their students to stay on a college track through the Compact. In addition, it helped parents prepare their child’s 4-year plan and helped parents see the essential
steps their students had to take in order to fulfill their expectations of college attendance.

A counselor at HHS explained that parents have the biggest influence on students attending college. This influence is translated into expectations and support. She said, “Parents have the most influence on students. When they talk about college they can really influence. Educators can tell them how important it is, but the biggest factor is of influence comes from the time they are young.” A counselor at CVHS added, “Family, the parents who push their kids and are involved in their education [are influential]. Even if they are not familiar with education, but call and check their student’s schoolwork, [they influence their child’s college readiness]”

Parents’ expectations appeared to be an important determinant in motivating students to do well in school and attend college. The Compact for Success influenced the expectations related to college. Some parents perhaps always had expectations of their children attending college and others probably did not have those expectations until they began participating in Compact for Success activities. However, when the Compact pulled all those parents and students together and parents saw that college students were recent graduates of SUHSD schools from the same racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups as their children, parents realized that their child could also attend SDSU. The activities created by the Compact changed the parents’ expectations.

The founding partners of the Compact for Success seemed to realize that a key factor that influences college attendance is parental expectation. Several Compact activities inform parents about college opportunities and provide a safe environment for parents to participate in their child’s education. As parents gain new information and get involved in activities, they expect more from their child. In the interview with L. Murillo
(personal communication, June 15, 2013), Compact for Success Director at SDSU, he said, “Seventh grade campus visits provide a good introduction to the Compact and to SDSU. We invite the seventh graders and their parents.” During the college visit, which all seventh-graders and their parents are invited to attend, both parents and students have an opportunity to learn about the Compact, the requirements, and the benefits. Parents and students sign a commitment banner and parents learn how to support their children for the next 6 years. In addition, Murillo said, “In many cases parents do not have an awareness of requirements for going to college, because they have never been in a college campus, so this is an enlightening experience for them, so they can be more supportive.” Furthermore, he added, “There are workshops throughout the day [of the college visit], so students and parents understand the pathway they need to take. We are always adding new aspects of the workshops and career opportunities.” Finally, Murillo mentioned, “Any activity that calls for parent and student participation is significant. We make sure that there is a Compact for Success presence at all the parent events to create higher expectations and a college-going culture at SUHSD.”

In summary, strengthening the college expectations of parents appears to be a key factor that influences students’ desire to attend college and strive to do well in school. In addition, although there are different types of parent/family support systems and different factors that motivate them to support their children, the end result appears to be the same. Regardless whether the students are the first in their family to attend college, or if both parents are college graduates, when parents expect their students to attend college and support them during the process, it appears to improve the likelihood that students will want to go to college and be college-ready. The influx of information provided by the
Compact helped parents increase their day-to-day expectations of their child. Parents seemed to understand that learning is not just about how smart someone is, but it is about work habits. Parents were constantly reminded of the requirements to stay on track for the Compact and how to best support their students. After attending Compact information opportunities, many parents changed their everyday routine to provide a richer educational environment for their children. Parents provided homework routines, a designated homework place at their homes and implemented other healthy study work habits. In addition, parents were more aware of the classes their children were taking to ensure they were on track for the Compact.

The conditional guaranteed acceptance into SDSU. A factor that influenced students’ motivation to engage in the challenging work required to prepare them for college was the Compact for Success guaranteed admission. The Compact guarantees admission into SDSU conditionally. Students must meet five specific requirements in order to earn guaranteed admission. Students must: (a) maintain a 3.00 GPA through the senior year of high school, (b) complete all of the A-G requirements (see Appendix A for a list of the courses required in the A-G curriculum), (b) have been enrolled in the SUHSD since the ninth grade, (c) satisfy both the ELM (Entry Level Math) and EPT (English Placement Test) placement tests, and (d) take the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) or ACT (American College Testing) exam. When a SUHSD senior fulfills all five benchmarks, the student is guaranteed admission into SDSU. Having a guaranteed college admission that is conditional could result in students doing what is necessary to achieve what they have been guaranteed. If the guarantee had no conditions, it could result in student apathy.
A recurring theme from participants was how being aware of the guaranteed admission feature of the Compact made going to college a possibility. A number of participants shared that having a guaranteed admission into SDSU motivated them to fulfill the requirements of the Compact to ensure staying on track. A CVHS senior mentioned, “Knowing that you have to maintain a certain GPA and you will be guaranteed admission into SDSU is huge. That’s what pushed me to do what Compact for Success said I had to do.” A HHS teacher shared a similar perception; he said, “Knowing they have a guaranteed spot if they meet certain goals is huge for students.”

The guaranteed admission factor allows students to see themselves as college students as long as they complete the five requirements. Students do not need to compete against other students in regards to their GPA. They only need to compete with themselves.

In addition, having a guaranteed admission allowed students to believe attending college was a possibility regardless of other personal or home factors. Students knew that, if they followed the prescribed requirements, they would be eligible to attend SDSU. For many students, attending college had not previously been a possibility (prior to their awareness of the Compact) because they did not know anyone who had attended college or they believed it was too difficult to be accepted. According to some participants, the Compact and its guaranteed admission allowed students to perceive college as a possibility. A CVHS sophomore said, “Compact for Success helps by itself, because knowing that if you do well you automatically can attend college. Its easier because you just continue doing what is required.” In addition, a HHS senior explained that when she learned about the requirements for guaranteed admission, she felt it was very doable. Furthermore, she described how she concentrated on meeting the requirements 1 year at a
time, and before she knew it she was graduating and being accepted into SDSU. The guaranteed admission allows students to focus on their own academic success one semester at a time. Furthermore, students know that they do not need to be at the top of their class to be admitted into SDSU. This makes going to college more of a possibility to the average student who may not have a strong support system at home. Students know exactly what they need to do to be admitted into SDSU, which takes away the uncertainty of not being admitted after working hard throughout their high school years.

A frequent perception among participants was that it was easier to focus on school because they felt college was a viable option. Students feel less stressed to compete against others for a spot at a university; they only need to compete with themselves. The Compact offers students the opportunity to focus only on the requirements set forth by the agreement in order to be eligible to attend SDSU. According to E. Brand (personal communication, June 16, 2013), this allows students to prepare better and outperform non-Compact students. During the interview, Brand explained that knowing they have a guaranteed admission helps students focus only on college-readiness. This takes much of the stress away from students and parents. He said:

If I do what the district tells me I need to do, then [the student] has a guaranteed admission in SDSU. So while someone outside the district needs to worry about being prepared, having access, and tuition, our students only need to worry about being prepared. It allows our students to prepare better, because as a Compact student our students outperform other non-Compact students. If you prepare yourself the way you are supposed to, you will outperform others.
In summary, an important element of the success of the program was having all students understand what the requirements were and the process was demystified. The guaranteed admission feature of the Compact for Success appears to be a key factor that leads students to want to attend college. The clarity and objectivity of the requirements help guide students to fulfill the conditions of the guarantee. Furthermore, the conditional guarantee emerges as a factor that has influenced increases in the number of graduating seniors entering SDSU through the Compact for Success. According to L. Murillo (personal communication, June 15, 2013) and E. Brand (personal communication, June 16, 2013), it is a common theme across all schools in the SUHSD.

**The clear and consistent communication about college and college requirements.** An important element of the success of the program was having all students understand the requirements for completing the Compact, as well as the timeline for remaining on track for completing the Compact. As well, students benefitted from a steady flow of information about other critical information regarding college eligibility. Once these requirements were clearly understood, college attendance seemed attainable and the college entrance process was demystified.

Some participants commented that they had not thought about college until they participated in one or more Compact activities where they were provided information that helped them see how possible it was to attend college. The Compact for Success Director said, “The Compact allowed many to think college was for them. They knew that if they did certain things they could go to our university.” An important element in motivating students to attend college was the constant influx of college information that students, parents, staff, and community received. This continual flow of information regarding the
Compact, colleges (especially SDSU), and the importance of attending college helped keep students focused on staying on track with the Compact. A HHS senior said, “Awareness, knowing about the Compact, what the requirements are, and if I was on track is what helped me the most. Knowing what you need to fulfill to be on the eligible track.” When asked how the Compact for Success supported college attendance, the HHS principal said, “In some schools the college-going mystique is easier to undergo than others. Some schools need a lot more support than those where parent already know how to maneuver the system. The Compact for Success levels the playing field.” Part of providing college information and awareness is the implementation of certain programs, such as college visits, college fairs, college mentors, and guest speakers. A SDSU student said:

I was in the Compact since the seventh grade. They told us about the program in seventh grade and we had to keep a certain GPA. They took us on field trips, and I remember seeing the campus and the kids and thinking, “Oh my God, this is so cool, I want to go here.” They took us twice, and I was very excited. I think by them taking us, they made me really want to go there. So every year I would think, “I’m almost there.” I remember even driving by with my parents and saying, “Hey, I’m going to go there soon.”

The information received during college visits provided students with an obtainable goal through the Compact. Students knew that if they followed the requirements of the Compact, they would be able to automatically be eligible to attend SDSU. Similarly, consistent communication of Compact requirements and college information by guest speakers and mentors appeared to support students attending college
and staying on track to meet the Compact requirements. Participants explained that an important topic discussed by guest speakers was information about college entrance. Students gained knowledge about specific college entrance requirements, financial aid opportunities, college programs, internships and fellowships, and differences among colleges. A CVHS sophomore shared that she found it informational when a group of speakers went to her school to present to students in individual classrooms. She explained:

Last year, for a week we had people from different colleges present to different classes. They gave us tips and information on how to attend college and how to succeed. They had us fill out a slip that asked us what we were interested in. Then they sent us to a room based on our answers, and there was a person who would tell us what we needed to do to attend college.

Similarly, a CVHS senior decided to attend SDSU after a SDSU college representative gave a presentation at her school. She said, “Representatives from colleges came and talked to us about their schools, what they had to offer, sites to find more information, and information on counselors. I want to go to SDSU because of the information they gave me.” Another CVHS senior commented that every year she would listen to a college advisor talk about college and what students needed to do to attend. She explained that the college advisor helped her with completing her applications. A SDSU student described how having people from colleges presented at her high school and made her interested in attending college. She became eager to know more about certain colleges. She explained, “Students will become more knowledgeable and
interested in certain colleges. What happens is that after the presentation, you research
more about the college that caught your interest.”

Another significant factor revolved around the influence parents had on their
children after they had been provided college information and Compact requirements.
The Compact for Success influenced the day-to-day interactions between parents and
students. After attending Compact activities, such as college visitations, Compact
information nights, and college nights, parents became better informed and seemed to
be more likely to ask about grades and check to see if homework was completed. In
addition, parents appeared to be more knowledgeable of what classes their children
needed to take to stay on track with the Compact. Parents were more attentive about
making sure their children took the right classes and participated in school activities.
Compact for Success activities that involved communicating college requirements to
parents seemed to motivate parents to stay active in their children’s schooling, regardless
of the parents’ educational level. Several participants shared that their parents did not
have the educational background or experience to help them navigate through the
college-entrance requirements; however, after learning about the expectations of the
Compact and the requirements, they were better able to ensure their student was on track.

Other participants revealed that parents supported the idea of going to college
and were motivated to know that, through the Compact, college could be a reality. A
sophomore student from CVHS said, “My mom got pregnant at a young age and didn’t
have many opportunities. She was in home studies and she ended up in a community
college, and she is pushing me to do better and attend SDSU.” This student further
explained that, although her mom did not have much education, she knew about the
Compact and made sure her daughter was on track. Her mom knew that through the Compact her daughter could attend SDSU. As a result, the mother became more involved in her daughter’s education. Similarly, the parents of a SDSU freshman said her brothers became actively involved in her education after learning about college requirements and the Compact. She said, “My brothers dropped out of college because they needed to help my mom. They learned about the Compact and they told me that they wanted me to keep on studying and they were willing to help me.” It appears that parent support increased as a result of parents receiving information on college expectations, requirements, and the Compact for Success program. The Compact created many opportunities for parents and students to know about the program, the requirements, and how to stay involved in their child’s education. A HHS counselor said, “We have our parent night that helps them decide and look at all the timelines. Parents and students know what they need to achieve to be successful and to be part of the Compact.” Providing consistent communication about college and Compact requirements seemed to keep students focused on their academics and improve the college-going rate. Furthermore, constant communication about college and the Compact provided frequent reminders to students and parents that attending college was a real possibility.

**Efforts to build school cultures that constantly promoted college.** The Compact for Success partnership continuously promotes a college-going culture in the SUHSD. The Compact Director at SDSU, L. Murillo (personal communication, June 15, 2013), remarked that the college-going culture that has reshaped the South Bay area, as a result of the Compact for Success, is greatly due to the constant bombardment of college information to all stakeholders. Murillo said that the college awareness component of the
Compact is integrated into all aspects of education, including parent meetings and financial aid workshops for parents and students: “This demystifies the whole college-going process. This is also a very compelling feature of the program.” In addition, Murillo said:

Teachers, counselors, and administrators who have been involved have seen the program grow and see it as a point of pride. The whole purpose of the Compact is to change the culture of the district and to make sure all students understood that they could go to college. Who does not want to be part of a success story? And this has been very successful, and we have changed the culture with students, parents, community, as well as teachers and counselors.

Similarly, a CVHS teacher argued that informing students about college and the Compact for Success program is significant in creating a college-going culture in schools and motivating students to stay Compact eligible. He said:

The counselors, at the beginning of the year, have different Compact for Success assemblies. We go over what classes they need to take and what happens if they don’t get a “C” or better. The Compact for Success assemblies are a major push. Staff is constantly talking about the Compact for Success. When students get here, they know what they need to do and strive, and now that we have had it for several years, they have cousins and brothers who have been through it, so they know what they need.

A significant factor in promoting a college-going culture for students is having teachers believe that college is a possibility for all students. The Compact encourages teachers to promote college and make it relevant to students. For many students, going to
college and college life is very foreign to them. In many cases, students do not have anyone in their families who went to college or who can share with them experiences about college life. It is difficult for students to see themselves attending and graduating from college. Students reported that many teachers constantly talked about college, the Compact for Success, and college life. These teachers made attending college seem possible. In interviews, teachers reported that they promoted the idea of attending college by constantly using examples in their lessons that revolved around college. In addition, as part of the Compact for Success initiative, every school in SUHSD had Compact banners, posters, and other materials posted throughout the schools. Most teachers displayed Compact information in their classrooms. Those Compact displays became a topic of discussion in the classroom, and teachers took the opportunity to promote college and the Compact for Success program. A HHS teacher explained:

Having daily reminders about college is impactful. The Compact for Success allows everyone to attend, if they want to. You know you don’t need to be the top dog in the class. If they follow the steps, they know they will be eligible to attend. That has been told to them since seventh grade. A student is more likely to say, “Yes, I do want that life that college offers instead of the quality of life and standard of living I had when growing up.”

Promoting a college-going culture is an on-going process. Participants shared that teachers were important in promoting a college culture at their school. Students reported that when they heard about teachers’ college experiences, the idea of attending resonated with them and became more meaningful. During a focus-group interview, a HHS senior said, “I had teachers who talked about their college experiences and what college is like
and what to do in college. They would say that I needed to go.” Another senior from CVHS said:

One teacher always talked to us about his college experiences. You get a better idea of what college is about when you hear it from a teacher. It broadens your mind to hear from people who already had those experiences.

Another CVHS senior added, “I had a particular biology teacher who I got to know very well. She graduated from SDSU, and she would always ask me, where are you going? And I had no clue. She always gave me information about SDSU.”

Similarly, a SDSU student explained how she was inspired to attend college, at an early age, by her teacher. She said, “At Hilltop elementary, I had a student teacher who was a graduate from SDSU and she would always talk about school and how she loved it. It was really inspiring.” A teacher at CVHS indicated that, at times, teachers could make a difference by just showing students that they believe in them. He commented, “There are teachers who really push their students. If they see students who are not doing as well as they could, teachers tell them that they are college material, and sometimes that’s all it takes to make a difference.”

**Information to students.** By providing students with information about college and making college seem available for everyone, teachers allow students to think that attending college is a real possibility. Teachers exert a high degree of influence on students, and, if used properly, this influence can harness positive results. A CVHS senior said, “Personal discussions with teachers [influenced the decision to attend college] because when you talk to teachers outside of the classroom it helps, because they talk to you more on a personal level.” The Compact for Success provides teachers a
platform for providing students information regarding college. Teachers are constantly receiving information regarding college field trips, college guest speakers, and other college information opportunities. In addition, Compact information is readily available for teachers regarding the eligibility requirements and the benefits of being on track to complete the Compact. As teachers become informed about the Compact and college information opportunities, they are able to share this knowledge with their students. Participants reported that teachers use this information to promote the notion that students attend college. Teachers were active participants in the promotion of a college-going culture by providing information about SDSU and the Compact for Success. Teachers had the responsibility of letting students know precise information about the Compact. Teachers had to have the right information regarding Compact for Success so that they could be part of the college-going culture equation. Therefore, one of the challenges that emerged from the Compact partnership was the provision of training and information to all teachers regarding the Compact. It was important that teachers have a solid understanding of the Compact eligibility requirements and articulate them to their students. Furthermore, teachers needed to be motivated to post banners, hang posters, display other college information in their classrooms, and most importantly be willing to provide college information to their students. It seems that students tended to ask more about college when they were being constantly exposed to a college-going environment.

**Teacher influence.** The influence that teachers could exert on students to attend college appeared to be an important factor in developing a college-going culture. There is a trust factor that is developed by students towards teachers, during the course of the semester, which could be a powerful ally in shaping the minds of students. When a
student trusts a teacher, believes that the teacher genuinely cares about the student, and values the teacher’s perspective and experience, the teacher’s influence could be a powerful tool that could be used to support a college-going culture and encourage the student to be part of it. A HHS teacher explained, “Students feel more comfortable with certain teachers. If the student knows the teacher cares, they’ll do better.” When asked how could teachers reach out and motivate students, he answered, “Teachers need to be more open, come down a level, be closer to them [students], so students feel they can interact more.” Similarly, another HHS teacher described what she believed was the key to reaching out and supporting students. She explained:

When students have a rough time at home, the teacher can give that compassion and caring the student needs. Just showing them you really care and that there is another adult that has a vested interest in their life, will motivate students and make them believe in themselves.

Teachers created a culture that fostered trust and then used the culture to guide students, by motivating them to excel academically, make the right choices, and believe college is for them.

As the connection between teachers and students develop, so does the range of influence teachers have on students. Another factor mentioned by students was how certain teachers led students to commit to attending college, because the teachers made their students feel academically capable. A SDSU student described her experience with teachers as follows:

My teachers were really awesome. They were always pushing me because, I guess, they would see that I am capable. When they see you have it in you to be
successful, they will push you. Every person has it in them to succeed, but people who really strive get to the goal faster. I was always trying to do extra credit and stuff, and I think teachers would see that, and they would motivate me to do more.

Another SDSU student shared, “My connect crew teacher was always pushing us to do well. My English teacher told us that we had to apply for college and I did.” Most students felt that teachers were an important influence in their academic success and that teachers continuously took the time to make personal connections with them to push them to succeed. In contrast, a CVHS senior believed that teachers had an important influence on students, but that they should take more time to have one-on-one connections with students. In the interview, she commented, “I think if the teachers had more time to speak to students on a personal level, students would be more interested in doing well in school.” However, the student acknowledged that teachers do play an important role in influencing students to attend college. She added, “Personal discussions with teachers are huge, because when you talk to teachers outside of the classroom it really helps, because they talk to you more on a personal level.”

Woolley (2009) explained that adults, including teachers, create social capital in the lives of youth through interpersonal interactions within their relationships. Youth internalize aspects of those relationships, and the messages received from adults become attitudes and beliefs. Woolley explained that those attitudes and beliefs on the part of youth about themselves have a direct impact on students’ perceptions of their potential and their ability to succeed in school. Furthermore, he clarified that when adults hold high educational expectations for youth, from passing an algebra test to going to and succeeding in college, youth have more positive attitudes and beliefs, are more confident
about school achievement, and perform better academically. In addition, research has shown educational expectations impact school outcomes when the expectations come from both teachers and adults at home (Woolley, Kol, & Bowen, 2009). Woolley et al. (2009) mentioned that it is reasonable to conclude that any adult with a personalized relationship can effectively communicate educational expectations to youth that they can internalize. Woolley et al. ’s research supports the findings of this study regarding the positive impact teacher support has on students’ motivation to attend college and to be college-ready.

In summary, it appeared to be a general perception among participants that continuously informing students and parents about the benefits of the Compact and the requirements to stay on track generated better results in college-readiness and interest of attending college. Furthermore, having college-awareness activities that promote a college-going culture among students and parents appeared to increase the number of students attending college. The Compact for Success Director, L. Murillo (personal communication, June 15, 2013), explained that an important goal of the Compact is to get parents involved in students’ activities as frequently as possible. He said:

Any activity that calls for parent and student participation is important. We make sure that there is a Compact for Success presence at all the events to make sure they see we are part of the college-going culture at SUHSD.

Murillo believed that all stakeholders needed to be part of the college-going culture. The SUHSD superintendent explained that the college-going culture has to be part of the everyday lives of parents and students. Superintendent E. Brand (personal communication, June 16, 2013) explained during the interview:
In an affluent kindergarten class you ask students who is going to college and all the hand go up. In a low-socioeconomic area, maybe a third of the hands go up, because they don’t know what college is. The goal is to change that culture. He added that one of the goals of the Compact is to change that cycle by continuously promoting college and making it accessible to all students.

**Factors Influencing Changes in Students’ Preparedness for College**

While the factors that influenced student expectations and motivation were important, they alone were insufficient to generate the substantial increases in college eligibility and attendance that occurred in the SUHSD. Student expectations might not have been sustained in the absence of extensive efforts to increase students’ preparedness for college. Specifically, students in the SUHSD benefitted from (a) rigorous classes/curriculum designed to prepare students for college, (b) teachers who aligned their classes with college courses, and (c) academic support programs designed to deepen understanding of content. This section describes the evidence related to each of these factors.

**Rigorous classes/curriculum designed to prepare students for college.** The implementation of rigorous classes/curriculum emerged as an important factor that influenced increases in the college eligibility of SUHSD seniors. E. Brand (personal communication, June 16, 2013) and L. Murillo (personal communication, June 15, 2013) described the rigor as not just being in the advanced classes, but as an integral component of the English and math curriculum. Furthermore, they described how district policies and the rigor of the curriculum ensured students were enrolled in the right classes that enabled them to meet the requirements of the Compact and become college-ready.
E. Brand (personal communication, June 16, 2013) explained that providing a rigorous curriculum was an essential component of the Compact. In addition, he shared that the SUHSD improved the rigor of English and math courses, required more students to take math as seniors, and created PSAT classes and testing opportunities for 10th and 11th grade students. Furthermore, he mentioned that the board of trustees approved an A-G curriculum and increased district A-G offerings. Additionally, the board required all high school students to have a 4-year plan and required the district to offer credit recovery opportunities for high school students. In turn, the district required all high schools to develop a plan for offering credit recovery opportunities to students. Brand explained how the rigor in curriculum has changed the college-going culture of SUHSD and helped students become college-ready. He said:

There is an expectation that when you are a Compact scholar, you are in an elite group of students who want to achieve very high academically. There is a confidence that comes from taking a rigorous curriculum. If you come from another part of the state and did not have the Compact as your vehicle to entering SDSU and did not have the right counselor, there is a good chance that you might have not been enrolled in the right classes. You might have a high GPA, but the rigor and type of classes might not be as challenging as the ones that are consistent for our Compact scholars. Our students are used to high rigor classes, and as a result, they are used to working hard and have the study skills. When they get to SDSU, we have already coached them up to a certain level that allows them to compete in an environment where some students, even though they have a
good GPA, have not had the experience of rigor and therefore, they have a better chance to be successful.

Finally, Brand explained that the district mandates that all schools comply with the academic rigor requirements set forth by the Compact for Success. This is important to ensure equity among schools and students. Regardless of what school students attend, everyone has the same opportunity to follow a 4-year plan that provides a rigorous A-G curriculum.

In addition to the A-G courses, some SUHSD schools provided greater access to rigorous courses through an open enrollment policy related to Advanced Placement (AP) classes. This policy allows all students to take rigorous AP classes. Unlike some schools where students must meet an array of eligibility requirements in order to enroll in an AP course, in SUHSD schools that adopted an open enrollment policy any student can take an AP course if they are willing to commit to the high level of effort required. A CVHS teacher shared that the availability for anyone to take a rigorous class expands opportunities for all students. She said, “Advanced Placement (AP) courses and accelerated courses are impactful because they are open enrollment, so it helps students think about college and become ready for college.” Similarly, the principal of CVHS agreed that having open enrollment in AP classes supports students by making higher rigor classes available to all students. He said, “Open enrollment in AP classes makes a difference. We encourage students to reach their potential and enroll. Counselors push our students to strive to do their best.”

Teachers reported that they have worked to elevate and maintain the level of rigor in AP courses and other challenging courses. A CVHS teacher explained that he provides
a college-like environment in his Advanced Placement classes. In addition to the rigorous curriculum, he expects his students to perform at a college level. In the interview, he explained the following:

I try to imitate how a college class works. We bring a college atmosphere all the time into our AP classes. We tell them [the students], “You just succeeded in this, so you can make it in college.” And they get excited.

Participants explained that the rigorous curriculum/classes better prepared them to be ready for challenging academic courses at SDSU. A SDSU freshman indicated that she was college-ready primarily because of the rigor of the classes she took at HHS. In the interview she explained:

When I entered college, I had to do much more studying, and I was prepared because of my honors and AP classes. The demands of the classes were very similar to my college classes. I think the teachers knew what it was like to take college classes, and they wanted us to have the same experience. It was very similar.

Similarly, another SDSU student felt her AP classes helped her become college-ready. She stated, “The honors and AP classes made a big difference once I entered SDSU, because the [experience in challenging high school courses] made me work harder.”

In addition to AP and honors classes, students reported that other SUHSD courses provided a level of academic rigor that helped them prepare for college. A HHS senior argued that the classes students choose make a difference in becoming college-ready. He added, however, that even if a student takes regular classes, “the rigor is there; it is just a
matter of the student doing the work and being engaged.” Similarly, a HHS senior argued that the foreign language program helped prepare him for college. He explained that many students get good grades in that program, so that raises the expectation for all students. Furthermore, E. Brand (personal communication, June 16, 2013) explained that the Compact was never designed just to influence students’ senior year (when many students took AP and honors courses). Instead, he claimed that the Compact was a 6-year (middle school and high school) plus a 4-year (college) plan. He argued that each secondary school year was important in preparing students for college success. Brand argued that the rigor provided from middle school through high school allowed students to scaffold success 1 year at a time, en route to college attendance and college graduation.

Participants shared that the rigor of the curriculum, specifically in English and math, the opportunity for students to enroll in advanced classes, higher teacher expectations, and a college-like class environment supports students in becoming college-ready. This finding affirms the findings of other studies of college readiness. Lewis and Overman (2008) explained that increasing the rigor of high school instruction reduces the need for postsecondary remediation. In addition, Cates and Schaefle (2011) found that out of the 11 elements that have proven to increase college readiness, one of the most important was rigorous course taking.

In summary, the Compact for Success partnership has allowed the implementation of a series of measures to ensure that students are exposed to rigorous curriculum. An important aspect of college-readiness is ensuring students are exposed to a rigorous curriculum. Taking A-G classes by themselves is not enough if the curriculum is watered down. A student who is receiving A and B grades in an educational setting that does not
have rigor will be set up for failure as a college freshman. In an effort to prevent this, the Compact for Success provides access to rigorous classes to more students, the English curriculum is aligned to SDSU standards, A-G requirements have increased, and on-going professional development is provided to the English and math departments at SUHSD. Providing rigorous curricular opportunities has increased the number of graduating seniors entering SDSU through the Compact. According to L. Murillo (personal communication, June 15, 2013), since the implementation of the Compact, students have increased their proficiency rate by 600%. The A-G requirements for all students, rigorous English and math classes, and on-going professional development for teachers is implemented across the district. Students having access, through open enrollment, to Advanced Placement classes is a site decision. Although open enrollment appeared to contribute to a higher level of college-readiness, it did not seem to be a significant factor in student acceptance to SDSU through the Compact for Success.

Although there have been significant changes to the rigor of curricula as a result of the Compact, it is interesting to note that only L. Murillo (personal communication, June 15, 2013) and E. Brand (personal communication, June 16, 2013) mentioned the implementation of A-G curriculum, curriculum alignment, and on-going professional development as factors that influenced curricular rigor. Other participants only mentioned the rigor of AP, AVID, and other advanced classes as factors that influenced rigor.

**Teachers who aligned their classes with college courses.** An important factor that influenced students’ preparedness for college was the alignment of math and English curricular expectations between SDSU and SUHSD. L. Murillo (personal
communication, June 15, 2013) explained that the key was not just for SUHSD to align the curriculum with SDSU, but to provide professional development to the English department at Sweetwater. He explained that the English component is a major focus, especially the writing component. He argued that by improving students’ writing skills, students achieved higher scores on their proficiency tests and were better prepared for the demands and rigor of classes during their freshman year. This allowed students not only to be accepted into SDSU, but also to be successful as freshman college students. During the interview with Murillo, Compact for Success Director at SDSU, he shared that an integral part of the Compact for Success partnership is the implementation of rigorous curriculum, especially in the areas of English and math. Murillo said:

Our English department head [at SDSU] has had a number of professional development workshops with the entire English faculty of the high schools and middle schools, at Sweetwater, to make sure we look at the curriculum in terms of the students’ expectations and what the teachers expect those students to do when they are taking those classes. We also have a special class that we implemented here, and we put it as one of the required courses in the Sweetwater district. In addition, instead of taking English literature, the focus is in writing and to make sure that those students are ready to pass the proficiency test. The focus is on a rhetorical approach in writing. We are very much in sync with the English department at Sweetwater. They [SUHSD English teachers and SDSU English professors] meet at least once a year. They look at work at Sweetwater and compare it with poor and excellent work at SDSU. This give teachers a point of reference of what is expected from students once they come to SDSU.
Murillo described one of the key elements in aligning the curriculum was the continuous professional development opportunities provided to SUHSD English teachers by the English department head of SDSU. During the professional development opportunities, English teachers focus on the rhetorical approach in writing. This approach is the same one being used at SDSU, so when Compact scholars arrive at SDSU, they feel comfortable in their English classes and tend to be more successful.

In addition, L. Murillo (personal communication, June 15, 2013) explained how important the implementation or a rigorous curriculum has been for the success of the program. He said the following:

We recognize that just having a memorandum of understanding will not get the students here unless they can get the work done once they are here as college students. So we have our English department [at SDSU] that works very intensely with the English faculty in the Sweetwater district to make sure the curriculum is aligned in a way we expect our students to perform in the classroom once they get here. That has been one of the most salient, but most successful features of the Compact program that rarely gets mentioned. Students who have taken the proficiency test have increased their pass rate by 600% in the course since we began tracking the data in 2002.

There are several factors that influence students’ motivation to attend college. However, Murillo explained that a feature that is not so visible, yet very important in students entering SDSU through the Compact, is the rigorous curriculum component. In addition, he explained that this feature is hardly mentioned because it happens behind the scenes.
Students, parents, and teachers focus on the activities promoted by the Compact and rarely on the curricular rigor that happens everyday in the classrooms.

**Academic support programs designed to deepen understanding of content.**
Three academic support programs appear to have increased the college-readiness of students in SUHSD. Specifically, students benefitted from (a) Saturday School, (b) Saturday Scholars program, and (c) AVID classes.

**Saturday school/scholars program.** One program that appeared to be successful in promoting college-readiness was the Saturday Scholars program implemented at Hilltop High School. There was a significant difference between the Saturday school tutoring at CVHS and the Saturday Scholars program at HHS. According to information obtained from the interviews, the Saturday school at CVHS was a tutoring program that consisted of two components: (a) teachers volunteer to attend a few hours on Saturday, and students could go and seek help with specific questions; and (b) an open tutoring session for 9th and 10th grade students. During the tutoring session, students could work on homework from different courses, and teachers assisted students with specific questions. In contrast, according to the Hilltop High School’s web page, the Saturday Scholars program is a 4-hour intervention session where students were re-taught and re-tested on the same content standards from the assigned core class. Saturday Scholars offered students additional opportunities to master the curriculum with which the student previously struggled. A HHS teacher explained that Saturday Scholars was not a tutoring session, but rather an actual class where the teacher re-taught the content standards that were covered during the past week. At the end of the class, students could retake a test to show mastery, and the grade helped them with their overall grade in that class.
Furthermore, the teacher explained that the Professional Learning Community (PLC) creates the lesson plan for the Saturday session. For example, the teachers in the geometry PLC develop the lesson plan for the geometry Saturday session. This ensures that the lesson provided on Saturday is aligned with what was taught during the week.

Although there were major differences between Saturday tutoring and the Saturday Scholars program, a few participants at CVHS found the tutoring component useful in helping them academically and helping them stay on track with the Compact. A CVHS sophomore commented, “Saturday school is good, because they help you increase your grade. They will tutor you and give you an assignment and that helps you with your writing skills.” A CVHS teacher indicated that the Saturday tutor assisted students, even though, for the most part, it was a disciplinary component. He said, “Saturday school helps students academically, which is a disciplinary thing; however, it is also an academic benefit because they are required to bring materials and they are working.” In contrast, another CVHS teacher found the Saturday tutoring a successful intervention because students go voluntarily. He said:

The Saturday program is successful because students have buy-in, they don’t see it as a punishment, but as a way to do their work and get caught up. At home they have a lot of distractions, and here is a safe place where they are learning at their own pace or a different way from the classroom.

Similarly, another CVHS teacher perceived the Saturday tutoring as a beneficial component for students, because it helped students with specific classes. During the interview she said, “The program on Saturdays really helps students. It targets students on specific areas in math and English for ninth and tenth grade.” It appeared that the
Saturday school tutoring at CVHS allowed students to receive tutoring on specific areas of need. In addition, since students attended voluntarily, they were focused and engaged. Furthermore, it provided a safe and quiet space for students to do their work without distractions.

The Saturday Scholars program appeared to be widely viewed as a powerful intervention at HHS. Most staff and students believed that Saturday Scholars has helped students become college-ready. Participants shared that the success of the Saturday Scholars program was based on three components, (a) it is voluntary, (b) teachers re-teach the curriculum using a different teaching strategy than their regular teacher, and (c) students earn extra points for their regular courses by attending and re-taking tests. Participants shared that having a voluntary Saturday academic intervention empowers students. A HHS teacher shared, “Saturday scholars really turned around things, because it’s a volunteer program, it provides less pressure for the student.” Likewise, another HHS teacher commented, “Saturday Scholars program really makes a difference, because it is totally self-determined.” The principal of HHS explained that he believed that an important element of the success of the Scholars’ program is that students come on their own. Furthermore, he argued that this creates buy-in from students and parents, which translates to a high number of students attending Saturday Scholars weekly on their own.

The focus on re-teaching was mentioned as influencing the success of the program. A HHS teacher said, “If students want it, they can go and relearn what was taught during the week in a specific class.” Similarly, another HHS teacher explained, “During Saturday scholars, students are seeing the same exact stuff as what they saw during the week except in a different way. Having different teachers teach, using
different modalities, really provides the student multiple opportunities to learn the
subject.” This statement illustrates the impact of re-teaching what was taught during the
week by a different teacher. Students had a second opportunity to understand the material
by having the content taught using different teaching strategies. A senior at HHS shared
the same perceptions. She commented, “Saturday scholars was taught by a different
teacher. She taught me a different way and system [from what] I originally was taught. I
understood that method and that was the one that I used afterwards.” A SDSU student
said, “Saturday scholars offered tutoring and with a different teacher. That helped.”
Students shared how being re-taught by a different teacher in a different way helped them
understand the material more clearly. Furthermore, they shared that by having successful
experiences during Saturday Scholars, students became more willing to continue
attending Saturday sessions.

A second reason for attending Saturday Scholars emerged from the interviews.
Specifically, students attended on Saturday because they wanted to improve their grades.
Participants shared that the program provided opportunities for students to relearn
material and to improve their grades by receiving extra points for attending the session
and by being able to retake tests. After the Saturday sessions, students were allowed to
retake tests, and the new score was either averaged with the old score or replaced. Each
PLC had its own criteria for determining how the new grade was considered. However,
regardless if the grade was replaced or averaged, it still benefitted the students’ grades. In
addition, participants argued that after attending the 4-hour Saturday session, students
were better prepared for tests. A senior at HHS shared that the program helped her
improve her grades, because students are able to retake tests and because students
received half a week of instruction in one subject. The HHS principal explained that he believed the program has been the main cause of Hilltop’s increased scores. He said:

We have done data analysis, and the Saturday Scholars program has shown to be successful because of the number of participating students. It tells you that parents and students have buy-in. In addition, data for CAHSEE [California High School Exit Examination], API [California’s Academic Performance Index], and D/F lists [HHS lists of students receiving D or F grades], since we started the Saturday scholars program, has improved. It is the only change we have made and student achievement has increased.

Another Hilltop teacher explained that he believed Saturday Scholars had improved college-readiness, because Saturday scholars can really get focused. Furthermore, he shared that it allowed teachers to individualize teaching, and that has a direct impact on grades and academic performance. Many students were motivated to attend Saturday Scholars session because they believed it would help their grades. In addition, students indicated that it was common for students to attend two or more Saturdays each month. Furthermore, students attended more than one subject per month. A student explained that she would attend the session, which she felt she needed the most at that time. For example, if she had earned a low grade in English that week, she would attend the English session. The next week she would attend the geometry session if she wanted to increase her grade in that class.

A former Hilltop student and current SDSU freshman shared that, although she did not attend Saturday Scholars for tutoring, she was asked to assist the teacher by tutoring other students during the Saturday sessions. She explained:
I was never late or anything so I was never required to go [to Saturday Scholars], but in my senior year my teacher asked us if we wanted to tutor some of the math students on Saturdays and help tutor algebra students, especially the ones that didn’t speak English. This helped me get a bigger idea on math. I would see how they thought and saw math, and seeing how they saw math broadened my knowledge of math. They were doing it right, and I would tell them, “You are not doing it right.” But they were, and I realized that their way of thinking and mine were different, and I learned how to see math from different perspectives.

The Saturday Scholars program was not part of the Compact for Success list of interventions. However, it was an indirect result of the Compact partnership. The partnership delineates requirements for students to become eligible for guaranteed admission to SDSU. Schools were commissioned to make every effort to ensure students stayed on track with the Compact. That caused schools to create, plan, and implement their own intervention strategies to target students who might not be on track or could be at-risk of not becoming eligible for the Compact. In the case of Hilltop High School, according to the principal, the Saturday Scholars program was implemented to support students academically and to help them prepare for college. In addition, he said:

Saturday scholars is successful because teachers are actually teaching the curriculum and parents have bought into it. In addition, any kid who puts in 4 hours of their own time makes a big commitment, so they want something in return and this comes in as a higher grade.

Similarly, Witherspoon (2011) reported benefits of peer tutoring during a Saturday program. Witherspoon reported that students felt it would be ideal to start some
peer-to-peer program, such as peer tutoring or mentoring during the Saturday sessions. The findings that emerged from the present study regarding Saturday Scholars/tutoring are consistent with the findings from Witherspoon. Witherspoon found that students participating in the Saturday Academy program had good attendance for both school (during the week) and the Academy (on Saturday), and they were interested in pursuing higher education. Furthermore, students were engaged during the Saturday sessions and there were very few discipline issues compared to regular school days. Witherspoon also found that the most successful element from the Academy was that all of the participants finished the program very motivated and with the desire to apply and enroll in college after graduating high school. This is congruent with the perceptions of HHS students and staff regarding the Saturday Scholars program.

In summary, participants’ responses indicated that there were significant differences between the Saturday school program at CVHS and the Saturday Scholars program at HHS in terms of academic impact for students. The Saturday school program was viewed similarly as after school tutoring. Students receive help on questions they might have, but there is no formal structure, nor did the teacher re-teach the curriculum. In addition, the tutoring session was not focused on a specific subject, and there was little structure. In some cases, participants shared that some of the teachers who offer Saturday school tutoring did it on their own, and it was not part of a formal program. For some students at CVHS, it appeared to support them in their college-readiness; however, the number of participants that shared that perception was small. In contrast, most HHS participants regarded the Saturday Scholars program at HHS as having a significant impact on college-readiness. Participants shared that the program was focused and
targeted, that a teacher was not just answering questions but actually re-teaching subject matter, and that it directly impacted their grades and academic performance in their classes. Most HHS students attributed this program as being a key component to being accepted into SDSU through the Compact for Success. The Saturday Scholars program was unique to HHS, and other non-HHS students in SUHSD could not participate in the program at HHS. Additionally, there appears to be a difference in the level of student achievement, as a result of the Saturday Scholars program, between HHS and CVHS. The two schools serve similar populations; however, HHS has a higher percentage of students entering SDSU through the Compact program. One possible explanation for the difference in performance might be the Saturday Scholars program and how it is being implemented at HHS. Since the implementation of Saturday Scholars program at HHS, the school has increased in API, CAHSEE proficient scores, and the number of graduating seniors entering SDSU through the Compact. Saturday Scholars program seems to be generating positive results in increasing the number of qualifying Compact students by helping students keep up their GPA and promoting college-readiness.

*AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) Program.* E. Brand (personal communication, June 16, 2013) described that through the Compact, SUHSD supports academic rigor by providing AVID tutors and Compact instructional aides to assist students with their homework and class work. In addition, Brand mentioned that the AVID program has been an integral part of the Compact, which directly influences the college-readiness of students. Brand explained:

Students start life essentially the same. Background, parents’ income, and other factors tend to give a positive impact in more affluent communities because they
[children] can attend more activities. So, when they are in third grade there seems to be a gap. The gap tends to widen throughout the course of the academic years. However, AVID tends to stop the gap from widening and sometimes reduces the gap. We started in seventh grade with AVID to work on closing the gap and support students towards entering college.

A SDSU freshman said that AVID helped to prepare her for college. She explained that AVID helped her focus on what she needed to work on during her junior year. Furthermore, she added that she learned how to complete college and financial aid applications, and she learned what to expect once she got to college. She explained that it made a difference in preparing her for college and in doing well, once she arrived at SDSU. Another HHS student said, “AVID is probably the only class that directly addresses skills for college outside the subject.” She explained that AVID taught her real-life skills for college aside from the academics. She described it as a “how-to-guide for college.” It appeared that students who took an AVID class felt better prepared for college and had a clearer sense of what to expect during their freshman year.

Summary

Factors that influenced changes in students’ expectations and motivation and factors that influenced students’ preparedness for college were the two overarching factors that influenced increased numbers of SUHSD graduates entering SDSU through the Compact. These two factors are summarized below in response to the research questions that guided this study.
**First Research Question**

The first research question guiding this study asked, “What key elements have influenced increases in the number of graduating Sweetwater Union High School District seniors entering San Diego State University through the Compact for Success?”

The participant interviews and document reviews revealed two overarching factors that contributed to increases in college attendance among SUHSD students:

(a) factors that influenced changes in students’ expectations and motivation, and

(b) factors that influenced students’ preparedness for college.

Sweetwater Union High School District students were more likely to expect themselves to attend college because of several factors associated with the Compact for Success. Specifically, the Compact included (a) efforts to make college seem familiar and comfortable, (b) efforts to change/strengthen the college expectations of parents, (c) a conditional guaranteed acceptance into SDSU, (d) clear and consistent communication about college requirements, and (e) efforts to build school cultures that constantly promoted college.

College campus visits and college guest speakers made college seem familiar and comfortable to students. College campus visits motivated students and raised their expectations that they would do well in school and attend college. These efforts helped SUHSD students recognize that students who attend college were similar to them (racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically). In addition, students had the opportunity to demystify the college experience by seeing what college life looks like. Guest speakers painted a picture of college life by sharing their college experiences. It was important that guest speakers were able to relate to students. The guest speakers were within the
same age bracket as the SUHSD students, had similar racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, and talked about college life and their experiences. In addition, college campus visits and college guest speakers allowed students to become familiar and comfortable with attending college. These experiences influenced increases in the number of graduating seniors entering SDSU through the Compact for Success.

Changing/strengthening the college expectations of parents appeared to be an important factor in motivating students to attend college. After participating in Compact activities, parents became more aware of the possibility that their children could realistically attend college. Parents learned that an important component of the Compact for Success was that every student could potentially be eligible to attend SDSU. Parents came to expect that their children could attend college and they, in turn, shared this expectation with their children. The expectation that college could be part of their child’s future motivated parents to become more involved in school activities and in the educational progress of their children.

The Compact’s guaranteed admission component seemed to be an important factor in increasing the expectations and motivation of students in attending SDSU. The guaranteed admission allowed students to concentrate on academics and focus on meeting specific conditions that students perceived as attainable. Students knew that, if they followed the prescribed requirements of the Compact, they would be accepted into SDSU. In addition, having clear and consistent communication about college requirements seemed to be an important element of the success of the program. Once students understood these requirements, college attendance seemed doable, and the college entrance process was demystified. Some participants shared that they thought
about college only after they participated in one or more Compact activities where they were provided information that helped them see how possible it was to attend college.

Promoting school cultures that constantly promoted college seemed to influence students’ motivation to attend college attendance. The Compact for Success partnership appeared to continuously promote a college-going culture in the SUHSD. An important aspect of the Compact was ensuring teachers were well informed about the partnership. The Compact leaders helped teachers learn about the advantages the Compact provided for students, and how to ensure student eligibility for college through the Compact. As teachers provided students with information about college and made college seem available for everyone, students were more likely to think that attending college was a real possibility. In addition, teachers exerted a high degree of influence in motivating students by providing relevant information about college.

While the factors that influenced expectations and motivation were clearly influential, they were not sufficient to explain the increased college readiness of SUHSD students. Student expectations might not have been sustained in the absence of extensive efforts to increase students’ preparedness for college. Specifically, students in SUHSD benefitted from (a) rigorous classes/curriculum designed to prepare students for college, (b) teachers who aligned their classes with college courses, and (c) academic support programs designed to deepen understanding of content.

The implementation of rigorous classes/curriculum emerged as an important factor that influenced increases in the college eligibility of SUHSD seniors. Participants described students’ access to high levels of academic rigor through Advanced Placement courses and honors courses, but also as an integral component of the English and math
Furthermore, they described how district policies and the rigor of the curriculum ensured students were enrolled in the right classes that enabled them to meet the conditions of the requirements of the Compact and become college-ready. Another important factor that influenced students’ preparedness for college was the curricular alignment of math and English courses in SUHSD to freshman math and English courses at SDSU. Although there was vertical alignment in both subjects, the English component was a major focus, especially the writing component. By improving students’ writing skills, students achieved higher scores on their proficiency tests and were better prepared for the demand and rigor of classes during their freshman year.

Furthermore, the academic support component emerged as an important determinant in students’ preparedness for college. One of the support programs that seemed to influence college preparedness was the Saturday Scholars program at HHS. The AVID program was another important support to SUHSD students.

**Second Research Question**

The second research question asked, “Are there differences in support systems across schools, and how might these differences contribute to different level of results? The findings of the interviews revealed that there were differences and similarities across schools. Compact for Success activities that supported increased motivation and expectations of students were similar throughout the district. In addition, factors influencing students’ college-readiness seemed to be similar across schools. These factors included vertical alignment of classes, rigorous curriculum, and professional development of teachers. However, one major difference between schools was the Saturday Scholars program offered at HHS. The Saturday Scholars program appeared to
generate better results in increasing college-readiness and entrance into SDSU. This program was implemented only at HHS.
CHAPTER 5—SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Background

The Compact for Success is an agreement between the Sweetwater Union High School District (SUHSD) and San Diego State University (SDSU) that guarantees graduating SUHSD seniors admission into SDSU’s freshman class. According to Superintendent E. Brand (personal communication, June 16, 2013), SUHSD’s primary goal is to put a college education within the grasp of every young person who comes through its schools. Since the implementation of the Compact for Success, there have been gains in the numbers of SUHSD graduates who apply, are admitted, and attend SDSU right after high school; however, the reasons for the gains were unclear.

There may be many variables involved in making this college-readiness partnership successful; therefore, it was important to interview current and previous year participants and to assess students and staff’s perceptions about the partnership and the school programs that help students become eligible to enter SDSU through the Compact. The purpose of this study was to identify the key elements that have influenced increases in the number of graduating seniors entering a 4-year university, specifically San Diego State University.

Methodology and Research Questions

The methodology used in this study is the qualitative tradition of case study. This study was conducted using individual and focus group interviews from key informants. Additionally, the study included the collection and review of documents related to the Compact for Success. While the case under consideration was the implementation of the Compact for Success throughout the SUHSD, this study focused upon two
demographically diverse high schools in SUHSD. The two schools selected were Hilltop High School (HHS) and Chula Vista High School (CVHS). These schools were selected because they serve demographically diverse groups of students and because several indicators of academic performance suggest that achievement at these schools is higher than achievement at similar schools in the district (CDE, 2012).

Students were interviewed in either a focus-group setting or individually using a semi-structured protocol. The questions allowed students to discuss the specific targeted interventions that were available to them, which they believe supported them academically during their high school experience. Each teacher, counselor, and principal, the superintendent, and the Compact for Success Coordinator was interviewed individually using a semi-structured protocol. The questions provided educators an opportunity to describe their perceptions of why they believed the Compact for Success seems to be producing better results.

This study examined the factors that might be influencing improvements in results associated with the Compact for Success partnership between SUHSD and SDSU. The following two questions directed this study:

1. What key elements have influenced increases in the number of graduating Sweetwater Union High School District seniors entering San Diego State University through the Compact for Success?

2. Are there differences in support systems across schools and how might these differences contribute to different level of results?
Connections Between Key Findings and Research Literature

There are important connections between the research literature and the key findings. In particular, this study generated findings similar to other studies related to the key features of successful partnerships. Also, similar to the research literature, many of this study’s findings fall within two overarching themes: factors influencing changes in student expectations and motivation, and factors influencing changes in students’ preparedness for college.

Key Features of Successful Partnerships

Pietre (2011) found that successful school university partnerships require deliberate planning and ongoing attention. In addition, Pietre argued that successful partners provide unique opportunities for all stakeholders to create a culture of quality and meaningful results based on high expectations and a well-designed plan. The present study found that the Compact for Success was similarly grounded in a shared commitment to quality and meaningful results. The Compact for Success Director, L. Murillo (personal communication, June 15, 2013), explained that SUHSD and SDSU were both equally involved in reshaping the college-going culture of the South Bay area. Both partners are part of parent meetings, College Making it Happen events at schools, and financial aid workshops. These events are planned for the parents and the students so that they demystify the whole process of going to college. Additionally, the partners continue to monitor and refine the program so that it results in high levels of academic success for SUHSD students. As an example of this on-going improvement, Murillo explained:
A great blue print [was established] in the form of the memorandum of understanding that spells out the responsibilities of each of the members of the partnership. The one created in 1999 stayed unchanged for a long time. As we were prepared to change Presidents at SDSU, I approached the Superintendent at SUHSD and said maybe it is time to review the MOU and bring it up to speed to current situations. Some things like the Compact Scholars had never been thought of at the time and it needed to be inserted. We now have a document that is more current and is a better reflection of what is happening. That’s strength. Although the program has changed in terms of leadership, over time, everybody is still committed to the success of the Compact. Teachers, counselors, and administrations who have been involved have seen it grow and see it as a point of pride. The whole purpose of the Compact is to change the culture of the district and to make sure all students understood that they could go to college. And this has been very successful and we have changed the culture with students, parents, community, as well as teachers and counselors. The fact that it was jointly created between the district and SDSU is very important. We each bought into making it work, so it had the strength of that collaboration.

Kamler et al. (2009) reported that collaborations suffer when the participants have different ideas about the roles and responsibilities of their partners. Distinct goals for university and school participants should be established before collaborations begin. In addition, Kamler et al. explained that selecting the right partner is also essential for a successful partnership. In the case of the Compact for Success, the findings illustrate
how SDSU and SUHSD have collaborated very closely since the inception of the Compact.

**Factors That Influenced Changes in Students’ Expectations and Motivation**

This study found that the Compact for Success influenced increases in the number of students who attended college, in part, because of program elements that influenced students’ expectations and motivation related to attending college. Sweetwater Union High School District students were more likely to expect themselves to attend college because of several factors associated with the Compact for Success. The Compact included (a) efforts to make college seem familiar and comfortable, (b) efforts to change/strengthen the college expectations of parents, (c) a conditional guaranteed acceptance into SDSU, (d) clear and consistent communication about college requirements, and (e) efforts to build school cultures that constantly promoted college. Some of these factors have been addressed in findings from other studies.

**Making college seem familiar and providing clear and consistent communication.** Martin (1999) explained that some early college intervention programs target minority and low-income students. Many of these students are first-generation college students who need preparation and information about college. In his study, the partnership built college awareness, provided information about programs and pathways to college, and perhaps, most importantly, promoted the belief that attending college was possible (Martin, 1999). Similarly, an important feature of the Compact for Success is that, through a series of activities, the Compact promotes college awareness among students and parents, provides information about programs and college life, and embeds in students the belief that college could be a reality for anyone.
The Compact implements a myriad of activities that helps students become familiar with college. A key element is the SDSU college visits for 7th and 10th graders. The visits allow students to learn about and experience college life. Students reported that the visits helped them see themselves attending college. In addition, through these activities, some students realized that attending college was not as different or overwhelming as they imagined.

In addition, L. Murillo (personal communication, June 15, 2013) explained that by providing a continuous stream of information to parents about college, even if they did not attend college or even graduate from high school, the Compact helped parents become more supportive of their children. Murillo argued that parent workshops, college visits, and informational college meetings prepared parents to support their students. Parents learned to ask their children about their homework, provide them a space to do their school work, attend parent nights, and participate in their children’s school activities. Furthermore, Murillo added, “It is important to create a college-going culture at home. Creating an environment at home that says ‘we value education and we are willing to support you in every facet of your journey.’”

Findings from the present study suggest that the more exposure a student has to information regarding the Compact for Success, college life, benefits of attending college, and the realization that college could be attainable for anyone, the more likely the student will pursue college after the senior year. Providing activities that provide college information to students has to be done through a systems approach. It needs to include college trips, parent meetings, college fairs, and the constant bombardment of information regarding college and accessibility to it. In addition, teachers play an integral part of this
equation. Teachers need to be constantly promoting going to college and informing students on college opportunities.

**College-going expectations.** Although poor postsecondary student outcomes are closely related to low levels of academic preparation, there is also evidence that students who are academically prepared also struggle to remain in college (Roksa et al., 2009). Furthermore, Roksa et al. (2009) explained that even academically proficient students also have trouble persisting in college, which indicates that college readiness encompasses more than academic skill. New college students must learn to navigate a complex system of bureaucratic requirements, learn new study habits and time-management strategies, and engage in new kinds of social relationships. Students who do not have this knowledge are unlikely to be successful in college, even if they have the required academic skills (Karp, 2012). Cabrera et al. (2001) argued that a critical step on the path to college is that students develop expectations to go and plan to go to college. In addition, they found that college plans and expectations are a crucial piece of the process of becoming qualified for college and college outreach program.

Similarly, findings in this study revealed that student expectations are a crucial factor in motivating students to attend college and become college-ready. Also, this study pointed to the importance of parent/family support based on the family expectations related to their child’s college attendance. According to some study participants, one of the most influential determinants to attending college was the expectation their parents had for their life after high school. The expectation was to do well in school and attend college. In addition, there was a culture of support and encouragement at home. Even when parents could not help their children directly with academics, students felt
supported and pushed to excel in school. Hilltop High School’s principal explained that many parents assume that their children are going to college, and they instill that expectation in their children from a young age, so it is not a question of if they are going to college, but rather which college are they going to attend. In the SUHSD, the Compact for Success deliberately sought to elevate all parents’ expectations of college attendance for their children. Furthermore, this study found that teachers’ expectations also influenced students’ expectations and motivations related to college. A SDSU student explained how it helped her to be involved in MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano @ de Aztlán) and soccer during her high school years. She said that both her soccer coach and MEChA advisor had really high expectations for her and continuously pushed her to do better. In addition, she described how her MEChA advisor would always talk about college and made sure she kept up with her academic work. Comparable to the findings of the study, Rozycki (2004) explained that successful college-ready interventions for students in at-risk situations need to include attainable goals that are clear, student progress that is carefully observed, high expectations for all, and understandable rules for behavior enforced by family.

**College visits, guest speakers, and parental involvement.** Cates and Schaefle (2011) found that the GEAR UP programs vary from site to site; however, most of them include 11 key elements that have proven to influence positive student results. These elements include: rigorous course taking, the goal of college attendance, parental involvement, college tours beginning in the eighth grade, the promotion of academic skills, parent college awareness, SAT/ACT training, parent assistance with financial aid forms, involvement in student activities, and college awareness or exposure. Cates and
Schaefle found that out of the 11 elements the most important ones were the first five (rigorous course taking, goal of college attendance, parental involvement, college tours beginning in the eighth grade, and the promotion of academic skills). In addition, the study explained that the GEAR UP program encourages students to plan to attend college, increases academic preparedness, and provides social and cultural capital to students and their families in order to help minimize the barriers to college attendance.

Some participants felt that the college visits provided them with an opportunity to experience college life. Students could see themselves as part of the experience of attending college. In addition, some realized that attending college was really not as different or overwhelming as they imagined it. In addition, after the college visit to SDSU, students came back motivated to go to college and committed to fulfill the Compact for Success agreement to be guaranteed admission into SDSU. The feeling of being at a college campus seemed to resonate with students and appears to contribute to students wanting to attend college. Furthermore, participants who did not believe college could be a reality prior to the college visit were able to see themselves as college students after the visiting SDSU.

Perna (2002) indicated that students self-reported that the most important influences in making the decision to attend college were college visits and receiving direct information about the path for college. In addition, students indicated that the college visit that most influenced them to attend college was the sixth-grade trip and that the subsequent trips, although influential, were of lesser degree. According to Perna, this may indicate that an early visit has a greater influence than later trips, which may support the importance of beginning college outreach or intervention programs prior to
eighth grade. Similarly, the Compact for Success provides a college visit to SDSU to all seventh grade students. L. Murillo (personal communication, June 15, 2013) explained that the seventh grade campus visit is a good introduction to the Compact and to SDSU. He argued that, in many cases, parents do not have an awareness of going to college, because they have never been on a college campus, so this is an enlightening experience for them, and they can be more supportive.

The present study findings indicate that parent support and involvement were influential factors in changing students’ expectations and motivation related to attending college. The Compact for Success helped increase parent support and involvement by helping parents/family members know how to navigate through the educational system, get involved in their child’s school activities, and provide useful and relevant information regarding colleges and college readiness. Specifically, parents of SUHSD students learned what classes students needed to take to help them become better prepared for college. Also, parents acquired knowledge regarding college tuition and financial aid. Although many parents do not have the educational experience that allows them to help their children pilot through the educational system, the Compact for Success offered several activities, which informed parents of college opportunities and provided a safe environment for parents to participate in their child’s education. These activities helped inform parents of college opportunities and college requirements, as well as provided opportunities for parents to get involved in their children’s activities.

Similar to the findings of Cates and Schaefle (2011), the findings of this study showed that college guest speakers were found to be instrumental in helping students attend college. Participants described different settings where listening to college guest
speakers helped to motivate students to attend college and encouraged them to focus on academics. These settings included school-wide assemblies, in-class speakers, and presentations from college advisors and mentors. Participants shared that when students learned about college life they appeared to be more interested in attending college. Similar to the impact college visits make on students, participants explained that guest speakers who share their college experiences motivated students to be part of college life.

**Factors That Influenced Students’ Preparedness for College**

Other studies emphasized factors that influenced students’ motivation to attend college. Most of these studies provided little attention to factors that influenced students’ preparedness for college. In the present study, the findings suggest that attention to motivational factors alone may not be sufficient to ensure that students would be adequately prepared to meet rigorous college admissions criteria. Moreover, a focus limited to motivational factors might not adequately ensure that students succeed in college after they obtain admission.

Through the Compact for Success, students in SUHSD benefitted from (a) rigorous classes/curriculum designed to prepare students for college, (b) teachers who aligned their classes with college courses, and (c) academic support programs designed to deepen understanding of content.

**Rigorous classes/curricula.** While most of the existing literature related to the preparation of diverse populations of students for college focuses on strategies to increase student expectations, one study clearly addressed the importance of rigor.

In their study of GEAR UP programs, Cates and Schaeble (2011) found 11 key elements that have proven to influence positive student results. One of the five elements
determined to be most influential was rigorous course taking. The present study adds depth to this finding by emphasizing that Compact for Success students had access to a curriculum designed to increase preparedness for the rigors of a college education. Students were required to take courses aligned to the state’s A-G requirements for admission to a California State University or a University of California campus. Students also received increased access to Advanced Placement (AP) and honors courses. Additionally, core academic courses in mathematics and English were redesigned to align with the expectations of SDSU freshman courses in those subjects.

**Tutoring, after-school activities, and mentoring.** Cates and Schaefle (2011) indicated that several program elements that were common in other intervention college-ready programs were not found to significantly influence students’ decision to attend college. These elements include tutoring, mentoring, after-school homework assistance, and after-school activities. In contrast, in the present student, these factors were important in helping students become college-ready by raising academic performance. Similarly, participants indicated that tutoring, extra-curricular activities, and mentoring helped students become college-ready. The principal of CVHS mentioned that students were experiencing success in their tutoring program because the school had made it more focused and strategic. He explained that since they started focusing tutoring sessions on specific standards and allowing students to retake tests, the results have improved.

Witherspoon (2011) found that teachers know how to raise student achievement during Saturday Academy, but they also have obstacles such as time to collaborate and prepare activities that need to be addressed that prevent them from increasing
achievement. Teachers had fewer discipline issues than during their regular classes, and they attributed it to smaller classes and providing more engaging activities. Finally, the most successful element from the Academy was that all of the participants finished the program very motivated and with the desire to apply and enroll in college after graduating high school. Similarly, the Saturday Scholars program at HHS appeared to have better results in preparing students for college. Although Witherspoon found that teachers had obstacles such as time to collaborate and prepare Saturday school activities, the teachers at HHS prepare their activities during their Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings. Students who participated in the Saturday Scholars program at HHS felt their grades increased, and they were better prepared for the academic rigor of college.

According to the principal of HHS, data related to the CAHSEE (California High School Exit Exam), D and F lists, and API (California Academic Performance Index) have shown an improvement since HHS implemented the Saturday Academy program. Furthermore, he argued that a key component for the success of the Saturday program is the buy-in from parents, teachers, and students. In addition, the HHS principal explained that the Saturday program allows students to take control of their own learning. They attend the program voluntarily, so there are almost no discipline issues on Saturdays. He argues that students are there to learn and improve their grades. He said, “If students cannot do it on their own, this is an excellent way to find something consistent where they know they can take advantage of it and be supported.”

Implications for Secondary School Leaders

This study analyzed a myriad of partnerships between school districts and colleges/universities. It provided an in-depth look at particular partnerships that have
achieved better results. This study may provide other educational leaders with a deeper understanding of current partnerships between school districts and colleges/universities and may inform them about particular types of school partnerships that may be useful in improving college access and success. In particular, this study emphasizes the importance of partners working together in pursuit of clear goals related to college attendance and preparedness. It is important for partners to consider how they will work together to continue examining data and refining their programs over time.

The findings in this study indicate that there were two overarching themes that appeared to influence increased college enrollment through the Compact for Success. The first theme addressed factors that changed students’ expectations and motivation related to attending college. Several specific factors helped influence the change of students’ expectations and motivation in attending college. These factors included (a) efforts to make college seem familiar and comfortable, (b) efforts to change/strengthen the college expectations of parents, (c) the conditional guaranteed acceptance into SDSU, (d) the clear and consistent communication about college requirements, and (e) the efforts to build school cultures that constantly promoted college. As secondary school leaders consider how they might improve college attendance, they should consider how they structure opportunities to engage parents in ways that help parents elevate their expectations for their children. As well, programs should help parents know how to monitor their child’s progress toward meeting college admissions criteria. Additionally, it is important for secondary school leaders to note that the efforts undertaken by the Compact for Success did not occur in one event or even in one year. Instead, these efforts
persisted over time in ways that were designed to influence a college-going culture throughout the entire school district.

The second theme focused upon factors that changed students’ preparedness for college. These factors include (a) rigorous classes/curriculum designed to prepare students for college, (b) teachers who aligned their classes with college courses, and (c) academic support programs designed to deepen understanding of content. It is important for secondary school leaders to embrace the importance of increasing academic rigor throughout their schools. If levels of academic rigor are insufficient to lead students to succeed in college-level courses, students may successfully enroll in college but may be more likely to drop out during or after the first year. Through the Compact for Success, not only did the SUHSD increase access to high-level courses, but they also increased the rigor of core academic courses in mathematics and English. Specifically, mathematics and English teachers worked with college professors to ensure that course offerings were aligned so that high school graduates would be more likely to achieve success once they entered college. Finally, it is important for secondary school leaders to understand that as they increase the academic rigor of courses, they should also consider how they will provide support for students who need help in meeting more rigorous academic standards. In SUHSD, students received support through Saturday tutoring programs, Saturday academies, and AVID programs. These support efforts helped students perceive that they could successfully meet challenging more rigorous expectations in their academic courses.
Implication for Universities

This study provides valuable findings for university leaders interested in reaching out to diverse populations of high school students and increasing their access to postsecondary education. There were important findings related to the importance of the university’s efforts to reach out to students and families to change the students’ expectations and motivations. In the Compact for Success, the university made expectations for college eligibility clear. The clear, consistent dissemination of information helped ensure that low-income families had a quantity and quality of information about college and college-life that was comparable to the quality of information available to many high-income families.

In addition, the findings suggest that successful partnerships require universities to support secondary school teachers in aligning their curricula so that students are likely to meet college eligibility criteria and experience success in college. Through the Compact for Success, university professors actively supported efforts to strengthen the secondary program curriculum by working with teachers to align curricular expectations. Just as university personnel worked to increase transparency related to college admissions, they worked to increase transparency related to the curricular expectations of freshman courses in mathematics and English. If colleges and universities are serious about increasing student access and success, they must be prepared to reach out to teachers and principals and engage in deliberate efforts to improve the curricula provided to secondary school students.
Implications for Future Research

The findings of this study suggest areas for future research. The study focused on two high schools in SUHSD. Future studies could consider examining a larger sample including high schools that have different demographic populations than those used in this study. This may provide a deeper understanding of the implications of intervention systems and the impact on college readiness.

The findings that emerged from this study emphasized two overarching themes as prominent elements: factors that influenced students’ expectations and motivation to attend college and factors that helped students become college-ready. The themes that emerged from this study influenced the extent to which larger numbers of SUHSD students have attended college after their senior year. However, further research should explore the specific influences and impact of each of those themes. In particular, more research needs to address factors that influence students’ preparedness for the academic rigor of college. Future studies could examine each theme individually to determine what can schools and universities do to support the implementation in ways that resulted in a greater impact on college readiness.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore the factors related to the Compact for Success partnership between San Diego State University and the Sweetwater Union High School District that have generated increases in the number of graduating seniors entering SDSU. Furthermore, the intent of the research was to find differences in support systems across schools and how might these differences have contributed to different levels of results.
Participants of this study were interviewed using an individual or focused semi-structured interview setting. Participants included sophomores, seniors, teachers, counselors, and principals of two similar high schools in the SUHSD. In addition, the superintendent of SUHSD and Compact for Success Director of SDSU were interviewed. The findings that emerged provide districts/universities with a roadmap of possible interventions that could be implemented to promote a college-going culture and college-readiness.

It was evident that students who were in a supportive environment that promoted a college-going culture were more likely to attend college after their senior year. Additionally, the more exposure students had to college-environment opportunities, such as college visits and college mentor presentations, the stronger their interest in attending college. Furthermore, college entrance after students’ senior year appeared to increase when there was a combination of academic rigor and support, a college-going culture, and parent/family support. Additionally, the findings revealed that successful interventions need to have a laser focus and results need to be constantly reviewed.

The Compact for Success partnership between Sweetwater Union High School District and San Diego State University appears to be yielding positive results in graduating a higher number of college-ready students and increasing the number of students entering SDSU. Additionally, as a result of the Compact, all schools in the Sweetwater District have implemented certain interventions targeted to increase the number of graduating seniors attending SDSU. Furthermore, individual schools have implemented their own interventions, targeting the individual needs of their student populations. These interventions have also assisted in increasing the number of students
entering SDSU after their senior year. The Compact for Success has created a college-going culture in the Sweetwater District that includes all stakeholders. This culture has enabled increased numbers of graduating seniors to be college-ready, to apply and enroll in SDSU, and to be successful as college students.
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX A

List of Courses Required in the A-G Curriculum

A) History/social studies
Two years of history/social science, including:
One year of world history, cultures and geography (may be a single year-long course or two one-semester courses), and 1 year of U.S. history or 1 1/2 years of U.S. history and 1/2 year of civics or American government.

B) English
Four years of college-preparatory English that include frequent writing, from brainstorming to final paper, as well as reading of classic and modern literature. No more than 1 year of ESL-type courses can be used to meet this requirement.

C) Mathematics
Three years (4 years recommended) of college-preparatory mathematics that includes the topics covered in elementary and advanced algebra and two- and three-dimensional geometry.
Approved integrated math courses may be used to fulfill part or this entire requirement, as may math courses taken in the seventh and eighth grades if the high school accepts them as equivalent to its own courses.
NOTE: Effective for fall 2015 applicants (students applying to UC in November 2014), all students must complete a geometry course; one transferable college course will not satisfy the full 3-year math requirement.

D) Laboratory science
Two years (3 years recommended) of laboratory science providing fundamental knowledge in two of these three foundational subjects: biology, chemistry and physics. The final 2 years of an approved 3-year integrated science program that provides rigorous coverage of at least two of the three foundational subjects may be used to fulfill this requirement.

E) Language other than English
Two years (3 years recommended) of the same language other than English. Courses should emphasize speaking and understanding, and include instruction in grammar, vocabulary, reading, composition and culture. American Sign Language and classical languages, such as Latin and Greek, are acceptable. Courses taken in the seventh and eighth grades may be used to fulfill part or the entire requirement if the high school accepts them as equivalent to its own courses.

F) Visual and performing arts
One year-long course of visual and performing arts chosen from the following: dance, drama/theater, music or visual art.
G) College-prep elective
One year (two semesters), in addition to those required in “a-f” above, chosen from the following areas: visual and performing arts (nonintroductory-level courses), history, social science, English, advanced mathematics, laboratory science and language other than English (a third year in the language used for the “e” requirement or 2 years of another language).
APPENDIX B

Memorandum of Understanding

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN
SWEETWATER UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT AND SAN YSIDRO SCHOOL DISTRICT
AND
SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

Preface - AN AGREEMENT FOR A COMPACT FOR SUCCESS BASED ON WORKING TO MAKE STUDENTS COLLEGE READY RESULTING IN GUARANTEED ADMISSION TO SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY.

The Sweetwater Union High School District operates the largest secondary school district in California and is responsible for preparing thousands of students annually for college entrance and/or work placement, with the majority of students going on to college in San Diego County.

San Ysidro School District is a K-8 public school district within close proximity to the U.S.-Mexico border. Its mission is to provide a challenging and rich education experience for students to be successful high school students.

San Diego State University is the oldest and largest higher education institution in the San Diego region. Since being founded in 1897, the university has grown to become a nationally ranked research university.

The Compact for Success partners agree that the following section represents the foundation for the guaranteed admission program and is in concert with SDSU’s selective admission standards and deadlines. Graduating students from SUHSD shall:

- Enroll in the SUHSD from the 7th grade through high school graduation
- Have a cumulative 3.00 GPA or higher in the a-g courses at the time of application and through their senior year
- Complete a-g courses with a C or higher
- Clear math and writing remediation requirements via SAT/ACT scores, ELM/EPT scores or EAP
- Take the SAT or ACT exam (no minimum score required)

All institutions have a commitment to the people of San Diego and to enhancing student success. Together the three institutions are entering into a partnership to expand and enhance the educational opportunities for residents living in the South Bay area.

Sweetwater, San Ysidro, and San Diego State have agreed that a strong college preparation program, guaranteed admission and support program will provide a valuable mechanism for dramatically increasing the number and percentage of Sweetwater graduates qualifying for admission to San Diego State University. Toward that end, the partners have developed the Compact for Success to better prepare students, for academic success at San Diego State University.
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Sweetwater Union High School District and San Ysidro School District Commitment

As part of the Compact for Success, the Districts agree to provide all students a rigorous program of study and support which will provide them with an opportunity to meet the requirements for entrance to San Diego State University without the need for remedial college courses upon graduation from high school. Working with SDSU, the Districts will develop benchmarks for:

- a-g sequencing of courses
- Grade point average
- PSAT, SAT, ELM and EPT preparation
- CST Scores
- Rigorous college preparatory program and skill requirements

Furthermore, the Districts will support the attainment of these benchmarks with an enhanced secondary education program. Toward that end, the Districts will:

- Implement a clear statement of expectations for seventh grade and subsequent years to be provided to staff, parents, community and elementary districts
- Offer Algebra curriculum for eighth graders
- Support classes in and outside the school day
- Initiate seventh through ninth grade literacy interventions for students in need of intense acceleration
- Provide additional Advanced Placement course offerings
- Expand the number of middle school science courses per new promotion requirements
- Implement new, rigorous graduation and promotion requirements
- Provide an expanded number of science laboratories in middle and high schools
- Implement training for middle school teachers in AVID program strategies
- Through the BTSA program require participation in staff development programs to improve literacy and mathematics skills for teachers
- Continue to identify and refine criteria for identifying and supporting incoming at-risk students
- Implement a systematic program of parent communication and education
- Provide students and parents transportation to San Diego State for visits and orientations
- Prepare and provide annual reports on the progress of each participating class
- Implement a Language Arts pedagogy to address rhetorical approach
- Work with San Diego State University to develop a comprehensive student orientation and visitation program for pre-collegiate advisement including: selection of college major, financial aid, and other college entrance matters
- Work with San Diego State University to communicate the guaranteed admission and its program requirements to all students, parents, teachers, staff and community members

San Diego State University's Commitment

As part of the Compact for Success, San Diego State University will provide all entering students who complete the established requirements, a guarantee of admission at San Diego State University. The benchmarks are as follows:
• Enroll in the SUHSD from the 7th grade through high school graduation
• Have a cumulative 3.00 GPA or higher in the A-G courses at the time of application and through their senior year
• Complete A-G courses with a C or higher
• Clear math and writing remediation requirements via SAT/ACT scores, ELM/EPT scores or EAP Take the SAT or ACT exam (no minimum score required)

San Diego State University, San Ysidro School District, and Sweetwater Union High School District are committed to an inclusionary/supportive model that allows the students who fall behind in meeting the benchmarks to get back on track to qualify for guaranteed admission to SDSU. Toward that end, SDSU will:

• Identify available faculty to undertake the following:
  o collaborate with District teachers in curriculum development, course alignment and SDSU freshman course expectations
  o develop methodologies to enhance the effectiveness of teaching Finite Mathematics and Rhetoric and Writing courses
  o work together to assist students in choosing courses that will prepare them for their intended major, e.g., Senior Math
  o explore techniques that will enhance academic rigor across the curriculum and enrich and improve teacher training methodology
• Encourage participation of SDSU students in teacher credential programs to serve in a practicum to better understand best practices, teaching techniques and educational research methodologies required of successful teachers in the District
• Work with the District to communicate the guaranteed admission and its program requirements to all students, parents, teachers, staff and community members
• Provide District juniors and seniors with the opportunity to take the ELM and EPT to determine readiness of college level work, and count passing scores toward meeting the SDSU entrance requirements
• Hire and train SDSU students as Compact Advisors for assignment in middle schools to serve as mentors and to work with students to keep them on track to complete the Compact for Success benchmarks. Compact Advisors shall be placed at middle schools pending available resources
• Work with District staff to plan how to utilize Compact Advisors in their assignment at the middle schools
• Plan and implement Compact for Success core activities to include but not limited to campus visits for 10th grade students and a 7th grade campus visit for students and their parents. Other activities shall be implemented to provide information to parents and students regarding all aspects of preparation for college
• Work with District staff to plan and implement campus visits for on-track 10th graders to gain an understanding of how to create a CSU Mentor account and track their high school grades

The Compact Scholars Program is the postsecondary component of the Compact for Success. Once the SUHSD students have satisfied the Compact for Success benchmarks and have enrolled at SDSU, they become "Compact Scholars." At this point, their progress to degree completion is supported as an integral component of the Division of Undergraduate Studies’ Thomas B. Day Student Success Programs. Toward that end, the Division of Undergraduate Studies will:
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- Coordinate the distribution of scholarship awards for eligible scholars with the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships and the Sweetwater Education Foundation (SEF)
- Advise students and support them in meeting their academic goals to include: general academic advising and intensive advising interventions such as academic progress reviews and referrals to specialized services
- Monitor student achievement and provide feedback in data reports to District staff on level of academic achievement at the University
- Provide reports and status updates for partnership stakeholders and cultivate support for student success with outside agencies, donors and funding organizations
- Encourage Compact Scholars to volunteer as speakers and serve as mentors in District schools and in Compact for Success sponsored events and programs
- Connect Compact Scholars to high impact educational experiences at SDSU including: common intellectual experiences, learning communities, study abroad, service-learning, undergraduate research, internships and leadership development
- Promote Compact Scholar participation in campus initiatives that support academic excellence such as the University Honors Program, Honors Council, and national merit awards and honor societies

Joint Commitment of Partners

- The District and University will collaboratively work to obtain additional public and private funds to support and enhance the activities outlined in the agreement.

II. TERMS OF MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

This Memorandum of Understanding can be amended or extended by mutual agreement of the partners. Under the terms of this Memorandum of Understanding, the SDSU admission guarantee will be extended to the ninth grade classes of 2011/12, 2012/13, and 2013/14.

San Diego State University, the Sweetwater Union High School District, and San Ysidro School District enter into this agreement on the 12th day of October, 2011.

/s/ Elliot Hirshman, Ph.D.
President
San Diego State University

/s/ Edward M. Brand, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Sweetwater Union High School District

/s/ Manuel Paul
Superintendent
San Ysidro School District

MOU originally signed on March 10, 2000. Amended October 12, 2011
APPENDIX C

Parent Consent Form

Parent Consent to Participate in Research
Information to Consider Before Taking Part in This Research Study

Dear ____________.

My name is Eduardo Reyes, Principal Investigator of this study. I am an assistant principal at Hilltop High School in the Sweetwater Union High School District and also, I am a doctoral candidate in educational leadership at San Diego State University. Dr. Joseph Johnson, Executive Director of the National Center for Urban School Transformation (NCUST) and the QUALCOMM Professor of Urban Education at San Diego State University, is my advisor. I am conducting a study to evaluate the effectiveness of the Compact for Success partnership and to identify the key elements that have influenced increases in the number of graduating seniors entering a four-year college. In this study, I will be interviewing a variety of teachers and administrators who work with the Compact for Success and a variety of students who have participated in the Compact. In particular, I will recruit 30 high school seniors who have been accepted into SDSU through the Compact for Success and 10 sophomores who are on track to qualify for the Compact. I am sending you this letter, because I would like your permission to interview your child.

If you agree to allow your child to participate in the study, he/she will be asked to participate in a group interview that will last from 25 minutes to 45 minutes. The group interview will be at the student’s school during school hours. There will only be one group interview and the student will be given an opportunity to describe his/her thoughts about the reasons the Compact for Success appears to be helping students achieve better results. Furthermore, the group interview will allow him/her to explain which specific programs or services have been most helpful. None of the procedures or questionnaires used in this study are experimental. Student answers to the interview questions will be analyzed to help identify the reasons more graduating seniors are entering four-year colleges. Students may be a little uncomfortable participating in the group interview because I am a school administrator. I will try to ease the discomfort by reminding students that they do not have to participate. I will also explain that even if they choose to participate, they do not have to answer questions. They can also stop participating if they become uncomfortable. The questions I ask during the group interview will be positive in nature, because I’m trying to learn about what has worked to help students succeed in school. This should also help reduce student discomfort. The focus group interview will be audio recorded.

When I report my findings, I will not report the names of any students who participated in the interviews. So, student responses will be anonymous. I will store all the audio and written information a locked file cabinet that nobody else can open. All records and information obtained from the interviews will be destroyed after three years.

Your child’s participation is voluntary and there will be no compensation. I cannot guarantee that you or your child will receive any benefits from this study;
however, this study may help other schools and universities develop strong partnerships that promote academic success for their students. In addition, students in other schools could benefit by receiving better programs and services that might help them prepare for college.

The San Diego State University Institutional Review Board has approved this consent form as signified by the Committee’s stamp. The consent form must be reviewed annually and expires on the date indicated on the stamp. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to allow your child to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this agreement. You have been told that by signing this consent document you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the research now, please ask. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact Eduardo Reyes at 619 476-4200. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the Division of Research Affairs at San Diego State University (telephone: 619-594-6622; email: irb@mail.sdsu.edu).

__________________________ Name of the Child: ___________________ Date ___________________
Eduardo Reyes
Project Representative

Parent’s Name: __________________________ 
Principal Investigator

Parent Signature: __________________________
APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Form for High School Students

Informed Consent Form (High School Students)
Information to Consider Before Taking Part in This Research Study

Dear ___________.

My name is Eduardo Reyes, Principal Investigator of this study. I am an assistant principal at Hilltop High School in the Sweetwater Union High School District and also, I am a doctoral candidate in educational leadership at San Diego State University. Dr. Joseph Johnson, Executive Director of the National Center for Urban School Transformation (NCUST) and the QUALCOMM Professor of Urban Education at San Diego State University, is my advisor. I am conducting a study to evaluate the effectiveness of the Compact for Success partnership and to identify the key elements that have influenced increases in the number of graduating seniors entering a four-year college. In this study, I will be interviewing students and staff from either Chula Vista High School or Hilltop High School. I will recruit 30 high school seniors, who have been accepted into SDSU through the Compact for Success, 10 sophomores who are on track to qualify for the Compact, 10 teachers, two counselors, and both principals. In addition, I will recruit six SDSU freshmen, who entered SDSU through the Compact for Success, the SUHSD superintendent, and the Compact for Success coordinator.

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to participate in a group interview that will last from 25 minutes to 45 minutes. The group interview will be at your school during school hours. There will only be one group interview and you will be given an opportunity to describe your thoughts about the reasons the Compact for Success appears to be helping students achieve better results. Furthermore, the group interview will allow you to explain which specific programs or services have been most helpful. None of the procedures or questionnaires used in this study are experimental. Your answers to the interview questions will be analyzed to help identify the reasons more graduating seniors are entering four-year colleges. If you choose to participate, you can stop participating if you become uncomfortable. The questions I ask during the group interview will be positive in nature, because I’m trying to learn about what has worked to help students succeed in school. This should also help reduce student discomfort. The focus group interview will be audio recorded.

When I report my findings, I will not report the names of anyone who participated in the interviews. Names will be kept anonymous; however, it may be possible for people to deduce someone’s identity because of the relatively small number of schools participating in the Compact for Success. I will store all the audio and written information a locked file cabinet that nobody else can open. All records and information obtained from the interviews will be destroyed after three years. Interviews will be audio recorded. If you choose not to be recorded, you may still participate in the study.

This study may help other schools and universities develop strong partnerships that promote academic success for their students. In addition, students in other schools could benefit by receiving better programs and services that might help them prepare for
college. Finally, this study could be significantly beneficial to other educational leaders by providing findings that could help other school districts replicate the program and the factors that have influenced the program’s success.

Participation is voluntary and there will be no compensation. Your decision of whether or not you want to participate will not prejudice your future relations with me, the Sweetwater Union High School District, or San Diego State University. If you have any questions or concerns you may contact me at (619) 204-2191 or email me at ereyes7@hotmail.com. You may also contact an IRB representative in the Division of Research Administration at San Diego State University (telephone: 619-594-6622; email: irb@mail.sdsu.edu). If you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue your participation at any time without penalty.

The San Diego State University Institutional Review Board has approved this consent form, as signified by the Board’s stamp. The consent form must be reviewed annually and expires on the date indicated on the stamp.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this consent form. You have been told that by signing this consent form you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

__________________________ Print Name: ______________________________
Eduardo Reyes
Project Representative
Signature: ______________________________
Principal Investigator
APPENDIX E

Assent Consent Form

**Assent Consent Form**

**Information to Consider Before Taking Part in This Research Study**

Dear ____________.

My name is Eduardo Reyes, Principal Investigator of this study. I am an assistant principal at Hilltop High School in the Sweetwater Union High School District and also, I am a doctoral candidate in educational leadership at San Diego State University. I am conducting a study to evaluate the effectiveness of the Compact for Success partnership and to identify the key elements that have influenced increases in the number of graduating seniors entering a four-year college.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in one group interview.
- The group interview will last from 25 minutes to 45 minutes.
- The group interview will be at your school during school hours.
- You will be given an opportunity to:
  - Describe your perceptions of why you believe the Compact for Success appears to be generating better results.
  - Explain which specific school programs or services have the most impact on student academic performance.
  - Share which school programs or services you believe help students become eligible for the Compact of Success and be accepted into San Diego State University.

None of the procedures or questionnaires used in this study are experimental.

Your answers to the interview questions will be analyzed to help identify the reasons more graduating seniors are entering four-year colleges. You are not required to participate in this study. If you choose not to participate, you will not be penalized in any way. Even if you choose to participate, you do not have to answer questions. Also, you can stop participating at any time if you become uncomfortable. The questions I ask during the group interview will be positive in nature, because I’m trying to learn about what has worked to help students succeed in school.

When I report my findings, I will not report the names of any students who participated in the interviews. So, your responses will be anonymous. I will store all the audio and written information a locked file cabinet that nobody else can open. All records and information obtained from the interviews will be destroyed after three years.
Your participation is voluntary and there will be no compensation. I cannot guarantee that you will receive any benefits from this study; however, this study may help other schools and universities develop strong partnerships that promote academic success for their students. In addition, students in other schools could benefit by receiving better programs and services that might help them prepare for college.

Please talk to your parents about this study before you decide whether to participate. We will also ask your parents if it is all right with them for you to take part in this study. If your parents say that you can be in the study, you can still decide not to participate. Taking part in this study is up to you. No one will be upset if you don’t want to participate. If you decide to participate, you can also change your mind and stop any time you want. If you have any questions, you may reach me at (619) 476-4200 or email at ereyes7@hotmail.com.

Please answer by placing a check on your response: Do you want to participate?
Yes _____ No _____

_________________________________________ Student’s Name: ______________________ Date ________________

Eduardo Reyes  Signature: __________________________
Project Representative
Principal Investigator
APPENDIX F

Informed Consent Form for SDSU Students

Informed Consent Form (SDSU Students)
Information to Consider Before Taking Part in This Research Study

Dear ____________.

My name is Eduardo Reyes, Principal Investigator of this study. I am an assistant principal at Hilltop High School in the Sweetwater Union High School District and also, I am a doctoral candidate in educational leadership at San Diego State University. Dr. Joseph Johnson, Executive Director of the National Center for Urban School Transformation (NCUST) and the QUALCOMM Professor of Urban Education at San Diego State University, is my advisor. I am conducting a study to evaluate the effectiveness of the Compact for Success partnership and to identify the key elements that have influenced increases in the number of graduating seniors entering a four-year college. In this study, I will be interviewing students and staff from either Chula Vista High School or Hilltop High School. I will recruit 30 high school seniors, who have been accepted into SDSU through the Compact for Success, 10 sophomores who are on track to qualify for the Compact, 10 teachers, two counselors, and both principals. In addition, I will recruit six SDSU freshmen, who entered SDSU through the Compact for Success, the SUHSD superintendent, and the Compact for Success coordinator.

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to participate in a group interview that will last from 25 minutes to 45 minutes. The group interview will be at your school during school hours. There will only be one group interview and you will be given an opportunity to describe your thoughts about the reasons the Compact for Success appears to be helping students achieve better results. Furthermore, the group interview will allow you to explain which specific programs or services have been most helpful. None of the procedures or questionnaires used in this study are experimental. Your answers to the interview questions will be analyzed to help identify the reasons more graduating seniors are entering four-year colleges. If you choose to participate, you can stop participating if you become uncomfortable. The questions I ask during the group interview will be positive in nature, because I’m trying to learn about what has worked to help students succeed in school. This should also help reduce student discomfort. The focus group interview will be audio recorded.

When I report my findings, I will not report the names of anyone who participated in the interviews. Names will be kept anonymous; however, it may be possible for people to deduce someone’s identity because of the relatively small number of schools participating in the Compact for Success. I will store all the audio and written information a locked file cabinet that nobody else can open. All records and information obtained from the interviews will be destroyed after three years. Interviews will be audio recorded. If you choose not to be recorded, you may still participate in the study.

This study may help other schools and universities develop strong partnerships that promote academic success for their students. In addition, students in other schools could benefit by receiving better programs and services that might help them prepare for
college. Finally, this study could be significantly beneficial to other educational leaders by providing findings that could help other school districts replicate the program and the factors that have influenced the program’s success.

Participation is voluntary and there will be no compensation. Your decision of whether or not you want to participate will not prejudice your future relations with me, the Sweetwater Union High School District, or San Diego State University. If you have any questions or concerns you may contact me at (619) 204-2191 or email me at ereyes7@hotmail.com. You may also contact an IRB representative in the Division of Research Administration at San Diego State University (telephone: 619-594-6622; email: irb@mail.sdsu.edu). If you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue your participation at any time without penalty.

The San Diego State University Institutional Review Board has approved this consent form, as signified by the Board’s stamp. The consent form must be reviewed annually and expires on the date indicated on the stamp.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this consent form. You have been told that by signing this consent form you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

_________________________ Print Name: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Eduardo Reyes
Project Representative
Principal Investigator

Signature: ___________________________
APPENDIX G

Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent to Participate in Research
Information to Consider Before Taking Part in This Research Study

Dear ____________

My name is Eduardo Reyes, Principal Investigator of this study. I am an assistant principal at Hilltop High School in the Sweetwater Union High School District and also, I am a doctoral candidate in educational leadership at San Diego State University. Dr. Joseph Johnson, Executive Director of the National Center for Urban School Transformation (NCUST) and the QUALCOMM Professor of Urban Education at San Diego State University, is my advisor. I am conducting a study to evaluate the effectiveness of the Compact for Success partnership and to identify the key elements that have influenced increases in the number of graduating seniors entering a four-year college. In this study, I will be interviewing students and staff from either Chula Vista High School or Hilltop High School. I will recruit 30 high school seniors, who have been accepted into SDSU through the Compact for Success, 10 sophomores who are on track to qualify for the Compact, 10 teachers, two counselors, and both principals. In addition, I will recruit six SDSU freshmen, who entered SDSU through the Compact for Success, the SUHSD superintendent, and the Compact for Success coordinator.

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to participate in an individual semi-structured interview that will last from 45 minutes to an hour. The interview will be held at your work site. There will only be one interview and you will be given an opportunity to describe your perception of why you believe the Compact for Success appears to be generating better results. Furthermore, the interview will allow you to explain which specific student interventions have the most impact on student academic performance and share which interventions you believe are the key factors that positively impact students by helping them be eligible for the Compact of Success and be accepted into San Diego State University. Answers to the interview questions will be analyzed to help identify the reasons more graduating seniors are entering four-year colleges. Sometimes, people are a little uncomfortable participating in such interviews, however, the questions I ask during the interview are positive in nature, because I’m trying to learn about what has worked to help students succeed in school. This should help reduce discomfort. Nonetheless, it is important to note that your participation is voluntary. Even if you choose to participate, you do not have to answer every question. You can stop participating if you become uncomfortable.

When I report my findings, I will not report the names of anyone who participated in the interviews. Names will be kept anonymous; however, it may be possible for people to deduce someone’s identity because of the relatively small number of schools participating in the Compact for Success. I will store all the audio and written information a locked file cabinet that nobody else can open. All records and information obtained from the interviews will be destroyed after three years. Interviews will be audio recorded. If you choose not to be recorded, you may still participate in the study.
This study may help other schools and universities develop strong partnerships that promote academic success for their students. In addition, students in other schools could benefit by receiving better programs and services that might help them prepare for college. Finally, this study could be significantly beneficial to other educational leaders by providing findings that could help other school districts replicate the program and the factors that have influenced the program’s success.

Participation is voluntary and there will be no compensation. Your decision of whether or not you want to participate will not prejudice your future relations with me, the Sweetwater Union High School District, or San Diego State University. If you have any questions or concerns you may contact me at (619) 204-2191 or email me at ereyes7@hotmail.com. You may also contact an IRB representative in the Division of Research Administration at San Diego State University (telephone: 619-594-6622; email: irb@mail.sdsu.edu). If you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue your participation at any time without penalty.

The San Diego State University Institutional Review Board has approved this consent form, as signified by the Board’s stamp. The consent form must be reviewed annually and expires on the date indicated on the stamp.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this consent form. You have been told that by signing this consent form you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

______________________ Print Name: __________________________ Date: __________________________

Eduardo Reyes
Project Representative
Principal Investigator

Signature: __________________________
APPENDIX H

Institutional Review Board Approval

May 24, 2013

Student Researcher: Eduardo Reyes
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Johnson
Department: Educational Leadership
Contract/grant number: not applicable
IRB Number: 1294089

Re: Compact for Success: Achieving Student Success through a School District-University Partnership

Dear Mr. Reyes

The above referenced protocol was reviewed and approved as expedited in accordance with SDSU’s Assurance and federal requirements pertaining to human subjects protections within the Code of Federal Regulations (45 CFR 46). This approval applies to the conditions and procedures described in your protocol. Please notify the IRB office if your status as an SDSU-affiliate changes while conducting this research study (you are no longer an SDSU faculty member, staff member or student). This approval expires May 24, 2014.

- Please submit a Report of Progress by: 4/24/14
- The following approved consent form(s) have been uploaded to your protocol file within the IRB system, within the Supporting Documents section:

Reyes_1294089_All approved consent forms and assent form_stamped.pdf

Graduate Students: This notification may be used as documentation to register in Thesis 739A. Attach a hard copy of this notice to your Appointment of Thesis/Project Committee form prior to submitting the completed form to Graduate and Research Affairs - Student Services Division.

For questions related to this correspondence, please contact the IRB office ((619) 594-0022 or e-mail irb@mail.sdsu.edu).

Sincerely,

Ramona Perez
Chair, Institutional Review Board

Amy McDaniel
Regulatory Compliance Analyst