

Education Innovation and Research Program (EIR) Project Abstract

Applicant Name: University of Indianapolis **Project Title:** The Rural Early College Network 2.0
Type of Grant Requested: (select one) Early-Phase Mid-Phase Expansion

Absolute Priorities the Project Addresses: (select all that apply)

- Absolute Priority 1-- Demonstrate a Rationale (Early), Moderate (Mid), Strong (Expansion)
- Absolute Priority 2-- Field-Initiated Innovations—General

Competitive Preference Priorities the Project Addresses: (select all that apply)

- Competitive Preference Priority 1— Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities: Implementers and Partners

Total number of students to be served by the project: 11,000 **Grade level(s) served project:** 9-12

Definition of high-need students: First-generation college-going, poverty, students of color, special education, and/or English Language Learners (ELL) and all from rural areas

Brief description of project activities: CELL will establish the Rural Early College Network 2.0 (RECN2) to help rural Indiana schools more quickly implement the Early College (EC) model with fidelity. Five mentor high schools (HSs) will each be matched with three partner HSs. Schools will learn ways to accelerate EC implementation while working in a network and as mentor-partner schools. RECN2 is unique because it 1) infuses rigor and supports to prepare high-needs students for postsecondary, 2) uses a network framework and mentor-partner approach to accelerate EC implementation, 3) leverages EC for local economic development, 4) provides training and coaching to help teachers, counselors, and principals better support students and the EC program, and 5) includes a Teacher Leadership Academy to develop and sustain a pipeline of EC leaders.

Summary of project objectives and expected outcomes: 1) More students a) pass dual credit courses, b) earn postsecondary credentials in HS, c) are accepted into postsecondary; 2) at least 12 HSs are endorsed by project's end; 3) capacity for EC implementation is increased in rural HSs across Indiana.

Summary of how the project is innovative: 1) Use of Mentor-Partner school framework in a network approach, 2) CELL's EC 8 Core Principles and EC endorsement process are unique for designating high-quality EC HSs, 3) delivery of EC in HSs instead of on college campuses, and 4) ongoing professional development and supports are provided teachers, counselors, and principals so that they can better support students and the EC program.

Other studies related to the proposed project: 1) American Institutes of Research and SRI International (2013). Early college, early success: Early college high school initiative impact study. Washington, DC; American Institutes of Research. 2) [REDACTED], et al (2017). Smoothing the transition to postsecondary education: The impact of the early college model. Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness, 10(2), 297-325.

Proposed implementation sites: Mentor schools: Logansport, Rising Sun, Sheridan, Southridge, and Winchester HSs. 15 partner schools to be selected in spring of 2025.

Organizations partnering with this project: 20 rural Indiana school districts, Ivy Tech Community College, SERVE Center from the University of North Carolina—Greensboro (evaluator)