



AdvanceNOLA

Providing public high school students in New Orleans with the tools needed to succeed in college and beyond

*"The grant has changed the way our students are thinking and talking."
- AdvanceNOLA teacher*

Annual Progress Report

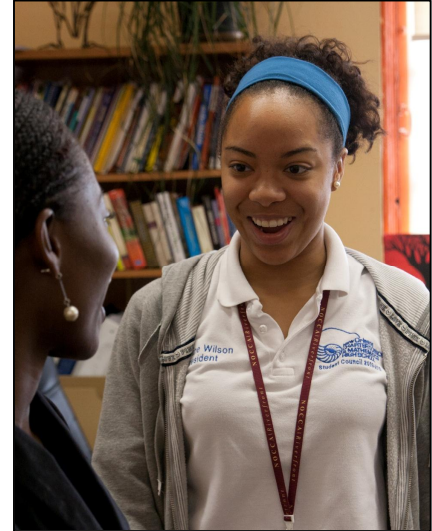
October 2011



Introduction

AdvanceNOLA provides high school students in New Orleans with the academic resources they need to graduate from high school, succeed in college, and compete in a global economy. Thanks to generous support from several donors and foundations, AdvanceNOLA offers a variety of resources to open-enrollment public high schools across New Orleans to implement college-level Advanced Placement® (AP®) math, science, and English courses. The Cowen Institute and its partners developed a program with components that have proven to drastically increase college readiness in other school districts around the country. The overall goal of the AdvanceNOLA program is simple: **to provide high school students with the tools needed to succeed in college.**

This progress report highlights our accomplishments during the 2010-2011 academic year.



Program Overview

AdvanceNOLA worked with five public high schools during the 2010-11 school year: Edna Karr High School, New Orleans Science and Math Academy (Sci Academy), New Orleans Science and Math High School (Sci High), O. Perry Walker High School, and Walter L. Cohen High School.

We originally launched Advanced Placement (AP) courses in three high schools in the Spring of 2009, with 67 students enrolled. Of the 76 exams taken, one student received a qualifying AP score¹. The following year, 2009-2010, enrollment in the program more than doubled, with 158 students enrolled in 11 AP courses within four public high schools. Three students received qualifying AP scores. 2010-11 marked another milestone in continued AdvanceNOLA expansion, with five partner high schools that served 313 students enrolled in 17 AP courses. 328 AP exams were taken by the students; 19 students earned qualifying scores.

In the 2011-12 school year, we expect over 600 Advanced Placement exams to be taken by students enrolled in at least one of the 21 courses being offered at our four partner schools.

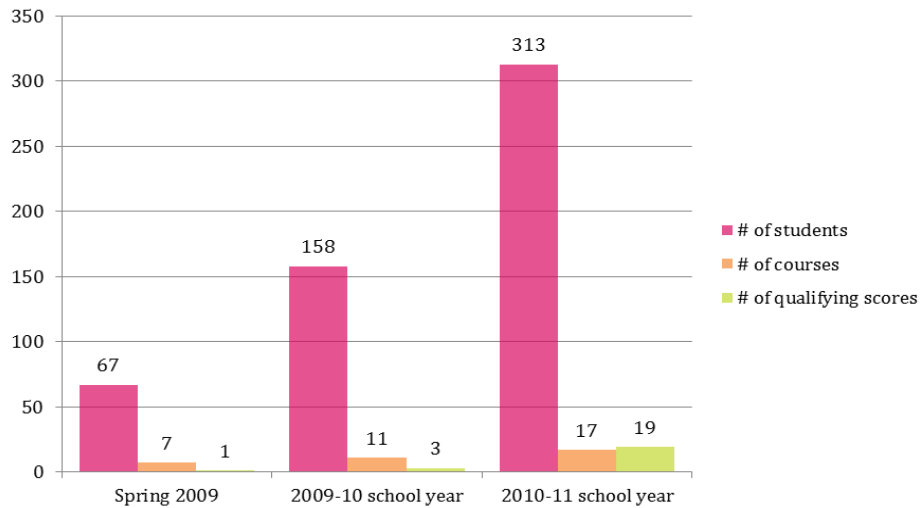
These increases have infused college-going attitudes and the expectation of rigorous, high achievement within the schools. We see this not only as a success but also a demonstration of a growing demand for challenging courses and an increase in the positive attitudes of young people, especially in regards to their future.

The following graph demonstrates exponential growth of the program over the past three years:

¹ N.B. A qualifying score ranges from 3-5 points and offers test takers college credit for the AP exams taken.

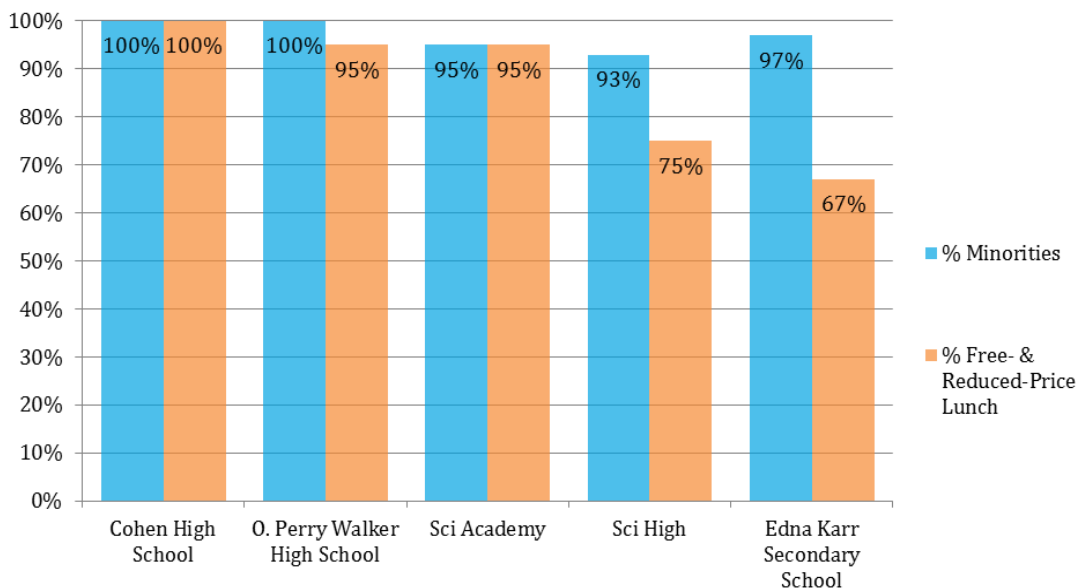


AdvanceNOLA Program Growth, 2009-2011



The vast majority of students in the AdvanceNOLA program are African-American and come from low-income families, as indicated by their eligibility to receive free or reduced-price lunch. Many will also be the first in their families to attend college. The AdvanceNOLA program is modeled on college-readiness components that have proven to dramatically increase the number of students who are prepared for and graduate from college. Based on our results to date and the number of students attending college, we believe our efforts are yielding positive outcomes with increasingly more first-generation college attendees from minority and low-income New Orleans families.

AdvanceNOLA Student Demographics, 2010-11





Program Components

Thanks to the generous support of individual donors and foundations, the Cowen Institute is able to offer an integrated set of training, incentives, and resources to support our partner high schools to develop a college-bound culture. Major AdvanceNOLA components are:

High-tech lab equipment, textbooks, and additional materials needed to implement Advanced Placement math, science, and English courses

Each year, we purchase all start-up costs for new courses, which often include textbooks, science equipment, calculators, novels, and more. Since AdvanceNOLA's inception, the Cowen Institute has spent nearly \$300,000 on classroom materials, textbooks, and lab equipment for Advanced Placement courses.



Extensive professional development and mentoring opportunities for school staff

Each summer, AP teachers, both new and experienced, have the opportunity to attend an Advanced Placement Summer Institute, a week-long workshop designed to help teachers to improve their students' scores.

In addition, mentor teachers serve as a vital piece of the program. In the 2010-2011 school year, four mentor teachers visited New Orleans regularly to help

AdvanceNOLA teachers with their syllabi, pacing guides, and assessments; to observe; to model teaching practices; and to assist with Saturday test preparation sessions. All of our mentor teachers have had track records of success with demographically similar students in their own classrooms. They are continually cited by AP teachers as the best part of the program.

Site-based Coordinators: Cowen Scholars

The 2010-2011 school year saw a new component added to the AdvanceNOLA program: Cowen Scholars. Based on past experiences, we discovered it is critical to have a dedicated coordinator at each school site to ensure that AdvanceNOLA is being implemented at the highest level. To achieve this, we leveraged the resources available at the Cowen Institute and Tulane University. The Cowen Scholars program is a highly competitive and selective internship program for Tulane's graduate-level students. At the beginning of the school year, Cowen Scholars are assigned to serve as site coordinators at each of the AdvanceNOLA high schools. Scholars work with AdvanceNOLA students, counselors, and administrative teams for 20 hours per week during the academic school year to assess and respond to needs in a timely manner. Scholars are also responsible for developing tutoring programs for all students enrolled in AP courses and for coordinating other Tulane students involved in the program at the specific school to which they are assigned. The coordinators act as a college advisor, focus on Advanced Placement classes, assist teachers with materials, and serve as role models for the students by educating them on and assisting them with the college application process.

Performance-based incentives to students and teachers in order to strengthen participation

Students who earn qualifying scores of 3, 4, or 5 on their AP exams receive \$300 per exam, and teachers receive \$300 per student who earns a qualifying score. In addition, many activities occur throughout the



school year at all partner sites, including college visits, awards ceremonies, Family Nights, and other celebrations. The number of incentive-based activities in the 2010-11 school year increased dramatically, due primarily to the leadership of the Cowen Scholars who were able to assess what motivates students the most and to target events towards these needs.

Additional support to students through prep sessions and after-school tutoring

In an effort to increase resources without significantly increasing costs, we recruited Tulane students to serve as AP tutors and college application mentors to high school students in the AdvanceNOLA program. Throughout the Spring 2011 semester, 25 Tulane students regularly visited all of our partner high schools over the semester and met with high school students on Saturdays during sessions for a total of approximately 500 hours – a more than threefold increase from the 2009-10 volunteer hour total of 150. 90% of Tulane University’s incoming freshmen enter with AP course credit. Since undergraduate students are mere semesters away from the material, they are often excited and motivated to help high school students succeed.

