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Local

Prince George's County Schools expand college prep program

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Prince George's County -

In an effort to send more students to college, Prince George's County Public Schools has expanded its relationship with a national nonprofit that helps high school seniors navigate through the application process.

Superintendent John Deasy "saw the merit in [the nonprofit], saw that it has been effective nationally in increasing college enrollment for low income students," schools spokesman John White said. "So, he instituted the pilot. It's been very effective."

The two-year pilot program with the Washington-based College Summit group had a total of more than 300 participants at Charles H. Flowers, Crossland and Laurel high schools over this school year.

Next year, the program will expand to Suitland, Oxon Hill and DuVal high schools and serve 1,500 students.

"Students are led through every single aspect of the college planning, application and enrollment process," said Tom Harrison, of College Summit.

Although all statistics for the current school year are not available, College Summit said in the previous academic year its national partners "saw a double-digit increase in their college enrollment rates."

According to White, Crossland High School, one of the county schools involved in the pilot program, will have more than 90 percent of its graduating seniors attend college. Last year, 75 percent of the school's seniors went on to college. White said 294 students were scheduled to graduate from the Crossland, and 75 participated in the program. All Crossland seniors will participate next year.

Of 60 students who participated in the program at Laurel this year, White said, 51 will attend four-year colleges next year, eight will attend two-year schools and the remaining student is on the waiting list at several four-year institutions.

According to Harrison, the organization improves college enrollment in four primary ways.

He said College Summit provides "a senior year college and post-secondary planning curriculum," trains educators in college planning, trains select students to be peer leaders in the program and offers "measurement and data tools" so schools can "determine what's working and manage the process."

The program cost the school system \$116,000 this year, with \$300,000 budgeted for next year.

"For every \$1 that the school district pays for College Summit's program, we raise and we provide \$4," Harrison said.

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