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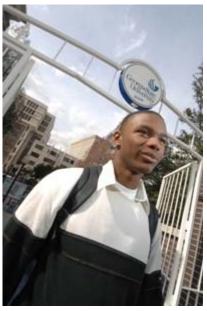
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The Legacy Class

Liz Babiarz



Coming from a family in which no one has graduated school, Derrick Standifer could have easily become a of poverty.

But instead, the 18 year old is graduating May 28 with school diploma from Carver High School and 39 colle from Georgia State University.

Standifer and 78 other students were able to rise abo challenging environments and achieve academic suc to the Early College Initiative at the New Schools of C partnership between Georgia State and Atlanta Public

They have been dubbed the "Legacy Class" because first Early College seniors in the state of Georgia to g

Even more impressive, all of the seniors have been a two-year or four-year institution, and nearly half are re scholarships to help with tuition. Like Standifer, the m Early College graduates will become the first member

families to head to college.

"Early College turned me into a hard working student," said Standifer, who is the class salutat really challenging – you either take on GSU or you quit. There was a lot of competition, but we I feel like I can do anything now."

Carver Early College High School was the first of its kind when it opened in 2005 and is funde and Melinda Gates Foundation. It was established to help improve graduation rates at Carver which at 36 percent in 2004 were among the lowest in the nation. In the program, students tal Carver High School and on the Georgia State campus.

The Pell Institute reports that only 24 percent of low income, first-generation high school grad college. The Early College model is designed to increase the number of underrepresented stusecondary education by giving them a jump start on their college education. The Early College graduating class is 99 percent minority and 72 percent of students are on free or reduced lunc

Even while taking college-level courses at GSU, Early College students outperformed their petraditional Atlanta high schools. For example, in 2008, the Early College junior class ranked file Atlanta Public School System on all sections of the state-mandated High School Graduation

"We are excited about the success of these students," said Gwendolyn Benson, associate des State's College of Education and GSU liaison for the Early College program.

Early College at Carver primarily serves students living in the area surrounding the school in s

Atlanta. Students must apply to attend the program; however, students from the immediate neare given first choice of attendance with any extra seats open to the district. A student's Crite Reference Competency Test scores, grade-point averages, teacher recommendations and pare factors in admittance.

Students in the Early College program take courses found on most college freshmen schedul English 1102, college algebra and economics. But they learn more than what they read in bollectures.

They are taught study and time management skills that help them juggle classes, school activitime jobs and other responsibilities. Standifer, for example, took classes at Georgia State and playing football, running track and working part-time at a movie theater. He also helped Colle Education Dean Randy Kamphaus with his research project, while earning mostly A's and B's

The Early College program also broaden students' experiences with international trips to plac Rica and Japan.

"Personally, it made me see there's a bigger world and I'm just a small part of it, but I can ma difference," Standifer said of his trip to Panama and Costa Rica.

Many students attribute their success to the unending support they received from educators a School and Georgia State during the program. In fact, Standifer was inspired to become a tea and will pursue an education degree at Florida A&M University, bringing his GSU credits alon

"Over the past four years, we have demonstrated what is possible when students are provide teachers, additional student support through college mentors and study coaches and, of cour of place experienced by high school students on a university campus," Benson said.

The commencement ceremony for the Early College High School students and all schools at held at 8 p.m. on May 28 at the Atlanta Civic Center. The commencement address will be del Arthur Blank, co-founder of Home Depot. The University System of Georgia Chancellor Erroll join Early College students on stage to congratulate them.

For more information, visit http://srt5.atlantapublicschools.us/carverec/

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