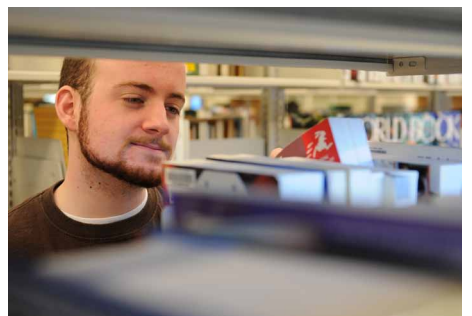




# Fast Track

Graduates of Ohio's Early College High Schools set a pace for early success

Excerpt:  
Brandon



**Graduate** of Africentric  
Early College.  
**Attending** Miami  
University, studying  
computer science.



## The early college experience pushed him to grow

Brandon Carter is one of those driven students with an innate ability to know what it takes to get the job done. From a young age, he knew he wanted to be in a technical field, and he knew that college was critical. By all accounts, he was bound to succeed in nearly any high school setting.

But he encountered more challenge than he expected when his high school, Columbus’ Africentric, adopted an early college program. He became one of the first students to qualify to take classes at Columbus State Community College – and the very first to receive his associate’s degree along with his high school diploma.

Taking college-level courses as a high school junior pushed Carter academically for the first time.

“Being exposed to early college was kind of like a gift for him,” said Eleanor Vickers, Africentric’s college liaison at the time. “Being at a traditional high school would not have challenged him, or allowed him to grow the way he did.”

Carter agreed. “Columbus State was a big challenge for me compared to high school. The teacher doesn’t hold your hand so much,” he said.

But he found that he didn’t want his hand held either.

Not wanting to be treated differently, Carter and other Africentric students decided to stop telling Columbus State professors that they were in high school after one pointed them out in class.

“We found it was better to succeed and then tell them,” said Carter.

Completing college coursework not only challenged Carter, but helped set his college applications apart from the pack.

“The early college experience definitely shows colleges that you can perform at the college level,” he said. “You get to engage in a college environment, and engage in the higher thinking that colleges require.”

With his associate’s degree, Carter became the first member of his family to earn a degree. He was offered a full scholarship to Miami University of Ohio.

Carter entered Miami with enough credentials to be a junior, but the core requirements of his computer science major will take four years to complete. Having some of his core course load already finished gave him a little more breathing room, which he needed, as he did eight hours of a work-study scholarship per week, running registers and stocking shelves at the campus convenience store.

In his first year, he found Miami to be a new challenge, much harder than Columbus State, but was taking it in stride. He said, “As long as you put the time in, there’s no reason you shouldn’t do well.”

— Tracy Zollinger Turner

# Early College High Schools in Ohio

Across Ohio, early college high schools are changing what it means to be a college student. These schools take the young teenagers who are least likely to attend college and most likely to be performing below grade level, then put them in an atmosphere with high levels of support and high expectations. They allow students to start taking college courses in grade 9 or 10 and earn up to 60 hours of college credit by the time they graduate from high school.

The nine Ohio Early College High Schools in the KnowledgeWorks network are showing remarkable results. They report an average graduation rate of 91 percent and more than one in three ECHS students graduate with a high school diploma and two years of college credit or an associate's degree. Others earn substantial college credits that speed their journey toward a degree.

More than 90 percent of ECHS 10th graders scored proficient or higher on the Ohio Graduation Test in reading, writing, mathematics and social studies, outperform-

ing the state average. Greater percentages of students from ECHS schools scored accelerated or advanced on Ohio state achievement tests than students at comparable high schools, suggesting that they are more college ready.

What happens when these young adults – almost all of them the first in their families to attend college or students who likely would not continue their education without the boost of ECHS – move beyond the carefully structured and nurturing environments of their high schools? Research shows that they are more likely to enroll in and complete college.

But research data is only part of the answer. Each of the remarkable young adults who has graduated from an Early College High School has a unique story of accomplishment and challenge. Each has a dream as individual as his or her journey. To learn more about early college high schools or meet other ECHS alumni, please go to [www.OhioEducationMatters.org](http://www.OhioEducationMatters.org).