



Building Community Through Dual Enrollment East Los Angeles College and Community-Based Organizations

East Los Angeles College (ELAC) prides itself on being a part of the community and building a family of learners in partnership with local community organizations. The relationships between community-based organizations (CBOs), K-12 districts, and ELAC began with the college's commitment to Great Outcomes (GO) East LA. The goal was to serve the educational needs of students and their families. These partnerships go far beyond just outreach to parents to help connect their high school- and college-age students to community college—they also work to serve the education and job training needs of parents. Through a network of relationships, the partner organizations help connect high school students to college courses in dual enrollment pathways, connect parents to ESL classes and job training, and support the whole family in understanding college culture and how to be supportive of family members in college.

“Dual enrollment is a door not only for students to access college, but for the college to reach entire families. We want to create a family of learners where all feel welcome at the college.”

GO East LA started with one small dual enrollment pilot that has grown over the last ten years to include three local school districts: Los Angeles Unified - Local District East, Montebello Unified, and Alhambra Unified. ELAC's commitment to embed the college in the East Los Angeles community led to offering dual enrollment classes in partnership with community-based organizations like the [Central American Resource Center \(CARECEN\)](#) and [Salvadoran American Leadership and Educational Fund \(SALEF\)](#). To better serve the families of college students, ELAC also created a Family and Community Engagement Services (FACES) department. FACES has developed strong ties with their K-12 counterparts at Family Resource Centers in the Los Angeles Unified School District. Blanca Gomez, Dean of Outreach and Recruitment, explains, “Dual enrollment is a door not only for students to access college, but for the college to reach entire families. We want to create a family of learners where all feel welcome at the college.”

ELAC's Partnership Ecosystem

FACES

Based on the community college campus

CARECEN

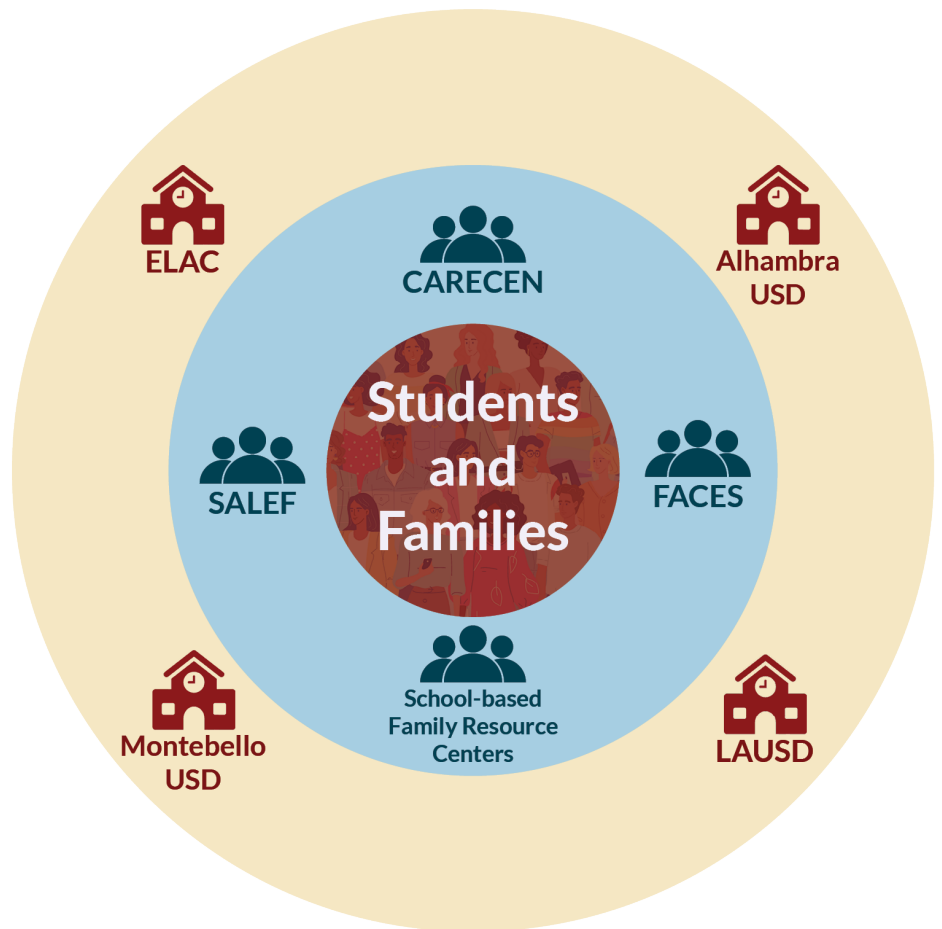
Based in the community

SALEF

Based in the community

Family Resource Centers

Based at the high school campuses



The partnership ecosystem centers students and families with each organization playing a key role.

Community-based organizations CARECEN and SALEF: Maintain relationships with the broader community and serve as the embedded support system connecting students and families to resources and opportunities.

Family resource centers at ELAC and the K-12 school locations: Provide a single point of contact for students and families, providing navigational support and preparatory workshops orienting families to the opportunities and culture of college.

Community college and local school districts: Provide overall dual enrollment planning, leadership, and program development.

Key Partnership Roles

ELAC Dean of Outreach and Recruitment: Oversees dual enrollment and supports the program development, outreach events, onboarding events, and overall planning.

FACES Program Coordinator: Supports the families to understand college culture and how to support their children who may be enrolled in college classes, facilitates the parent workshops, and supports family members and high school students in enrolling in college.

Local high school principals: Support the partnership and program development, outreach events, and overall planning.

Local high school counselors and staff: Support dual enrollment students in learning about college options and college culture, support outreach and onboarding events, and program development.

CBO Directors: Collaborate with ELAC and high school partners in enrolling and supporting students in dual enrollment classes, support outreach efforts and events, and overall planning.

CBO staff: Supports outreach events, families in supporting students and understanding dual enrollment opportunities, and relationship building between the community and educational partners.

Impact of the Partnerships

Community college and CBO partnerships enable a holistic approach to supporting students, families, and communities. Because of the partnerships,

- High school students gain early exposure and experience success in college.
- Parents are connected to educational and training opportunities, potentially leading to better jobs or careers.
- The college becomes embedded in the ecosystem of community support and opportunities for local high school students and their families.
- The college has a better idea of what students and families need to be successful.
- The partners help to identify barriers early and remove them.

Keys to Successful Partnerships

- Regular and consistent communication.
- Commitment to the partnerships and relationships.
- Commitment to co-designing events and programs.
- Desire to be responsive to the needs of the community.
- Ability to be flexible.

Spotlight: CARECEN and ELAC Partnership

Bringing dual enrollment courses into the community has proven powerful for East Los Angeles students engaged with [CARECEN](#), the Central American Resource Center in Los Angeles. CARECEN is an immigrants' rights organization providing new Central American immigrants support in navigating legal matters, finding work, connecting to education, accessing health services, and building community. Through a partnership with ELAC, high school students can also take college classes at the resource center, earning college credit¹ while learning about and connecting to their native countries' histories.

High school students can take up to two dual enrollment classes a semester at CARECEN. "The partnership grew out of the social activism and community engagement of former ELAC Vice President of Student Services Julie Benavides," says Dr. Miguel Dueñas, current Vice President of Student Services. Benavides was passionate about increasing equitable access to higher education for the ELAC community, and with her deep understanding of East Los Angeles she was able to identify the gaps in access.

ELAC initially started offering three courses in rotation on Saturdays: The Central American Experience, Central American Literature, and Introduction to Central American Studies. Rocio Veliz, the Youth Programs Coordinator and Organizer at CARECEN, shared that when she took one of these classes as a dual enrollment student, she learned about the civil wars in El Salvador and Guatemala. Veliz, from a Salvadoran immigrant family, says that students learn about their own history, history that "parents may not have shared or known about." The impact of that experience is "a deeper appreciation and connection to family and culture, and a better understanding of why their families left to come to the U.S."

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CARECEN serves a large population of immigrant youth. Through the partnership with ELAC, high school students can take classes that strengthen their understanding and connections to the history and culture of their native countries, while also learning about different educational pathways available to them post-high school. Classes are held at the CARECEN Youth and Parent Center, a community hub for families. Students can use computers and printers, and CARECEN staff provide tutoring support and help them navigate the dual enrollment process. And their families can access free services to support adjusting to life in California and Los Angeles County.

ELAC is bringing college classes to the community and CARECEN is supporting students in their college success. This partnership and community connection is especially powerful for immigrant families. They're able to see the college as a place where they and their students belong and are valued, helping ease the transition to living in the U.S. while connecting to postsecondary education opportunities and greater economic mobility. Partly due to this partnership, ELAC is the first college in California to offer an Associate of Arts degree in Central American Studies.

¹ The classes fulfill Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC) general education transfer requirements for the University of California and California State University systems.

Getting Started with Developing Community College, K-12, & CBO Dual Enrollment Partnerships

Define Your Ecosystem

Spend time getting to know the organizations that the community surrounding your college engages with for basic needs support, navigation support, job training, and education.

- What CBOs serve your community? What needs do they serve?
- What K-12 educational partners do you currently have dual enrollment partnerships with? Where are there opportunities to expand?
- How is your college, the CBOs, and the K-12 partners supporting families to understand dual enrollment, college, and other educational opportunities?
- What youth development organizations are in your area? How might you build a relationship with them?

Build Relationships

Successful partnerships hinge on the relationships between organizations. Spend time building relationships and reciprocity.

- Develop a clear vision for your dual enrollment program to share with potential partners so that they can envision their role and understand the benefits to the community.
- Conduct outreach to potential partners to share the vision for dual enrollment and the benefit of a partnership model to support the students and their families.
- Meet with partners in-person at their sites to demonstrate your commitment and to get to know what they do as an organization, what their mission is, and how the college can support them in reaching their goals.
- Ask to tour or participate in partner events to get to know their work and their community.

Develop a Shared Vision and Goals

The organizations in a dual enrollment partnership are all working with slightly different missions and goals, but all share the goal of supporting students and families. Spend time developing a shared vision for the partnership with some clear guidelines and expectations. Consider these questions in developing your partnership vision and goals:

- What are the key needs of your community?
- What are your key commitments in developing a partnership relationship? This may include a commitment to meet students and families where they are and to be responsive. Identify commitments that consider the community needs and the goals of the partners.
- How can you ensure maintaining a positive partnership relationship? This may include identifying who is the lead for setting meeting times, sharing agendas, and keeping partners updated.
- If the partnership is successful, what does that look like? Develop a vision that every partner is excited about.