



KEYS TO DEGREES: EDUCATING TWO GENERATIONS TOGETHER

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ASCEND ROUNDTABLE

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HISTORY OF ENDICOTT COLLEGE

Founded in 1939 as a two-year college for women, Endicott earned its reputation as an institution where young women could pursue both professional and liberal studies. By 1986, however, declining enrollments caused fiscal hardship, and the College was facing bankruptcy. The Board of Trustees entertained bids for the sale of the campus but chose, instead, to reinvent the College. In 1987, with a new president, the College strengthened its commitment to academic programs that combine theory with practice, and the hallmark of an Endicott education became the internship experience, which is tied to the curriculum in a way that is unique in higher education. The College became a coeducational institution in 1994, and in 1998 it earned the authority to grant baccalaureate degrees. Endicott began offering graduate degrees in 1996; and, through its Van Loan School of Graduate and Professional Studies (GPS), the College now offers accelerated degree completion programs to adult learners. From an enrollment of less than 500 undergraduate students in 1987, Endicott today enrolls to 2,500 undergraduate students on its Beverly campus and at international sites around the world. The College also enrolls 2,400 students through GPS, who pursue graduate, accelerated undergraduate, and professional development programs. The success of its entrepreneurial model of education has helped build a very successful institution.

KEYS TO DEGREES: EDUCATING TWO GENERATIONS TOGETHER

Building on its roots as a women's college, and with a desire to continue supporting young women pursuing education, the College initiated *Keys to Degrees*, a program for single parents and their children. Originally the program was designed as a four-year, year-round residential experience for mothers ranging in age from 17 to 32, and children, ages two to eleven. Beginning in 2003, the program began admitting young mothers ranging in age from 18 to 24 years. Their children are generally one year of age or toddlers. The College has chosen to expand the program to include young, single fathers and their children as well.

Over the years, housing arrangements have evolved from a modified dorm space to today's apartment-style living. A wing of one residence hall is configured with five apartments. Each apartment, shared by two parents and two children, has four bedrooms, a living room, and a kitchen. A common playroom and an outdoor play yard provide "out of home interaction" for children.

Parents are immersed in the college experience, selecting majors from over 40 degree options, engaging in clubs and organizations, and participating in inter-collegiate athletics. During the day, the children are in off-campus day care or public schools. When not in school, the children are integrated into college life and, with their parents, take part in all aspects of the community.

GOALS FOR PARTICIPANTS IN THE KEYS TO DEGREES PROGRAM

Seven goals for participants in the *Keys* program have been identified by the Endicott community. Each goal has a number of related, measurable objectives. These goals and objectives, designed to evaluate the success of the program, are as follows:

Goal #1.

Students will obtain a baccalaureate degree from Endicott College.

- 1.1 Students will remain in good academic standing.
- 1.2 Students will complete a standard academic load during each semester.
- 1.3 Students will partake in internship experiences.
- 1.4 Students will participate in program-sponsored activities.
- 1.5 Students will participate in college-sponsored activities.

Goal #2.

Students will be able to successfully balance parenting, academic, and employment responsibilities.

- 2.1 Students will demonstrate feelings of self-efficacy at home, in school, and at work.
- 2.2 Students will develop healthy stress management strategies.
- 2.3 Students will learn to allocate time effectively.
- 2.4 Students will integrate with traditional students in campus life.

Goal #3.

After graduation, students will become economically self-sufficient with professional employment.

- 3.1 Students will find professional employment.
- 3.2 Students will remain able to financially support their families.

Goal #4.

Students will enhance their parenting skills.

- 4.1 Students will learn effective and appropriate parenting skills.
- 4.2 Students will learn about child development and age-appropriate behavior.

Goal #5.

Students will provide mentoring to other single parents.

- 5.1 Students will understand the value of mentoring.
- 5.2 Students will mentor other single parents in the community while at Endicott and after graduation.

Goal #6.

Students will provide community service to others.

- 6.1 Students will understand the value of community service.
- 6.2 Students will participate in community service activities while at Endicott and after graduation.

Goal#7.

The children of Keys students will develop positive attitudes toward family and school.

- 7.1 The children will experience a positive bond with their mothers (fathers).
- 7.2 The children will develop a positive attitude for learning and school.

IMPACT

Keys to Degrees began as an opportunity for young adults but quickly became a two-generational program. Higher education, once out of reach for many single parents, provides for their learning and professional development. We have found that the college environment also stimulates their children to learn. The *Keys* program has also had an incredible impact on the wider college community who witness young mothers and custodial fathers accept and become energized by their responsibilities to set the best example for their children. It has become a reality check on unplanned pregnancy for many of our students, and it has built pride among our student body, alumni, parents, and faculty as we witness these young parents and their children succeed.

WHAT DOES OUR RESEARCH SAY?

Graduation and Retention

Endicott College's first-to-second year retention rate for all fall 2009 first-time/full-time freshmen who returned in fall 2010 is 80%. The graduation rate of the class of 2009 was 72%. The *Keys to Degrees* program has a small sample size, where each incoming fall cohort has consisted of fewer than five students. Therefore, conventional graduation and retention rates, as defined by academic institutional researchers, will compromise confidentiality and will be statistically insignificant. The past five years the *Keys to Degrees* statistics are higher than the general Endicott population.

Analysis of the seven graduates since 2004:

- 1 transfer student earned a Bachelor degree in three years
- 5 students earned Bachelor degrees in four years
- 1 student earned a Bachelor degree in five years
- 3 graduated with academic honors
- 3 are furthering their education in graduate school

Of the students who graduated prior to 2010 at least 80% are employed. 50% of the 2010 graduates are furthering their education.

Answers to specific questions from 2010 surveys:

1. I could be successful in college without the *Keys to Degrees* program – Yes: 30%, No: 70%
2. I will be completing my baccalaureate degree – Yes: 100%
3. My child benefited from the program – Yes: 100%
4. Faculty who reported that *Keys* students did well in their courses – Yes: 86%
5. *Keys* offers a positive addition to the diversity of the student body – Yes: 98.5 %
6. I feel well prepared to balance parenting and a career – Yes: 100%
7. My career will allow me to be economically self-sufficient – Yes: 72%

THE NEXT STEPS

Shortly after the program was started, it became clear that, due to space and cost constraints at Endicott, we would quickly reach our optimal size for the *Keys* program on our campus. While demand for the program was large and the quality of prospective students good, the program's sustainability would depend on and maximizing program visibility and alumni support. It became apparent that the best way to achieve this was to encourage and support other institutions to build their own programs.

Supported by local Boston foundations, we refined and built our model and opened dialogue with foundations across the nation. In 2010 the Kellogg Foundation invested \$400,000 to begin a replication model, and Eastern Michigan University joined us. As part of our agreement, they will bring two other

Michigan universities into what is now called, the Higher Education Alliance. In recent months a university in Georgia has expressed a desire to build the program, and funding to start this initiative is currently underway. The national initiative has begun!

Endicott College's goal is not to run, manage, or control the partnering institutions. Rather, it is to create the Alliance to expand membership, conduct research, shape public policy, and positively affect the lives of two generations – parents and children – and give them the tools to be great parents and independent wage earners.