

ANNUAL REPORT

college offers

COOL

opportunities for life

2012-2013

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Letter from the COOL Team

COOL becomes COOL(ER)

What an amazing year for COOL! As we reflect on the end of our sixth year, in many ways, the 2012-2013 school year felt as if it was a new beginning for us. Due to the generous continued support of the Shelton Family Foundation and the new support of the Dian Graves Owen Foundation, the COOL Program became just a little bit COOL(ER) this year. We reached out our arms and gathered in more AISD students, significantly increasing aid, tours, housing applications and simple encouragement not to give up on a college education. We appreciate the opportunity to serve the students of Abilene ISD in such a fundamental and life-changing way.



Since 2007, the COOL Program has proudly worked at both Abilene High and Cooper High schools in need of financial aid, college applications and college visits. In 2012, the COOL Program expanded its services by hiring two additional college advisors: LaQuiera Gantt, Cooper High School and Amanda Hothan, Abilene High School.

LaQuiera is from Maryland and has her Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from ACU. Before joining COOL, she worked with first-generation college students for 3 1/2 years as a College Advisor for TRIO Talent Search. Amanda is an Abilene native and has her Bachelor's degree in Human Development and Family Studies and her Masters of Higher Education from Texas Tech University. Prior to joining COOL, she worked for Texas Tech Health Sciences Center for five years as Lead Advisor and Recruiter.

We are excited to share this Annual Report for the 2012-2013 school year with you. The expansion of the COOL Program has reaped beyond our highest expectations. In addition to our two new college advisors, we presented several middle school and underclassman classroom workshops, placed a college advisor at ATEMS and Woodson Center for Excellence, increased the number of FAFSA workshops offered in AISD alongside Hardin-Simmons University Financial Aid experts, hosted the first ever Texas Association for College Admission Counseling Workshop in West Texas and held CAMP COOL, a leadership retreat for 8th grade students which focused on a need for commitment to excellence, the importance of teamwork and the value of self-reflection as a pathway to college and life success.

We have included information about CAMP COOL, statistics on our 2012-2013 seniors, two post-graduate COOL personal stories, follow-up statistics on our 2008 and 2009 graduates, as well as a list of all our scholarship recipients, many of whom were COOL participants and will be the first in their families to go to college and so much more! The back inside page of the Annual Report contains a DVD. We hope you will take a few minutes to watch it. It is a slideshow of COOL students in action. It is a small glimpse of the overwhelming joy we experience every day as we interact with our students, gently guiding them as they discover who they are, their place in this world, and their dreams of a college education - a true opportunity for life.

-The COOL Program Team

Jean McMillon/*Executive Director*

Christine Curtis-Carr/*COOL Program Coordinator and College Advisor*

William Medina/*ATEMS & WCE College Advisor and IT Coordinator*

LaQuiera Gantt/*Cooper High School College Advisor*

Amanda Hothan/*Abilene High School College Advisor*

Program Highlights

The AEF COOL Program provides for a college advisor at Abilene High, Cooper High, ATEMS, Woodson Center for Excellence and the middle school campuses to help students and their parents navigate through the college selection and application process, financial aid, college tours, scholarship research and hosts an area-wide college fair attended by more than 50 universities. The goal of the COOL Program is to encourage first-generation students to research, apply, enroll, and graduate from a two-year college or four-year university.

- Assisted 548 seniors in making the transition from high school to college.
- Provided services to over 750 middle and 1,000 high school students in the pre-college or college admission process through classroom presentations, one-on-one mentoring and summer workshops.
- Interacted with 8th graders in a classroom workshop setting across the district helping them to create "Vision Boards" which explored college options and discussed the benefits of a college education.
- Presented information to 9th and 10th grade classes at Abilene High on how to set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely) goals for their future and how to plan for college.
- Provided 20 college tours at no cost to the students. College tours included Tarleton University, Sam Houston State University, Texas Christian University, Texas Tech University, McMurry University, Baylor University, Abilene Christian University, Hardin-Simmons University, Lubbock Christian University, and University of Texas Arlington just to name a few.
- Created outreach opportunity with the Center for Economic Opportunity to direct students and parents who needed help with their taxes prior to completing the FAFSA application for next spring.
- Helped coordinate "ATEMS Goes to College Day" where the entire student body went to one of the local universities for the day to learn about college life, admissions and scholarship opportunities.
- Presented a "COOL College Dreams" interactive workshop to Lee Elementary 5th graders as a part of their Career Day.





- Held the 5th Annual AEF-AISD College Fair at the Abilene Civic Center with over 50 universities represented and 800 students from Abilene and the surrounding cities in attendance.

- Supported and promoted the Café con Leche program which hosted parent and FAFSA nights targeting the Hispanic community.

- Attended the NACAC Conference (The National Association for College Admission Counseling) in Denver, CO, for professional development opportunities.

- Formed a partnership with Ads4Next to help promote and recruit students from AISD to apply for the Summer Youth Entrepreneur Program. Students can earn up to \$5,000 for college through a youth entrepreneur training process that equips them with skills to achieve success in life and business.

- Implemented the summer bridge program for high school seniors participating in the COOL program. This included a checklist of all outstanding tasks that needed to be completed prior to enrolling in college the next fall and will contact throughout the summer to ensure they arrive ready for college.

- Recruited students for and implemented the 8th grade summer leadership camp – CAMP COOL held at Lake Brownwood Christian Retreat.

- Amanda Hothan was honored as a “Very Important Counselor” of 2012-2013 school year by Texas A&M University in College Station, TX.

- Coordinated to bring the first workshop in association with Texas Association for College Admission Counselors to Abilene for college advisors and guidance counselors regarding admission updates and changes in higher education.

- Assisted the Azle Education Foundation launch a COOL Program in their district.

- 2012-2013 COOL participants were accepted into a variety of colleges and universities including: Texas Tech University, Georgia State University, Bard College, University of Texas, Angelo State University, Texas State University, Embry Riddle University, Cisco College, Abilene Christian University, McMurry University, Hardin-Simmons University and many more.



TOURS

College tours are an essential part of the COOL program and are important in helping students decide where they will choose to continue their education. Many of our students have an idea as to where they will apply, and a visit to those schools can solidify their decision to attend. Our fall tours are a great way to remind students that admissions deadlines occur around Christmas and encourage students to apply as soon as possible. COOL college tours are free-of-charge to all AISD students and include travel, meals and lodging (if overnight). A typical tour includes admissions and financial aid presentations, a tour of the campus and dorms, lunch in a campus dining facility and a stop at the bookstore for students to purchase college memorabilia. Some tours include special presentations by departments such as a magic show by the physics department or a visit to the Planetarium. During the 2012-2013 school year, we toured 20 colleges and universities and took approximately 400 juniors and seniors.

Campuses Visited



- Tarleton State University
- Texas Christian University
- Texas Tech University
- Abilene Christian University
- Hardin-Simmons University
- McMurry University
- Baylor University
- University of Texas at Arlington
- Lubbock Christian University
- University of Texas of the Permian Basin
- Howard College
- Southwest Collegiate Institute for the Deaf
- Sam Houston State University
- Texas A&M University
- University of Texas San Antonio
- University of Texas at Austin



COOL in the Community

This year was a great year for the COOL Program and the community of Abilene. We have formed several partnerships over the years and are excited to highlight a few of them in this report.

Ads4Next - Generation Next Scholarship Program

The COOL program refers students and gathers applications for this program. It helps students improve their entrepreneurial skills while earning money for college. Terry Johnson, Executive Director, spoke to our group of 8th graders this summer at CAMP COOL about the importance of setting goals and making smart decisions in high school.

Educational Talent Search

A federally-funded grant program, housed at ACU that equips students for academic success in middle school, high school and college. ETS refers their students into the COOL Program for additional one-on-one college advising, especially their junior and senior years. This year, ETS received free online ACT test prep from Kaplan and many COOL students were eligible to participate in the online program.

P-16 Council

The COOL program promotes and regularly participates in any college related activity hosted by our regional council. The COOL Advisors regularly hosted several Café con Leche community meetings on both AHS and CHS campuses. They also participated in a Financial Literacy Training program offered by Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation which gives lessons on how to financially prepare for college costs and the future.

Communities in Schools

A program for at-risk students in Abilene ISD, CIS refers students who need one-on-one college admission mentoring to the COOL program. COOL also refers students who we feel need additional resources outside of the scope of COOL, especially our homeless or unaccompanied youth participants.



The COOL program collaborates with non-profits and local universities to provide financial aid literacy workshops. This year Community Foundation of Abilene provided inside tips on how to write a winning scholarship essay, and BCFS: Abilene Transition Center hosted their first FAFSA workshop targeting students in AISD. The Hardin-Simmons University Financial Aid staff gave both a presentation on the financial aid process for seniors at the college fair and helped families complete the FAFSA application during workshops held at Abilene High and Cooper High schools.

We hosted the Texas Association for College Admission Counselors (TACAC) workshop in Abilene at Abilene Christian University, and the first in West Texas! Funding for the event was provided by ACT and TACAC with the conference space graciously donated by the Abilene Christian University Admissions Department. Topics covered included the FAFSA, essay writing tips for students, ACT test changes, how to write a recommendation letter (teacher versus counselor) and a special presentation called "Preparing your Seniors to Succeed in College" by Mickey Saloma, the co-chair of the Professional Development committee for TACAC. Over 30 counselors and college advising professionals from the West Texas region attended this fantastic workshop.

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS!

Middle School Outreach

The COOL Program encourages all its students to start the process of choosing a college with a careful look at themselves: an assessment of their interests, their attitudes and their abilities. Why? Because the purpose of college-hunting is for our students to find the right match between their dreams and goals and their eventual college choice. Many students want to start their search by looking at specific colleges. This sounds good, perhaps, but it is a faulty strategy. Before they start pouring over websites and viewing books and catalogs from colleges, they need to examine themselves as people and as students.

We taught important building blocks students can create for themselves in high school in order to create a successful pathway to college: Grade Point Average (why it matters), attendance, getting involved in extra-curricular activities, taking care of yourself by getting enough rest, exploring fun opportunities in and outside of school, doing your best in class and trying new interests.

This year, COOL actively participated in the Career Technology classrooms at the middle school campuses using the activity "Create Your College!" where 8th grade students created vision boards using construction paper, stickers, magazine cut-outs, markers and crayons to outline their idea of the perfect college. The projects did not have to mimic a college in the "real-world" but were individually based on the students' own personal interests. The vision boards were as varied as our students. Some of the ideas included:

"I like friendly professors."

"I want my university to have an ROTC program."

"I need a variety of classes like hunting and engineering."

"My university must be located in Texas and be medium or small in population."

"I really want a McDonalds on campus."

"I love scuba diving classes, game design as a major and I want the mascot to be a unicorn."

"I want to study abroad in Austrailia."

No dream was too silly or too big. We reminded our students as they progress into high school, some items would stand out as more important than others and that it was okay to alter the details of their vision boards until they make their final selection their senior year, but not to give up their dream of a post-secondary education. The goal of "Create Your College" workshop is to get our 8th graders, before they enter high school, to think about their future and to facilitate a discussion with the class about what it takes in high school to eventually reach the college level. However, before they can figure out where they want to go, it is important to know what they are looking for in the first place.



Camp COOL



College Offers Opportunities for Life. It is something we talk about all the time with our high school students, but this year we targeted twenty-seven 8th graders, from the four middle schools, for a special camp at Lake Brownwood. CAMP COOL is a camp for incoming freshmen students who are already leaders at the middle school level, but primarily come from first-generation or low to middle income households.



This year's camp focused on the "Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens" by Sean Covey in an effort to teach some of the skills vital to success at the high school level. Our goal with this camp was to not only provide early contact and familiarity with the college advisors, but to challenge and engage the students in an intensive, but fun, atmosphere about the rigors of life in high school and beyond. There were two junior counselors present, who were recent high school graduates and COOL participants. They were able to talk candidly with the upcoming freshman about what to expect in high school, how to make school a place where they can succeed despite what may be going on at home and all the wonderful extra-curricular activities available to them at Cooper, Abilene High and ATEMS. Some of the topics covered in the workshops at CAMP COOL included learning how to prioritize time, teamwork, listening skills, staying focused on tasks and the melting point of marshmallows (a.k.a. S'mores over an open campfire).



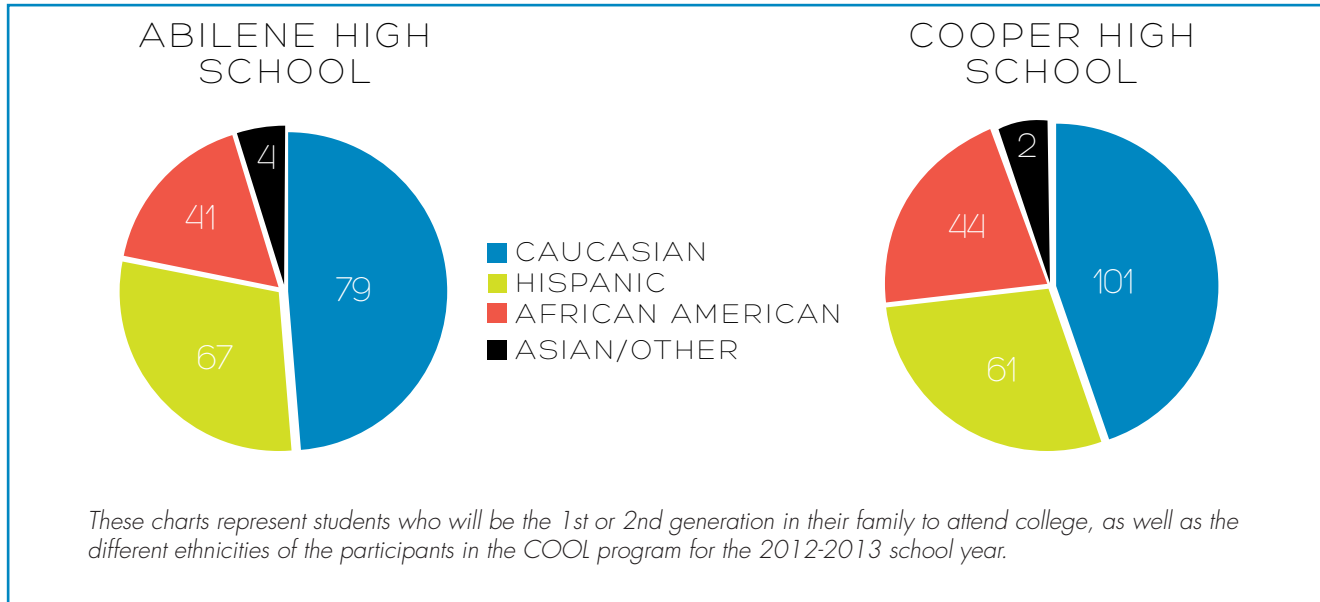
Students were also presented with real life challenges in the form of a high and low ropes course which demanded teamwork, communication and patience. We were so proud to see so many of these students overcome their fears and scale a 30-foot tall rock wall and zip-line back down to the ground. Many of the students walked away from the experience with a feeling of pride. "If I can do this, then what else can I do that I'm afraid of in my life?"



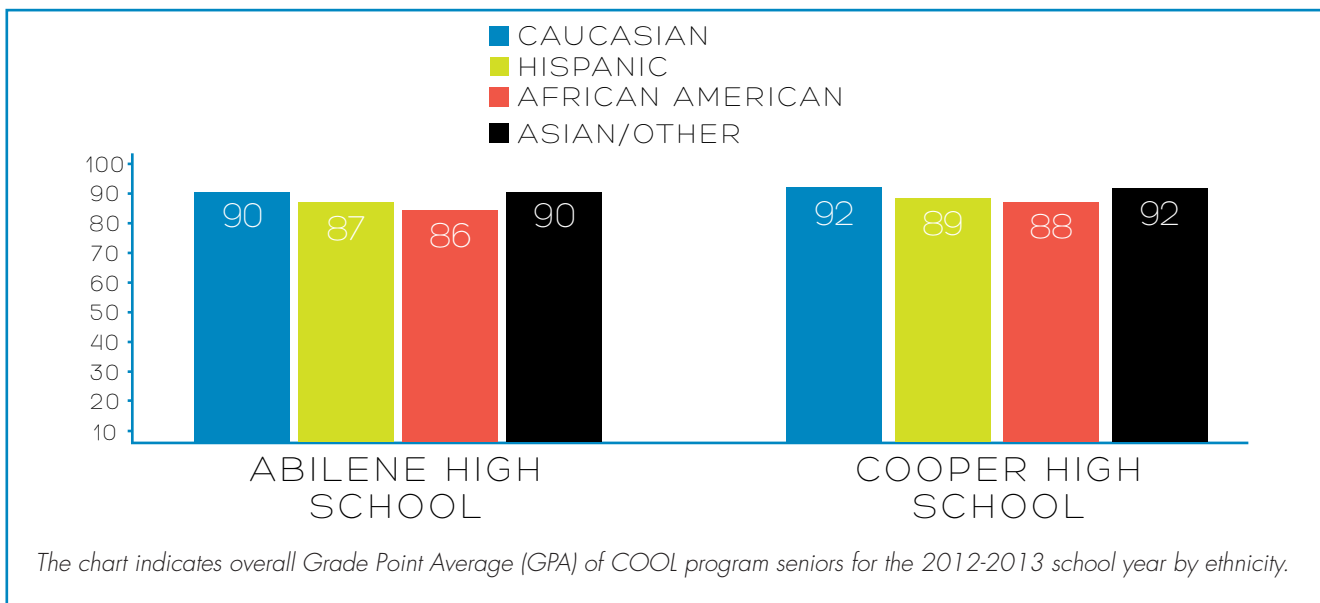
We are so excited to see what the future holds for these amazing students!

CHS and AHS Statistics

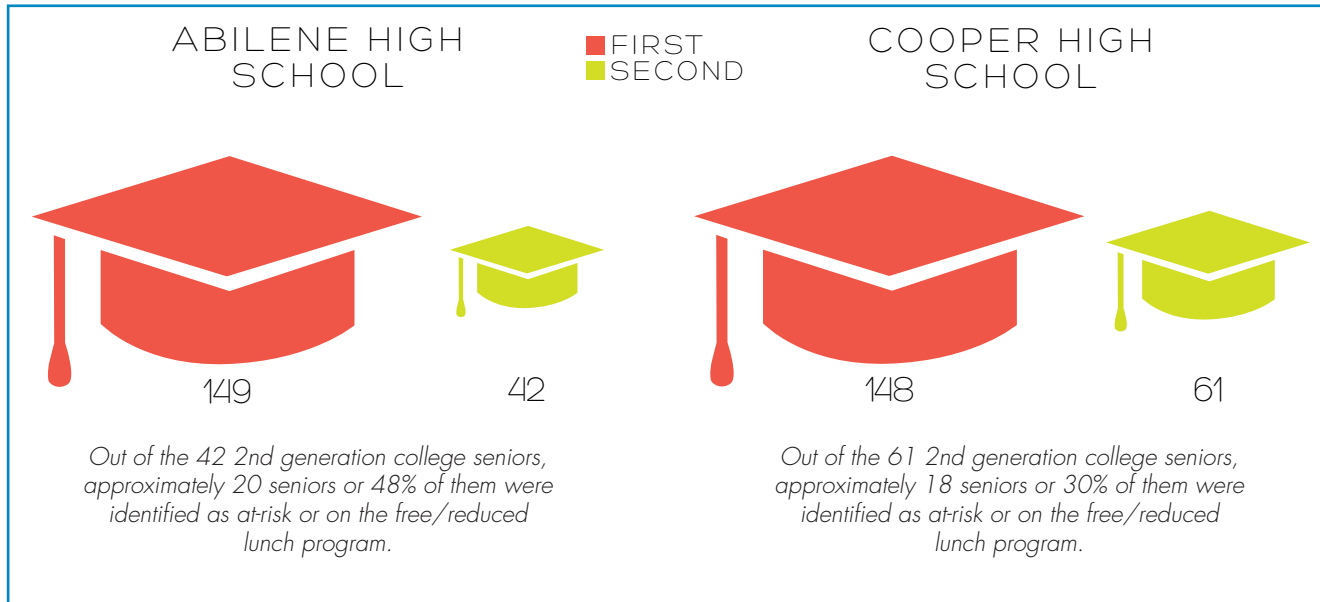
Ethnicity Breakdown 2012-2013 COOL Senior Participants



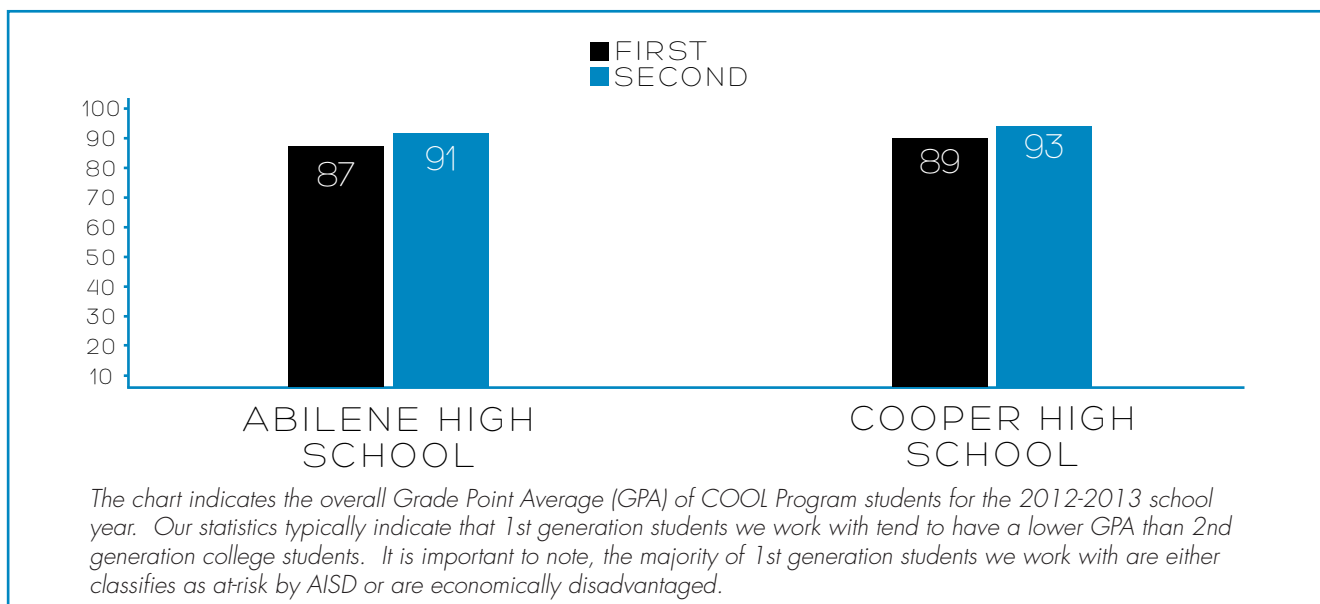
Ethnicity Grade Point Average 2012-2013 COOL Senior Participants



Number of First and Second Generation 2012-2013 COOL Senior Participants



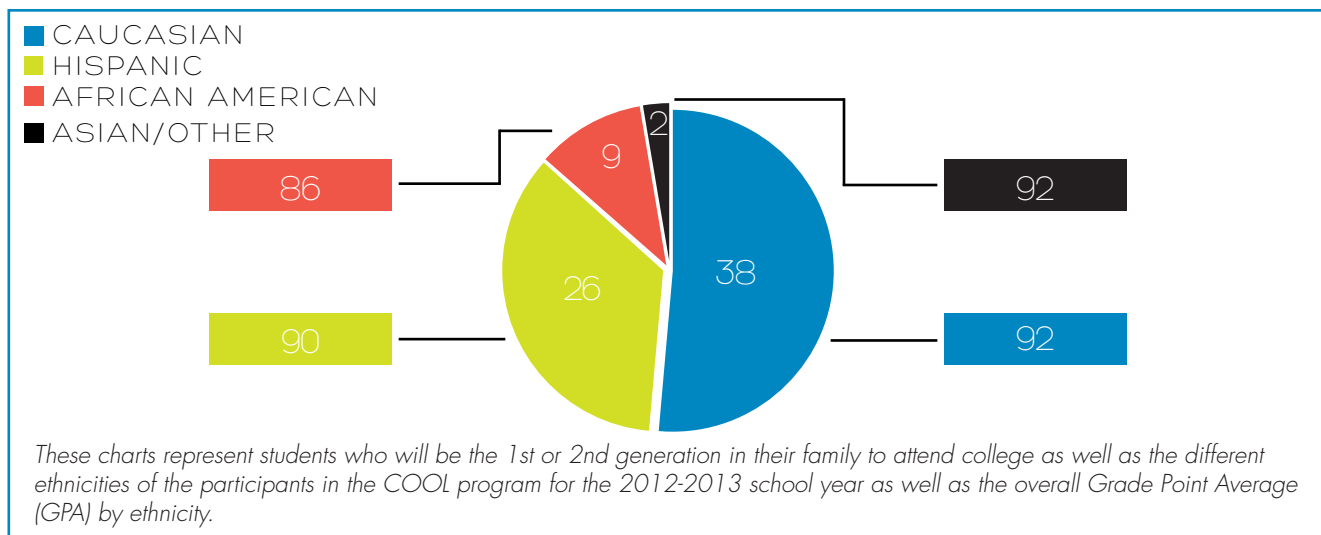
First and Second Generation Grade Point Average 2012-2013 COOL Senior Participants



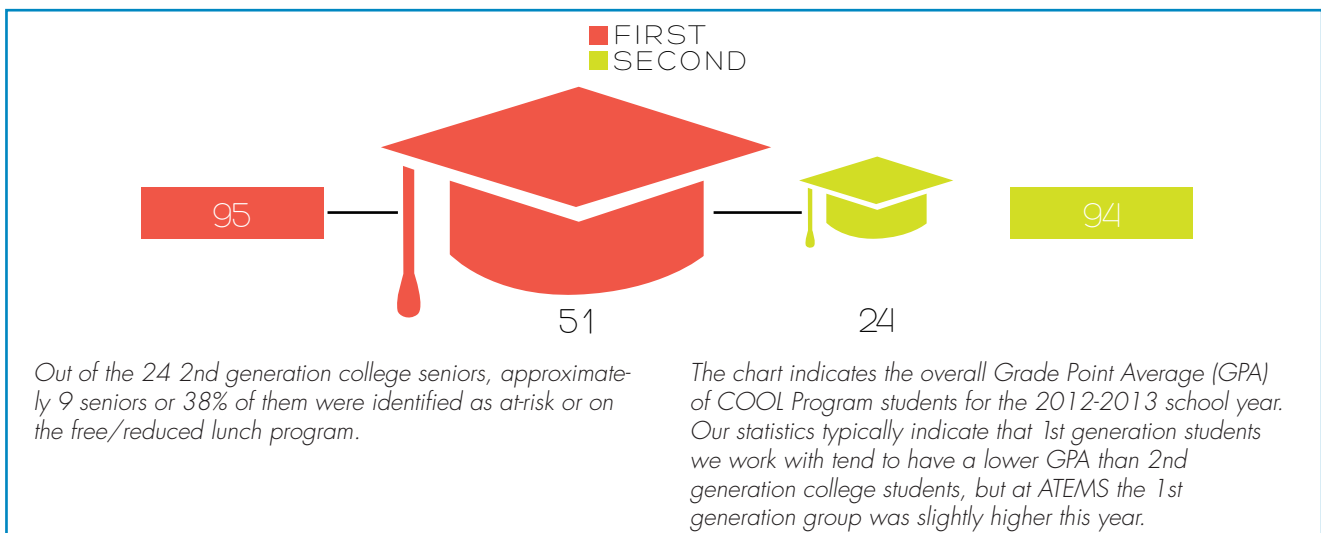
ATEMS Statistics

This was a banner year for ATEMS High School as they graduated their very first senior class. ATEMS, the Academy of Technology, Engineering, Math and Science, is a magnet school for students interested in Math and Science related majors in college. ATEMS is a very rigorous school with most classes being Pre-AP/AP or Dual Credit. This was the first year for the COOL program to officially be involved at ATEMS, and it was a fantastic year. Many of the students were accepted into their first college of choice and enjoyed equally great success in winning scholarships. ATEMS students were accepted to, and plan to attend, Angelo State University, Abilene Christian University, Hardin-Simmons University, McMurry University, Cisco College, Texas Tech University, the University of Texas at Austin, UT-Arlington, UT-Dallas, Texas A&M University, Friends University, Embry-Riddle University and many other universities.

Ethnicity Breakdown/Grade Point Average 2012-2013 ATEMS COOL Senior Participants



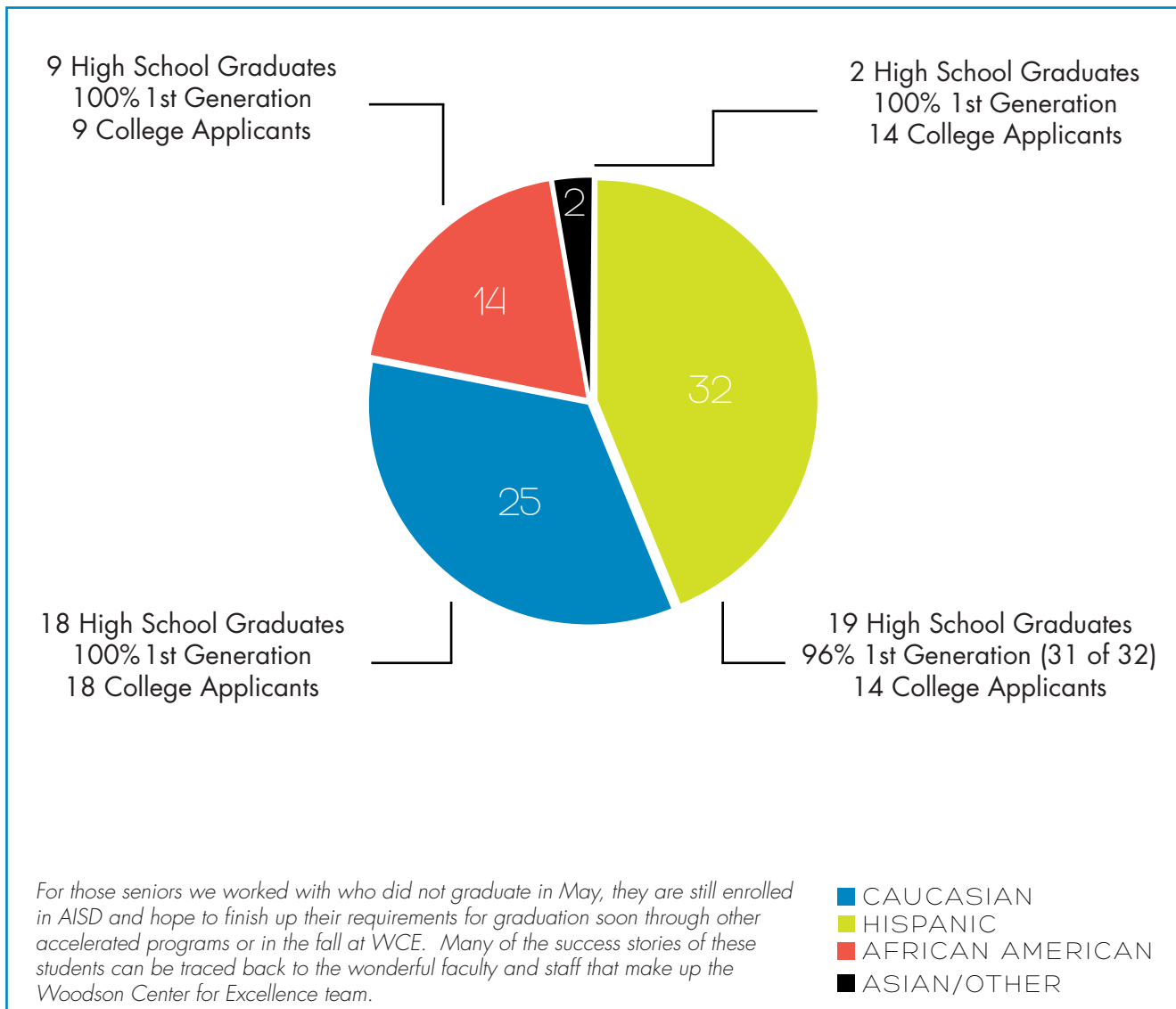
First and Second Generation/Grade Point Average 2012-2013 ATEMS COOL Senior Participants



Woodson Center for Excellence Statistics

Woodson Center for Excellence (WCE) is an alternative high school for students in Abilene ISD. It is a program of choice. Offering a self-paced program designed to accelerate a student's education and meet state and local graduation requirements. The decision to reach out to students at the Woodson Center for Excellence campus this year presented a unique challenge to the COOL program. Many of the seniors who attended Woodson Center for Excellence have the potential to attend college and be just as successful as their counterparts at Abilene High, Cooper High or ATEMS High schools. The style of college advising differs at Woodson because many of the students have family obligations, financial issues or children of their own. All of the students served were first in their families to attend college, and many were first in the families to graduate high school. These circumstances, while not uncommon at other schools, put many of the students at a steep disadvantage when compared to their peers. Students who attend Woodson may not be able to enroll in college right away due to varied graduation times or other circumstances, so we work with these students to formulate a plan that gets them into college as soon as possible.

2012-2013 Woodson COOL Senior Participants



Scholarships

The Abilene Education Foundation is pleased to announce the names of the 2013 AEF Scholarship recipients. In conjunction with the Star Family of Dealerships, the AEF acknowledged the scholarship winners on Monday, May 20, at Frontier Texas.

Thirty-two Abilene High School, Cooper High School, and ATEMS High School students received a total of \$53,950 in scholarships. If the AEF scholarship recipient decides to attend a local college or university, he or she also has the opportunity to double their scholarship award. Abilene Christian University, Hardin-Simmons University, McMurry University and Cisco College have all generously committed to match the AEF scholarship amount, within certain guidelines, in the student's financial aid package with the university or college funded financial aid.

The AEF is very appreciative of their enthusiastic collaboration.

Abilene Education Foundation Scholarships

Due to the tremendous generosity of the Abilene community at our past three "Cajun Fests," the Abilene Education Foundation is pleased to provide one-time scholarships to seven students.

- Roberto Ballin** (ATEMS) \$2,000: West Texas A&M University and major in Psychology
- Michael Matas** (Cooper High) \$2,000: Angelo State University and major in Computer Programming
- Shayne Cook** (Cooper High) \$2,000: McMurry University and major is undecided
- Reanne Parker** (Cooper High) \$2,000: Angelo State University and major in Business or Psychology
- Raquel Ortega** (Abilene High) \$2,000: McMurry University and major in Nursing
- Victoria Cortes** (Abilene High) \$2,000: Hardin-Simmons University and major in Speech Pathology
- Christine Musonera** (Abilene High) \$2,000: University of Texas and major in Biology



Alumni Scholarships

Alumni scholarship funds are endowed monies that provide scholarship opportunities for graduating seniors of AISD. This year monies raised by the endowment were matched with AEF funds raised by Cajun Fest.

- Elizabeth Van Houten** (Abilene High) \$2,000: Texas A&M University and major in Biology
- Dalton Clark** (Cooper High) \$2,000: Howard Payne University and major in Christian Studies

Donor Directed: Individual

Each year, private donors see potential in certain students and decide to invest in these students by providing scholarships.

- Alyssa Reynolds** (ATEMS) \$1,000: Angelo State University and major in English/Communications
- Briauna Wilson** (Cooper High) \$2,000: Texas State University and major in Psychology
- Brandon Vasquez** (Cooper High) \$2,000: University of North Texas and major in Marketing
- Conlan Aguirre** (Abilene High) \$2,000: Hardin-Simmons University and major is undecided
- Morgan Trevino** (Abilene High) \$2,000: Texas Tech University and major in Political Science with a pre-professional emphasis in law

AISD Transportation

The AISD Transportation scholarship is awarded to a senior in AISD who has the desire to further his or her education after high school and a proven record of success. The student must also be a dependent of an employee in the AISD transportation department.

Jasmine Rangel (Abilene High) \$500: Sam Houston State University and major in Criminal Justice

School Nutrition Association of Abilene

“My Heroes Have Always Worn Hairnets” scholarships are funds raised by the School Nutrition Association of Abilene food service employees of AISD, through luncheons, bake sales, and silent auctions. The scholarships benefit a graduating senior from Cooper and Abilene high schools.

Charles Ann Freeman (Cooper High) \$800: Harding University and major in Mathematics and Education
Yvan Ntwali (Abilene High) \$800: University of Texas in Austin and focus on pre-law

Citizens Bank of Abilene

This year, the Abilene Education Foundation attained the Citizens Bank of Abilene Scholarship. The Citizens Bank of Abilene is committed to building strong and enduring relationships with their customers and in the community.

Jason Ligon (Cooper High) \$1,000: Hardin-Simmons University and major in business
Rainah McIntyre (Abilene High) \$1,000: University of Texas Arlington and major in biology

Abernathy Scholarship

Jeff and Shawna Abernathy, owners of Abilene Auto Glass, are a couple who believe in the power of higher education. Just as someone helped them, they also have a desire to help a rising young Cooper student reach his or her dream of a college education through the gift of a scholarship.

Nicole Shirmer (Cooper High) \$500: Texas Christian University and major in Nursing.

The Johnny Ortega Jr. Memorial Scholarship

This amazing opportunity is provided by Mary and Johnny Ortega Sr. in memory of their son Johnny Ortega Jr. to honor his legacy.

Zachary Benivamondez (Abilene High) \$1,000: Texas A&M University and major in the field of Math or Science



The BreLex Memorial Scholarship

The BreLex Memorial Scholarship is a new scholarship established by Mr. Rocky Flores in memory of his daughter Breanna Camacho and niece Elexus Flores, who were students in Abilene ISD.

Spencer Blaire Collins (Cooper High) \$800: McMurry University and major in Art and Education
LeAndra Middleton (Abilene High) \$800: Angelo State University and major in Nursing

The Meta Alice Keith Bratten Foundation Scholarships

In memory of her mother, Adelaide Leavens has established a scholarship for two AHS graduates.

Levi Grand (Abilene High) \$6,000 scholarship, payable over four years: University of North Texas and major in Psychology

Joylyn Seguin (Abilene High) \$6,000 scholarship, payable over four years: Gallandet University and major in American Sign Language Interpretation

Young Masters

Juried Art Exhibition

The Grace Museum, the National Center for Children's Illustrated Literature (NCCIL) museum and Abilene Independent School District collaborate with AEF to celebrate young master artists in Advance Placement art courses by hosting a juried art exhibition. This year Carol Ivey, a professional artist from Fort Worth, judged the submissions and awarded the following.



WINNERS

Best in Show \$2,500

Abilene High School: Ethan Foster plans to attend McMurry University and is undecided on his college major.

First Place \$1,500

Cooper High School: Luis-lokepa Ortiz plans to attend ACU and major in Theatre Arts.

Second Place \$1,250

Cooper High School: Grace Brunkow is a junior and will be awarded her scholarship in May 2014.

Third Place \$1,000

Abilene High School: Margaret Patton plans to attend Abilene Christian University and major in Graphic Design and Marketing.

Merit Awards

\$750 – Cooper High School: Cristian Garcia plans to attend Cisco College.

\$1,500 (two pieces were awarded)

Cooper High School: Michael Romero plans to attend University of North Texas and major in Studio Art.

Honorable Mention:

Josue Gutierrez – CHS
 Sergio Hernandez – AHS
 Jordan Lara – AHS
 Katelin Reyes – AHS
 Briana Wilson – CHS

Scholarship Overview

Although this year proved to be a challenge when it came to financial aid and scholarships, the COOL participants were very fortunate to receive over \$3 million in institutional, civic, athletic and merit award money!

Students with an estimated family contribution of zero, according to their student aid report submitted via the FAFSA, did not receive enough financial aid to cover direct costs of school (tuition, fees, room and board). As College Advisors, we stressed the importance of submitting scholarship applications in anticipation of gaps in financial aid. The students responded and we are proud to report a significant increase in the amount of scholarship applications. The Abilene Education Foundation received over 100 scholarship applications, which was three times as many as the previous year.

Scholarships depend heavily on grade point average, community service and in most cases a well-written essay on a variety of topics. This year, two students received very prestigious scholarships, the Dell Scholars and the Air Force ROTC Scholarship, totaling over \$70,000 in award money.



The COOL Program is pleased to announce ATEMS, AHS and CHS 2012-2013 senior COOL participants received \$3,170,061 in scholarship money to be used over a four-year period! Scholarship monies listed come from civic organizations, foundations, institutions and universities, and exclude traditional financial aid opportunities such as federal and state grants.



1st Generation =
\$1,708,623

2nd Generation =
\$1,461,438

Total Scholarships =
\$3,170,061

COOL- Post Graduation

My name is Joselin Alfaro and I am an Abilene High School graduate Class of 2011. I just finished my sophomore year at Sam Houston State University. College has been a life changing experience for me. It has made me grow as a person and has changed the way I view the world.

There are always events going on at SHSU. For example, each year before school starts there is what we call Sammy Palooza. It is an event where students can come and have fun, meet new people and enjoy popular artists they love for free. At my first Sammy Palooza, I met many of the amazing friends I now hang out with on a daily basis.



The road to college was not easy, and leaving Abilene was definitely not an easy task for me. Before coming to college, I did not know how I was going to cover all my expenses. I came from a one-parent household and there was no way my Mom was going to be able to cover everything, and I did not have a clue on how to get financial aid. Scheduling classes was a little difficult as well. I was used to just going to school and getting handed a schedule. As a freshman, I did not know how to do all the scheduling for myself. It was very stressful trying to find times for class that did not conflict with each other. Finally, simply processing the idea that I was going to be far from home was very difficult for me too. I am very close to my family. During high school, I was always with my family and I did get very homesick my freshman year of college. SHSU is about a five hour drive from Abilene. It was my first time really being far away from home and on my own. The only time I visited SHSU was on a COOL college tour and when I arrived here as a freshman I did not know a single person, but I knew this was my opportunity and that the homesickness would pass.

I really owe my decision to give college a try to both Mrs. Carr and Ms. Gantt. Without their help I do not think I would be where I am today. I did not know how to get my financial aid done, or how to apply, or where to apply for college, but they both helped me. I really appreciate all the help, advice, and encouragement they have given me to this day. They continue to help me even now as a college student. I am the first person in my family to go to college, so although my mom encouraged me to pursue college I really did not have anyone from my family who already knew the process. Even though I'd thought about college, I assumed I'd probably work first or maybe try junior college, but my college advisor just kept telling me I was college material. Without the COOL program, I wouldn't be at SHSU pursuing Criminal Justice as my major.

I really want to encourage all students to get the help they can from whatever resources they can while in high school, especially COOL. Take every opportunity you have to continue on with you educational career. It may be a struggle in the beginning, but in the end it is all going to be worth it. You may feel like giving up at times, but just push yourself to keep going on. Remember if you are the first one in your family to go to college like me, then you are the transition person in your family so it is going to be a little harder for you. Think of all the positives that you will get out of college, career, friends, self-esteem, and most important an education, which no one can ever take from you!

My name is Patrick Angus. I am a graduate of Abilene Cooper High School, class of 2009. Over spring break, I had the distinct pleasure and honor of marrying my best friend and college sweetheart, Rebecca Griffin. On 10 May 2013, I will be formally commissioned into the United States Army as a Second Lieutenant (O1) and on 11 May 2013, I will graduate from one of the most prestigious Universities in the country, Texas A&M, class of 2013. My degree is Agricultural Leadership and Development, a social science, with an emphasis on military science. After graduation, I will report to Fort Sill, Oklahoma for Basic Officers Leaders Course (BOLC). From there, I will more than likely be sent to Korea and assigned to the 35th Air Defense Artillery Brigade. All of the success mentioned above is as the result of the COOL Program and is the reason of why I write to you today.

Early in my senior year, I was hurt in the first football game of the season. I received a grade three concussion, whiplash, nerve damage, and a bruised spinal cord. I was told I would never play again. I soon found out that discovering reality is a harsh thing. All of the universities that were looking at me to play for them vanished overnight. I became depressed and stopped caring about my education. A little while after all this occurred, I met Mr. Medina. He started talking to me and persuaded me to come on the student visit to Texas A&M, a school I was not even remotely interested in at the time. After touring the campus, seeing what college life was like, I decided to apply and start caring about my education again. In March of 2009, I was shocked to find out I was admitted to Texas A&M as a member of the Fightin' Texas Aggie Class of 2013.

This came as a shock for a number of reasons. First, I was never really confident or sure of myself. I projected an air that I was "average" so that others would not pick on me. Second, I did not know how to even begin paying for an A&M education. Lastly, and probably most importantly, I was always told by people I looked up to and even a family member, that I was not good enough, that I would never be somebody, and that I was definitely not smart enough for college.

Now, throughout all of this, Mr. Medina was patient and slowly started building the foundation of what I am today. He listened and talked with me, even joked around a little bit, and at other times he was too busy to do that and we just got the work done. But no matter what, he was always there to support me and help me find my way. Besides my parents, I had never had that before. Over the years, he has tracked my accomplishments, and from time to time provided me with the encouragement that I needed to finish my college education.

In the end, it was Mr. Medina that truly helped and prepared me for the rigors and other difficulties of college. He helped me develop my sense of accomplishment, and driven mindset. I needed these as I would have dropped out of college long ago if I did not have them. Mr. Medina is not only an amazing collegiate advisor but a true friend to anyone.



COOL Senior Participant Update

The COOL program, using the National Student Clearinghouse database, has been able to track each individual COOL senior participant after high school graduation.

A large majority of COOL senior participants enroll in a post-secondary institution after high school and all were accepted to at least one college of their choice.

There are a wide variety of reasons why some of our participants chose not to pursue a post-secondary education. There are some students who join the military or make personal choices which cause them to enter the workforce or postpone enrollment.

Percentage of COOL participants who enrolled in a college or university after high school graduation:

2007-2008 = 81.5%

2008-2009 = 82%

2009-2010 = 83%

2010-2011 = 80%

2011-2012 = 80%



It has been five years since the first COOL senior class enrolled in college and four years since the second class began their journeys. We are pleased to report the following information on our graduates, our students still enrolled, and those who although they did not earn a degree, did earn some college credit. It has been fun to see where so many of our students ended up – some all the way in Alaska! It is our sincere wish for those who have postponed their education that they will one day return to complete their degrees. We seek out these past COOL graduates in an attempt to encourage them to re-enroll by providing assistance and guidance to further their post-secondary education options.

COOL Class of 2007-2008 COOL Class of 2008-2009

186
enrolled in post-secondary education
directly after high school

11
enrolled in post-secondary education
more than a year after high school

117
graduated from college, are still enrolled
or scheduled to graduate in 2014.

40
earned some college credit, but not a
degree.

40
earned some college credit, but we are
unable to verify their current enrollment/
graduation status. *

220
enrolled in post-secondary education
directly after high school

2
enrolled in post-secondary education
more than a year after high school

114
graduated from college, are still enrolled
or scheduled to graduate in 2014.

34
earned some college credit, but not a
degree.

74
earned some college credit, but we are
unable to verify their current enrollment/
graduation status. *

**Most of these students are not on Facebook, do not participate in the National Student Clearinghouse, or have moved out of the Abilene area. The last recorded activity for this group of students in the National Student Clearinghouse Database is prior 2012. Some of these may show up as Graduates in the years to follow. All data is current as of June 2013.*



Thank you

The COOL program would like to thank the following community partners for their support:

Shelton Family Foundation	Citi Foundation
Dian Graves Owen Foundation	First Financial Bank
Abilene Christian University	Dodge Jones Foundation
Abilene Independent School District	Educational Talent Search
Ads4Next	Hardin-Simmons University
Azle Education Foundation	Hispanic Leadership Council
BCFS: Abilene Transition Center	McMurry University
Carver Youth Council	National Association of College Admission and Counseling: Imagine Fund
Center for Economic Opportunity	P-16 Council
Cisco College	Texas Association for College Admission Counseling
Community Foundation of Abilene	Texas State Technical College: West Texas
Communities in Schools	

"It was good," Mann student Lauren McAden said of the middle school - Create a College Workshop. "I think it's awesome they're getting us ready for college this early. Most people aren't shown their options this early in life."

COOL Pics DVD





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