

5-11-2012

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Recommended Citation

"DECA on Top" (2012). *News Releases*. 663.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/663

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DECA on Top

05.11.2012 | Education

On the University of Dayton campus sits one of America's most innovative high schools, which added another feather to its cap this week.

The Dayton Early College Academy received a Bronze Medal from *U.S. News & World Report* in its annual ranking of America's Best High Schools, released May 11. The report analyzed academic and enrollment data from nearly 22,000 public high schools to find the best in the nation. A total of 4,850 schools received recognition in gold, silver and bronze categories.

DECA is one of four early college high schools in Ohio to receive recognition.

"Being on the list of America's best high schools is wonderful," said DECA superintendent and CEO Judy Hennessey. "When an external evaluator ranks schools, it adds credibility. Our hard working students, teachers and parents have made DECA successful in our singular mission: get students to college."

The University of Dayton founded DECA in 2003 in partnership with Dayton Public Schools with the singular focus of preparing urban students to succeed in college. DECA reorganized in 2007 as a charter school operated by the University of Dayton and enrolled seventh-graders for the first time in 2008.

Many of the students are from low-income families and will be the first generation to go to college.

Since its inception, DECA has attracted significant national attention. The Harvard University Graduate School of Education, Jobs for the Future and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* have studied the school's innovative approach to education.

The Center for Secondary School Redesign has called DECA "a concrete response to convince and prepare urban learners to go to college," and the Council of the Great City Colleges of Education honored DECA with its national Urban Impact Award as exemplary partnership between an urban school district and a university.

But the best measure of DECA's success is its graduates. Here, every student holds on to one thought: "I'm going to college."

All 146 of DECA's graduates have attended college, with more than 85 percent graduated or still enrolled. The school expects to graduate classes of up to 70 students by 2013, and it has plans to expand to include an elementary school.

The school is preparing to graduate its sixth class at the end of this month. All 24 graduates have been accepted to college, earning more than \$1 million in scholarships and grants. Senior Olga Ramos received the prestigious Gates Millennium

Scholarship, which pays for all costs for her undergraduate education. Ramos plans to attend Bryn Mawr College, a women's college near Philadelphia.

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