



What is Countdown to College?

Countdown to College (C2C) is a college preparation program designed to ensure college access and success for first-generation students whose parents did not have the opportunity to go to college. In partnership with NativityMiguel middle schools in Chicago, Milwaukee, Racine, Minneapolis, and Tucson, Saint Mary's University provides on-campus summer academic camps and school follow-up services to 24 students each year for four years prior to high school graduation.

Countdown to College begins the summer after eighth grade graduation. The two-week academic boot camp consists of a mix of academic classes, sports, recreation, academic competitions, supervised study halls, college prep discussions, and field trips. Follow up continues through visits by the C2C Coordinator and Director in each student's high school during the school year. Students who meet the program's academic and behavioral goals are invited to attend for three additional summers and are given preference for full-cost scholarships at the University through Saint Mary's FGI Scholars program.

Why Countdown to College?

"The distressing reality is that first-generation students are less successful in college than their non-first-generation student counterparts."

College Board, 2011.

"Reseachers have determined that only 16 percent of Hispanic students are considered college-ready, based on high school completion rates, curricular offerings, and literacy scores...Catholic colleges and universities can partner with existing K-12 Catholic

schools in innovative ways to support the adoption of best practices in instruction and curriculum.”

To Nurture the Soul of a Nation, 2009.

“College enrollment, persistence, and graduation for students of color are areas of concern that require special planning and attention. Black students earn GPAs that are, on average, two-thirds of a letter grade below whites, even when SAT scores predict that they are extraordinarily well-prepared for college. While 58% of white students graduate in six years, only 38% of black students achieve that goal.”

Jencks & Phillips, 1998, 2008.

These are some of the many reasons Saint Mary’s University is dedicated to providing a seamless and successful educational system for first-generation students from our partner Nativity/Miguel middle schools and Lasallian/Cristo Rey high schools. Contrary to the usual college prep program that lasts for a few weeks in the summer before college entrance, Countdown to College provides four years of intensive summer preparation and school-year followup.

Questions about the C2C Academic Program

What are the academic goals of C2C?

1. Address learning strengths and gaps, with special attention to math, reading, writing/spelling, grammar and vocabulary.
2. Prepare each student for success at college entrance.
3. Connect and coordinate C2C with the Nativity/San Miguel Schools and high schools of each student.
4. Expose students to college life, college students, college professors.
5. Orient and prepare students for college life outside of the classroom.

How long will the academic day be?

9:00am – 3:30pm, with breaks for sports and lunch. Each academic class will be one hour long Monday-Friday, with shortened classes on Saturday to allow for field trips, attendance at Mass, and sports events.

Supervised study halls will occur each night, as well as academic contests in vocabulary and nightly discussions related to high school success and college preparation.

What will the academic curriculum look like?

The C2C curriculum was designed by Backward Design: Starting with what students need to know and be able to do in order to succeed in their first year of college and building a four-summer curriculum that will prepare them for that goal.

Classes the first two summers will include reading, writing, mathematics, and grammar/vocabulary. Each class will be one hour long. Students will participate in supervised study halls each night, and in guided discussions and presentations about preparing for success in college. Frequent academic contests will challenge teams in the areas of vocabulary and math. During the last two summers, classes will focus on science investigations that integrate math, scientific reasoning, reading, and writing, and technology.

How are partner school teachers involved in C2C?

Each class of 6 students will be co-taught by a Saint Mary's instructor and a partner-school teacher. Saint Mary's instructors will be responsible for all curriculum and lesson planning. Partner school teachers will co-teach four hours a day and assist with recreation, field trips, night discussions, and study halls on a rotating basis. Teachers will have joint planning times and faculty meeting times to adjust curriculum and supports for individual students as needed.

How will academic goals be measured and achieved?

Reading specialists will administer individual tests in reading, spelling, writing, math, and vocabulary on the first Sunday after arrival. Formal post-tests are planned for the beginning of each year of participation, as repetition of tests in a two-week period is not valid for measurement of growth.

At the end of the two weeks, each instructor-teacher team will write a brief report of individual progress in the academic area taught by that team. This will be discussed with the students' high school counselor and/or graduate support person when the C2C Director and Coordinator make visits to each student's home school.

Is this camp an introduction to college or an academic boot camp?

Both. There will be rigorous academic work on a college campus, with college professors, and interaction with college students. Participants will be staying in college dorm rooms.

Social/Safety Questions

Who will be supervising the students when they are not in class?

Teachers from the partner middle and high school, the C2C Coordinator, and C2C camp counselors will supervise recreational and nature experiences. A night supervisor is hired for the hours from “Lights out” until morning wakeup.

What are the rules of conduct? What happens if a student breaks these rules?

What will be the procedure if a student needs to be sent home prior to the end of the program?

For information on these topics, see the *Code of Conduct*.

What activities are planned during non-academic hours?

Educational field trips, sports, recreation, teambuilding activities, orientation to college, competitions, supervised study hall, movies (with a message) and discussion, Mass (on Sundays).

What kind of expectation should the students have about their time at Saint Mary’s?

Students can expect to be treated as college students are treated, which assumes personal motivation, a good work ethic, and a willingness to be stretched and challenged. They can expect a rigorous and enjoyable program which will prepare them for college success.

What kind of expectations should parents have?

Parents can expect that students will be safe, well-supervised at all times, and that their children will have an opportunity to learn about and experience college life.

May the parents visit the students?

Parents of first-year students will arrive with their children the first Saturday and depart after Mass and lunch on Sunday. Free transportation will be provided for parents, students, and teachers from the home schools. This is exclusively for parents only, no other family member. During year 4, parents will return to Saint Mary’s University for their child’s graduation ceremony at the end of the final Countdown to College Camp.

What kind of emergency planning has been done?

- We have campus safety coverage 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days per year with adult campus safety staff and student worker staff on each shift.
- We have free campus escorts 24 hours per day for any reason.
- All of our campus safety and hall staff go through criminal background checks and have specific training in CPR/First Aid and fire safety.

- We have a wireless campus-wide emergency response system in place and conduct periodic drills.
- We have 3-5 minute response time with police, fire and EMT through the city of Winona.
- The Winona Police periodically drive through on campus.
- Our Director of Campus Safety was a Winona Police Officer and has a degree in counseling.
- We have low annual crime statistics which can be viewed on our campus safety website.
- We have Automatic Emergency Defibrillators in key locations on campus.
- Doctors and nurses are available at Winona Health and the Urgent Care facilities, 4-5 minute drives from campus.
- Saint Mary's University has had extensive experience in hosting high school residential camps, including sports camps and summer experiences for students from Mexico and other Spanish-speaking countries. There are well-developed procedures and staff to manage emergencies of all types.

General Questions

How will the students arrive/return home from Saint Mary's?

Transportation will be provided to and from Saint Mary's. The point of departure and return will be to the Nativity or San Miguel School.

How will students be housed?

Students, partner-school teachers, and C2C Coordinator and camp counselors will be housed in one of the University dorms. There will be two students housed in each dorm room. Parents will also be housed in dorm rooms in another University facility.

How/where will students eat?

Breakfast, lunch, and dinner will be provided daily in the student cafeteria on campus. Box lunches will be provided for field trips and picnics.

Who will organize the evening time and the weekend activities?

The Program Director and Coordinator plan the overall camp schedule and jointly supervise the C2C counselors. The Countdown to College Coordinator is responsible for planning and organizing the non-academic schedule.

Staff Training

Will all staff have background checks and VIRTUS training?

Staff of Saint Mary's University will participate in the Diocese of Winona *Safe Environment Program*, which places emphasis and importance on the process of providing all the people of God with the appropriate and necessary information to protect themselves and those vulnerable from any form of abuse, particularly sexual abuse. Specifically, staff will be required to complete four online training sessions: *Protecting All God's Children*, *Code of Conduct*, *Regarding Misconduct*, *In an Online World Protecting God's Children*.

Partner-School Teachers

What is the job description for partner-school teachers who participate in C2C?

The partner-school teachers will each receive a stipend of \$1,000 to serve as co-teachers with SMU professors, along with continuing education credits. They will be expected to serve as study hall supervisors and assist with after-school recreation and field trips on a rotating basis. Their day will generally consist of four hours of class and 2-3 hours of supervision during sports, recreation, nightly discussions, or study hall, Monday through Saturday. Sunday will consist of field trip supervision after mass and lunch on campus.