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Early College Program Gives High School Students a Head Start to Degree and Career

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NORWALK, Calif. - February 22, 2022 – This fall, St. Pius X - St. Matthias Academy (PMA) in Downey will join Cerritos College's Early College program as the first private high school to build a four-year dual enrollment pathway. The incoming freshman class at PMA will get a head start on their college coursework. Students who complete the program can shorten their time in college and save on tuition costs up to \$30,000. Students can also earn an associate degree by taking additional Cerritos College classes.

Established in 2021, Early College provides high school students the opportunity to earn up to 46 UC/CSU transferrable units. Students who finish the entire program will earn a high school diploma while also completing the entire Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC). This is a series of courses that can be used to meet many of the freshman/sophomore level general education requirements at CSU, UC, and independent campuses. Cerritos College tuition is waived for the program, and each school district pays for participating students' textbooks.

"We are thrilled to have PMA in our Early College program. The program introduces high school students to college courses early to help them build confidence to achieve college and career readiness while saving time and cost of education," said Rick Miranda, vice president, Academic Affairs. "We will continue to enhance the program offerings and partnerships to address community interests and student needs."

"Providing direct access to college coursework for our students starting in grade 9 will not only increase their opportunities for acceptance and matriculation to college but their success in completing college," said Dr. Christian De Larkin, President of PMA. "We are excited to welcome our first cohort of students in the fall of 2022 and look forward to creating the model program for dual enrollment in Los Angeles County."

"We are so excited to partner with Cerritos College and offer our students this opportunity at PMA. We are always looking for ways to best serve our students to be not just college-ready but college-competitive," echoed Veronica Zozaya, Principal of PMA.

Cerritos College currently partners with Bellflower High School (Bellflower Unified School District), Norwalk High School (Norwalk-La Mirada Unified School District), and Whitney High School (ABC Unified School District). Ninety students are currently participating in the College's Early College program.

About Cerritos College: Cerritos College serves as a comprehensive community college for southeastern Los Angeles County. Communities within the college's district include Artesia, Bellflower, Cerritos, Downey, Hawaiian Gardens, La Mirada, Norwalk, and portions of Bell Gardens, Lakewood, Long Beach, Santa Fe Springs, and South Gate. Cerritos College offers degrees and certificates in more than 180 areas of study in nine divisions. Annually, more than 1,200 students successfully complete their course of studies. Enrollment currently averages 21,000 students. Visit Cerritos College online at <http://www.cerritos.edu/>.

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