

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Local Executive Director receives Lifetime Achievement Award**



The lessons David Dugger learned almost five decades ago eventually became an educational goldmine for students. While early middle colleges were once just a concept on paper, the tenacity, brain trust, and bold actions of a core group that included Dugger moved the idea from paper to practice. Today, David Dugger is the Executive Director of the Washtenaw Educational Consortium Options, including a middle college-the Early College Alliance at Eastern Michigan University (ECA@EMU), which he founded in 2007.

Dugger is the recipient of the *Dr. Chery Wagonlander Early Middle College Lifetime Achievement Award*, given to individuals who have dramatically impacted the development, leadership, growth, support, and student outcomes of EMC efforts at both the state and national levels. Dugger says documented achievement results for early middle college students is gratifying and points to the success of EMCs.

“Applying the lessons I learned in the 1980s while working at the Federal Region V Desegregation Assistance Center proves you can change the system in impactful ways,” Dugger says. “Our data shows that 75% of students of color who graduate from the ECA graduate from college, which is 700% higher than the rate in Michigan. The early middle college is an intentional educational model that creates successful student outcomes, independent of race, gender, or national origin.”

There are over 170 early middle colleges in Michigan. Dugger was charged with starting the second one in Michigan, the Washtenaw Technical Middle College, established in 1997. Additionally, he has consulted on the start-up of multiple early middle college programs in Michigan and other states.

“I’m very honored to have my life work recognized,” Dugger said. “I have had the incredible opportunity to be innovative my whole career and to solve unique solutions to change the educational landscape to benefit students. Working with school districts and leaders in Michigan and nationally in the early college movement has been rewarding.”

William Miller, former Executive Director of the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Districts, says when he was working as Superintendent of the Washtenaw Intermediate School District, he tapped Dugger to head up the creation of the state’s second middle college program.

“Dave is a pioneer in the development of early middle colleges and is respected across the state in K-12 and higher education,” Miller said. “He is student-centered, driven, compassionate, and cares about giving students alternatives to traditional education. He developed the program at Washtenaw Community College and later established the Early College Alliance at Eastern Michigan University. He consistently advocates for middle colleges, which appeals to educational groups that thrive on innovation. Dave is detail oriented and knows how to bring many factions together to design programs and implement models.”

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In 2013 when Dugger became the Executive Director of WEOC, he named Dr. Ellen Fischer as the program’s principal. Fischer says Dugger is one of the longest-serving practitioners in Michigan and has left an indelible mark on programs across the state and nation.

“Dave has built an incredible legacy. Our movement is much stronger for his vision and leadership over the past quarter-century. He fearlessly beats the early/middle college drum, helping to elevate and emphasize the pillars that have made our movement so successful,” Fischer said. “Dave has developed a tremendous amount of expertise in the model; there are not many people still working in the field of education who have the depth of knowledge, breadth of experience, and unlimited passion for the early/middle college model as he does.”

Dugger holds a BA degree from Michigan State University and an MA in Education from the University of Michigan. In addition to his position as the Executive Director of WEOC, he is also the President/CEO of Middle College Consultants, which provides consulting services to secondary and post-secondary institutions pertaining to the creation, development, and implementation of innovative educational programs. He has also served on several state-level commissions, including The Governor’s Commission on Early College Credit Earning Opportunities and Governor Whitmer’s Education and Talent Transition Team.

In addition to the Wagonlander Award, he is also the recipient of: Teacher Powered Schools/Education Evolving National Partner District of the Year (2022), Engineering Society of Detroit Institute, David A. Skiven Leadership Award (2014), University of Michigan Musical Society, Arts Alliance Arts and Culture school Program of the Year (2012) and Exemplary Educational Endeavors Award, Early College Alliance @ Eastern Michigan University (2010).

Dugger says he is most proud of making policy and systemic changes and implementing soft skills development that has and continues to result in positive student outcomes.

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