

Dual/Concurrent Enrollment

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Dual Enrollment: Policy Issues Confronting State Policymakers

By Carl Krueger March 2006

The Need

The transition to a knowledge-based economy is fueling the demand for well-educated, technically proficient workers – in all sectors, across a wide range of occupations and even for entry-level positions. New civic demands also call for a highly educated populace. Although more students today begin college than 20 years ago, greater proportions are not graduating. Nationally, for every 100 9th-grade students, 68 graduate from high school, 40 immediately enter college, 27 are still enrolled in their sophomore year and 18 graduate within 150% time with either an associate's or bachelor's degree. Far too many students experience substantial challenges in negotiating the transition from high school to college, resulting in a choice by many students to drop out of high school or college altogether. The result is that fewer than 20% of the 9th graders entering the education pipeline will graduate with a college degree by the age of 24. The United States cannot afford human capital loss of this scale and remain globally competitive.

In today's global economy, knowledge truly is power. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that a majority of the fastest growing and highest paying occupations between now and 2014 require some form of postsecondary education.² In other words, a high school diploma will no longer suffice. One policy tool to improve postsecondary preparation and participation is dual enrollment – defined as an academic program where college-level courses are offered to high school students for college credit. The terms dual enrollment, middle colleges and early college high schools are often used interchangeably. While all of these approaches fall under the umbrella of dual enrollment, there are a few minor distinctions:

- *Dual enrollment programs* can be administered in high school classrooms, on a college campus or through a distance-learning provider.
- Middle college high schools are essentially high schools located on college campuses and enrollment is usually limited. Some middle college programs target low-income or at-risk students.
- Early college high schools integrate high school and college resources to create an accelerated curriculum and allow students to graduate with a high school diploma and an associate's degree in four or five years, instead of six. Reaching out to underserved students is also of feature of early college programs.³

Whatever form they take – dual enrollment, middle college or early college programs – multiple enrollment options provide students with the rigor of a college curriculum while still in high school, and the opportunity to receive both high school and college credits.

The Benefits

A growing body of research documents the benefits of dual enrollment. According to the U.S. Department of Education, college credits earned prior to high school graduation reduce the average time-to-degree and increase the likelihood of graduation for the students who participate in these programs.⁴ Recent

research in Minnesota suggests that the number of students taking Advanced Placement tests rose by 988% between 1986 and 2004 as a result of the state's dual enrollment program. Figures from the Center for An Urban Future estimate that of the predominantly at-risk students enrolled in New York's LaGuardia Middle College High School, 90% graduated and went on to college. And because of the implementation of a P-16 initiative in Georgia that linked K-12 to postsecondary education in 1995, the percentage of high school students taking a rigorous core curriculum rose from 76% to 91% and postsecondary remediation levels fell by nearly 40%.

The Controversy

Dual enrollment is not without controversy. Some policymakers and researchers see dual enrollment as diluting quality, while others see a system that shuts out low-income and low-achieving students. Still others worry about the quality of certain high school teachers who are asked to teach college-level courses. Carol Dougan, a trustee at Klamath Community College in Oregon, claims that dual enrollment programs are based on what she calls the "pitcher principle." They "suggest that learning can be poured into a student and that when the pitcher is full, a student should receive a degree." In her view, and the view of others, there is no attention paid to rigor in dual enrollment programs, only to seat time and standardized testing. But another point of view comes from Lauren Adams, a dual enrollment student at Chester County Middle College High School in Pennsylvania. Her participation in the middle college program allowed her to transform from an apathetic student with no intention of going to college to an engaged student "dead set on a double major." Proponents of dual enrollment point to success stories like Lauren Adams, insisting that when students are challenged, they achieve at higher levels. Or, in the words of Betsy Brand of the American Youth Policy Forum, students "rise to the occasion when they are treated like adults."

The Basics

Dual enrollment provides high school students the opportunity to take postsecondary courses in state two- and four-year institutions. Eligibility and tuition requirements, funding streams and program features vary widely from state to state. Courses may or may not be designed specifically for high school students; they may be offered at the high school or at the college; and they may be taught by regular college faculty or by specifically certified high school teachers. Some programs offer college credit immediately upon completion of the course, while others offer the credit only when the student enrolls in postsecondary education. Currently, dual-enrollment policies exist at the state, board or institutional level in 47 states and their popularity seems to be growing.¹¹

Growth

According to the Prichard Committee in Kentucky, the number of students enrolled in the state's dual enrollment program grew from 6,281 in 2000 to 14,123 in 2005. The Center for an Urban Future estimates the number of colleges offering dual enrollment courses in New York grew from six in to 17 in a single year. In Virginia, the number of students participating in dual enrollment programs rose from 2,000 to 6,700 in a six-year period. And in the Philadelphia area, the number of high schools offering dual enrollment rose from 75 to 112 between 2003 and 2005. Other statistics include:

- During the 2002-03 school year, 70% of public high schools offered courses for dual credit. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005)
- 92% of schools offering courses for dual credit offered such classes with an academic focus, and 51% reported offering dual credit courses with a career and technical/vocational focus. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005)
- Of schools offering dual credit courses on a postsecondary campus, 82% reported that these courses enrolled both high school and postsecondary students. Of schools offering technical/vocational dual credit courses on a postsecondary campus, 78% reported that these courses contained both high school and postsecondary students. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005)

The Impact

There is evidence that dual enrollment increases academic performance and educational attainment. As previously mentioned, the U.S. Department of Education claims that college credits earned prior to high school graduation in dual-enrollment programs reduce the average time-to-degree. Time-to-degree

average for students with no acceleration credits earned was 4.65 years, compared to 4.25 years for students who earned nine or more acceleration credits. The Department also estimates that one out of four students who ultimately earned a graduate degree earned nine or more credits by examination or dual enrollment, 10 times the proportion of students who earned no degree. At the state level, the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Education reports that students who participated in the state's "Running Start" program averaged a 3.14 grade point average once they transferred to the University of Washington and completed more credits than students who did not participate in the program.

Despite the growing popularity and success of dual enrollment programs across the country, these programs still affect a limited number of students. While the percentage of Texas high school students taking dual enrollment courses in high school has tripled in the past decade, these students still make up only 6% of the total high school population. In Washington, dual enrollment affects only about 9% of all high school students. This might be because the target population for dual enrollment programs has traditionally been academically motivated and successful students. There is evidence that dual enrollment programs are not reaching low-income or minority students. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, schools with the highest minority enrollment were the least likely to offer dual enrollment courses when compared to schools with lower minority enrollment – 58% to 78%. In general, policymakers have only recently focused on extending dual enrollment opportunities to underserved student populations.

Access

The Education Commission of the States has found that a growing number of states are extending dual enrollment opportunities to a broader array of students. New York's "College Now" program and the Chester County Middle College High School in Pennsylvania are two examples of dual enrollment programs that specifically target low-income or underachieving students. The National Center for Education Statistics estimates that 5% of institutions with dual enrollment programs – or 2% of all institutions – had dual enrollment programs geared toward high school students at risk of academic failure. While this is a small percentage, it does represent progress. Jobs for the Future notes that in states with long-term, comprehensive programs that offer courses at no cost to students, between 10% and 30% of juniors and seniors obtain college credit in high school. Does for the Future also notes that because dual enrollment programs can shorten the time to a college degree by as much as two years, states and families can subtract from the total cost of educating a student. Removing financial barriers and easing access to dual enrollment programs does seem to have an effect on the participation and success of underrepresented students. In Florida, where access to dual enrollment programs is fairly open, African American students who participate in a dual enrollment program enroll in postsecondary education at higher rates than peers who do not, 70% to 45%.

State Examples

States create dual enrollment programs for a variety of reasons, including:

- Fostering relationships between high schools and colleges
- Enhancing the efficiency of the K-12 and postsecondary systems
- Implementing a rigorous college-prep curriculum for all
- Increasing postsecondary attainment rates
- Reducing the number of students in remediation.

Whatever the reason, states take different approaches to establish dual enrollment programs. Some draft dual enrollment legislation, while others create voluntary partnerships between institutions. Some states target low-income and minority students for admission into programs, while others focus primarily on high achieving students. More important, some states provide dual enrollment free of charge to students by relying on district, institutional and state resources to offset the cost of tuition. The following states represent a cross-section of program designs and outcomes:

Florida: Most college courses in Florida are available for dual enrollment. Legislation mandates that all 28 community colleges and certain four-year institutions offer dual enrollment opportunities. In most cases, the college credit earned in high school will transfer to any public college or university. Students who attend a Florida public college or university are exempt from paying registration, matriculation or

laboratory fees for courses taken through dual enrollment. Florida's data collection system can follow students through the high-school-to-college pipeline to determine where achievement gaps exist. Program Web site: http://www.firn.edu/doe/postsecondary/pdf/dual_enroll_faq.pdf Legislation: http://caps.fiu.edu/de/destatute.html

Minnesota: Established in 1985, the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program was the first dual enrollment program in the United States. Minnesota statute makes the offering of dual enrollment options mandatory. Students pay no tuition or associated costs. The state has also set participation guidelines that specify students may not take more than the equivalent of two years of coursework through the program and schools may not offer students developmental or remedial coursework. It is estimated that, during the 2004-05 school year, 7,441 Minnesota high school juniors and seniors participated in PSEO at a postsecondary institution while 14,000 students participated in a college-level course taught at a high school. A University of Minnesota study estimates the number of students taking Advanced Placement tests in the state between 1986 and 2004 increased by 988% as a result of the PSEO program.

Program Web site: http://www.ohe.state.mn.us/mPg.cfm?pageID=797

Legislation: http://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/data/revisor/statutes/2004/124D/09.html

New York: There is no state dual enrollment legislation in New York. However, the City University of New York (CUNY) and the New York Department of Education established a high-school-to-college partnership in 1984. The "College Now" program provides numerous opportunities to students at different developmental stages, including the opportunity to earn a high school diploma and an associate's degree simultaneously. One of the more notable features of CUNY's program is that it offers college credit courses free of charge. Also significant is its commitment to underserved student populations. Of the 14,000 students enrolled in the College Now program in 2003, 22.2% were African American, 20.2% were white, 18.8% were Latino and 20% were Asian. Also in 2003, 32.4% of New York City public high school students who enrolled in the CUNY system in 2003 participated in the College Now program. Program Web site: http://www.collegenow.cuny.edu/

Utah: The New Century Scholarship Program, created by the Utah legislature in 1999, allows students to complete the requirements for an Associate of Arts or Science degree while they are enrolled in high school. Students who complete the A.A. or A.S. degree by the fall following their high school graduation are then offered a scholarship that pays for 75% of their tuition at a Utah four-year college or university. The scholarship will be cancelled if a student fails to maintain a "B" average for two consecutive semesters. Since 2000, 270 students have earned an A.A. degree while in high school. Utah reimburses school districts \$39.34 per credit to offset the cost of dual enrollment programs. Utah's funding system is unique since the state, schools districts and postsecondary institutions all contribute towards the cost of dual enrollment programs. This means that students can access the program at no extra cost to them. Concurrent courses are offered at all of Utah's 109 high schools, 141 middle schools and 10 state colleges, ensuring equitable access for all Utah high school students. Utah has also established six early college high schools to serve underrepresented or underachieving students interested in pursuing careers in math, science or technology.

Program Web site: http://www.utahsbr.edu/html/new century.html

Legislation: http://www.utahsbr.edu/policy/r604.htm

Washington: The Running Start Program, created by the legislature in 1990, allows students in 11th and 12th grades to take college-level courses at any of Washington's community and technical colleges, as well as Washington State, Eastern Washington and Western Washington universities. This program allows students and the state to save money by reducing both the amount of time students spend in school and their college costs. It is estimated that in 2001, parents saved \$17.4 million in tuition and taxpayers saved \$34.7 million because of the Running Start program. It is also estimated that in 2003-04, 9% of all high school students in Washington participated in the Running Start program. Of this percentage, 17% were students of color. Colleges are reimbursed by the K-12 districts whose students participate in Running Start.

Program Web site: http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/legislative/BriefingPapers/2003/Running%20Start%20onepager.pdf

Progress Report: http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/data/rsrchrpts/RS_Final_Report_2004.pdf

Policy Considerations

As dual enrollment programs gain popularity in the states, policymakers need to carefully consider how to best design their programs. Creating a mechanism for moving students through the system without paying attention to rigor or quality is a waste of student time and state resources. Furthermore, asking students to pay for all or most of the costs of dual enrollment limits the number of students who participate and the effectiveness of the programs. States should foster collaboration between the K-12 and postsecondary systems by easing the transition between high school and college, allowing the greatest number of students the opportunity to complete a postsecondary degree. States also need to let students and parents – particularly low-income students – know what dual enrollment options are available in their state through information campaigns. The following considerations are based on state examples and current research:

- P-16 Collaboration: The K-12 and postsecondary sectors can and should share responsibility for dual enrollment students. Dual enrollment can be a mechanism for aligning high school and postsecondary education, not merely a strategy for moving advanced students out of high school. The alignment of high school exit standards with college admission standards helps prepare all high school students for college-level learning. Dual enrollment programs can be part of a larger P-16 agenda. Some notable examples of states that are pursuing P-16 approaches aligning education systems from preschool through four years of college include Georgia, Indiana, Illinois, New York and Tennessee. Illinois offers "P-16 Initiative Grants" to colleges who, in turn, use this funding to offset the cost of tuition for dual enrollment students.
- Funding: Equitable financing mechanisms help to ensure that economically disadvantaged students are not excluded from dual enrollment programs because of their inability to pay tuition. Funding dual enrollment programs can come from a variety of sources so that one institution or system does not bear the full financial responsibility of the program. Financial arrangements in states like Utah, where funding is shared by the state and the K-12 and postsecondary systems, ensure that the widest possible range of students can benefit from dual enrollment programs without hampering partnering institutions.
- Equity: Dual enrollment can have a positive impact on the access to and attainment of a postsecondary credential for underrepresented students if the programs are made more widely available. The CUNY College Now Program in New York specifically targets economically and academically disadvantaged students for dual enrollment programs. Utah also ensures equitable access to dual enrollment by offering programs at every high school and college in the state.
- Standards: Dual enrollment does not have to mean diluting standards. States can maintain rigor and increase participation if they set eligibility standards and structure programs in ways that attract and engage both high achievers and underachievers. Washington is currently working to align the Washington Assessment for Student Learning (WASL) – which measures student achievement in reading, writing, science and math in the 10th grade – and college entrance requirements so that more students involved in the "Running Start" program are prepared for college-level work. The "Early Assessment Program" administered by the California State University System (CSU) aligns high school and CSU placement standards in English and math, and tests students' college readiness in 11th grade so that below-average students can use the senior year to get up to speed. States can also limit the amount of course restrictions and increase the number of learning opportunities by allowing courses to be taught in high schools, on college campuses or even through distance learning. In 2000 the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education removed age and class-level restrictions for their dual enrollment program. The number of students participating in the program rose from roughly 6,000 in 2000 to over 14,000 in a five-year period. ²⁴ Illinois and Washington allow students to receive instruction online, allowing their dual enrollment programs to reach students in remote areas and making it possible for students to access college courses from the high school classroom.
- Articulation: Easy transfer of course credit from high school to college, and then from community college to four-year institutions, is an essential component of any successful dual enrollment program. Florida uses a common course numbering system to facilitate transfer between the systems. States should also address the needs and aspirations of academically oriented students and technically oriented students. Washington and Wisconsin, for example, offer dual enrollment

options to students interested in pursuing career and technical education, as well as those interested in attending a university.

Public Relations: Expanding dual enrollment policies can be part of a larger public agenda for higher education in the states. Students and parents need to know what options are available and how to access and utilize that information. Colleges and universities can prominently feature dual enrollment information and options on their Web sites. Even better, the state should launch a public relations campaign aimed at low-income and at-risk students using the Internet, the media, and middle and high school classrooms. The California State University System has developed marketing materials explaining their "Early Assessment Program," which allows 11th graders to gauge their preparation for college-level English and math. Information about the program and CSU's admissions and placement standards can be downloaded from the system's Web site and mailed or displayed in the form of brochures, flyers or posters. Washington law requires school districts to provide information about college admissions requirements and dual enrollment options to parents and students in the state.

Conclusion

Perhaps the most urgent perspective on the importance of high school graduation and college entry comes from economist Neeta Fogg when she says, "Failure to complete high school is almost equivalent to economic suicide." The difficulties that students face if they drop out of the education pipeline will someday become the difficulties faced by society as a whole. Dual enrollment programs, while still in relative infancy, are a key strategy for increasing postsecondary participation in the states and policymakers should implement them with care. Academic rigor, access and affordability are the keys to success when it comes to dual enrollment.

While there is evidence that dual enrollment smoothes the transition between high school and college and raises student achievement, the unknowns still outweigh the known when it comes to dual enrollment. Questions requiring further research include:

- Program outcomes What is the full impact of dual enrollment policies?
- Program designs Which programs work best?
- Student data Who participates, who benefits? Does dual enrollment increase the educational attainment of those who are "low-achieving"? How can college-level learning be measured?
- Quality of Instruction Are high school grading standards rigorous enough?

Additional Resources

Add and Subtract: Dual Enrollment as a State Strategy to Increase Postsecondary Success for Underrepresented Students

Add and Subtract is a policy primer for states interested in using dual enrollment to improve college access for underrepresented students. The report examines the rationale for dual enrollment programs, and provides data on dual enrollment participation in Florida, Utah, City University of New York (CUNY), Washington State, Illinois and Virginia. It asks essential questions about the evaluation of dual enrollment programs and also provides recommended solutions to those questions. Case studies of the dual enrollment programs in Florida, Utah and CUNY are provided. Page 16 presents a state funding model for dual enrollment. (Nancy Hoffman, Jobs for the Future, April 2005)

http://www.jff.org/JFF KC Pages.php?WhichLevel=1&lv1 id=4&lv2 id=0&lv3 id=0&KC M ID=60

Dual Credit and Exam-Based Courses in U.S. Public High Schools: 2002-2003

The findings of this report from the National Center for Educational Statistics address the prevalence of dual credit, Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) course offerings in U.S. public high schools; the location and educational focus of dual-credit courses; the characteristics of courses for dual credit (course sequence, course instructors, student composition); and the eligibility requirements for enrolling in dual-credit courses. Statistics are disaggregated by school size, geographic region and percent of minority enrollment. According to the report, over six in 10 schools offering dual-credit courses set eligibility requirements for students to enroll in such courses; in 42% of such schools, one

requirement was teacher recommendation. (Tiffany Waits, J. Carl Setzer and Laurie Lewis, National Center for Education Statistics, April 2005) http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2005/2005009.pdf

High School to College and Careers: Aligning State Policies

In order to better prepare students for life after high school, states need to align their education policies in ways that facilitate student transitions from K-12 to postsecondary education and the workforce. This report from the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) highlights state policies in several areas: high school graduation requirements (including curriculum and exams), dual enrollment programs, college admission and placement standards, reports on student learning at the college level and merit-based scholarships. The report also provides one-page summaries of high school policies in all SREB states. (Rebecca Daugherty, Southern Regional Education Board, 2005)

http://www.sreb.org/main/HigherEd/readiness/04E14-AligningStatePolicies.pdf

Postsecondary Options: Dual and Concurrent Enrollment

A multi-state compilation from the Education Commission of the States, this StateNote provides information on dual enrollment policies from all 50 states and explains the variations between programs, including the funding and scope of the programs.

(Genevieve Hale, Education Commission of the States, 2001)

http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/28/11/2811.doc

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¹ National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, "Student Pipeline Data and Calculations by State." (Boulder, CO: NCHEMS, 2002).

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² U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Tomorrow's Jobs," U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, http://www.bls.gov/oco/oco2003.htm (accessed 6 March 2006).

³ For more information on middle colleges, please consult the Middle College National Consortium's Web site: http://www.laguardia.edu/mcnc/; for more information regarding early college high schools, please consult Early College High School Initiative Web site: http://www.earlycolleges.org/.

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⁶ Neil Scot Kleiman, *Building a Highway to Higher Ed: How Collaborative Efforts are Changing Education in America*, (New York: The Center for an Urban Future, 2001).

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¹³ Kleiman.

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¹⁹ National Center for Education Statistics, Dual Credit and Exam-Based Courses in U.S. Public High Schools: 2002-2003, (Washington, D.C.: NCES, 2005).

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²⁴ The Prichard Committee.

²⁵ Public relations information and materials about California State's "Early Assessment Program" can be accessed at: http://www.calstate.edu/eap/marketing_materials.shtml.

²⁶ Bob Herbert, "Locked Out At a Young Age," *The New York Times*, 20 October 2003.

¹¹ Genevieve Hale, *Postsecondary Options: Dual/Concurrent Enrollment*, (Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States, 2001). http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/28/11/2811.doc

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¹⁴ Hans Andrews, "The Dual Credit Explosion at Illinois' Community Colleges," Community College Journal 71, 2001.