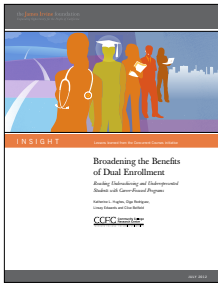# Dual Enrollment: Helping Make College a Reality for Students Less Likely to Go

Recommendations for Policymakers from the Concurrent Courses Initiative

Find the full report *Broadening the Benefits of Dual Enrollment* **and other resources at** www.irvine.org

A three-year study tracking outcomes for approximately 3,000 students across California shows that career-focused dual enrollment programs can provide important benefits for those who are underachieving and underrepresented in higher education. Dual enrollment, which allows high school students to take college courses and earn college credit, was once geared primarily toward high-achieving students seeking greater academic challenge.

Better Outcomes for Students

The Concurrent Courses initiative comprised eight programs involving 10 colleges and 21 high schools across California. Among participating students, 60 percent were students of color and 40 percent came from non-English speaking homes. Extensive evaluation shows that program participants, compared with other students in their districts, were:

- More likely to graduate from high school
- More likely to transition to a four-year college rather than a two-year college
- Less likely to take basic skills courses in college
- More likely to persist in postsecondary education
- Accumulating more college credits

ABOUT THE CONCURRENT COURSES INITIATIVE

The three-year Concurrent Courses initiative was created in 2008 to demonstrate the feasibility of using dual enrollment programs to enhance college and career pathways for low-income youth who are struggling academically or who are within populations historically underrepresented in higher education. Funded by The James Irvine Foundation, this $4.75 million initiative provided financial support and technical assistance to eight secondary-postsecondary partnerships in California for approximately three years as they developed, enhanced and expanded their career-focused dual enrollment programs.

Participating Dual Enrollment Program Sites

Arthur A. Benjamin Health Professions High School, Sacramento, in partnership with Sacramento City College

City College of San Francisco, San Francisco, in partnership with San Francisco Unified School District

Long Beach Unified School District, Long Beach, in partnership with Long Beach City College and California State University Long Beach

Los Angeles City College, Los Angeles, in partnership with Hollywood Senior High School, Downtown Business Magnets High School and Miguel Contreras Learning Complex

North Orange County Regional Occupational Program, Anaheim, in partnership with Anaheim Union High School District, Cypress College and Fullerton College

Santa Barbara City College, Santa Barbara, in partnership with Santa Barbara High School District, Carpinteria High School District and South Coast Regional Occupational Program

Shasta Union High School District, Shasta, in partnership with Anderson Union High School District, Shasta College and Shasta-Trinity Regional Occupational Program

Tulare Joint Union High School District, Tulare, in partnership with College of the Sequoias

Policy Recommendations

Policymakers and community leaders can build on the lessons learned from the Concurrent Courses initiative and further reduce the barriers to program development and student participation. Based on the experience and outcomes attained in high schools and colleges across California, here are three high-value recommendations for state policymakers.

- **Remove funding penalties:** To encourage dual enrollment, California should adopt a "hold harmless" funding model for dual enrollment, in which neither participating institution loses any of its per-pupil funding for dually-enrolled students. State policy should also require, rather than allow, colleges to waive student fees.

- **Make dual credit earning consistent and portable:** State policy should mandate that dual enrollment students automatically earn dual credit — both high school and college credit — for college courses they complete. In addition, a statewide system that facilitates the portability of college credits would ease student transfer and help ensure that students do not repeat courses they have already taken. This would benefit all California college students.

- **Standardize broad student eligibility:** At present, California policy sets no statewide academic eligibility criteria for dual enrollment participation but stipulates that participating colleges may do so. Following the standard of student eligibility for community colleges, the state should encourage broad access and prevent students from being disqualified by grades or test scores alone.

The experience of dual enrollment implementation partners leads to five recommendations for institutions.

- **Continue to make dual enrollment available on both the high school and college campuses.** Courses on the college campus provide a fuller and more authentic college experience; college opportunities must also be available at high school for students who lack transportation.

- **Explore ways to ensure authenticity of the high school-based program format.** Courses delivered at high school must have the same rigor and quality as college campus-based courses, and students must be held to the same standards of achievement as those in campus-based programs.

- **Provide professional development to dual enrollment instructors.** High school teachers may need greater assistance in creating a college-like atmosphere, and college instructors may need insights into scaffolding and other pedagogical strategies to support high school students.

- **Identify dedicated college staff to smooth logistical challenges.** In particular, colleges should identify a student services staff member knowledgeable about and responsible for registration of dual enrollment students.

- **Obtain student consent to share college records.** High school administrators and counselors need to be aware of how students are doing in their college coursework; monitoring progress is essential to providing needed interventions.