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CCLC Commission on the Future: An Update Increasing College Preparation and Completion through Concurrent Enrollment -- The Next Steps

Since the publication of the initial report of the League's Commission on the Future (COTF), there have been many reports written and the California Community Colleges have taken many steps to improve student success and completion. However, there is still much to do. This paper will provide a brief assessment of where we are -- in relation to student attainment since the time of the release of our last report (2010), in relation to the goals which we are attempting to reach, and in relation to our ability to meet those goals -- before we discuss successful interventions or what needs to be done to meet those goals.

Update on College Attainment – California, 2013

In June 2013, the Lumina Foundation published its annual report, *A Strong Nation through Higher Education: Visualizing data to help us achieve a big goal for college attainment*. This report indicates the following about the degree attainment of California students:

- " 38.9 % of the state's 20 million working-age adults (25-64 years old) hold a two- or four-year college degree. (Last year's rate was 38.8% so there was essentially no growth.)
- California's rate of higher education attainment is equal to the national average of 38.7%, with an annual rise of .2 - .4 % annually over the last several years. and lower than the national rate of 40.1 %.)
- If the current rate of degree production continues, 43% of California's adult population will hold a college degree in 2025; to reach the 60% attainment goal, California will need to add nearly 3.8 million degrees to that total. (This is especially important because the Center on Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University indicates that, by 2018, 3.3 million (61%) of the 5.5 million job vacancies in California will require postsecondary credentials.)
- Of even greater concern than the overall percentages for all ages or for the younger portion of the adult population is the data about the achievement gap between various groups with those in the fastest-growing segments of our population attaining lower percentages. Specifically, the data show the following [rates for college-degree attainment]: Asian, 59.05%; White 50.7%; Black 32.58%; Native American 35.68% and Hispanic 16.34%."

As this report further notes in discussing the degree attainment of Californians, "increasing attainment is a particular challenge in rural counties" ... and "California must increase college success among the fast-

growing groups that will account for a growing proportion of the state's population, including working adults, low-income and first-generation students, and students of color."

Update on the Achievement Gap

Among the important issues cited in our first report was the necessity for eliminating the achievement gap – both for social justice as well as economic reasons. This issue is so significant that McKinsey & Company issued a report, *The Economic Impact of the Achievement Gap in America's Schools* (April 2009) to warn that, "The persistence of these educational achievement gaps imposes on the United States the economic equivalent of a permanent national recession. The recurring annual economic cost of the international achievement gap is substantially larger than the deep recession the US is currently experiencing." The McKinsey study also offered the belief that

"...the wide variation in performance among schools and school systems serving similar students suggests that the opportunity and output gaps related to today's achievement gap can be substantially closed. Many teachers and schools across the country are proving that race and poverty are not destiny; many more are demonstrating that middle-class children can be educated to world class levels of performance. American's history of bringing disadvantaged groups into the economic mainstream over time, and the progress of other nations in education, suggest that large steps forward are possible."

Another important recent study, *Why Race?* (Center for Urban Education, Rossier School of Education at USC, 2013) provides ample evidence of the importance of eliminating the racial achievement gap. Data, for example, shows that low and middle-income Black students would be disadvantaged by a "class, not race" college admission policy. In 1992, they report, "the average SAT score for Black students with family income greater than \$70,000 per year was 854, while the average SAT score for white students with family income of less than \$20,000 was 879. This discrepancy in SAT scores indicates that race is a greater disadvantage than income. This is further verified by studies which show differences ranging from 40 to 80 SAT points between Blacks, Asians, and Whites who belong to the same socioeconomic class – and the results are similar for all socioeconomic classes."

What Is Occurring in California and Other States

There are a number of strategies which have been singled out as having significant positive effects on increasing the numbers of students who complete to receive either a BA or an AA degree. Among the most important are efforts to improve the preparation of high school students so they will come to their community college years fully prepared to do college-level work, are early assessment and dual/concurrent enrollment; this paper will focus on the second.

Dual/Concurrent Enrollment in California-

Existing law authorizes the governing board of a school district, upon the recommendation of the student's principal and approval of a parent to allow a high school student "who would benefit from advanced scholastic or career-technical studies" to attend a community college as a special part- or full-time student. However, this authorization is limited in that a principal can recommend no more than

five percent of the total number of students in the same grade level for summer session attendance. The only exceptions to this limitation are for students recommended by their principal for enrollment in a college-level summer session course if the course is necessary to assist students in passing the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) or if the high school of the student does not offer college credit in English language arts or mathematics and the pupils meet the following two requirements: a) they are in their senior year of high school, and b) have completed all other graduation requirements prior to the end of their senior year, or will complete these requirements during a community college summer session in which they are enrolled after the senior high school year. This exemption, however, is only available until January 1, 2014 and then sunsets unless urgency legislation is enacted prior to that date.

Additionally, the governing board of each community college district is required to assign a low enrollment priority to these students, referred to as “special part-time or full-time students” to ensure that they do not displace regularly-admitted community college students.

As this brief summary indicates, California’s rules for dual/concurrent enrollment provide critical support for underachieving students, those from groups underrepresented in higher education, and those who are seeking advanced studies while in high school.

Dual/Concurrent Enrollment in Other States

Research on dual/concurrent enrollment on a state-by-state basis has been conducted most thoroughly by the Education Commission of the State’s High School Policy Center which has developed an 88-page state-by-state summary and analysis of dual/concurrent enrollment policy. (This document is available at: http://www.ecs.org/html/educationIssues/HighSchool/highschooldb1_intro.asp?topic=de)

A brief summary of this document follows (*with California’s policy in italics*):

- **Statewide Policy:** 46 states have statewide policies governing at least one statewide dual enrollment program, while four have programs administered by local district- and institution-level policies. *CA: statewide policy in place.*
- **Mandatory vs Voluntary Opportunities:** 12 states require all high school and public postsecondary institutions to provide dual enrollment opportunities, while participation is voluntary. *CA: Voluntary opportunities as well as participation.*
- **Responsibility for Paying for Tuition:** 22 states require students and parents to pay; six require the student’s school district to pay; three require the participating postsecondary institution to pay. Three require the state department of education or another state organization; four have multiple dual enrollment programs which have different groups that are primarily responsible for paying tuition; six states have no clear funding system in place. *CA: Community colleges can waive tuition; if they choose not to, the student or student’s parent is responsible.*

- **College Partners, Two-year or Four-year:** Five states allow only two-year public postsecondary institutions to participate in dual enrollment programs. 39 states allow both two- and four-year institutions to participate; five states do not have state policy on the types of institutions that may accept dual enrollment students; 23 states allow non-public proprietary or tribal colleges to participate in dual enrollment programs. *CA: Two-year and four-year public postsecondary institutions.*

- **Where/How Courses Are Taught:** Two states specify that courses may be offered only on postsecondary campuses. 30 authorize dual enrollment courses to be taught either in high schools or on postsecondary campuses. At least 17 provide dual enrollment courses online, while 10 allow dual enrollment courses to be offered at physical locations other than the high school or postsecondary campus; policies in 18 states do not specify where dual enrollment courses may be offered. *CA: at high schools and postsecondary institutions.*

- **Student Eligibility Requirements:** Two states require students to be in at least grade 10; 20 states require students to be in at least grade 11. Nine states allow students in any of grades 9 – 12 to participate. In seven states, the student’s grade level varies, depending on which of two or more state-level programs the student participates in. At least three states have an additional dual enrollment program for students in grade 12. *CA: Different requirements for advanced/career tech vs. passage of CAHSEE for students in their senior year.*

- **GPA:** Seven states require a minimum GPA; three more require a specific GPA only under certain circumstances. *CA: No requirement.*

- **Written approval/recommendation:** In 22 states, written permission or a recommendation from a teacher, principal, or other school or district staffer or postsecondary official is required. In 3 states, written approval is necessary only in certain circumstances. *CA: Written approval/recommendation plus parental consent required.*

- **Cap on Number of Credits Students May Earn:** Four states cap the number of credits high school students may earn, from two courses per semester to 30 semester hours per year, depending on the state. Ten states allow high school students to enroll in college programs as part- or full-time students. Two states specify that postsecondary institutions may make the determination of units; four states place a cap on the number of credit students may earn in one program but none in another. One sets a cap on the combined high school and postsecondary credits a student may take in a semester. 29 states do not address this. *CA: Eleven-unit semester cap for community college credit; no state cap on UC/CSU units.*

- **Postsecondary and/or secondary credit earned:** Twenty-six states specify that dual enrollment students earn both high school and postsecondary credits; one state requires only high school credit to be awarded; while four states require only postsecondary credit to be awarded. In six states, the type of credit awarded varies depending on the program in which the

student is enrolled. Thirteen states do not specify the level of credit. *CA: no state policy; credit to be determined by student's school district and community college district governing boards.*

- **How states fund participating high schools:** Thirty-one states provide schools/districts with the same funds for dual enrollment as traditional high school students. Eight provide equal funding, but with qualifications. Four states provide reduced funding for dual enrollment students as compared with traditional high school students. One state provides different levels of funding depending on the program; six states do not specify funding levels. *CA: Equal, if the student is in grade 11 or 12, attends school at least 3 hours daily and is enrolled at a cc as a special part-time student.*

- **Students/parental notification of dual enrollment opportunities:** Twenty states require that students and/or parents be notified of the availability of dual enrollment programs. *CA: No requirement.*

- **Instructor and course quality:** Twenty-nine states include instructor/course quality in state policy. *CA: No state policy.*

- **Public postsecondary institutions required to accept credits:** Fifteen states require all public two- and four-year institutions to accept transfer credits earned through dual enrollment programs. Fifteen states do not require acceptance of dual courses for transfer credit. In two states, public postsecondary institutions must recognize credit earned through one state program, but not another. Eighteen states have unclear policies. *CA: Unclear.*

- **Institutional Reporting Requirements:** Eighteen states require reporting on dual enrollment participation while 31 states do not. One state has separate reporting requirements for two-year and four-year public institutions but does not require non-public institutions to report. *CA: None in state policy.*

- **Program Evaluation:** Thirteen states require evaluation; thirty-five do not. *CA: None set in state policy.*

Evaluation of California Concurrent Enrollment Program/Students

Among the most recent studies of the concurrent enrollment in California is *Broadening the Benefits of Dual Enrollment* (Community College Research Center [CCRC], Columbia University Teachers College, 2012) which followed the outcomes of 3,000 California student. Sixty percent of these students were students of color and forty percent came from non-English speaking homes; they studied at eight California community colleges: City College of San Francisco, Cypress College, Fullerton College, Long Beach City College, Los Angeles City College, Sacramento City College, Santa Barbara City College, College of the Sequoias, and Shasta College.

When compared to their peers who had not participated in concurrent enrollment, this study found that these students were:

- “More likely to graduate from high school;
- More likely to transition to a four-year rather than a two-year college;
- Less likely to need basic skills remediation in college;
- More likely to persist in postsecondary education and to accumulate more college credits.”

This report further argued that dual/concurrent enrollment programs are most successful when there is “a strong connection between high schools and colleges, when dual/concurrent enrollment is embedded within career-focused small learning communities, and when students see themselves as capable of college work.”

Finally the report offers the following policy insights:

- “Students who attend college courses on the college campus with college students are more likely to have an ‘authentic’ college experience and more access to college support services, although students enrolled in concurrent classes based at a high school can be successful;
- College instructors teaching high school students for the first time often need help in understanding and connecting with them. High school instructors teaching college courses might need to change their teaching methods to create an authentic collegiate environment.
- Student success courses – focusing on study skills, career goals, and exploration of colleges and majors – help students do well in postsecondary education. Hands-on career technical courses help students make decisions about future employment.
- Students who take dual enrollment courses alongside regular college students are more likely to display greater maturity and have an authentic college experience.
- The opportunity to receive credit for both high school and college, while saving time and money, is a significant incentive for students to participate in dual enrollment programs.
- Dual enrollment courses during the school day encourage more students to participate because there are fewer transportation challenges and fewer conflicts with after-school obligations.”

Additional Evaluations of Dual/Concurrent Enrollment

In 2011, Jennifer Dounay Zinth of the Education Commission of the State’s High School Policy Center wrote a brief entitled, *Model State Dual/Concurrent Enrollment Policies* in which she cited research that showed that dual enrollment was more likely than other acceleration options, including Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate, to increase a student’s college success. Her findings and conclusions were very consistent with those cited in the CCRC study cited above, including:

“a correlation between dual enrollment participation and enrollment in college both for traditional and CTE students, increased likelihood of enrolling in a four-year institution [on a ...] full-time enrollment [basis], greater persistence to a second semester in college and [greater] likelihood of [remaining enrolled in]

college ...two years after high school graduation and [earning] higher college GPAs.”

Model Components for Concurrent Enrollment Programs

Both Dounay Zinth’s study cited above and a 2012 study by the Community College Research Center at Teachers College, Columbia University, entitled, *What We Know about Dual Enrollment* used research data to develop lists of program elements that they recommend as “models” or “What States and Schools Can Do.” A combined list includes the following:¹

- Eliminate restrictive eligibility requirements for dual enrollment, since program participation can benefit a range of students.
- Do not require creation of a partnership between a district and one or more postsecondary institutions for eligibility.
- Annually provide all students and parents with program information.
- Determine student eligibility requirements based on quantifiable demonstration of ability to access college-level content (i.e., completion of prerequisite courses for courses in disciplines such as foreign language, science and math that build on prior knowledge; college placement exam scores in reading, writing or math where appropriate to the dual enrollment course content and/or other proxies of college readiness such as ACT or SAT scores.)
- Require the same eligibility requirements for all students, regardless of whether they are accessing the course at the postsecondary campus or at their high school.
- Reconsider caps on the number of units a student may complete, especially if the caps are low.
- Clearly state that students earn both secondary and postsecondary credit for successful completion of approved postsecondary courses.
- Make counseling/advisement available to students and parents before and during program participation.
- Expand outreach to underserved populations and provide dual enrollment course tuition free for low-income students (if not for all students) in order to ensure that they are able to take advantage of dual enrolment opportunities.
- Integrate dual enrollment into high school career-technical education (CTE) pathways and program, since participation may positively impact college outcomes for CTE students.
- Include dual enrollment as part of a high school senior year redesign effort. (Florida’s senior year “College Success Academies,” for example, are comprised of remedial and dual enrollment courses to help prepare students for college.)
- Create measures within high school accountability systems to reward high schools for providing dual/concurrent enrollment opportunities.
- Whenever possible, offer dual enrollment courses on college campuses, since research suggests that students benefit more from attending distance education courses held at colleges.

¹ There are numerous other studies of the effects of dual/concurrent enrollment from other academic research groups and institutions. These are not specifically cited in this paper; however, they generally draw conclusions and make recommendations similar to those of the ECS and CCRC studies cited in this paper.

- Take measures to ensure that distance education courses are high quality and rigorous so that students derive maximum benefits from participating.
- Include both two-year and four-year public postsecondary institutions in concurrent enrollment program.

For Consideration -- Amendments to Concurrent Enrollment in California

Following is a list of elements of the “model” legislation and/or research findings which are not included in California’s concurrent enrollment program. Any or all of these could be drafted into legislative form if California policymakers and educators wish to follow these recommendations and increase the effective use of this important policy to increase student success and ultimately, college completion:

- Prohibit charging tuition/fees to any concurrent enrollment student, or require (or encourage) that fees be waived for students with financial need, or authorize local boards of trustees to waive fees at their discretion.
- Clearly specify that distance education is allowed as an option within the concurrent enrollment program.
- Delete the five percent limitation on students from a single grade and school attending concurrent enrollment classes in summer sessions, except for physical education.
- Encourage/require high schools to provide information annually about concurrent enrollment and its benefits to all high school students and their parents.
- Encourage/require concurrent enrollment to be integrated into high school CTE pathways and programs.
- Specifically encourage districts to hold as many concurrent enrollment classes as possible on the local college campus rather than at the high school.
- Encourage/require students to earn both secondary and postsecondary credit for successful completion of approved postsecondary courses, rather than current law which allows the local school district and community college governing board to determine if dual credit will be awarded.
- Encourage/require all public postsecondary institutions to accept concurrent enrollment credit.
- Include data on concurrent enrollment in high school accountability reporting.
- Eliminate the requirement in Education Code Section 76002 that classes for special part-time or full-time students be open to the general public.