



Illinois Board of Higher Education

Rod Blagojevich, Governor
Carrie J. Hightman, Chairwoman • Judy Erwin, Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Dual Credit Task Force

FROM: Bob Blankenberger, Assistant Director for Academic Affairs

DATE: August 26, 2008

RE: Summary of literature related to benefits and concerns about dual credit/enrollment

Below is a summary of the literature on proposed benefits and concerns related to dual credit/enrollment. Dual credit courses are widely used in the United States. According to the most recent comprehensive U.S. Department of Education report on the topic, *Dual Credit and Exam-Based Courses in U.S. Public High Schools: 2002–03*, 71% of U.S. high schools and 51% of U.S. postsecondary institutions allowed high school students to take college courses in 2002–03, with 813,000 high school students taking a college-credit course in that academic year (Waits, Setzer, & Lewis, 2005). In the same year 20,405 Illinois students (9.6% of the total) took dual credit courses with dual credit offered in 54.1% of the state's public school districts (Illinois State Board of Education, 2004). As of January 2006, 42 states had legislation and/or Board policies related to dual credit/enrollment. These primarily include policies regarding program eligibility (over ½ of the states), how credit is awarded, who pays for dual credit programs, requirements for counseling and information sharing, and implementation of institutional accountability (Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education, 2006).

Proposed Benefits

The literature on dual credit/enrollment is extensive. Researchers and policy analysts have suggested a number of potential benefits of dual credit/enrollment (Bailey, Hughes, & Karp, 2003; Blanco, Prescott, & Taylor, 2007; Boswell, 2001; Clark, 2001; Conklin, 2005; Coplin, 2005; Crook, 1990; Education Commission of the States, 2000; Greenberg, 1989; Hoffman, 2005; Karp, Calcagno, Hughes, Jeong, & Bailey, 2007; Johnstone & Del Genio, 2001; Kentucky Interagency Dual Credit Task Force, 2007; Kim, 2006; Kirst & Venezia, 2001; Puyear, 1998). These proposed benefits include:

- Facilitating the transition between high school and college
- Allowing students to complete a degree faster
- Reducing costs for a college education
- Reducing high school drop out rates
- Preparing students for college work and reducing the need for remedial coursework
- Enhancing the high school curriculum
- Making more effective use of the senior year in high school
- Developing the connection between high school and college curricula
- Raising the student's motivation and goal to attend college
- Acclimatizing students to the college environment
- Freeing space on college campuses
- Improving relationships between colleges and their communities
- Easing recruitment of students to college
- Enhancing opportunities for underserved student populations

Concerns

Researchers and analysts have identified several concerns associated with dual credit/enrollment (Andrews, 2001; Bottoms & Young, 2008; Cambra, 2000; Clark, 2001; Johnstone & Del Genio, 2001; Kim, 2006; Krueger, 2006; Lerner & Brand, 2006). These include:

- No solid quantitative data supports the claims of the benefits
- Low or uncertain academic quality
- Limited oversight of academic rigor
- The college course experience is not duplicated in high school courses
- Capability of high school teachers to teach college level courses
- Transferability problems
- Costs involved in the programs
- Potential funding uncertainty
- Limited access for low-income, minority, and academically underprepared students
- Lack of policies to ensure students are prepared to begin college level work
- Liability with underage high school students on college campuses
- Actions by many interested groups are required

Lack of research demonstrating the benefits of dual credit/enrollment

There is no strong quantitative evidence in the literature that dual credit/enrollment is directly connected to positive student outcomes. This is primarily because it is difficult to isolate the effect of participation in dual credit/enrollment programs from other factors which may lead to student success, and data to make such assessments is often incomplete or unavailable (Bailey, Hughes, & Karp, 2003; Blanco, Prescott, & Taylor, 2007; Bragg & Kim, 2006; Crook, 1990; Kim, 2006; Krueger, 2006; Lerner & Brand, 2006; Smith, 2007). Student motivation, academic ability, participation in other programs at the same time (such as AP, IB, tech prep, high school early college or college prep courses), career goals, differences in instructor qualifications, differences in counseling at the school, and differences in methods of instruction are all factors which may alter or even be more likely to effect student achievement outcomes than participation in dual credit programs. Only a few studies have attempted to control for such factors. These have produced mixed results with some findings that suggest dual credit may contribute to decreased time to degree and improved retention. The studies caution that further research should be conducted (Crook, 1990; Eimers & Mullen, 2003; Karp, Calcagno, Hughes, Jeong, & Bailey, 2007; Spurling & Gabriner, 2003).

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