

## Dual Enrollment/Early College

### Background

Dual enrollment (sometimes referred to as concurrent enrollment) and early college – programs in which secondary students enroll in postsecondary coursework and receive both college and high school credit – is used by high school students to explore college options and earn college credit prior to high school graduation. Increasingly popular among eligible high school juniors and seniors, dual enrollment has the potential to decrease the cost of higher education and reduce student debt.

Dual enrollment is a proven policy associated with a range of positive outcomes. Some include:

- ✦ Reduced time-to-degree,
- ✦ Quicker entrance into the workforce,
- ✦ Increased high school graduation rates,
- ✦ Increased postsecondary attainment rates (even after controlling for student, family, schooling achievements, and school context factors),
- ✦ Reduced cost-to-degree, and
- ✦ Lower student debt.

According to the [Education Commission of the States](#), “students who dually enroll are more likely than their non-dually enrolling peers to finish high school, matriculate in a postsecondary institution and experience greater postsecondary success.”<sup>1</sup> Similar positive outcomes have been documented by the [League for Innovation in the Community College](#) and the [Community College Research Center](#), among [others](#).<sup>2,3,4</sup>

Massachusetts recently assessed their [early college program](#) and found the program was helping narrow education equity gaps and increase college completion rates among students of color, first-generation college students and those from low-income backgrounds.<sup>5</sup>

The increased registration of students in states across the country also attest to the benefits of dual enrollment. According to the [National Student Clearinghouse Research Center](#), the number of students under 18 at public two-year colleges increased nine percent from Spring 2019 to Spring 2020.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Education Commission of the States (2018) *Rethinking Dual Enrollment to Reach More Students*. [https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/Rethinking\\_Dual\\_Enrollment\\_to\\_Reach\\_More\\_Students.pdf](https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/Rethinking_Dual_Enrollment_to_Reach_More_Students.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> League for Innovation in the Community College (2005) *Dual Enrollment: A New Major Trend*. <https://www.league.org/project-resource/ccti-alert-report-21-dual-enrollment>

<sup>3</sup> Community College Research Center (2017) *What Happens to Students Who Take Community College “Dual Enrollment” Courses in High School?* <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/what-happens-community-college-dual-enrollment-students.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Inside Higher Ed (2020) *Strong Returns for Early-College High Schools*. <https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2020/02/19/strong-returns-early-college-high-schools>

<sup>5</sup> MassINC (2019) *Investing in Early College: Our Most Promising Pathway*. <https://2gaiae1lifzt2tsfgr2vil6c-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Investing-in-Early-College-Report.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2020) *Term Enrollment Estimates: Spring 2020*. [https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/CTEE\\_Report\\_Spring\\_2020.pdf](https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/CTEE_Report_Spring_2020.pdf)

## Dual Enrollment/Early College

*Page 2 of 3*

Community colleges around the country have seen significant increases in dually enrolled students, even more so as a result of COVID-19. Community colleges, with a sophisticated technological infrastructure and significantly more experience in delivering effective online education, have provided students high-quality education in a safe environment, that awards both high school and college credit.

As the uncertainty caused by COVID-19 continues, dual enrollment offers a way to ensure high school students continue to access high-quality instruction through their local districts. Pennsylvania should be doing everything it can to ensure its students have access to high quality, college-level coursework that will propel them to postsecondary success, particularly given the current uncertainties associated with national standardized tests.

### Status

Pennsylvania is one of only two states that does not offer a statewide dual enrollment program.<sup>1</sup>

The Pennsylvania Department of Education previously administered a grant program to support dual enrollment opportunities for students (Article XVI-B of the Public School Code, 24 P.S. §§ 1601-B-1615-B). This program awarded grants to school districts and area vocational technical schools to fund dual enrollment opportunities. The appropriation that supported the grant program for dual enrollment was eliminated in FY 2011-12. As a result, there have been significant changes in dual enrollment programs statewide. A variety of structures and funding mechanisms were implemented, such as:

- ✦ Shifting costs to students and their families,
- ✦ Reduced tuition by the colleges to preserve this important opportunity to students, and, unfortunately, in some cases,
- ✦ Discontinuing dual enrollment programs entirely.

Pennsylvania's community colleges have been enthusiastic partners with secondary education in offering dual enrollment opportunities for students. Student enrollment in dual enrollment courses at Pennsylvania's community colleges steadily increased for several years, but growth has stalled with the lack of state support. During the 2018-19 academic year, 18,887 high school students were enrolled in Pennsylvania community college courses. This represents a 74 percent increase since 2008-09, brought about by the increased focus and commitment of Pennsylvania's community colleges to ensure that Pennsylvania secondary school students have the opportunity to experience the benefits of dual enrollment. However, in order for all Pennsylvania secondary school students to have access to dual enrollment, the Commonwealth needs to implement a statewide program.

### Change Requested

The Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges and its member institutions recommend the Commonwealth launch a statewide dual enrollment component as part of its strategy to increase postsecondary attainment rates and reduce the cost of postsecondary education throughout the Commonwealth – two outcomes dual enrollment has been proven to support.

## Dual Enrollment/Early College

*Page 3 of 3*

There are many models that could be implemented, including providing funds to cover the costs of tuition and fees – which is the largest expense associated with dual enrollment programs – for students who are enrolled in approved dual enrollment opportunities at one of Pennsylvania’s 14 community colleges through new funding or redirection of existing funds.

Focusing on community colleges as the preferred provider in this program will ensure that funding is used in the most efficient manner possible and guarantees the most access for students. For the 2020-21 academic year, the annual average tuition at Pennsylvania’s community colleges totaled \$4,194. That amount is significantly less than the average tuition and fees at Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education universities and many of the private colleges and universities in Pennsylvania. Using the most cost-effective provider of public postsecondary education in the Commonwealth to provide the coursework will maximize the number of students who are able to take advantage of the program.

### Benefits of Change

Dual Enrollment and early college have demonstrated its effectiveness as a high school graduation strategy, postsecondary attainment strategy, higher education affordability strategy, and student debt reduction strategy. Statewide implementation of dual enrollment will yield significant benefits for the Commonwealth, its students, and its employers, and help the Commonwealth meet its postsecondary attainment goal.

### Method of Change & Proposed Timetable

The Commission recommends that expanded access to dual enrollment opportunities be implemented immediately, and no later than the 2021-22 academic year.

**Please note:** *This request is representative of the 14 Pennsylvania community colleges that are members of the Commission as of the time of this correspondence. Currently, they include:*

*Community College of Allegheny County • Community College of Beaver County • Bucks County Community College  
Butler County Community College • Delaware County Community College • HACC, Central Pennsylvania’s Community College  
Lehigh Carbon Community College • Luzerne County Community College • Montgomery County Community College  
Northampton Community College • Pennsylvania Highlands Community College • Community College of Philadelphia  
Reading Area Community College • Westmoreland County Community College*