

Promoting Quality: State Strategies for Overseeing Dual Enrollment Programs

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NACEP

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ABOUT NACEP

The National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) is a professional organization for high schools and colleges that advances seamless education through secondary and post-secondary collaborations. Established in 1999 in response to the dramatic increase in concurrent enrollment courses throughout the country, NACEP fosters student success and achievement by supporting standards of excellence that promote program and professional development, accreditation, research and advocacy.

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www.nacep.org

DEFINITIONS

There is considerable variation and confusion in the usage of the terms dual enrollment, dual credit, and concurrent enrollment. States use these terms in different ways, and individual programs and schools often use them interchangeably.

NACEP defines **concurrent enrollment** as the opportunity for high school students to take a college class taught by a trained high school teacher in order to simultaneously earn both high school and transcribed college credit, at their high school, during the regular school day.

NACEP considers concurrent enrollment to be a subset of **dual enrollment** opportunities for high school students to take a college class in order to simultaneously earn both high school and transcribed college credit. Dual enrollment courses can be taught by high school and/or college/university instructors and can occur on the high school campus, the college/university campus, or via distance education.

INTRODUCTION

Context

In many states across the country, legislative and policy changes have led to rapid expansion of **dual enrollment** programs in recent years – especially **concurrent enrollment** programs where high school students take a college class taught by a trained high school teacher for both high school and college credit, at their high school, during the regular school day.

Concerns about dual enrollment course quality often follow periods of growth and expansion, particularly as many states embark on initiatives to raise the rigor of the high school experience through accelerated coursework and to increase access to dual enrollment for students who are underrepresented in higher education.

Observers and advocates of this expansion have cautioned that merely enrolling greater numbers of students is unlikely to achieve these policy goals with adequate quality assurance mechanisms in place (American Youth Policy Forum, 2006 and Jobs for the Future, 2008).

Twenty-nine states have adopted quality standards for post-secondary providers of dual enrollment (Education Commission of the States, 2008). The standards adopted across the states vary widely, but a common intent lies behind these standards – that college courses offered to high school students are of the same high quality and rigor as the courses offered to matriculated college students, regardless of their location, delivery method, or instructor.

Typical faculty standards adopted by states require instructors teaching college courses to

high school students to meet the same academic credential requirements as other faculty teaching on the college campus, classroom observations, and/or professional development specific to the course being taught. Course quality standards variably include requirements for academic department oversight over course syllabi, assessments, textbooks, grading policies and/or course evaluations.

At least seven states (Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Montana, Oregon, and Utah) have modeled their quality standards on the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP)'s national standards in the areas of Faculty, Assessment, Curriculum, Students, and Program Evaluation.

Purpose

Few states have, however, established systems for overseeing dual enrollment programs to encourage institutions to align their practices with quality standards.

Five states (Arkansas, Indiana, Minnesota, Iowa, and South Dakota), have established incentives or requirements for post-secondary concurrent enrollment providers to pursue NACEP accreditation as one quality assurance mechanism. NACEP's peer-review accreditation process promotes the implementation of policies and practices to ensure that concurrent enrollment courses offered in the high school are the same as the courses offered on the sponsoring college campus.

A number of states are currently designing or redesigning dual enrollment oversight systems, including Indiana, Colorado, Kentucky, Ohio, Oregon, Montana, and Wyoming. While prior studies by the Education Commission of the States, the Community College Research Center, and the Western Interstate Compact for Higher Education have examined dual enrollment policies across the 50 states, none have looked in depth at the processes by which states conduct program oversight.

This report is designed to fill that void, by illuminating dual enrollment oversight and review strategies among the following state-level entities:

- ▶ Florida Department of Education;
- ▶ Illinois Community College Board;
- ▶ Oregon Dual Credit Oversight Committee;
- ▶ South Dakota Board of Regents;
- ▶ Utah System of Higher Education and Utah Office of Education; and
- ▶ Virginia Community College System

The report presents these six as in-depth case studies, and does not evaluate or judge the practices. NACEP does not take a position favoring a particular form of dual enrollment program oversight, and instead offers this report to help further knowledge and understanding of state-level policies and practices that advance the goal of seamless education through secondary and post-secondary collaborations.

SUMMARY

Among the six case studies, seven main strategies for overseeing dual enrollment programs were observed:

- ▶ **Program Approval.** Front-end reviews are conducted to evaluate whether a dual enrollment program meets the state’s standards. Without this approval, dual enrollment providers will not be able to offer courses (Oregon) or have their credits accepted (South Dakota).
- ▶ **Periodic Program Reviews.** Each dual enrollment program is examined periodically to gauge compliance with standards and program quality and to provide feedback to the colleges.
- ▶ **Student Outcome Analysis.** Researchers use longitudinal data on student outcomes, such as persistence and GPA in subsequent college courses. Research allows states to spot trends and monitor performance.
- ▶ **Regular Collegial Meetings.** Regularly-occurring collegial meetings provide opportunities for dual enrollment administrators and state officials to share best practices, discuss standards, and resolve issues that arise. Open dialogue helps create an environment for program improvement through information exchange and professional development.
- ▶ **Course Approvals.** States with the resources to review individual course learning outcomes and/or syllabi can verify that they are college-level courses and also meet high school graduation requirements. States with existing college course transfer libraries or common numbering systems can match proposed dual enrollment courses to these lists.

STATE STRATEGIES FOR OVERSEEING DUAL ENROLLMENT PROGRAMS

	Florida	Illinois	Oregon	South Dakota	Utah	Virginia
Program Approval	①		✓	✓		
Periodic Program Reviews		✓	✓			②
Student Outcome Analysis	✓		✓	✓		
Regular Collegial Meetings			✓		✓	✓
Course Approvals	✓				✓	
Review of District/College MOUs	✓				✓	✓
Annual Reporting	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓

① The Florida Department of Education approves programs that offer specific dual enrollment courses to students from school districts statewide. It does not affirmatively approve the majority of dual enrollment programs, which are subject to local agreements between school districts and community colleges and public universities in nearby locations.

② The Virginia Community College System does not have regularly scheduled program reviews, but the System’s internal auditor performs program audits upon the Chancellor’s request.

- ▶ **Review of District/College MOUs.** In most states, post-secondary institutions and local school districts sign partnership agreements or Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) describing the terms and arrangements for dual enrollment courses. MOUs submitted to state officials provide them with an opportunity to review the contents and raise concerns with post-secondary institutions. These agencies provide post-secondary institutions with templates that include provisions required by legislation and policy.
- ▶ **Annual Reporting.** States can use information from annual reports to monitor trends, learn of new developments, and aggregate data for greater understanding of how programs are operating statewide. Data from institutions can be aggregated for state-level reports on dual enrollment practices and

prevalence. Without consistent data on a variety of data elements, policy-makers often make decisions without knowing the extent or success of a particular program or practice. While some states’ annual reporting systems are limited to student enrollment, similar information is sometimes included in the MOUs submitted by colleges in those states. The large number and variance in format of MOUs, however, would make aggregation and analysis a challenge for state officials.

Each state agency implements a different combination of the seven strategies, emphasizing those aspects of oversight most relevant to their particular institutional and policy environment. Designing the right set of accountability measures can lead to program improvement, without burdensome regulatory measures. However, none of the strategies identified come without costs, all require human and financial resources at both the institution and state-level.

ANNUAL REPORTING REQUIRED OF DUAL ENROLLMENT PROVIDERS

	Florida	Illinois	Oregon	South Dakota	Utah	Virginia
Student Enrollment	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Faculty Qualifications		✓	✓			
Courses Offered		✓	✓		✓	
Locations		✓				
Student Selection Standards			✓			
Student Outcomes / Credits Earned			✓			
Program Costs			✓			

STATE OVERVIEWS

Florida Department of Education

Florida has a long-standing dual enrollment program, with 90% of student enrollment concentrated in 28 community colleges that are required to establish dual enrollment partnerships with school districts in their respective service areas. Some public universities voluntarily offer dual enrollment, along with a few private colleges and universities. Within the Florida Department of Education, there are two divisions that collaborate to oversee dual enrollment: the Florida Division of Colleges and the Office of Articulation.

Two Florida statutes govern dual enrollment courses: the Dual Enrollment Program statute and the District Interinstitutional Articulation Agreements statute. The Dual Enrollment statute establishes student eligibility, career pathways, alignment with the statewide course numbering system, transferability, free textbooks, and course weightings. The Interinstitutional Articulation Agreements statute requires school districts and community colleges to partner to offer dual enrollment courses and other articulated programs.

In 2008 the Council of Community College Presidents adopted a Statement of Standards for dual enrollment, adapted from the NACEP national standards. These standards were incorporated into a State Board of Education rule on College Credit Dual Enrollment, which became effective in June 2010. The Board's rule includes standards on placement testing, faculty qualifications, faculty liaisons, classroom observations, common course syllabi, textbooks, exams and grades, and instructional time.

The state expects to see a new surge in dual enrollment participation in the next few years, particularly occurring on high school campuses. This is largely due to a legislative change to the state's system of evaluating the performance of high schools. Beginning in the 2009-10 school year, the state-assigned school performance grades for high schools will include calculations for student participation and student performance on accelerated coursework, including dual enrollment.

The state utilizes four strategies for overseeing dual enrollment programs: (1) reviewing draft Interinstitutional Articulation Agreements (IAAs); (2) ensuring that all dual enrollment courses offered are listed on a Statewide Course Numbering System for college courses; (3) approving any programs that offer dual enrollment classes statewide; and (4) utilizing the state's comprehensive information system that tracks student enrollment and performance longitudinally in public K-12 schools into Florida public post-secondary institutions.

Every college is required to annually sign an IAA with each school district in its service area, covering course offerings, student eligibility, instructional quality, and cost sharing. The department developed a template to ensure that the IAAs include the required information. Reviewing draft IAAs each year gives FLDOE staff an opportunity to provide feedback if they have concerns or when issues arise about a particular program's quality.

The Department also is responsible for certifying that courses offered via dual enrollment appear in the Statewide Course Numbering System for post-secondary courses. It has developed a crosswalk for the most commonly taken academic credit courses that shows how they meet state high school graduation requirements, reducing the ambiguity of the type of high school credits students can earn through dual enrollment.

Lastly, the Department also approves programs that offer specific dual enrollment courses to students statewide. The three programs that have received approval are able to operate without needing to negotiate IAAs with all school districts across the state.

Illinois Community College Board

Concurrent enrollment is the predominant form of dual enrollment¹ in Illinois, with nearly 80% of student enrollment in dual enrollment courses located on high school or career center campuses. Dual enrollment became common in Illinois in the late 1990s, with enrollment nearly doubling in the last five years. A P-16 Initiative grant supported data collection and student tuition for a few years, though the grant has recently ended.

The Illinois Community College Board's (ICCB) Administrative Rules set out standards for community college dual enrollment programs,

¹ **Dual enrollment** as defined in the preface is known as **dual credit** in Illinois; **dual enrollment** is defined as a high school student taking a college course solely for college credit. The use of the term **dual enrollment** in this section, and throughout the report, follows the definition in the preface.

covering: faculty qualifications and selection; student academic qualifications; placement testing and prerequisites, course offerings, and course requirements. The ICCB's standards have been in place for approximately 10 years.

The 2008 Illinois Dual Credit Quality Act legislatively established similar standards, and applies them additionally to universities as well as independent and private colleges offering dual enrollment. Oversight and review of community college programs remains with ICCB. The Act also directs the Board of Higher Education to oversee the implementation of the quality standards for dual enrollment programs offered by public universities and private post-secondary institutions. The Act also mandates annual reporting by each program on the courses offered, faculty and their credentials, student enrollments, and sites where dual enrollment is offered.

ICCB's primary strategy for dual enrollment program oversight is the Board's Recognition Process. In order to remain eligible for state funding, the Board conducts a site visit to each of the 39 colleges every five years to ensure that the colleges comply with state standards and demonstrate quality programming. Highly visible reports are provided to the college's President and Board of Trustees, and include both quality and compliance recommendations. The college is given an opportunity to respond. The final report and the college's response are presented to the ICCB's Trustees in a public meeting. The Trustees can establish conditional recognition or withdraw recognition of a college if there are significant compliance concerns.

In 2006, the dual enrollment standards were incorporated into the Recognition Manual and

the Board's Director of Career and Technical Education began making site visits to review dual enrollment programs. The two-day site visit includes a review of the college's self study and includes an audit of student placement testing and faculty qualification files. Conversations also include discussion of program standards, agreements with school districts, and engaging high school instructors as adjunct faculty.

As this is the first round of dual enrollment reviews, the Director has focused on quality recommendations more than compliance recommendations. To help educate college administrators about the Board's standards, the Board organized two statewide dual enrollment summits and regional workshops.

Oregon Dual Credit Oversight Committee

All 17 community colleges in Oregon are statutorily required to offer dual enrollment² opportunities to school districts within their college district boundaries. The most prevalent form of dual enrollment in Oregon is concurrent enrollment courses offered in the high school by high school teachers. Concurrent enrollment is also offered by 4 of the 7 public universities in the state. The state first adopted an administrative rule on "Two Plus Two and Dual Credit Programs" in 1981, and the early programs were focused primarily on career and technical education. Over time, the colleges began offering more academic courses that transfer to university degrees.

² The state uses the term **dual credit** to refer to a course offered in a high school where a student can earn both secondary and post-secondary credit, and the **concurrent enrollment** model as described in the preface is the predominant one in Oregon.

The administrative rule requires programs to submit their policies to the DCCWD and prepare an annual report, while a second administrative rule specifies the qualifications of community college faculty teaching under contract in high schools.

For many years, the community college dual enrollment coordinators have been meeting 3-4 times per year, providing a collegial environment to share program updates and best practices. Conversations began in these meetings about adopting common state program standards. A 2007-08 Dual Credit Task Force recommended that the state adopt common standards. Last year the Task Force was reconstituted as the Dual Credit Oversight Committee.

The Oversight Committee is comprised of three representatives from community colleges, two from public universities, and one high school representative. It is staffed by the Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development, in collaboration with the Oregon Department of Education and the Oregon University System.

The Oversight Committee adopted NACEP's standards as the state's standards, and established a program approval process. All dual enrollment programs must be approved by the Committee within the next 3½ years, or they will no longer be able to offer dual enrollment in the state. Renewal will be based primarily on demonstrated professional development and student outcome data, and is tentatively scheduled for 2016.

Researchers with the Oregon University System conduct biennial longitudinal evaluation studies utilizing data from a student information system containing data from all public higher education

institutions in the state. These reports track students who took a dual enrollment course in high school and look at their subsequent performance in higher-level courses after enrolling at an Oregon community college or public university.

South Dakota Board of Regents

The Board of Regents oversees and sets policy for the six public universities in South Dakota. Historically only one public university in the South Dakota university system, Northern State University, offered concurrent enrollment.³ On-campus dual enrollment programs exist on most of the university and college campuses, but these are small and not the focus of the Regents' policy.

Due to the large distances between universities, numerous post-secondary institutions in neighboring states offer concurrent enrollment courses in South Dakota high schools, and many out-of-state students attend university in South Dakota. Thus the Board of Regents' has used its credit acceptance policy to influence the quality of concurrent enrollment programming in the region, not just among South Dakota institutions.

The Board of Regents interest in the quality of concurrent enrollment coursework stemmed from a situation in the 1990s when an institution in a neighboring state began marketing a concurrent enrollment program to South Dakota high schools. When these students matriculated to one of the South

Dakota universities, the universities noticed that they were poorly prepared for higher-level college courses. Further investigation revealed that the content of these courses was not equivalent to the college's course content and that the high school instructors and the sponsoring college's faculty had little interaction.

The Regents established a transfer policy that only accepted concurrent enrollment credit from an out of state institution if the institution signed a high-school based dual enrollment agreement with the Board.

These agreements establish standards for student eligibility, faculty credentials, faculty mentoring, and syllabi development. Prior to signing an agreement, staff from the Board interview program coordinators and college academic officers to gauge whether the program is following the state's standards. When possible, staff visit the institutions throughout the region that send students to South Dakota universities to discuss dual enrollment. The Board approved 13 institutions between 2001 and 2010.

In addition to the program agreements, South Dakota analyzes how well students perform in advanced college classes in the same discipline after taking a concurrent enrollment courses.

In a state with low population, informal networks work well to keep the Board staff informed about new developments in the schools and for resolving concerns. When a serious concern arises, staff discuss the matter with the Regent's Academic Affairs Council (AAC), comprised of university Chief Academic Officers whose recommendations go to the Board of Regents and who ultimately are responsible for implementing Board policy.

³ **Concurrent enrollment** as defined in the preface is referred to as **high school-based dual enrollment** in South Dakota.

Recent changes to Board policy provides for credit acceptance from NACEP-accredited programs, regardless of whether those programs have signed agreements with the Board.

Utah System of Higher Education and Utah Office of Education

Oversight of dual enrollment⁴ in Utah is collaboratively conducted by the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) and the Utah State Office of Education. The USHE's standards for post-secondary institutions operating dual enrollment programs are an adaptation of NACEP's program standards to the Utah context. The State Board of Education's rule governs high school participation, including student eligibility standards, funding, and program delivery methods. The primary oversight strategies used in Utah include (1) regular collaborative meetings and other efforts to ensure college and school administrators and faculty are aware of the state's standards, (2) course curriculum alignment and approval, and (3) close monitoring of enrollment data.

State agency staff meet quarterly with the Utah Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (UACEP), comprised of post-secondary dual enrollment directors and high school administrators implementing dual enrollment. The UACEP post-secondary and school district chairs set the meeting agendas, but regularly include the state representatives to explain new developments and resolve outstanding issues. The meetings also emphasize professional development, with staff and faculty from both

⁴ Utah uses the term **concurrent enrollment** as we define **dual enrollment** in the preface, to cover a wide range of delivery locations and instructors.

secondary and post-secondary institutions sharing best practices.

The state also requires each high school and institution of higher education to annually sign an agreement, which contains assurance statements regarding state standards compliance. These are submitted to the USHE, and help ensure that administrators are aware of state policy expectations.

Utah's dual enrollment course curriculum review is designed to ensure that course content aligns 100% with college curriculum, and at least 80% with high school curriculum necessary for graduation. This review process was initiated six years ago, resulting in a Master List of dual enrollment courses for which the state provides funding to school districts and colleges, as the courses are provided for free to students. Colleges and high schools together propose new courses for the list, or adjustments to existing courses. This has created a unique approach to curriculum alignment which must be done the year prior to a course being offered. It forces dialogue between school district curriculum specialists and college faculty, whose work is then filtered through subject area specialists at both state agencies. The process has resulted in greater focus for students taking dual enrollment courses, as the courses are better aligned with first year college requirements and career pathways.

Virginia Community College System

The *Virginia Plan for Dual Enrollment*, originally signed in 1988, establishes the principal framework and standards for dual enrollment in the state. Revised most recently in 2008, it

encourages collaboration between Virginia's 23 public community colleges and local school districts. It sets standards for admissions requirements, course eligibility, credit awarded, selection of faculty, tuition and fees, and assessment and evaluation.

The *Plan* directs the colleges to apply broadly applicable institutional policies, Virginia Community College System (VCCS) guidelines, and the accreditation standards of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) to dual enrollment course curricula, assessment, students, and faculty; just as the colleges would for on-campus coursework for matriculated college students.

The *Plan* allows for local agreements between the community colleges and school districts to establish the location of the courses, whether courses are taught by high school teachers or college campus faculty, whether to mix high school and college students, and financial arrangements. VCCS provides a template to ensure the contracts contain the minimum provisions required under statute and policy. A central legal office reviews individual contracts as needed.

Five years ago multiple pressures led to an intervention by the system office to improve colleges' dual enrollment programs. These pressures included a large increase in the numbers of students taking dual enrollment courses, questions raised about the rigor of dual enrollment courses, ongoing negotiations regarding transfer agreements, and system office concerns about inconsistent evaluation of faculty qualifications, student placement testing, and other practices.

In response, the Chancellor directed the system office's auditor to conduct a policy and practice audit of nine colleges' dual enrollment programs. The primary findings related to inadequate documentation, excessive use of waivers for faculty credentialing, limited use of required student evaluations of faculty, and some high school textbooks being used instead of college textbooks. System office staff prepared a summary report with no attributions that was distributed to all 23 colleges' Presidents and Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs.

The audit became the starting point for dialogue with the dual enrollment program directors. The System began holding regular meetings to create an environment for open conversations, information exchange, and professional development. The meetings were initially held three times a year, recently shifting to twice a year. Program directors suggest agenda items. The meetings have become an opportunity for dialogue, to resolve legal and enrollment questions, and share practices and resources such as handbooks, faculty materials, contracts, and factsheets.

Building collegial relationships and establishing an environment of transparency and trust has allowed the system office staff to deal with any issues that arise on a case-by-case basis, without the need for authority or mandates. The colleges now have greater consistency in practice, without impeding on institutional autonomy.

While data reporting is limited to student enrollment in dual enrollment courses, system staff are able to monitor trends closely because enrollment and course outcome information is

centrally stored in an enterprise student information system.

CONCLUSION

States considering implementing new strategies for overseeing the quality of dual enrollment programs have a variety of tools at their disposal. Local policy environments and institutional arrangements affect the design of a state oversight system. Policy-makers should identify quality assurance mechanisms that encourage colleges and universities to adopt best practices without establishing burdensome regulatory measures. There are many routes to the desired outcome of a high quality seamless education system for students, where high school teachers and college faculty collaborate to align curriculum across the secondary-post-secondary divide.

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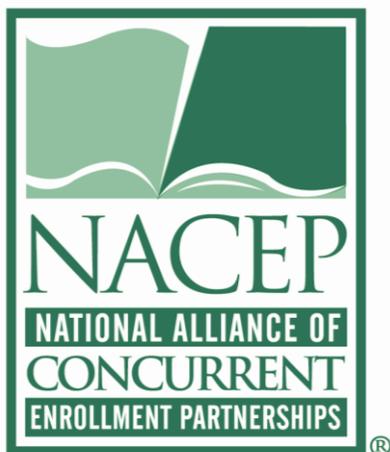
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