



# At the Crossroad of Access and Opportunity: *Funding and Dual Credit Participation in Illinois*

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**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION** AT ILLINOIS

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## Introduction

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Postsecondary education was not readily accessible prior to the massification of higher education marked by the expansion of community colleges. On January 9, 2015, President Barack Obama called for free community college education, promoting *America's College Promise* to provide at least two-years of postsecondary education for all citizens (The White House, 2015). The Obama administration understanding that in the global knowledge-based economy of the millennium, today's labor market calls for skilled workers in high demand and highly technical areas. Community colleges play a critical role in the national completion agenda to produce more college graduates in the U.S. Hence, it is important to foster productive and creative collaborations that diversify pathways to postsecondary attainment through community college and school partnerships.

There have been attempts over the years to bridge K-12 and postsecondary education as historically the various tiers have not promoted continuity of programming which has long produced disconnects in curricular offerings and student matriculation (Boswell, 2000; Education Commission of the States, 2000). Hence, partnerships between high schools and colleges that focus on improving college readiness, fostering college enrollment, persistence, and completion are critical to promoting a college-going culture and bolstering college attendance and graduation rates (Barnett & Hughes, 2010). One means of improving and accelerating pathways to postsecondary are dual credit programs. Sometimes referred to interchangeably with dual enrollment, dual credit refers to high school students taking college level courses earning postsecondary credit and credit for high school requirements (Abdul-Karim, 2010; American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2002). Research has suggested that students that were not enrolled in dual credit courses did not academically perform as well as their peers that were dual enrolled in college courses (Arnold, 2015). Subsequently, the impact of dual credit and the extent to which it is accessible across student populations is varied (Giani, Alexander, & Reyes, 2014; Karp, Bailey, Hughes, & Fermin, 2004; Kim, 2006; Taylor, 2015).

Dual credit is an academic pathway to promote college access and completion by offering an accelerated route to postsecondary education has grown across the country (Marcus, 2015; Marken, Gray, Lewis, & Ralph, 2013; Roachford, O'Neill, Gelb, & Ross, 2010; Zimmerman, 2012; Zinth, 2014). Many states are utilizing dual enrollment and dual credit programs as a strategic initiative to

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increase success for underserved, underrepresented students, yet this state strategy has been shown to differentially promote college going and student outcomes by income, gender, and race/ethnicity. Karp, Calcagno, Hughes, Jeong, and Bailey (2007) found that for New York there were no differences in outcomes of dual enrolled students by gender, Florida results varied as male (as well as low-income) students were found to benefit most from dual enrollment participation. However, many studies suggest that opportunities for dual credit are not as readily afforded to students of color and low-income participants. Numerous studies on dual enrollment credit the policies with providing necessary on-ramps for underrepresented student groups yet this can be seen more in the rhetoric of dual credit policy than in the reality of who actually benefits.

Various scholars have asserted that dual credit while important to acceleration and completion, does not consistently promote equitable participation with accelerated pathways and expanded access for low-income students and students of color (Hoffman, 2005; Lichtenberger, Witt, Blankenberger, & Franklin, 2014; Pretlow & Wathington, 2014; Taylor, 2015; Taylor & Lichtenberger, 2013). Considering the college completion agenda within state and federal contexts alongside increasing demographic shifts with females outnumbering men (Howden & Meyer, 2011), 45 million Americans (14.5% of the population) living in poverty (DeNavas-Walt & Proctor, 2014), and racial/ethnic minorities expected to be the new majority by 2043 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012), dual credit enrollment gaps by race/ethnicity, income, and gender are critically important to increasing national college graduation rates.

Young, Slate, Moore, and Barnes (2013) uncovered differential dual credit enrollment in Texas by ethnicity and gender between 2005 to 2012. Although increasing numbers of students participated in dual credit during the six-year period at the Texas community college examined (from 12.2% to 19.5%), higher percentages of females enrolled in high school dual credit courses than their male counterparts. Results from Young and colleagues reported one-third of Asian American students participated in dual credit while one-quarter of White students, 17.4% of Hispanic students, and 7.5% of Black students enrolled in dual credit. For five of the seven years examined, Asian students were enrolled more often in dual credit courses. The authors also noted within group gender differences among Hispanic and White students with higher percentages of female dual credit enrollees in comparison to White and Hispanic male participants.

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### **College Readiness: Clearing Pathways to Postsecondary Education**

The extent to which students can participate in dual credit is contingent on many factors (e.g., academic preparedness, funding, upon their college readiness, etc.). In theory, if students have no academic skill gaps, the numbers participating in dual credit programs and matriculating to and through college can increase. Sadly, many students experience pathways from high school to college marked by the need for remedial coursework (Baber, et al., 2015). In fact, more than half of first-year students require remediation in Math or English and only 6 in 10 students enrolled in remedial courses at community colleges become college ready through this form of academic catch up (Complete College America, 2012).

Conley (2007, 2010, 2012) contends that students that illustrate necessary mastery in key cognitive strategies, central content knowledge, academic behaviors, and contextual knowledge are college-ready as they would enroll in general education credit-bearing courses without the need for remediation. Conley's model of college readiness has been utilized in attempts to curb academic skill gaps of high school students in an effort to eliminate the need for remedial course taking during their first-year of college (Baber et al., 2015; Bragg, Baber, & Castro, 2011; Bragg & Taylor, 2014; Zamani-Gallaher, Lang, Graham, & Baber, 2015). According to Hoffman (2005), dual credit programming could serve as a college readiness standard as high schools could count the successful completion of dual enrollees as a measure of academic preparedness. Hoffman suggests that, "— as a plank in the platform of "college readiness for all"— dual enrollment presents new possibilities (p. 11). Therefore, the coordination of secondary and postsecondary state departments in offering dual credit is thought to incentivize student college attendance and boost accelerated pathways toward degree completion.

An and Taylor (2015) assert that there has not been empirical work that assesses if dual enrollment improves college readiness. While college readiness bears influence on dual enrollment opportunities and subsequent college outcomes, the authors argue there is a gap in the dual credit research with regard to academic preparedness. Applying Conley's framework of college readiness with data from the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education (WNSLAE). An and Taylor's findings support that students that participate in dual enrollment show higher levels of college readiness by the end of their first year of college compared to their peers that were not concurrently enrolled. There was a statistically significant influence of being dual enrolled for three of Conley's four dimensions of college readiness. There was no significant

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relationship between key transition knowledge and skills from Conley's model of college readiness with dual enrollment. Yet there was greater likelihood of concurrently enrolled students were low-income and students of color with lower levels of academic achievement in contrast to exam-based accelerated pathways.

As states consider alternatives to routing an increasing number of diverse high school students to college, closing the achievement gap and ensuring learners meet college readiness standards are essential. College readiness has become a means of enforcing state and federal accountability measures. Hence, college readiness standards are embedded in many reform efforts and thought to foster a college-going culture. Research by Welton and Williams (2015) examines the politics of promoting college-going in correspondence with state accountability mandates in schools with a high concentration of racial/ethnic minorities and low-income students. Their field observations along with interviews with students and faculty suggest multiple challenges in establishing a college-going culture (i.e., perceived negative academic climate, state exit exam being the focus of instruction, and inconsistency in disseminating college information, programs and support).

A lack of college-going culture accounts for many college students' initial academic failings and underpreparedness. Ganzert (2014) found dual credit participation promotes college readiness in technical education and transfer-level courses among other content areas. Farrell and Siefert (2007) maintain that student background characteristics such as socioeconomic status, the learner's high school experience, and academic achievement shape their perceptions of college and if they consider themselves a good prospect for college. By this line of thought, participation in dual credit garners familiarity with college-going while in high school which could promote college readiness and smooth the transition to college.

Work by Kim and Bragg (2008) demonstrates the academic benefits of dual credit participation as they found a greater likelihood of non-dual enrolled students require math remediation than students that were dual enrolled. Results from a study by Jones (2014) revealed that dual enrollment participation does have a statistically significant role in higher cumulative college GPA for first-year full-time college students attending community colleges and research universities. Jones also found that dual enrolled students that attended research universities had higher persistence rates than their counterparts at the university that were not participants in concurrent



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enrollment programs. Hence, students engaged in dual credit programming are more apt to have skill sets to successfully navigate and persist in college study.

**Background: Illinois Dual Credit Up-close**

In 2008, the Illinois Dual Credit Task Force, in its report to the General Assembly, emphasized the role of dual credit programs in “offering opportunities for improving degree attainment for underserved student populations” (Illinois Dual Credit Task Force, 2008, p. 8). The task force writes:

Dual credit programs provide chances for offering college credits to underrepresented students who are able to meet academic standards for participation. Some students may not even consider attending college, but are encouraged to attempt such courses through dual credit because the costs are lower for college credits, the setting is more familiar, and the courses are readily accessible. Achieving success in these courses can act as a gateway to continue in college (Ibid.).

The following year, the Dual Credit Quality Act (2009) established the expressed aim of “offer[ing] opportunities for improving degree attainment for underserved student populations” (110 ILCS 27/1, emphasis added). The DCQA also launched and affirmed a system of “oversight and review,” to be administered by ICCB and ISHE, in order to assess “student participation and performance” and to evaluate dual credit programs.

The DCQA defines a “dual credit course” as “a college course taken by a high school student for credit at both the college and high school level” (110 ILCS 27/1). ICCB elaborates on this definition with the following: dual credit is “[a]n instructional arrangement where an academically qualified student currently enrolled in high school enrolls in a college-level course and, upon successful course completion, concurrently earns both college credit and high school credit” (ICCB Rule 1501.507(b)(11)-Credit Hour Claims). The benefits of dual credit programs are three-fold. In 2008, the Dual Credit Task Force noted the many “potential benefits” of dual credit include reducing costs for a college education, facilitating the transition between high school and college, hastening time to degree, enhancing the high school curriculum, developing connections between secondary and postsecondary institutions, and offering greater opportunities to underserved students (p. 7).

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Behind the scenes, a dual credit program entails benefits for high schools and community colleges through numerous aspects of the dual credit program partnership, such as course alignment, faculty collaboration, resource sharing, administrative communications, and coordination. Importantly, while outlining the benefits of dual credit, the Dual Credit Task Force noted a central concern. Even as dual credit programs and courses proliferate throughout the state, they often translate into “limited access for low-income, minority, and academically underprepared students ...” (Report, p. 7). The task force traced problems of access to obstacles in the programs and the in broader community context. The report states: “[a]ccess to dual enrollment programs is uneven, with some districts more involved than others, and tuition costs presenting barriers for some students.” As a result, “Districts serving more low-income and minority students are less likely to participate in dual credit programs” (p. 9). Thus, “potential benefits” mean little to underserved students unless they become actual opportunities for participation based on program development and delivery. Notably, the very work of the task force and the resulting legislation, points to the importance of state policy to foster local programs and student participation.





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# Shaping the State Context for Dual Credit: Funding and Quality Standards

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## Illinois Dual Credit Funding Policy

Dual credit programs were not always attractive propositions for high school and community college partnerships. Prior to 1996 — a watershed year for dual credit in Illinois — educational funding was often disincentive for at least one side of the partnership. For high schools, state funding was calculated according to average daily attendance (ADA). For community colleges, the calculation for funding was rendered for full time equivalent enrollment (FTE). The very definition of dual credit blurred these clearly delineated funding systems. Both sides of the partnership, high school, and community college, provide resources in support of students, and both award credits to them. How, then, was ADA and FTE to be calculated? Prior to 1996, students could be claimed by the high school (ADA) or the community college (FTE) but not both. Although, both sides were involved in the design and delivery of a dual credit program, only one could receive state funding for participating students (Andrew, 2001).

In 1996, ICCB replaced the “either/or” practice with a rule that allowed for “both/and.” The rule, called “hold harmless” or “double dipping,” meant that both partners could receive funding for the same student in the same dual credit course. Each dual credit student counted toward both ADA and FTE, and both sides of the partnership could benefit by offering courses to students.

In 2001, ICCB introduced Accelerated College Enrollment (ACE) grants, which provided community college funding for dual credit students at a rate of \$55 per credit hour. The added incentive translated into greater program access for students. Hoffman (2005) writes, “In 2001–2002, 44 percent of colleges participating in [ACE grants] used this funding to waive all tuition charges, and 24 percent waived between one-quarter and three-quarters; 32 percent used other tuition reduction formulas.” In 2003, ACE grants were expanded and renamed “P-16 grants.” ICCB reports:

In support of the dual credit/dual enrollment component of the P-16 Initiative grant, colleges are eligible to receive the expense of course tuition and universal fees associated with the coursework of dual credit/dual enrollment students. College districts will receive credit for eligible midterm student enrollments at their local in-district tuition and

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universal fee rate, up to the total amount allocated to the district. The college may use these funds for full or partial coverage of the high school student's tuition and universal fees (ICCB, P-16 Initiative Grant Report 2006).

In 2004, P-16 grants totaled \$1.3 million (Hoffman, 2005). By 2006, the grant total had increased to nearly \$2.3 million. The new funding context fostered universal participation by community college districts. In its P-16 Initiative Grant Report for 2006, ICCB stated, "All 39 community college districts indicated that they offered academic/transfer courses for dual credit, and 37 of the 39 reported that they also offer career and technical education courses for dual credit/dual enrollment" (ICCB, P-16 Initiative Grant Report, 2006, p. 2). Between 1996 and 2006 the dual credit funding context in Illinois transformed dramatically, fostering significant growth in dual credit programs and student participation throughout the state (588 participating high schools, 88.96% of the 661 total public high schools in Illinois).

### **Dual Credit Quality Standards**

Dual Credit Quality Standards Alongside funding policy, Illinois established a Recognition Evaluation system, based on ICCB Administrative Rules and NACEP (National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships) accreditation standards for dual credit programs. The evaluation system "recognized" community college districts — thus, qualifying them for state funding — based on a "crosswalk" between ICCB rules and NACEP standards. In concert, the rules and standards took a comprehensive view of dual credit, covering nine areas:

In 2009, the Dual Credit Quality Act enhanced and affirmed the state's commitment to program quality. The DCQA established general aims of dual credit including reducing college costs and time to degree completion, improving curriculum quality, facilitating the transition from high school to college, and enhancing communication between high schools and colleges. As noted, the act also established the particular aim of offering "opportunities for improving degree attainment for underserved student populations." Between 1996 and 2009, Illinois had established a statewide context that combined dual credit funding policies and quality standards in order to foster the growth programs in general, and in order to encourage participation by underserved student, in particular. The growth of dual credit programs and student enrollment put greater pressure on limited state funds, especially as budgets throughout the country faced the reality of the Great Recession. One

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casualty was the elimination of the P-16 grant program, in 2008, meaning that dual credit programs throughout the state experienced their own significant reduction in funding. However, despite funding cuts in 2008, enrollment continued to increase significantly. Between 2008 and 2013 enrollment increased 23%, from 76,000 to 90,000 (Corso, 2014). The experiences of local programs help to illustrate the growth. For example, between 2011 and 2015, enrollment at Harper Community College increased from 500 to 2,300 students. At McHenry County College, enrollment increased from 33 in 2010 to 916 dual enrollees in 2014. The increased participation is partly due to a shift in the dual credit model from the college campus to the high school sites.

ICCB frames dual credit as a **process**, a **tool**, and a **solution** (ICCB, 2015). By 2013, ICCB introduced a new funding initiative called the Dual Credit Enhancement Grant to help support local programs. However, the initiative works on a smaller scale than the preceding P-16 grant program. For example, ICCB awarded thirty-nine P-16 grants in 2006 ranging from \$22,500 to over \$180,000. By comparison, the Dual Credit Enhancement Grant awards about half as many grants, each with a \$10,000 maximum. By 2015, the statewide context for local dual credit interspersed quality standards, financial incentive, a commitment to access for underserved students, and budgetary constraints for program development and delivery.



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## Aims of the Study & Findings

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### Methodological Approaches

The Dual Credit Quality Act established a statewide concern for participation by underserved students. Exploring issues of access and affordability that interplay with funding of dual credit can aid in understanding obstacles that stand in the way of dual credit participation for low-income students and students of color. Accordingly, this exploratory study sought to look at the connection between state funding policy, quality standards, program design, and development as well as the perceptions regarding access and participation of underserved students (i.e., low-income and racial/ethnic minorities) in dual credit programming. This study follows up on an OCCRL report ICCB commissioned which served as an environmental scan and provided baseline data on dual credit funding models in the state of Illinois.<sup>1</sup>

The study was approved by the principal investigator's institutional human subjects review board. All interviewees participated in the informed consent process. Twenty-eight telephone interviews ranging from 45 minutes to 75 minutes were conducted with chief academic officers (CAOs), community college dual credit administrators, and/or their designee representing 26 of the 48 public Illinois community colleges. Participating institutions included:

Black Hawk College, Carl Sandburg College, College of Lake County, Elgin Community College, Harper College, Heartland Community College, Illinois Central College, John A Logan College, John Wood Community College, Joliet Junior College, Kankakee Community College, Kaskaskia College, Lewis and Clark Community College, Lincoln Land Community College, McHenry County College, Parkland College, Prairie State College, Rend Lake College, Richard J. Daley College, Sauk Valley Community College, Shawnee Community College, South Suburban College, Southeastern Illinois College, Southwestern Illinois College, Spoon River College, and Wilbur Wright College.

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<sup>1</sup> "However, the scope of work associated with this initial survey did not allow time or human capacity to do further data collection during FY14" (Taylor, Fisher, & Bragg, 2014, p.1).

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Roughly, one-fifth of the responding community colleges in this study are minority serving institutions (MSIs); one Asian American and Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI), one predominately Black institution (PBI), and three Hispanic serving institutions (HSIs).<sup>2</sup> Over half of the community colleges in the state of Illinois participated in this study and all but one of the above institutions responded to the OCCRL survey on dual college funding models (Taylor, Fisher, & Bragg, 2014).

## Findings

### Dual Credit Program Design and Delivery

Through the interviews, we discerned specifics on dual credit program design and delivery. For instance:

- *What* course offerings and what program emphasis (CTE or Transfer)?
- *Who* will teach the course, high school teachers or community college instructors — full time or adjunct?
- *Where* will the course be taught, on the high school or community college campus, or, in some cases, at a vocational center, or online?
- *What other* resources — personnel, course materials, equipment, facilities — are necessary for program delivery?
- *How* much, and *who* pays — high school, community college, or students and their families?

### Access and Participation

Our conversations with the dual credit partners, during winter and spring of 2015, suggested a combination of opportunity and obstacle for underserved students. In studying dual credit in relation to underserved students, one

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<sup>2</sup> Minority Serving Institutions are institutions of higher education that serve minority populations. They are unique both in their missions and in their day-to-day operations. Some of these colleges and universities are located in remote regions of the country, whereas others serve urban neighborhoods. Some minority serving institutions are only a few decades old, whereas others, particularly the Historically Black Colleges and Universities, have been striving for more than a century to give their constituents the social and educational skills needed to overcome racial discrimination and limited economic opportunities. U.S. Department of the Interior (2015). *Minority Serving Institutions Program*. Retrieved from <http://www.doi.gov/pmb/eeo/doi-minority-serving-institutions-program.cfm>

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approach is to begin by categorizing schools and communities — urban, suburban, or rural; white or minority; low income to affluent — and to study access within and between categories. Categories can be limiting especially as the program and district context is multifaceted or multilayered. A community college district and its dual credit programming cover a broad area that includes numerous high schools in communities varying in size and each with their own set of characteristics. Community college districts may cover less geographic area but with high population density and student diversity. We draw on our interviews with local community colleges, as illustrated above, to help identify underserved students in their districts and discuss their particular problems and solutions to participation.

**Black Hawk College** is located in Moline, just across the Mississippi from Davenport, Iowa. Moline is part of the Quad Cities with a population of nearly 400,000. The dual credit enrollment is comprised of 1,300 students with 82% White and the remaining participants being Asian, Native American, Native Hawaiian, African American, and Hispanic dual credit students.

**College of Lake County** is located on Lake Michigan, near the Wisconsin border. The dual credit program includes 18 high schools throughout Lake County, with an overall mix of 55% White, 26% Hispanic students, and 19% representative of other racial/ethnic groups.

**Carl Sandburg College**, located in Galesburg, covers a large district area with a population of less than 20,000. Dual credit enrollment of 344 is over 90% White, spread across 14 school districts.

**Harper College**, in Palatine, is 35 miles northwest of Chicago. The dual credit program enrolls 2300 students — 58% white, 24% Hispanic, 14% Asian — from 12 high schools. The dual credit program at **John A Logan**, outside Carbondale, includes 12 high school partners, some predominantly white, some predominantly African American, some with a significant international student populations given the proximity to Southern Illinois University. Approximately 25% of students receive free or reduced lunch.

**Lewis and Clark College** is located in Godfrey, on the Missouri border north of St. Louis. The district, which covers both urban and rural communities, consists of a combination of wealthy and low-income school districts. In total, the dual credit program enrolls 3,000 students from 18 high schools. The dual credit



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*Based on our findings, there are limitations or constraints to program participation, especially by underserved students that concern funding in part, but more significantly, state standards on program quality.*

program at **Richard J. Daley College** in Chicago enrolls over 400 students, 86% of whom are Hispanic.

**Sauk Valley Community College** is located in Dixon, the boyhood home of Ronald Reagan. Located in Lee County, the population of 36,000 has remained near constant since the 1940s. The county serves as a regional economic center that includes healthcare and food processing. Of the 852 dual credit students, 83% are White (consistent with the general population), and 12% are Hispanic (significantly higher than the 4% Hispanic population in the county).

**Southeastern Illinois College** is located in Harrisburg, just north of Shawnee National Forest. The dual credit program includes nine high school partners and 988 students. Ninety-four percent of dual credit students are white. Southeastern notes the “high poverty level” in the community, with many students who are “low-income, first generation, and ... from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.” According to SIC, the average income in the district is \$34,000 for a family of four.

**Kankakee Community College** is located 70 miles south of Chicago. The district encompasses both urban and rural communities. The dual credit program enrolls 500 students — white, Hispanic, and African American — from 11 high schools, some up to 50 minutes away. In light of reduced state funding, one assumption is that program quality and vitality would suffer, especially in relation to participation by underserved students.

Based on our interviews, college districts expressed a concern that there are limitations or constraints to program participation, especially for underserved students. While program funding on the CTE side of dual credit was one concern, in general, we found that dual credit programs responded to limited state funding with strategic, curricular, operational, and financial adjustments and innovation.

Perhaps, more significantly, districts expressed the view that state quality standards on minimum teacher credentials may actually constrain the quality and vitality of dual credit programs in relation to student, and especially underserved student, participation. The following distills what was garnered on local solutions to local problems of quality and access.



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## **Redefining the Dual Credit Campus Context**

By definition, dual credit blurs the lines between the two educational systems. While the traditional relationship is one of sequence — secondary then post-secondary education — dual credit entails intentional overlap. The most obvious blurring is the status and experience of the student. A dual credit student is a high school student without a high school diploma taking a college course for college credit. In its most absolute form, a dual credit student will leave the high school campus, travel to the college, and attend a class taught by a college instructor in a classroom full of college students.

In dual credit programs throughout Illinois, however, the high school is increasingly becoming a kind of community college campus extension, in which high school teachers, classrooms, and other resources play dual roles in support of dual credit. The reason is strategic and curricular, operational and financial. In addition, the shift concerns student access and participation.

To illustrate the shift, we turn to the 26 dual credit programs interviewed to distinguish between three program models. The first model is located on the college campus. The second takes place online. The third model is situated on high school campuses. Virtually all dual credit programs we interviewed offer some combination of the models. Notably, the “where” of dual credit is interwoven with the other basic questions of design and delivery: What program offering and emphasis? Who teaches? What other resources are needed? How much, and who pays? What do these answers mean for student participation?

## **Dual Credit Programming Offered at Community College Campuses**

Half of the dual credit programs represented in this study offer courses on the college campus, taught by college faculty — either full-time or adjunct. The following institutions deliver the *majority* of dual credit programs onsite.

1. Black Hawk College
2. Elgin Community College
3. Harper College
4. Heartland Community College
5. Illinois Central College
6. Joliet Junior College
7. Kaskaskia College
8. Lincoln Land Community College

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9. McHenry County College
  10. Parkland College
  11. Rend Lake College
  12. Shawnee Community College
  13. Southwestern Illinois College

While a few programs discount the tuition rate — 50% off, for example — the vast majority of the programs charge *full tuition*, paid by the student or, in some cases, by the school district. While a few programs focused on the college campus model, most noted that their course and enrollment numbers were relatively small compared to enrollment on partner high school campuses. The argument for dual credit on a college campus often points to the full college experience that comes with the course. One college described a range of benefits, including interactions with professor, self-management skills, and experience navigating the college system. However, some colleges note the challenge of travel and transportation. In many rural districts, for example, a student may have to travel up to 100 miles round trip and incur substantial transportation costs. Basic conflicts in scheduling can also complicate the school day. **Prairie State College** explains that even when a school district provides transportation to and from the college campus, competing schedules allow no margin for error. If the bus is late to arrive, all the students are late for class. The interviewee shared:

The other thing is getting back on the bus. If the class gets out at 12:15pm ... the bus leaves at 12:20pm, and if the student is ... not on the bus then there is a problem. Some of our faculty think that this does not allow the students an authentic college experience in some ways because there's no opportunity for them to go see their professor during office hours or there's no chance for students to see them before class or stick around after class and chat or ask questions. It's regimented so much like a high school that it can take away from that type of [college] experience.

Many colleges reported that dual credit on college campuses translates into obstacles for underserved students. For example, **Lewis and Clark** explained, "If we have to charge students to take dual credit, it will be difficult. Students with financial resources will still do it. But for low-income students, they live day by day and they live on the fence. They may not be able to afford [dual credit] and may not think about college."

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*While online dual credit courses may increase accessibility in terms of distance or convenience, financial accessibility is mixed.*

**McHenry County College** pointed to a basic problem with taking dual credit courses on a college campus. While many or most college students qualify for federal aid, until recently, no dual credit student qualifies — regardless of need — because dual credit students, by definition, have not received their high school diplomas. In October 2015, student eligibility standards for financial aid changed to a degree. The U.S. Department of Education announced a pilot program, which would provide up to \$20 million in Pell grants to help approximately 10,000 low-income high school students with dual credit tuition costs during the 2016-2017 school year. While the pilot program is promising, it is not currently a firm fixture in educational policy and it has a limited reach given the over 1 million dual credit students around the country (Kelly, 2015).

### **The Virtual Campus – Taking Dual Credit Online**

Nationally and internationally, online courses are increasingly viewed as solutions to problems of access. The number and range of online offerings as well as dual credit courses offered online has increased dramatically in higher education. For example, 56% of Iowa high schools responding to an online course use survey offered online dual credit courses in 2012-2013 while 10% of Wisconsin high schools used online courses to address dual credit academic objectives (Clements, Stafford, Pazzaglia, & Jacobs, 2015). In a study of New York high schools, 71% of Capital Area School Development Association high schools desired to increase their use of online dual credit courses (Clements, Zweig, & Pazzaglia, 2015).

Dual credit programs in Illinois seem to follow this trend to some degree. In 2006, ICCB reported that 1.6% of dual credit students took courses online. In contrast, based on interviews, eight of the colleges (30% of the participating institutions) offer online dual credit course options. These include:

1. Black Hawk College
2. Carl Sandburg College
3. John A. Logan College
4. Kaskaskia College
5. Rend Lake College
6. Shawnee Community College
7. Southeastern Community College
8. Spoon River College

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In most cases, the course is taught by a college instructor. **Southeastern** is notable as there are dual credit offerings available at the college as well as the high school in good numbers, however the bulk of dual credit courses are delivered online. In making online dual credit more accessible, Southeastern accommodates students with limited internet access at home by offering on-site computer lab use for online dual credit classes. **Rend Lake** described an interesting hybrid, which it calls “distance learning,” that combines all three modes of course instruction. Students from multiple school districts gather at their respective high schools for an online course. The course instructor, a college faculty, travels a circuit from one high school to the next to deliver the course in person to at least one school per session. Each class session is simultaneously broadcast to the other high schools. Thus, the course combines the resources and logistics of online and in-class, high school and community college.

While online dual credit courses may increase accessibility in terms of distance or convenience, financial accessibility is mixed. Two programs charge full tuition for online courses, and one charges \$40 more than regular college-campus tuition. One program reduces tuition by 50%, one charges a flat fee of \$25, and another does not charge tuition due to a program grant. Dual credit online shows notable growth in the past decade and a continuing trend in online education may merit further study as questions of access and quality.

### **High School Site Dual Credit Offerings**

In light of the challenges and obstacles of dual credit on college campus, we found that the vast majority of colleges reported that dual credit courses were taught at the partnering high school sites. In some cases, dual credit programs were offered entirely on high school campuses. The programs are:

1. Black Hawk College
2. Carl Sandburg College
3. College of Lake County
4. Harper College
5. Heartland Community College
6. Illinois Central College
7. John A. Logan College
8. John Wood Community College
9. Joliet Junior College
10. Kankakee Community College
11. Kaskaskia College

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*“I think the dual credit is by far the best thing for low-income students.”*

12. Lewis and Clark Community College
13. Lincoln Land Community College
14. McHenry County College
15. Parkland College
16. Prairie State College
17. Richard Daley College
18. Rend Lake College
19. Sauk Valley Community College
20. Shawnee Community College
21. Southeastern Illinois College
22. Southwestern Illinois College
23. South Suburban College
24. Spoon River College
25. Wilbur Wright College

In most cases, programs combined a mixture of CTE and transfer courses. In a few cases, a program focused on one or the other. For example, **Wilbur Wright** only offers transfer courses and **Carl Sandburg** reports that 95% of its dual credit courses are transfer. On the other end, **Prairie State** has designed a CTE program, which folds in select business courses that count as transfer.

With few exceptions, courses at high schools were taught by high school instructors. In 21 out of 24 programs, tuition was free. Two programs charged at a reduced rate (\$15 – \$75 per credit hours) and only one charged full tuition. Notably, in addition to free tuition for dual credit participation at the high school, **Shawnee** offers the additional benefit of providing free first-year tuition at the college once a student graduates from high school and enrolls full-time.

Many of the colleges offered insight into the reasons for their shift away from college and tuition-based programs and toward free dual credit at high schools. Prior to 2010, **McHenry County College** charged full tuition to high school students enrolled in dual credit. McHenry reports that this tuition policy meant that the program remained small, offering a few courses in English Composition to just over 30 students. In 2010, with new academic leadership and board approval, McHenry adopted a free tuition policy when the class is taught at the high school by a high school instructor. At McHenry County College, free tuition was thought as a mechanism to increase student participation, especially in light of state funding cuts. McHenry County College provides tuition free dual credit opportunities in an effort to enroll students that

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have experience with college rigor, possess college readiness for matriculation, and have a greater likelihood of persistence to a degree or certificate with less time and money to completion.

McHenry notes that the move was embraced by superintendents, who were concerned with offering “rigorous college-level courses to students at their high schools across the board ... to everybody.” McHenry calls the policy change “a huge step forward,” with enrollment “skyrocketing.” As noted above, in 2010, 33 students were enrolled in two courses. Four years later, the numbers had increased to 916 students, 15 courses, and 56 sections. McHenry notes that dual credit students who attend class on the college campus still pay full tuition. The heart of the program, however, is on high school campuses.

Another community college characterized the shift in one word — “access” — describing the transition to the high school campus as an “offering policy” as much as a “funding policy.” While noting the benefits of the college classroom and campus experience, the college reports on increasing requests from school districts for “early college opportunities” at the high school, in order to enhance a student’s education and offer the broadest access. For this college, the commitment to access at high schools starts to outweigh the benefits of the “full college experience,” which often limits access due to transportation, tuition, and time constraints.

Alongside the commitment to access and the benefits to students, the location of dual credit onto the high school campus can mean operational and financial benefits to the institutions. **Logan** states: “I think the dual credit is by far the best thing for funding for low-income students.” With “dual credit at their high school, they are there already, the support system is already there, and it *costs nothing*” to the college.

**Parkland** reports that dual credit courses that are taught at high schools entail little to no cost for the college. Plus, the costs of high school instruction are already built into the high school budget. This allows the college to justify a free tuition policy. In all, college districts described the shift from college to high school campuses in terms of strategy and curriculum, operations and budgets, all with a concern for greater student opportunity and access.

### **Limitations to Dual Credit Programming at High Schools**

College districts spoke to what might be termed “structural limits” to student opportunity when dual credit programs are located on high school campuses. What emerged from the interviews with community college administrators

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regarding dual credit are two sets of structural challenges perceived at the high school level, the first concerning transfer courses and the second concerning CTE.

State standards require that a dual credit instructor hold a master's degree in the course area taught (History or English, for example) or a master's degree (of any type) and 18 credit hours in the course subject area.<sup>1</sup> It is a master's in the discipline or a master's (of any type) and 18 graduate hours in the subject area, which is consistent with the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) requirements.

At present, the regulation of dual credit teacher credentials goes into effect September 1, 2017. For schools that fall short, each will have to submit plans of becoming compliant within two years. Hence, discussions about alternative credentialing and targeted waivers are ongoing in Illinois and other states (Higher Learning Commission, 2015).

As we detail below, transfer courses have a low material cost but an often prohibitive instructor cost. Many of the high school partners share with the colleges that the major obstacle to meeting the need and demand for dual credit is their ability to recruit, hire, and retain teachers that meet the graduate-level credentialing standard established by the state.

CTE courses at the high school level face the opposite challenge. State standards require a lower level of instructor credentials: a bachelor's degree and professional experience, which makes faculty easier to recruit, hire, and retain. However, the courses themselves from auto repair to drafting to computer technology often require significant investment and campus capacity in terms of facilities and equipment. In many cases, schools with the greatest student need have the fewest resources to address either challenge.

### **Teacher Credentialing and Transfer Courses**

The requirements for course instructor credentialing were meant to ensure that courses and students benefit from college-level instruction. In a basic sense, only college level courses deserve college credit and only a college-level instructor can teach a college level course. In a broader sense, quality standards were meant to ensure the legitimacy and transferability of college credits. Non-transferrable credits (credits not accepted by postsecondary institutions) defeats the very purpose of a dual credit transfer course.



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As mentioned earlier, Illinois established a basic commitment to student access, especially for underserved student populations. In our study, 14 dual credit programs reported on the tension between teacher credentialing and/or student access (i.e., two of the state's primary concerns) as the greatest challenge in broadening participation in dual credit programming. For example,

**Carl Sandburg College** offers courses at the college but most at the high schools charging tuition (at a 50% rate). The reason for this model is due to financial necessity. Their dual credit program consists mostly of rural high schools without enough credentialed high school teachers. "In a small rural area like ours, it's hard to find people with master's degrees to teach." One college administrator continues: "I am sending faculty to the high schools to teach. Because we have such large number of rural schools, I'm paying faculty mileage stipend to go teach at high schools" that are spread throughout the district." "So there's that cost and we still have to charge tuition whereas many of our peer [colleges] don't. It's not a big moneymaker for us but a way to cover our basic costs." The effect, however, is that dual credit courses remain unaffordable for many rural, low-income students.

**Southeastern** describes the same problem, stating, "We just don't have enough high school teachers with 18 graduate hours in their content area." Many colleges point to the traditional design of the high school system, in which graduate degrees allowed teachers to advance from teacher to principal to superintendent, for example. Accordingly, teachers pursued graduate degrees fields such as education administration or curriculum and instruction in order to strengthen their qualifications for administrative roles. **McHenry** estimates that 85% of teachers with master's degrees working in the districts have degrees in education administration or curriculum & instruction. However, by state standards, teachers with graduate credentials are not qualified to teach dual credit courses, unless they also have a minimum of 18 credits in the course area.

**Heartland** points to a related problem. In one high school, a teacher has offered a high school level communications class for the past 15 years. However, she holds a master's degree in theater and is considered ineligible to continue teaching a dual credit communications course at her high school. **Prairie State**, which focuses almost solely on CTE, echoes Heartland. "The beauty of the industrial tech side" of the program is that teachers only need a bachelor's degree. However, because the CTE program incorporates

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*The benefits of dual credit CTE are both college and career oriented, multiple on-ramps for postsecondary and pathways to gainful employment are especially important as a way to support underserved students.*

transferrable business courses into its design, the program encounters the challenge of finding a teacher with an MBA or similar degree.

**Parkland** reports that some larger high schools have begun hiring teachers with the credentials to teach dual credit. However, other colleges report that high schools in their districts simply cannot afford to hire teachers with master's degrees. One college reported that a credentialed teacher retired and was replaced by someone that did not meet the teaching standard. Without a qualified teacher, the course was not offered, "hurting" the "integrity of the program."

**Kaskaskia** also faces retirement concerns. "The challenge is that we are seeing more and more faculty retiring and moving on to other schools. Replacing those instructors with teachers with master's degrees is becoming more and more difficult." **Kankakee** describes teacher credentialing as the "biggest speed bump" and "biggest barrier" to the program as the college reports, "schools are frustrated because they want to offer more but their instructors don't have the masters."

One solution is that high school teachers obtain graduate credits and degrees necessary to teach dual credit. One college responds by pointing out that part of being a high school teacher is taking part in extracurricular responsibilities such as cheerleading and coaching sports, advising student clubs, being theater director, or band leader. For these teachers, the challenge is time, energy and in some cases lack of professional development resources (e.g., graduate education tuition and fees).

Given responsibilities during the school year, summer would seem to be an alternative time. **John Logan** reports, however, that, "Most universities have cut way back on discipline specific ... courses in the summer ... so that people who want to get graduate degrees at the high school are going into administration, C & I, neither one of which will make you qualified to teach a college credit course." Due to tensions between program offerings and credential requirements, the call from programs centered on "flexible policies," a "flexible teacher qualification policy," "more creative" qualification standards "that count their experience teaching in the discipline," and new kinds of "solutions" to the "lack of teachers with the right credentials."

One college stated that revised policies would help under-resourced schools "tremendously" in broadening access. Importantly, colleges from both urban

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and rural areas of Illinois raised a concern about the potential conflict between teachers unions and faculty unions. Especially on the college side, some predicted pushback from faculty who view a wholesale shift to high schools as a challenge to the rights and opportunities to teach college courses in their districts.

In October 2015, the Illinois Board of Higher Education adopted a set of administrative rules pursuant to the Dual Credit Quality Act, described above, which take up the question of instructor qualifications (IBHE, 2015). Among other things, IBHE affirmed the aforementioned master's degree requirements and established a system of program application, agency approval, and annual reporting designed to ensure dual credit instruction by qualified teachers. While it is beyond the scope of this report to assess IBHE policy in relation to the present findings, the tension between teacher qualifications, course availability, quality and student access appear to be an enduring concern.

### **CTE Facilities and Equipment: The Cost of Student Access**

Student readiness focuses on two concerns -- college and career. Generally speaking, dual credit CTE uses college-level courses to prepare students directly for careers. As we will discuss, this does not preclude further education including four-year institution attendance. The benefits of dual credit CTE are both college and career oriented, multiple on-ramps for postsecondary and pathways to gainful employment are especially important as a way to support underserved students.

**Carl Sandburg** describes its vision for developing an industrial and manufacturing maintenance certificate. The college states that “community, industry, business, and educational leaders” are “concerned about the limited opportunities for the non-bachelor’s degree seeking student.” The program would serve as a pathway for students to “go straight to work after high school graduation in an entry level position, or go on ... for advanced training.” The danger of having no pathway to a career is that individuals will “languish” in the community.

**Prairie State** calls CTE a pipeline between high school and career, as well as a 4-year college education. Prairie State reports that the demand for CTE educated students is “coming more so from the employers than anywhere else right now.” The college also reports that “four-year universities are reaching out to us to see if there’s a way that we can gateway our applied programs to the applied programs they are now creating.” In a technical age, technical skills

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allow a kind of blurring of the line between a trade and emerging fields in 4-year degree programs.

**College of Lake County** describes its “high school technology center” on the college campus, which serves students throughout the district. **Carl Sandburg** notes, however, that in its district:

There are so many barriers...distance and travel, costs for equipment, reconciling schedules between several high schools with transportation routes to get students for this program at the same place/time each day, and tuition costs. The schools cannot afford to pay the tuition, and Sandburg would discount some of it; but I would figure that the families would have a difficult time paying the tuition for such a program and Sandburg does not have the resources to offer this for free (emphasis added).

While colleges shared various challenges, emergent in our study was the particular theme of the costs for CTE facilities and equipment, especially at high school campuses.

**Kaskaskia** reports that it is “very costly to offer computer-type courses (software, technology) and other CTE courses” in high schools. **Logan** states that “high school cannot keep up with technology required for some courses [such as] computer programming or cad drafting.” While the college has more resources and facilities, it is 35 miles away from some high schools, making it inaccessible for many low-income students. **Sauk Valley** describes the general decrease of CTE programs in high schools “most of the high schools have had their CTE programs go away. Back in the day, there were more manufacturing courses from freshman to senior years. These programs on high school campus have gone away, partly due to high equipment costs ....”

The sentiments emerging from the interviews in this study expressed need for CTE facilities and equipment on high school campuses as more limiting than the broad call for revised teaching standards. Nonetheless, in light of the limited resources of many college and school districts, the role that CTE dual credit can play to help underserved students follow a career path points to the need (perhaps statewide) for greater funding to assist with CTE facilities and equipment as a means to extend access and participation of underserved students.

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## Conclusions

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What is the equivalent for a high school teacher without the technical credential? What would a general policy revision entail? Colleges have suggested general solutions, such as crediting teacher experience or accepting graduate degrees in related fields. Some colleges have expressed a willingness to help ensure quality by informal or formal reviews of high school teacher qualifications. At least five offer professional development or teacher training during the year. While these sessions or workshops are not designed around credentialing, they point to a possible avenue for more extensive training.

It is beyond the scope of this exploratory study to offer specific policy recommendations. Instead, we highlight the language of the 2008 Dual Credit Task Force, which hoped to “identify the pressing issues related to dual credit in the State of Illinois.” Hence, insights gleaned from our findings suggest that relevant bodies continue to take up the pressing issue of teacher credentialing



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***Yet budget tensions remain throughout Illinois with an estimated \$9 billion annual deficit projected to increase to \$14 billion by FY 2026.***

— relative to time, delivery, and funding for professional development — with the statewide aim of student access in mind, as well. Touchstone (2010) found that high school instructors had the greatest impact on student participation in dual credit programs and that dual credit enrollees had a higher likelihood of attending college following high school completion. However, college enrollment and completion has been found to be less probable for low-income students and students of color (Taylor, 2015). Opportunities for dual credit enrollment are unevenly distributed due to school funding and other resource dependencies such as human resources namely personnel.

Excellence in teaching and quality instruction are critical in dual credit courses. While enforcing dual credit instructor qualifications are not consistently enforced in some contexts (Abdul-Karim, 2010), Illinois upholds the requirement that college-level work must be delivered by instructors with master's preparation/credentials in the discipline. However, our findings suggest there is an opportunity cost for students due to limited teacher opportunities to pursue the requisite graduate education and appropriate skills to deliver dual credit offerings. More flexible options and greater financial support of advanced study as well as being able to engage in ongoing professional development beyond the required instructor qualifications for teaching dual credit college-level work seem to be vital avenues to explore in order to increase dual credit across school districts.

In a general sense, a revised policy on teacher qualifications might be grounded in dual credit itself. Nonetheless, the enforcement of quality instruction, course rigor, and teacher credentialing are important mandates but arguably present a bridge and a barrier to building participation across underserved diverse youth. If teacher qualifications are addressed alongside curbing increasing college costs (e.g., considering free tuition and fees across the state for dual credit offerings) as a question of boosting student access and diverse student participation, eliminating barriers to dual credit opportunities for low-income students and students of color would be within closer reach. Yet budget tensions remain throughout Illinois with an estimated \$9 billion annual deficit projected to increase to \$14 billion by FY 2026 (Dye, Hudspeth, & Crosby, 2015).

As June 30 marked the end of the 2015 fiscal year and with the absence of an enacted fiscal 2016 budget as 8/31/15, it is only wishful that the community colleges can expand dual credit offerings at little to no fees and/or free tuition. Illinois community colleges have varying resource dependencies whereby some can afford to offer no fees and/or free tuition for dual credit programs as

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others reconcile less inflow of human and fiscal resources that thwart their ability to expand dual credit offerings no less sustain subscribing to free tuition and fees.

In lieu of funding questions, many states do not explicitly utilize dual credit policies or maximize partnerships as a means of promoting college access for underserved students (Bragg, Kim, & Barnett, 2006; Roach, Gamez, & David, 2015). Dual credit students are students deemed “ready” for college without a high school diploma. Student academic preparedness for college level work is most readily translated into a set of requirements including exam scores, GPA, and teacher or counselor recommendation. Case in point, secondary students that are at least 16 years old, in the top 40% of their class with three years of Math and English that have the requisite ASSET or COMPASS placement score can enroll in the escrow program to take college courses at Shawnee Community College. However, high school students in the top 20% of their class with a minimum cumulative high school GPA of 3.25, based on the 4.0 scale qualify for advanced honors admission in the escrow program at SCC. Advanced honors escrow program participants receive tuition/fee waivers, a book loan and are required to maintain a minimum cumulative SCC GPA of 3.0, based on the 4.0 scale while enrolled in dual credit.

Student success in dual credit programs also means success for high schools and community colleges. A high school senior who benefits from a dual credit program and who graduates, ready for college, is a *win* for the high school. Moreover, a student who enrolls at a community college, ready for the rigor and responsibility of college courses, is a *win* for the community college, especially in light of the all too prevalent need for remediation once students enter a community college.

In fostering more “wins” for colleges and the students they serve, Scheffel, McLemore, and Lowe (2015) call for the accreditation of dual credit programming. The National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment (NACEP) accreditation seeks to strengthen concurrent enrollment through fostering awareness in dual enrollment opportunities, strengthening partnerships between high schools and colleges/universities, and by ensuring high standards for college-level work and recognition of quality programming. NACEP employs 17 accreditation standards and the organization is establishing state chapters that will aid in supporting member institutions to establish and/or maintain concurrent enrollment quality standards. Efforts to launch a NACEP Illinois state chapter are underway with an initial dual credit



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summit held April 2015 and chapter planning meeting hosted at Parkland College in August 2015.

In summary, there is synergy surrounding dual credit programming in the state of Illinois. Funding models of dual credit vary substantially (Taylor, Fisher, & Bragg, 2014) with Illinois and countrywide (note Dudich, 2011; Pretlow & Patteson, 2015; Zinth, 2015). Although there are obstacles to participation across diverse groups, the economic impact and benefits of concurrent enrollment opportunities far outweigh current barriers.

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