



Academic Pathways to
Access and Student Success

DUAL CREDIT AND DUAL ENROLLMENT¹

Debra D. Bragg and Eunyoung Kim
Office of Community College Research and Leadership, UIUC

Dual credit and dual enrollment courses enable high school students to take college-level courses, earning them college credit before graduating from high school. For the purposes of the APASS project (see www.apass.ed.uiuc), we defined dual credit distinctly from dual enrollment to emphasize *credit* in the term *dual credit* meaning students are taking college-level course work and securing credit at both the high school and college level simultaneously. Dual enrollment, on the other hand, emphasizes *enrollment* at the high school and college level, but *dual enrollment* does not necessarily translate into credit (Kim, Bragg, & Barnett, 2003). Another distinguishing feature of dual credit courses is that they often, though not always, are taught within the high school. This latter approach sometimes carries the label of *concurrent enrollment*, which is the preferred term in Arkansas, California, Utah, and a few other states.

A multitude of dual credit and dual enrollment arrangements exist between secondary and postsecondary institutions across the U.S., with many states emphasizing partnerships between high schools and community colleges. Often dual credit courses are administered by community colleges in partnership with secondary schools wherein the colleges take a lead role in identifying instructors, recruiting students, administering pre- and post-course assessments, subsidizing or deferring tuition and fees, and monitoring quality (Barnett, Gardner & Bragg, 2004). Some community colleges allow dual credit students to access student services and activities, considering them analogous to non-degree or sometimes degree-seeking students. However, finding equitable funding mechanisms, meeting the needs of the diverse student populations, and insuring the quality of course work has been challenging (Bailey & Karp, 2003; Karp, Bailey, Hughes, & Fermin, 2004).

Two recent national surveys confirm the prevalence of dual credit and dual enrollment in U.S. high schools. Waits, Setzer, and Lewis (2005) show that during the 2002-03 12-month academic year, 71% of public high schools in the U.S. offered dual credit courses. An estimated 1.2 million enrollments in courses for dual credit was cited in the report. Hoffman (2005) estimated between 10% and 30% of juniors and seniors secure college credit in states that have made a long-term commitment to dual credit and imposed no charges to them for enrolling in the courses. She also suggested as many as half of dual credits are accumulated by students enrolled in career and technical education (CTE), pointing out the wide diversity of subject matter that fell under the dual credit umbrella. The prevalence of community colleges in offering college credit courses to high school students was also evident in the national survey by Kleiner and Lewis (2005), who found 98% of public 2-year institutions enrolled high school students in college courses during 2002-03, with these institutions being much more likely to enroll students in dual credit or dual enrollment courses than either their private two-year college counterparts or public or private four-year institutions.

Looking more deeply at student enrollment, Waits, Setzer and Lewis (2005) showed the distribution of dual credit and dual enrollment courses was uneven at the secondary level, with dual courses more available to students attending medium to large high schools (500 or more enrollees) than small high schools and to students enrolled in towns or suburban areas rather than urban or rural locations. Students in the Central region of the country were more likely than students in any other part of the country to be offered dual credit options, while students in the Northeast region were least likely to have access to them. Further, students attending high schools with the highest minority enrollment were less likely to have access to dual credit courses than students attending less diverse schools. These results suggest students' opportunities to participate are not distributed equally, with students having different demographic, geographic and economic characteristics being differentially involved.

¹ Obtain additional information about dual credit and dual enrollment by using the APASS website, including searching by state. References appearing in this report are available upon request.

The APASS inventory of the 50 states, along with research by Karp et al. (2004), corroborates the widespread yet uneven existence of dual credit or dual enrollment in the U.S. Nearly all states indicate they support high school students' involvement in dual credit or dual enrollment, but the level of support and financial provision for local programs vary widely, as do the student populations who are supposed to be served. Because states are changing policy rapidly, it is difficult to provide firm figures on all 50 states' policies but we estimate nearly all states, albeit limited in some cases, have instituted policy to offer definitions, incentives or mandates. The APASS data show about half of the states mandate that high school students gain access to dual credit or dual enrollment courses, sometimes prescribing the way tuition and fees should be apportioned between secondary and postsecondary institutions and the students. Policies in at least 13 states make a point of identifying community colleges as a primary higher education provider of dual credit, and officials of 17 states select dual credit or dual enrollment as an academic pathway that is a high priority to increase access to college for underserved students. Fifteen states indicate their community colleges are involved in distance learning or virtual schools/colleges that allow high school students to capture dual credits, exemplified by the Iowa Communications Network, the Online College of Oklahoma, and the New Mexico Virtual College.

A literature review by Kim (2005) discussed the impact of dual credit courses on student outcomes, and her results paralleled earlier findings of Bailey and Karp (2003) who examined 45 publications. The conclusion of both of these studies was that minimal research offered rigorous evidence of the impact of dual credit or dual enrollment on student outcomes even though numerous studies claimed that, relative to non-participants, participants were better prepared for college, show lower remedial credit hours earned, demonstrated superior academic performance in college, earned more college credits, and excel in retention to the second-year of college (see Black, 1997; Crook, 1990; Gurule, 1996; Monroe Community College, 2003; Richardson, 1999; Spurling & Gabriner, 2002; and Windham, 1996). Many of these studies are methodologically flawed because they fail to account for differences in academic characteristics, aspirations and motivations of participants and non-participants. This is an important point because, through selective admissions, the effects of dual credit can be obscured when the characteristics of able learners who are more likely to succeed in college relative to other students regardless of the high school program are not controlled (Chatman & Smith, 1998).

Two studies reported by Kim (2005) that did apply appropriate statistical controls offered mixed results. Nitzke (2002) evaluated a dual credit program involving Midwestern community college, and Eimers and Mullen (2003) studied dual credit students associated with the four campuses of the University of Missouri System. Nitzke (2002) followed 568 dual credit students for an 8-year period, from the time they initially enrolled in dual credit courses to their completion at the community college. Stratified random sampling was used to select a comparison group of 1,007 traditionally-enrolled students. Results favored the traditionally-enrolled students in that dual credit participants attempted and completed fewer course credits, after controlling for prior-academic performance. Eimers and Mullen (2003) studied nearly 8,000 first-time, full-time degree-seeking students attending the University of Missouri and found favorable results. With academic ability controlled, they found dual credit students had an increased likelihood of second-year college return compared to non-participants. Utilizing logistic regression, Kim's (2005) dissertation study examined dual credit associated with academic and CTE courses, producing mixed results for local consortia in four regions of the U.S. Briefly, academic dual credit had a positive impact on college placement, but it had a negative impact on college credits earned, suggesting students did not continue their enrollment at the community college. Kim speculated those students might have transferred to 4-year institutions. CTE dual credit did not impact college placement or retention, though articulated CTE credit (college credit earned after high school graduation and subsequent enrollment at the community college) earned more college credits relative to a comparison group. Thus, the strengths and limitations of different forms of college credit played out in different ways.



University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
College of Education
51 Gerty Drive, CRC Room 129 . Champaign, IL 61820
217-244-9390 . Fax: 217-244-0851
OCCRL Website: <http://occrf.ed.uiuc.edu>
APASS Website: www.apass.uiuc.edu