



## **THE STATE OF DUAL CREDIT AFTER POLICY CHANGES TO FACULTY QUALIFICATIONS IN ILLINOIS**

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A new policy set by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), the accreditation body for most two-and four-year institutions in Illinois, requires that by September 2017 high school teachers in dual-credit courses, along with all instructional college faculty, must have a master's degree in the specialty they are teaching or at least 18 graduate-level credit hours within that specialty in order to teach dual credit classes. This presents a concern in terms of access to early college courses as there are clear disparities around the state in schools that have teachers with the right credentials to teach these courses.

This change of policy and concern about equitable access to dual credit courses for students prompted the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) to work with the other state agencies and the Governor's P-20 Council to explore what actions could be taken by the state and districts to get more high school teachers to receive the qualifications to teach dual credit courses in their schools and to pursue opportunities to teach these classes. This white paper written by Dr. Ashley Becker, Senior Director for Academic Affairs, at the Illinois Community College Board and Dr. Glenn Wood, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction at Plainfield School District #202, outlines the work led by the Illinois Community College Board.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF DUAL CREDIT WITH FULFILLING ILLINOIS' EDUCATION POLICY GOALS**

ICCB defines dual credit as "an instructional arrangement where an academically qualified student currently enrolled in high school enrolls in a college-level course, upon successful

completion, concurrently earns both college credit and high school credit” (ICCB, 2017)<sup>1</sup>. In Illinois, dual credit courses are typically grouped into three models: (1) college-level courses taught on a high school campus, (2) college-level courses taught on a college campus, or (3) college-level courses taught as a distance learning modality. Dual credit courses in Illinois can be taught by high school or college faculty, as long as the teachers meet the qualifications to teach college-level courses, on either a high school or college campus.

Increasing access to college has long been a policy priority in Illinois. Aligning with a national effort to increase college credentials, the Illinois P-20 Council adopted the goal to “to increase the proportion of adults in Illinois with high-quality degrees and credentials to 60% by the year 2025”<sup>2</sup> Increasing the accessibility for high school students to dual credit programs can support Illinois’ 60x25 college completion agenda as students who participate in dual credit courses have a better understanding of college expectations, are more likely to graduate from high school, and are more likely to enroll in college than similar students who do not participate (Karp, Hughes, and Cormier, 2012). Many other documented benefits of dual credit courses have been identified and are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**Documented Benefits of Dual Credit Courses<sup>3</sup>**

<b>Increases high school curriculum opportunities for students</b>
<b>Reduces postsecondary costs to students and parents</b>
<b>Reduces costs for state spending on education</b>
<b>Increases college access for students from underrepresented groups</b>
<b>Increases access to educational opportunities, particularly for students in rural schools</b>
<b>Eases overcrowding in colleges and high schools</b>
<b>Enhances college-credit options for technical education students</b>
<b>Addresses “senioritis” experienced by many students in their junior and senior years</b>
<b>Increases choices for parents and students</b>
<b>Reduces high school drop-out rates</b>
<b>Prepares students for college work and reduces the need for remedial coursework</b>
<b>Develops the connection between high school and college curricula</b>
<b>Improves relationships between colleges and their communities</b>
<b>Eases recruitment of students to college</b>

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<sup>1</sup> High school students who participate in dual credit programs are enrolled in a college-level course, which allows the student to earn both high school and college credit simultaneously. Dual credit courses may be taught on a college or high school campus, but must be delivered in a way that produces a similar rigor and practices a college student would experience while taking a college-level course.

<sup>2</sup> More information on the Illinois P-20 Council can be found at: <https://www.illinois.gov/gov/P20/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> AASCU, 2002; Andrews, 2001; Bailey, Hughes, & Karp, 2003; Blanco, Prescott, & Taylor, 2007; Boswell, 2001; Clark, 2001; Conklin, 2005; Coplin, 2005; Crook, 1990; Education Commission of the States, 2000; Greenberg, 1989; Hoffman, 2005; Karp, Calcagno, Hughes, Jeong, & Bailey, 2007; Johnstone & Del Genio, 2001; Kentucky Interagency Dual Credit Task Force, 2007; Kim, 2006; Kirst & Venezia, 2001; Martinez & Bray, 2002; Puyear, 1998

## **FACULTY QUALIFICATIONS FOR DUAL CREDIT IN ILLINOIS**

In June of 2015, the HLC revised the rules for Dual Credit Faculty Requirements to ensure academic quality by requiring institutions to demonstrate that faculty members who deliver college-level content are appropriately qualified to do so. Under HLC's Dual Credit Faculty Requirements, an institution must demonstrate responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, as well as evaluate their effectiveness for student learning through a continuous improvement process.

Under the new HLC rules, institutions are expected to ensure all courses are rigorous, faculty are qualified for all of its dual credit programs, and assure that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum. Complying with the new HLC rule would require all high school faculty seeking to teach transfer dual credit courses to have a Master's degree in a content area or a Master's degree plus 18 graduate credit hours in the content area he or she wishes to teach in (HLC, 2016). The HLC does not have a grandfather clause for faculty who are no longer eligible to teach under the new rules, which has caused significant challenges for school districts across the state and on student accessibility and educational attainment opportunities.

It has also been a long standing policy of the ICCB to require a Master's degree in content area or a Master's degree plus 18 graduate credit hours in the content area. The ICCB has also provided insight into the new faculty qualification requirements throughout the state and provides updates on the current strategies in place to assure that all high school instructors teaching dual credit meet these requirements. While ICCB's long-standing policy assured that all Illinois institutions were already in compliance with the new HLC rule, the rule did require ICCB to look at the influence of this policy on dual credit course offerings throughout the state; thus recognizing areas of disparity in access to dual credit courses. In an effort to address this, ICCB decided to engage in a statewide policy effort to create more master's degree opportunities in the content areas for high school teachers around the state.

## **NEED FOR GREATER INVESTMENT IN DUAL CREDIT HIGH SCHOOL FACULTY PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

In the fall of 2016, the ICCB in partnership with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) conducted a statewide dual credit survey. The main purpose of the survey was to identify the key disciplines high school teachers felt were the most needed for high school students. Through the survey, the ICCB was able to identify what disciplines our partner four-year institutions needed to develop in order to close the gap for unqualified secondary teachers. The survey was sent out by the ISBE to all high school teachers.

The survey generated the following themes:

- 14 percent stated they were already qualified to teach, while 86 percent said they were not currently eligible to teach dual credit.
- 50 percent stated that they already had a Master's degree and would like to obtain 18 graduate hours in content to assist them with obtaining the proper credentials to teach dual credit courses
- Top four disciplines: Mathematics, English, Science, and History
- 56 percent stated that they would like to attend their program via online or in a hybrid modality
- 40 percent stated they would like to start their program in the Fall of 2017

Currently, the ICCB and IBHE are working with Eastern Illinois University, Governor State University, Northern Illinois University, Northeastern Illinois University, and Southern Illinois University Carbondale and Edwardsville to develop 18 hour graduate certificates in Mathematics, Science, History, and English. Without these partners, Illinois secondary and postsecondary institutions would not be able to have access to quality and flexible postsecondary Master's programs and certificates to assist high school teachers with obtaining the proper credentials to teach dual credit courses.

In another effort to collect data from the field, the Illinois P-20 Council Teacher and Leadership Effectiveness Committee (TLE) working with ICCB and IBHE, conducted a cross-sectional survey for teachers, principals, superintendents and school board members to collect their feedback on strategies that the state should pursue to incentivize more teachers to get advanced degrees in their content areas in order to teach dual credit courses. Administered by Dr. Wood, the survey found that 92 percent of the Illinois Superintendents surveyed confirmed that they determine which dual credit courses they offer within their district based upon the credentials of teachers. Of the Superintendents surveyed, over 50 percent stated that the financial cost for faculty to obtain the proper credentials was a barrier for having more teachers who met the qualifications needed to teach dual credit courses (Wood, G. 2016). Additionally, accessibility to graduate courses and no financial incentives to obtain additional credentials was among the barriers to having more teachers with proper qualifications to teach dual credit courses.

The P-20 TLE Committee's findings suggest that Illinois must improve how the state recruits, develops, places, supports, and incentivizes high school faculty to obtain the necessary credentials to teach dual credit courses. Based on the survey findings, the TLE Committee<sup>4</sup> released a report that contained recommendations regarding how to incentivize high school faculty to receive the proper credentials required to teach dual credit courses. The findings suggested that there are teachers qualified to teach dual credit courses but are not teaching these

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<sup>4</sup> The P-20 Council TLE Report can be found here: [https://d32dsh9a6dg9hg.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/05/12110729/FinalRecommendationsDualCredit\\_TLE.pdf](https://d32dsh9a6dg9hg.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/05/12110729/FinalRecommendationsDualCredit_TLE.pdf)

courses. The findings also suggested that districts need to take into consideration the qualification and needs of their students to determine the gaps in courses offered in their districts. In this report, teachers identified potential incentives for faculty who wanted to obtain additional credentials to meet the qualifications to teach dual credit courses. Among the incentives identified were release time, reduced class load, waivers to reduce college tuition cost, reimbursement for graduate hours completed, salary increases, and teaching stipends (Soglin, Hunt, and Reilly 2016)<sup>5</sup>.

## **LOOKING AT STRATEGIES FROM OTHER STATES**

According to a policy report completed by the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) and Education Commission of the States (ECS) (Horn, Reinert, Jang, & Zinth, 2016). several states have taken a variety of steps to help high school faculty earn the graduate credit hours needed to meet the faculty qualifications to teach dual credit courses. The report identified two strategies: a) offer financial assistance to high school faculty to complete graduate credit hours and b) utilize alternative course delivery models, such as hybrid or online, to facilitate the completion of graduate credit hours. MHEC and ECS's report included case descriptions for Minnesota, Wyoming, Ohio, and Montana.

**Financial Aid.** Several approaches can be taken by states to provide financial support to high school faculty seeking additional graduate credit hours necessary to teach dual credit courses. According to the MHEC and ECS report (2016), four strategies for financial support were identified: leveraging existing professional development funds, loan forgiveness programs, competitive grant programs, and credit for credit vouchers.

In Minnesota, state statute requires districts to reserve at least two percent of basic revenue for professional development funds. Districts in Minnesota have the option to use these reserved funds for district faculty to pay for coursework and training that will lead to the necessary credentials to teach dual credit courses. In order for a teacher to receive this grant, he or she must be enrolled in a program that includes coursework and training focused on teaching in a specific discipline (Horn, Reinert, Jang, and Zinth, 2016).

Wyoming state legislatures established the Wyoming Adjunct Professor Loan Repayment Program in 2013 (Horn et al., 2016). Through this program, public school faculty, who required additional coursework to qualify as an adjunct college professor for dual credit courses, may qualify for funds for continuing his or her education. Under this program, a recipient may repay

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<sup>5</sup> The TLE Committee also recommended that monitoring data and needs of the students can help districts determine which dual credit courses need to be offered and which teachers are qualified to teach them as well as help with identifying teachers qualified to teach dual credit courses but who are not and allowing districts to explore strategies to address this.

the loan by teaching at least one dual credit course in a Wyoming public school for a minimum of two years (Horn et al., 2016).

Ohio state legislatures in 2015 passed House Bill 64, which directed five million to be used by the Ohio Department of Education. This bill helped high school faculty complete the necessary graduate-level coursework to be eligible to teach dual credit courses. This bill placed priority around grants being funded to economically-disadvantaged high schools which there are few or no faculty currently credentialed to teach dual credit courses (Horn et al., 2016). This bill also awarded five million dollars to the Chancellor of High Education as a competitive grant to universities to provide free or reduced-cost courses needed for faculty to become credentialed to teach dual credit courses (Ohio H.B. 64. 2015).

In 2014, Montana announced the Montana Teachers Dual Credit Incentive Program. The credit-for-credit voucher program awards vouchers to dual credit faculty based on the number of dual credit courses taught. The vouchers may be used to redeem tuition cost for graduate education at any of the public or tribal colleges in Montana (Horn et al., 2016). Under this program, faculty can accrue up to 24 credits or transfer the vouchers to others, which is an option that allows for pooling of credits among faculty to create a single scholarship for a dual credit faculty member.

**Alternative Delivery Methods.** The delivery of graduate coursework to faculty is the final strategy. One example of alternative delivery methods approach is the Ohio Appalachian Collaborative (OAC). Five institutions of higher education partnered with OAC to offer graduate-level programs to high school faculty to earn graduate credit hours to teach dual credit courses (Horn et al., 2016). Through this program the number of high school faculty credentialed to teach dual credit courses nearly doubled. As a result, the number of dual credit courses offered increased from 41 to 254 offerings (Horn et al., 2016).

## **NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DUAL CREDIT FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT IN ILLINOIS**

As a result of the survey conducted by ICCB and Illinois P-20 Council Teacher and Leadership Effectiveness Committee, ICCB begun work with three four-year higher education institutions to develop 18 hour graduate certificates in mathematics, science, and English. Currently, there are seven four-year public institutions offering Master's degree and certificate programs in English, Mathematics, History, and Science. Through this collaboration, the ICCB and its partners have developed an online and hybrid graduate certificate and Master's degree programs, which are available for Illinois K-12 educators. These partnerships allow Illinois dual credit faculty great access to quality, flexible Master's programs and certificates. Unfortunately, the impact these programs will have on getting secondary teachers certified to teach dual credit will not be significant if the recommendations below are not addressed.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In order to increase dual credit program opportunities for students across the State, ICCB found that it was necessary to create incentives for high school faculty to hold the right credentials and this meant removing barriers to accessibility for graduate programs. Research has shown that this can be achieved by supporting and incentivizing high school faculty to become credentialed to teach dual credit courses. Additionally, support and resources to incentivize higher education institutions to create hybrid and online modality graduate-level programs and reduce tuition costs for high school faculty to become credentialed to teach dual credit courses is needed.

Another incentive legislatures should consider is including dual credit teachers in a loan forgiveness program if they went back to college for additional training. By expanding the current Illinois Teachers Loan Repayment Program, Illinois could provide school districts with additional incentives for teachers to become credentialed to teach dual credit courses. Senate Bill 1738 passed this legislative session amended the Minority Teachers of Illinois Scholarship program to allow scholarships to also be awarded to already licensed teachers to pursue a Master's in their field or complete coursework that would lead to an endorsement to teach an additional subject or grade level. One purpose that this could serve is to finance more teachers to receive a master's degree in their content area to be able to teach dual credit classes.

Additionally, education leaders at all levels in education can institute initiatives that increase student access to dual credit. The P-20 Council's study (Wood, 2016) found that districts play an important role with making dual credit courses accessible to all students. To do this, they must be willing to allocate the necessary resources to meet the goal of increasing accessibility. Illinois education leaders and legislators should explore strategies for how federal funds in Title I, Title II, Title III, Title IV, and ESSA may be used to support high school teachers to obtain the necessary credentials to teach dual credit courses (Wood, 2016). Finally, the Illinois Student Assistance Commission should explore expanding the eligibility to the Minority Teachers of Illinois (MTI) grant to allow tuition and fees for courses to be covered for teachers who seek to obtain either their Master's degree or 18 graduate credit hours in a certain discipline in order to be qualified to teach dual credit courses (Wood, 2016).

## **CONCLUSION**

The research presented in this report is intended to lay the foundation for future exploration of incentives and potential revisions to existing loan forgiveness programs. Research makes it clear that dual credit can be key to improving student success and completion in college; thus, contributing to the state's 60x25 initiative. An analysis of peer state policies and initiatives demonstrate that other states view dual credit courses as an important education reform strategy for reducing achievement gaps among underrepresented students.

Policymakers in Illinois should support incentives for high school faculty and remove barriers to accessibility for graduate programs so that faculty can gain the necessary credentials to teach

dual credit courses. The promise of improving state efforts to provide supports and resources to increase dual credit program access for students by supporting and incentivizing high school faculty to become credentialed to teach dual credit courses, the state will also secure other benefits of dual credit, which includes reducing the cost of college, speeding time to completion, improving curriculum for high schools students, smoothing the transition from high school to college, improving the partnership between secondary and postsecondary, and providing more college opportunities to underserved student populations across the state. If the state harnesses its collective expertise and resources toward these common goals, Illinois could be on the brink of another major paradigm shift that increases accessibility to dual credit programs and ultimately closes the student achievement gaps for students in Illinois.

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