

Expanding College Access Through the Dual Enrollment Pell Experiment

May 16, 2016

Contact: Press Office, (202) 401-1576, press@ed.gov



Earning a college degree is an increasingly important step towards entering the middle class. Yet less than 10 percent of children born in the bottom quartile of household incomes attain a bachelor's degree by age 25, compared to over 50 percent in the top quartile.^[1] Many high school students—especially those from low-income backgrounds—lack access to the rigorous coursework and support services that help prepare them for success in college.

In his 2013 State of the Union Address, President Obama laid out a new vision for America's high schools, proposing funding to scale up innovative high school models and partnerships with colleges and employers so that all students can access a high-quality education and be prepared to pursue their educational and career goals. These models aim to strengthen America's high schools by supporting stronger partnerships to expand access to rigorous coursework, support personalized learning, provide students with the chance to build work-based competencies, and allow for innovative approaches to drive student achievement.

Building on the Administration's work to expand college opportunity including efforts to redesign America's high schools and America's College Promise, the President's vision to make two years of community college free for responsible students, today the Department of Education is inviting 44 postsecondary institutions to participate in an experiment that – for the first time – allows students taking college-credit courses to access Federal Pell Grants as early as high school. As part of this experiment, an estimated 10,000 high school students will have the opportunity to access approximately \$20 million in Federal Pell Grants to take dual enrollment courses provided by colleges and high schools throughout the nation. Nearly 80 percent of the selected sites are community colleges.

Dual enrollment, in which students enroll in postsecondary coursework while also enrolled in high school, is a promising approach to improve academic outcomes for students, particularly those from low-income backgrounds. Selected experimental sites are required to ensure Pell-eligible students are not responsible for any charges for postsecondary coursework after applying Pell Grants, public and institutional aid, and other sources of funding. About 80 percent of the sites are community colleges, and the Administration continues to place a strong emphasis on offering responsible students the opportunity to pursue an education and training at community colleges for free.^{[1][2]}

"Innovation is an important underpinning in our efforts to expand college access and increase college completion for our nation's students," said U.S. Under Secretary of Education Ted Mitchell. "We're thrilled these institutions have joined us in answering the President's call to reimagine the high school experience and create stronger linkages to college coursework. These sites will help us learn how the availability of Pell Grants impacts participation and success in dual enrollment programs."

Promoting College Access and Success Through Dual Enrollment

In the 2010-2011 school year, more than 1.4 million high school students took courses offered by a college or university for credit through dual enrollment.[3] A growing body of research suggests that participation in dual enrollment can lead to improved academic outcomes, especially for students from low-income backgrounds and first-generation college students.[4] Research suggests that participation in dual enrollment can lead to better grades in high school, increased enrollment in college following high school, higher rates of persistence in college, greater credit accumulation, and increased rates of credential attainment.[5][6]

While dual enrollment models have shown promising academic outcomes for students, cost can be a barrier: at nearly half of institutions with dual enrollment programs, most students pay out of pocket to attend.[7] Under the experimental sites authority of section 487A(b) of the Higher Education Act, which allows the Department to test the effectiveness of statutory and regulatory flexibility for postsecondary institutions that participate in the Federal student aid programs, the Secretary will waive existing financial aid rules that prohibit high school students from accessing Federal Pell Grants. Through this experiment, the Department hopes to learn about the impact of providing earlier access to financial aid on low-income students' college access, participation, and success.

Advancing Practices that Promote College Access and Success

Many of the institutions invited to participate in this experiment proposed dual enrollment arrangements that share some key features designed to make students successful in college and career. Some of these features include:

- **Academic preparation and credit accumulation:** These programs ensure that students meet academic requirements, keep their grades up, and are engaged in a quality curriculum. They also increase students' college-readiness by offering a minimum of 12 credits worth of courses, which can allow students to earn about a full academic semester's worth of college credits towards their postsecondary credential.
- **Advising and other support services:** Most of these programs provide students with access to personalized academic advising or guidance counseling. These services help guide students in taking courses most relevant to the postsecondary credential they are seeking. Many programs also provide tutoring and other services designed to better prepare students for the rigors of postsecondary education. Additionally, participating institutions and their secondary school or school district partners will commit to assisting their dual enrollment students with completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to determine their eligibility to receive Federal Pell Grants.
- **Pathways to further their studies:** All students participating in dual enrollment arrangements are one step ahead in their pursuit of a postsecondary credential. Many of the programs selected for participation create clear pathways programs for their dual enrollment students to continue their studies at the postsecondary institution and/or transfer the credits they've earned to other institutions of higher education in the local area.
- **Providing a teaching foundation for STEM and alignment with workforce needs:** Many of the selected programs help students get a foundational education that will prepare them to succeed in college and their careers. Some examples of the focus of these programs support students in developing the critical-thinking skills and foundational knowledge for STEM fields and others that align with local workforce needs including advanced manufacturing, machining, welding, aviation, health sciences, software engineering, computer information systems, and business computer applications.

Finally, participation in this experiment will enable many of these programs to expand the number of students they serve: in particular, more Pell-eligible students from low-income backgrounds. In

addition to expanding existing programs, this experiment has spurred the creation of at least 10 new partnerships between colleges and high schools.

Building on Efforts to Make College More Affordable

Strengthening Community Colleges

By allowing students to take college courses for credit, the dual enrollment experiment builds on President Obama's efforts to make higher education more affordable and to support community colleges to ensure they are gateways to economic prosperity and educational opportunities for American families.

Last week, the Vice President and Dr. Biden announced the [\\$100 million America's Promise Grants](#), which connects more Americans to free community college and training. This builds on the Administration's investments of over \$66 billion in community colleges through the Pell Grant program, cutting the cost of college by about \$3,500 for over 3 million students per year. In addition, the Administration has invested over \$1.6 billion in community colleges through the HEA Title III and Title V programs and nearly \$2 billion through the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College Career Training (TAACCCT) Grant Program, which expands and improves their education and career training programs. Altogether, the Administration has invested about \$70 billion in community colleges, and continues to see college [attainment rates increase](#)

Building on Evidence to Expand Access, Keep Costs Down, and Strengthen Quality

The dual enrollment experiment also builds on the Administration's efforts – most notably through the First in the World program for higher education and the Investing in Innovation (i3) Fund for PK-12 – to support innovative solutions while building the evidence base to identify and promote promising strategies that improve educational outcomes.

Catalyzing Partnerships and Designing Next Generation High Schools

The dual enrollment experiment program builds on this Administration's work to promote Next Generation High Schools, which not only provide students with the academic foundation and skills they need to be successful, but also ensure students have the opportunity to participate in project- or problem-based learning and engage in experiences learning opportunities that build career-ready competencies.

Through his budget request for fiscal year 2017, President Obama has asked Congress to fund an \$80 million competitive program to help districts create innovative high school models to personalize teaching, promote active learning for students, and to provide deep ties to post-secondary education. By doing so, schools and districts will build the rigorous and relevant education needed for students to succeed. The Administration has also called on the private and public sector to take action. The White House Summit on Next Generation High Schools announced the answer to that call: \$375 million in private and public sector commitments to advance Next Generation High Schools. The dual enrollment experiment represents the next step in the work to rethink how high schools educate our students and prepare them for college and career through stronger partnerships between higher education and the K-12 space.

2016 Postsecondary Institutions Invited to Participate

44 postsecondary institutions across 23 states will be invited to participate. They are listed below, and more information can be found about their proposed programs [here](#).

- Adams State University (Alamosa, Colorado)
- Asnuntuck Community College (Enfield, Connecticut)
- Bard College (Annandale-on-Hudson, New York)
- Benedict College (Columbia, South Carolina)
- Bristol Community College (Fall River, Massachusetts)
- Carl Sandburg College (Galesburg, Illinois)
- Cayuga Community College (Auburn, New York)
- Central Virginia Community College (Lynchburg, Virginia)
- College of Southern Maryland (La Plata, Maryland)
- Community College of Beaver County (Monaca, Pennsylvania)
- Cowley County Community College (Arkansas City, Kansas)
- Gateway Community College (New Haven, Connecticut)
- George C. Wallace Community College (Hanceville, Alabama)
- Germanna Community College (Fredericksburg, Virginia)
- Glenville State College (Glenville, West Virginia)
- Guilford Technical Community College (Jamestown, North Carolina)
- Hagerstown Community College (Hagerstown, Maryland)
- Holyoke Community College (Holyoke, Massachusetts)
- Illinois Central College (East Peoria, Illinois)
- Jackson State University (Jackson, Mississippi)
- Leeward Community College (Oahu, Hawaii)
- Louisiana State University (Eunice, Louisiana)
- Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College (Perkinstown, Mississippi)
- Naugatuck Valley Community College (Waterbury, Connecticut)
- Niagara County Community College (Sanborn, New York)
- North Country Community College (Saranac Lake, New York)
- Northeast State Community College (Blountville, Tennessee)
- Northeastern Technical College (Cheraw, South Carolina)
- Norwalk Community College (Norwalk, Connecticut)
- Owensboro Community and Technical College (Owensboro, Kentucky)
- Quinebaug Valley Community College (Danielson, Connecticut)
- Ranger College (Ranger, Texas)
- Ranken Technical College (St. Louis, Missouri)
- Southern New Hampshire University (Manchester, New Hampshire)
- Southwest Tennessee Community College (Memphis, Tennessee)
- Southwestern Illinois College (Belleville, Illinois)
- Sullivan County Community College (Loch Sheldrake, New York)
- SUNY Adirondack (Queensbury, New York)
- SUNY Rockland Community College (Suffern, New York)
- Three Rivers Community College (Norwich, Connecticut)
- University of Arkansas Community College (Hope, Arkansas)
- University of Nevada (Reno, Nevada)
- Urban College of Boston (Boston, Massachusetts)
- William R. Moore College of Technology (Memphis, Tennessee)

- [1] Bailey, M, and Dynarski, S. (2011). Gains and Gaps: Changing Inequality in U.S. College Entry and Completion. National Bureau of Economic Research.
http://users.nber.org/~dynarski/Bailey_Dynarski.pdf
- [2] Marken, Stephanie et al. (2013). Dual Enrollment Programs and Courses for High School Students at Postsecondary Institutions: 2010–11. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013002.pdf>
- [3] Marken, Stephanie et al. (2013). Dual Enrollment Programs and Courses for High School Students at Postsecondary Institutions: 2010–11. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013002.pdf>
- [4] Karp, M, and Hughes, K. (2008). Study: Dual Enrollment Can Benefit a Broad Range of Students. Techniques: Connecting Education and Careers (J1) 83.7, 14-17.
- [5] An, B. P. (2012). “The Impact of Dual Enrollment on College Degree Attainment: Do Low-SES Students Benefit? Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 35, 57–75.
- [6] Karp, M. M., Calcagno, J. C., Hughes, K. L., Jeong, D. W., & Bailey, T. R. (2007). The Achievement of Participants in Dual Enrollment: An Analysis of Student Outcomes in Two States. Saint Paul, MN: University of Minnesota, National Research Center for Career and Technical Education.
- [7] Marken, Stephanie et al. (2013). Dual Enrollment Programs and Courses for High School Students at Postsecondary Institutions: 2010–11. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013002.pdf>