

THE CHRONICLE

of Higher Education

In Georgia, a Streamlined Program Draws Students

By Beth McMurtrie APRIL 02, 2017 [PREMIUM](#)

After Georgia revamped its dual-enrollment system in 2015, participation skyrocketed. And early signs are that many of the beneficiaries are low-income and rural students.

The revamp streamlined three different programs — with different funding sources, application processes, and fees — into a single plan. The [Move on When Ready](#) program also expanded funding: It now covers not just tuition, but textbooks, fees, and other course costs for up to 15 credit hours per term for all qualified high-school [Postsecondary Success Starts in High School](#)

As a result, dual-credit enrollments have grown from 6,500 students enrolled in technical-college courses in 2013 to an estimated 19,000 students in 2017. (Students can also take courses through public universities and private institutions in the state.) The restructuring has had a significant impact on Wiregrass Georgia Technical College, which serves 11 mostly rural, lower- and middle-income counties in south Georgia that are also home to many migrant workers. About 36 percent of its spring enrollment is made up of high-school students, says Angela Hobby, vice president for enrollment management. And many of the courses offered are focused on technical skills that can help students move quickly into the work force, like allied health, automotive, and welding programs.

When Wiregrass instructors teach at local high schools, they sometimes have to retrofit the space to bring it up to the college's requirements for courses in career and technical education. Other times, they purchase mobile equipment, such as welding trainers, that instructors can take with them from school to school.

Finding high-school teachers with the right credentials has been hard, as has finding Wiregrass faculty members who work well with high-school students and are willing to drive up to two hours to teach a course. The college has modified its hiring process, telling new instructors that they need to be prepared to teach high-school students, whether in one of their classes on campus or in a local school. Wiregrass also has to

juggle multiple constituencies, including 22 different school administrations and sets of counselors.

Despite the additional work, says Ms. Hobby, "the benefits far outweigh the challenges. We're providing access to college courses for students in rural communities who never thought they could have a chance to go to college."

Beth McMurtrie writes about campus culture, among other things. Follow her on Twitter [@bethmcmurtrie](#), or email her at beth.mcmurtrie@chronicle.com.