



The Rise of Dual Enrollment

More high school students are taking courses for community college credit. Here's how to make this work for everyone involved.

BY DENNIS PIERCE



More than 5,100 high school students take college courses through Tompkins Cortland Community College.

There are more high school students taking courses for credit from Tompkins Cortland Community College (TCCC) in upstate New York than there are students at the college itself.

Some 3,200 full- and part-time students are enrolled in more than 50 degree and certificate programs at TCCC. But more than 5,100 high school students from 60 K-12 school systems—some as far as three hours away—take TCCC courses at their local high schools through a dual-enrollment program called CollegeNow, one of the oldest such programs in the state.

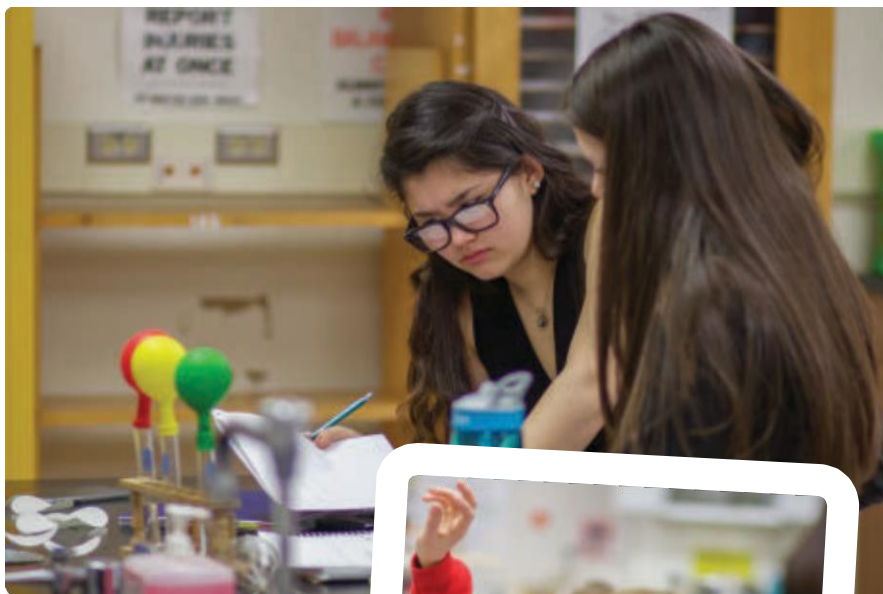
The program helps provide a “seamless transition” from high school to college, says Victoria Zeppelin, director of CollegeNow.

As students simultaneously earn high school and college credit, they’re getting a jump on their college experience, which can significantly reduce the amount of time it takes them to earn a degree. In fact, “we had 31 students graduate from high school last year with an associate degree from the college,” Zeppelin said.

CollegeNow is a striking example of how popular dual-enrollment programs have become. During the 2010-11 academic

year, more than 1.2 million U.S. high school students took courses for college credit within a dual-enrollment program, according to the National Center for Education Statistics—and experts say that number has continued to climb.

“As states look at how to move the needle on college enrollment and completion, dual enrollment is a strategy that has been proven to work,” says Adam Lowe, executive director of the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships. “If students come to college with credits under their belt, that often gives them the momentum they need to succeed.”



High school students in TCCC's CollegeNow program pay no tuition.



Successful dual enrollment programs begin with strong, collaborative partnerships between community colleges and their local K-12 school systems, says Daniel A. Domenech, executive director of AASA, the School Superintendents Association. They also require clearly articulated agreements that spell out what each entity's responsibilities.

For example: Who's going to teach the courses? Will the instruction take place at the high school or at the community college? What courses will be offered for dual enrollment, and what credit will be given? How will the costs be shared? Will the students have to pay tuition—and if so, at what rate?

When these arrangements are worked out satisfactorily, "then

everybody benefits," Domenech says. "But the devil is in the details."

DECIDING WHO TEACHES THE COURSES

Dual-enrollment programs can take many forms. TCCC mainly offers a "concurrent enrollment" model, in which high school students can take college-level courses in their own school, taught by high school faculty. These instructors become adjunct faculty for the college, and they must go through a rigorous process to ensure their course meets the college's high standards.

"The instructors have to submit their credentials, and we have faculty assigned in every discipline to review those credentials," Zeppelin says. "Once an instructor is approved as an adjunct, he or she must attend training. We share the expectations

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ADAM LOWE, executive director, National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships

for the course, and the instructors send us their course syllabus for approval. We have to see what it is they plan to teach and whether it aligns with the learning outcomes we expect."

Offering dual-enrollment courses in the high schools provides greater access for students, because they don't have to travel to campus. "Transportation can be a significant barrier, especially in rural settings," Lowe says. It also alleviates concerns about whether high school students are socially or emotionally ready to learn in a campus environment.

On the other hand, being on a college campus exposes high school students to a more authentic college experience. What's more, many high schools lack instructors who are qualified to teach a college-level course.

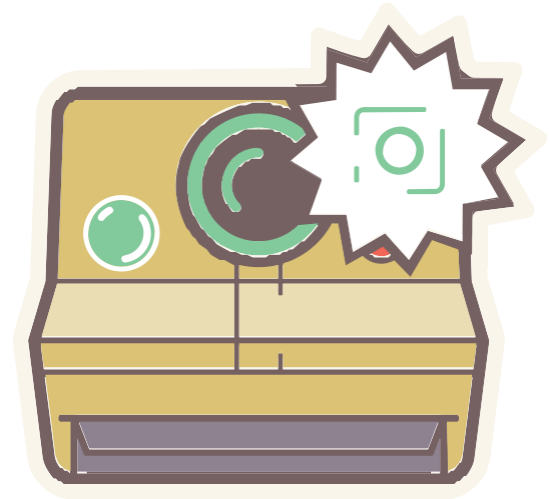
At Snead State Community College (SSCC) in Boaz, Alabama, about 200 to 250 students from 21 area high schools receive dual-enrollment credit each year. At nine of those schools, students take the courses within their own school, while students attending the others travel to the Boaz campus to take courses taught by college faculty.

Dual-enrollment courses are "an opportunity to introduce college to a population who wouldn't normally think about it," President Robert Exley says. "Students get access to our Academic Success Center, which provides tutoring and early alerts, and they are encouraged

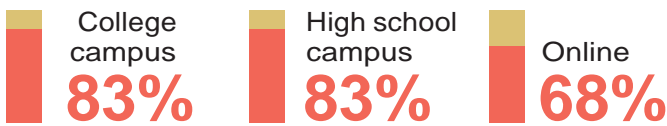
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A Snapshot of U.S. Dual Enrollment

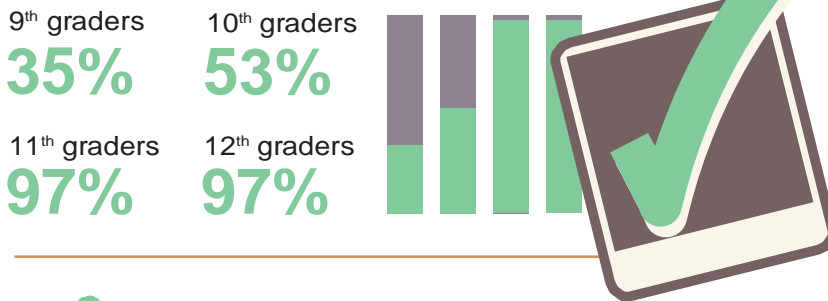
The National Center for Education Statistics last surveyed colleges about their dual-enrollment programs after the 2010-11 school year. At that time, here is what two-year institutions with a dual-enrollment program said about their programs.



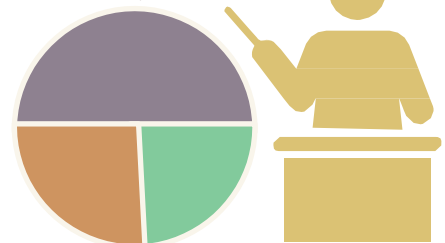
WHERE ARE THE COURSES TAUGHT?



WHAT HIGH SCHOOL GRADES ARE ELIGIBLE?



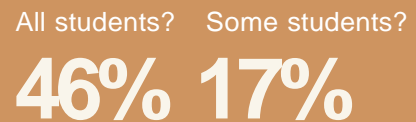
IF TAUGHT IN THE HIGH SCHOOLS, BY WHOM?



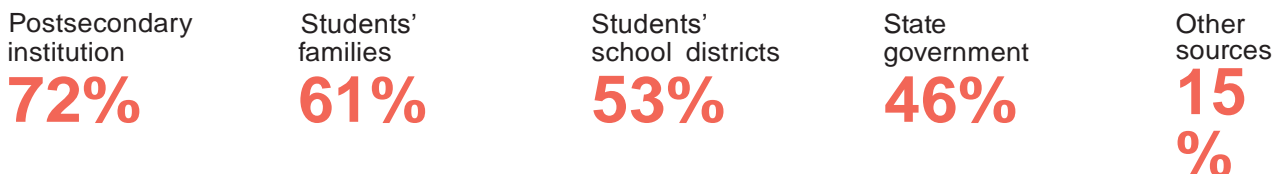
WHAT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS ARE IN PLACE?



IS TUITION DISCOUNTED FOR:



WHO PAYS THE TUITION FOR DUAL-ENROLLMENT COURSES?





to take part in campus activities. Our goal is to have them see themselves as a normal college student.”

Lowe recommends that community colleges offer a wide range of dual-enrollment options, so more students have a chance to participate. Everett Community College (EvCC) in Washington, for instance, has pioneered a few different approaches that have become statewide programs: College in the High School allows students in grades 10-12 to earn college credit by taking advanced high school courses, while Running Start enables high school

juniors and seniors to take courses for dual credit at an EvCC campus or online.

In addition, the college offers a program called Ocean Research College Academy (ORCA), in which high school students can earn up to two years of college credit while completing their high school education using an innovative, project-based approach within a small “learning community” environment. While marine science provides the focus for these projects, students receive instruction in all of the core subjects.

“We wanted to offer dual enrollment in a number of different models,”



Everett Community College’s Ocean Research College Academy has a marine science focus.

says Karen Landry, director of EvCC’s College in the High School program. “Not all students are mature enough to be leaving their high school campus and coming to a college environment.”

MAKING IT AFFORDABLE

How dual-enrollment programs are funded varies widely from state to state. “There are 50 different states with 50 different funding models,” Lowe says.

Some states provide scholarships for high school students to take a certain number of dual-enrollment courses. For example, the new Kentucky Dual Credit Scholarship gives any student the opportunity to take two college courses free of charge in their junior or senior year, with the state paying the tuition for those students.

Other states, such as Iowa, Minnesota and Utah, have set aside money from their K-12 budgets for dual-enrollment programs. “The school districts pay the college provider on behalf of their students,” Lowe says.

Dual Enrollment By State: Who Is Responsible for Paying Tuition?

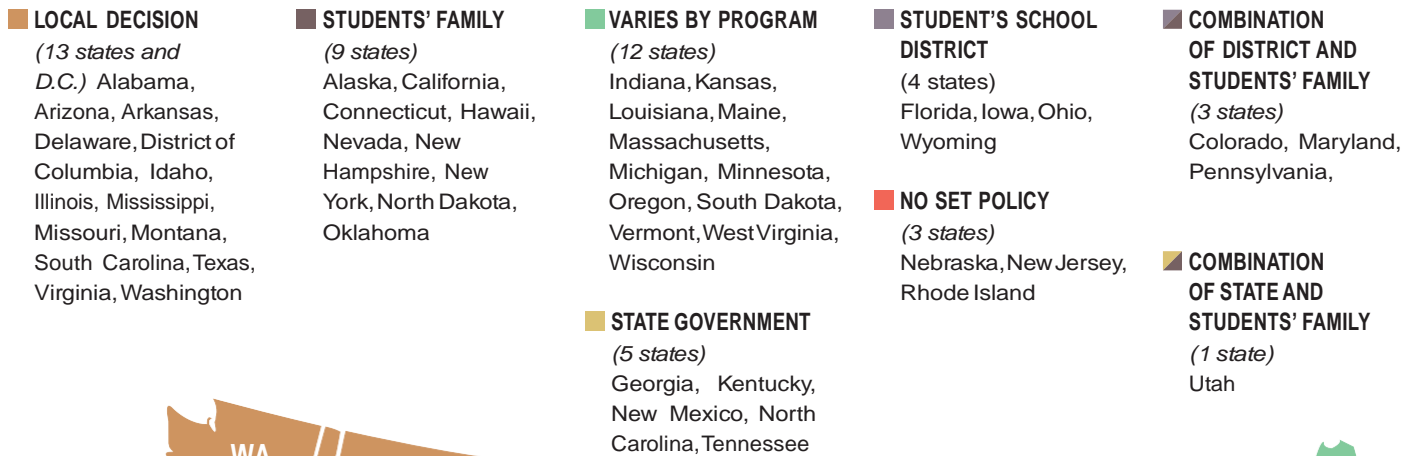


Image Credit: Amber Parrow (States Illustration)

(Source: Education Commission of the States, 2016: <http://bit.ly/1XEzNDs>)

In states with limited or no funding for dual enrollment programs, colleges have taken creative steps to make sure cost isn't a barrier to participation. Some community colleges have found ways to reduce the cost of tuition for high school students, Lowe says, and local school districts often contribute toward the cost as well.

Alabama provides extra money only for dual enrollment in career and technical education courses. In 2013, Snead State Community College received a state

grant that covers the tuition for high school students enrolled in Cyber Security or Child Development courses; for the spring 2017 semester, that covered 38 of the college's 208 dual-enrollment students.

SSCC is part of a statewide system that does not discount the tuition for dual-enrollment courses. "Currently, we charge about \$154 per credit hour," Exley says. "It's not completely unaffordable—it's significantly less than the universities—but it's still much higher than I wish it were."

TCCC also is part of a statewide system and cannot discount or waive tuition. However, the college is able to use the state aid it receives from enrollment to cover the costs associated with its CollegeNow program.

"We also account for everything the local high schools provide, such as the space, the instructor, and the support services, and use that as an in-kind match against the student's tuition," Zeppelin says, "so that in the end, the net cost to students and their families is



“We wouldn’t be fulfilling our mission if we put up roadblocks for students.”

VICTORIA ZEPPELIN, *director, CollegeNow, Tompkins Cortland Community College*

zero—and the schools also don’t have to pay us a dime.”

Having a zero net cost to families helps with access, she says, adding, “We wouldn’t be fulfilling our mission if we put up roadblocks for students.”

Washington offers state funding for dual enrollment, but it uses a convoluted formula that favors students from rural and high-poverty school districts. As a result, most of the students taking part in EvCC’s College in the High School program are responsible for tuition themselves.

To make it easier for these students to participate, EvCC has discounted the cost

of tuition for dual-enrollment courses by 40 percent—and its board has approved \$300,000 in funding over two years to waive the tuition for high school students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunches.

In the first year of this pilot project, “we increased first-generation participation in College in the High School by 185 percent, from 199 students to 568 students,” says John Bonner, vice president of corporate and workforce training. “Also in that first year, we increased the participation of students of color in the program by 13 percent, from 659 to 745. These are pretty significant results.”



Collaboration between high school and college faculty involved in TCCC’s CollegeNow is essential.

SUPPORTING SUCCESS

Taking college-level courses can be a big leap for some high school students. To make the transition easier, colleges must ensure that dual enrollment students have the support they need to succeed.

At TCCC, students can find strategies for success on the college's website, including advice for taking notes and managing their time. Students also learn how to use the library databases and have access to online tutoring. At EvCC, students in the Running Start program go through the same retention processes as the college's other students—such as meeting with a faculty advisor to make sure they are on track academically.

"It takes a village," says Bernita Bontrager, director of outreach and high school programs for EvCC. "Everybody has to be on the same page in helping students transition in as smoothly and successfully as possible."

Setting clear expectations for the program also is critical. High school students and their families should understand that dual enrollment "is not a watered-down course—it's a full college course," Exley says. "We don't negotiate the content of the course, and we don't negotiate the standards for the college grade. We have to be very clear for parents and for students: They are enrolling in college, and they are establishing their permanent academic record."

Perhaps the biggest key to success is having close collaboration between high school and college faculty.

"Getting faculty out of their silos has been one of the most powerful strategies for successful dual enrollment," Lowe says. "High school teachers often don't have an idea of what's expected in entry-level college courses, and college faculty often feel that high school teachers aren't preparing students appropriately for college. Getting them to collaborate and engage in shared professional development around curriculum and assessment results in much better alignment between the two systems."

Lowe recommends that college faculty observe what is being taught in

the high schools and vice versa. That's something TCCC has its instructors do.

"You have to get faculty involved," Zeppelin says. "You have to get them out into the schools and listening to teachers. And, it has to be a two-way street: Teachers have a lot of knowledge

about student engagement that they can share with faculty. So, it really is a collaborative effort, building collegial relationships between high school and college faculty."

Having faculty support for your dual-enrollment programs is essential.

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Dual-enrollment student Jailin Jiminez is a recent graduate of Snead State Community College's child development program.

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ADAM LOWE, *executive director, National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships*

“In our program, there was a period of time early on when we didn’t have that,” Zeppelin says. “There was a lot of support from our administration, but it was sort of a top-down approach. We spent a lot of time and effort to build this support and educate our faculty. And faculty need to be respected and compensated for their time.”

Whenever Zeppelin encounters faculty who are skeptical of CollegeNow’s merits, “I try to have them meet a concurrent

enrollment instructor or student,” she says. “Once they do, they realize the impact of the program.”

As with all healthy relationships, colleges must listen and respond to their K-12 partners’ needs. “I have 334 concurrent enrollment instructors, and I know each instructor’s name,” Zeppelin says. “We pride ourselves on having enough staffing to be able to provide that support.” ■

Dennis Pierce is an education writer based in Boston.



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