



U.S. Department of Education

Fact Sheet: Department of Education Launches Experiment to Provide Federal Pell Grant Funds to High School Students Taking College Courses for Credit

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Earning a college degree is an increasingly important step towards entering the middle class. By 2020, approximately 35 percent of job openings will require at least a bachelor's degree, and another 30 percent will require at least an associate's degree or some college.^[1] However, many high school students—especially those from low-income backgrounds—lack access to the rigorous coursework and support services that help prepare students for success in college.

Today, the [Department of Education](#) is announcing the launch of an experiment that will expand access to college coursework for high school students from low-income backgrounds. For the first time, high school students will have the opportunity to access Federal Pell Grants to take college courses through dual enrollment. 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 from low-income backgrounds.

"A postsecondary education is one of the most important investments students can make in their future. Yet the cost of this investment is higher than ever, creating a barrier to access for some students, particularly those from low-income families," said Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. "We look forward to partnering with institutions to help students prepare to succeed in college."

Next week, the Department will release a [Federal Register Notice](#) inviting postsecondary institutions, in partnership with public secondary schools or local education agencies, to apply to participate in the dual enrollment experiment. The Department will invest up to \$20 million in the 2016-17 award year, benefiting up to 10,000 students from low-income backgrounds across the country.

Promoting College Access and Success Through Dual Enrollment

More than 1.4 million high school students took courses offered by a college or university for credit through dual enrollment.^[2] 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.^[3] 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.^{[4] [5]}

Early college high schools, a type of highly structured dual enrollment program, have been shown to significantly increase the chances of high school completion, college enrollment, and degree attainment for students from low-income backgrounds. [6] [7] [8] [9]

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 for tuition. [10] Under the experimental site 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 disburse federal financial aid, the Secretary will waive existing financial aid restrictions that prohibit high school students from accessing Federal Pell Grants. Through this experiment, the Department hopes to learn about the impact of Federal Pell Grants on low-income students' participation and academic success in dual enrollment programs.

Candidates for Participation

Title IV-eligible institutions of higher education, in partnership with one or more public secondary schools or local education agencies, are encouraged to apply. Promising candidates for this experiment would:

- Require dually enrolled students to enroll in a title IV eligible postsecondary program as regular students
- Provide that students will receive Federal Pell Grants only for coursework that applies towards completion of a postsecondary credential at the participating institution. Such coursework may, but is not required to, apply towards a secondary school diploma. Participating institutions should ensure that dual enrollment arrangements do not impede participating students' academic progress and persistence in secondary school
- Offer students the opportunity to earn the equivalent of at least 12 postsecondary credit hours while also enrolled in a public secondary school.
- Ensure that students are adequately prepared academically for postsecondary-level coursework. This may include ensuring that students meet any relevant requirements that may apply for enrollment, such as grade point average, placement tests, and course prerequisite requirements.
- Prohibit the use of Federal Pell Grant funds for remedial coursework taken by students who are enrolled in a public secondary school.
- Provide appropriate student support services, such as academic tutoring, high school to college transition support, guidance counseling, or other comparable services designed to increase student preparation for and success in postsecondary education. These services may be provided by the public secondary school, the institution, the LEA, or by another entity.
- Provide assistance completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This assistance may be provided by the public secondary school, the institution, the LEA, or by another entity.

Building on Efforts to Make College More Affordable

Supporting Community Colleges

By allowing students to take college courses for credit to cut costs and time-to-completion, the dual enrollment experimental site 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. Community colleges offer over 70 percent of dual enrollment courses taken by high school students nationwide, 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. [11] By offering Federal Pell Grants to eligible public high school students enrolling in college courses, the Administration is expanding opportunities for students to enroll in high-quality dual enrollment programs with robust systems of student support.

Over just the past four years, this Administration has invested approximately \$2 billion for 700 community colleges to partner with employers to design education and training programs that prepare workers for jobs in-demand in their regional economies, such as health care, information technology, and energy. These programs are promising—by the end of 2014, more than 1,900 new or modified training programs had been launched. In addition, 85 percent of the more than 176,000 individuals who had enrolled in these programs either completed a program or continued the program into a second year.

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

The dual enrollment experimental site also builds on the Administration's efforts to support innovative solutions while building the evidence base to identify and promote promising strategies that improve educational outcomes.

The Department's First in the World program and the Investing in Innovation (i3) Fund support grantees working to develop, validate, and scale innovative, evidence-based solutions in both postsecondary and PK-12 education. Through this experimental site, the Department hopes to better understand which types of dual enrollment programs are most beneficial to students from low-income backgrounds, and how best to help students in these programs succeed.

Investing in Pell Grants

This experimental site builds on the Obama Administration's efforts to increase college graduation rates of students from low-income backgrounds with the support of Federal Pell Grants. Since 2008, the Administration has increased Federal Pell Grant funding by 70 percent, and has increased the maximum award by \$1,000. As of the 2015-16 school year, Federal Pell Grants will have helped more than 2 million additional students each year since the President took office.

Application Guidelines

To be considered for participation, interested postsecondary institutions must submit a letter of interest to the Department of Education, following the procedures outlined in the [Federal Register Notice](#). The *Federal Register* Notice will provide detailed information about the experiment, including application procedures.

Footnotes:

1. Anthony P. Carnevale, Nicole Smith and Jeff Strohl. "Recovery, Job Growth and Education Requirements Through 2020." Georgetown Public Policy Institute Center on Education and the Workforce (2014). Available at: https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Recovery2020.FR_Web_.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. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. <http://www.jff.org/initiatives/early-college-designs>

7. American Institutes for Research & SRI. (2013). Early college, early success: Early College High School Initiative impact study. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research. Retrieved from <http://www.air.org>. <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/singlestudyreview.aspx?sid=20006>
8. American Institutes for Research & SRI. (2013). Early college, early success: Early College High School Initiative impact study. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research. Retrieved from <http://www.air.org>. <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/singlestudyreview.aspx?sid=20006>
9. 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. doi: 10.3102/0162373712461933.
10. 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>
11. 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>