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Dual Enrollment Programs: Accessing the American Dream

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One of the central and most compelling themes of the American success story, (and a key reason that the U.S. has always been a magnet to immigrants from around the world) has been the belief that America provides an opportunity to the individual who isn't afraid of hard work to achieve the "good life." However, in today's highly competitive and interdependent global economy, hard work alone is no longer a guarantee of access to the American dream.

With more than 80% of today's jobs requiring at least some postsecondary education or training, attending a college or university for additional education and/or job preparation has, for all intents and purposes, become the primary route into the middle class. Teenagers and their parents are coming to understand this reality, and today somewhere between 70 and 80% of currently enrolled high school students indicate that they intend to go on to college.

Two-year colleges, which have celebrated their 100th anniversary this year, are playing an increasingly significant role in providing access to the education and training that both traditional-age students and returning adults need in order to succeed in today's economy. Policymakers see the community college as pivotal in helping to create seamless P-16 systems (pre-school through baccalaureate education) where every student is able to smoothly and successfully progress through the different levels of education to accomplish their goals.

Education System Disconnects

Education scholars suggest that the U.S. has the most disconnected education pipeline in the world. Primarily because of our traditional emphasis on local control and support of education, high schools, two-year colleges and universities have each developed their own standards and requirements for admissions and/or graduation, usually with little consultation with the receiving institution. Because of separate governance and funding systems between K-12, vocational education, two-year, and four-year colleges and universities, it has been difficult to hold the educational system as a whole responsible for learning that crosses institutions.

Editors' Note:

*This issue of UPDATE focuses on **dual credit/enrollment**, and **articulation** between secondary and postsecondary educational systems. The speed with which related programs are evolving in Illinois and in the nation led us to believe that information is urgently needed on this sometimes controversial topic.*

In a recent speech in Bloomington, Illinois, Carol D'Amico, Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Office of Vocational and Adult Education, made it clear that the expansion of dual enrollment programs is a priority for the current administration in Washington. It has also been a priority in Illinois as evidenced by rapidly increasing student participation. We hope that the authors' theoretical and practical perspectives will be helpful to those involved in these efforts.

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An oft-cited example of this disconnect is the high-stakes standards and tests that states have increasingly mandated for secondary students to demonstrate certain skills mastery before being allowed to graduate from high school. These standards and tests however, bear little or no relationship to college admittance tests (typically the SAT or ACT). And the college admittance tests in turn, have little or no relationship to tests that determine the placement of students in college-level general education courses. These disconnects between secondary and postsecondary systems often prevent students from using the senior year to fully prepare for college level work. Instead, many high school seniors take easy classes, cut corners, or work long hours at after-school jobs.

State policymakers have become increasingly frustrated by statistics that indicate that 30% of college freshman require at least one remedial course (NCES, 1996). The Bridge Project at Stanford University estimates that 50% of entering high school seniors do not meet placement-exam standards at the community college level and should not be enrolled in college credit courses. The lack of accountability, unnecessary duplication of effort and/or artificial barriers created by separate requirements have led policymakers to begin to mandate a number of policy initiatives that seek to streamline the educational pipeline and ensure that students are better prepared for postsecondary education.

Dual/Concurrent Enrollment at High Schools and Community Colleges

One example of such an initiative is the growth in postsecondary enrollment option programs being offered to high school students. Enrollment options allow high school students the opportunity to get a head start on their college careers by participation in challenging courses that allow them to earn college credits upon admittance to a postsecondary institution. Dual/concurrent enrollment, Advanced Placement, I.B. (International Baccalaureate), and Tech-Prep programs are all designed to provide high school students the opportunity to take classes that have the rigor of a college curriculum and the potential to receive both high school and college credit.

Dual and concurrent enrollment programs allow high school students to enroll in college-level courses taught at the high school, at their local community college, or on-line via a distance learning provider. Some of the benefits policymakers cite for their increasing interest in creating postsecondary enrollment options include:

- Reducing college tuition costs for students and their families
- Accelerating student progress towards a degree in order to free up space on campus to meet the projected growth of new students coming to college
- Providing greater academic challenge to high school students to help overcome “senioritis”
- Removing the artificial barriers that get in the way of students moving seamlessly between systems by encouraging greater collaboration between high school and college faculty
- Increasing student aspirations to go to college
- Providing greater academic opportunities for students at small rural schools
- Building closer ties between colleges and their communities.

Critics of dual and concurrent enrollment programs argue that significant numbers of concurrent classes don’t maintain the academic rigor of the same courses taught on college campuses; or that such courses, while accepted at the community college for credit, may not be accepted for credit when the student later transfers to a university. State fiscal agents express concern about “double dipping,” in states where both the high school and college are allowed to collect state aid for the concurrently enrolled student.

State Policy Approaches to Dual/Concurrent Enrollment

Despite such concerns, policies encouraging dual and concurrent enrollment options are growing dramatically across the nation. Nineteen states have adopted state statutes regarding dual and concurrent enrollment, while an additional 14 have adopted state board policies encouraging the practice. In an additional 14 states, such programs are negotiated at the institutional level between local schools and community college districts. In a survey of postsecondary enrollment options conducted by the Education Commission of the States in 2000, there were only three states where there was no evidence of such agreements.

The state of Minnesota takes credit for being the first state to institute concurrent enrollment policies for high school students in 1985 with the intent “to promote rigorous academic pursuits and provide a variety of options for juniors and seniors in high school by giving them the opportunity to take college courses at state expense.” In

a study by the Minnesota Legislative Auditor, it was estimated that students and their parents saved an estimated \$10.9 million in costs for tuition, fees and books had students enrolled in the same postsecondary courses without the program.

The Running Start program was created by the Washington State Legislature in 1990 to expand educational opportunities for public school students. Running Start allows 11th and 12th graders who pass a test demonstrating that they have the skills needed to succeed at college, to take tuition-free college-level courses at Washington's 33 community and technical colleges. A University of Washington study on Running Start transfer students who later transferred to the University reported that the students graduated with a 3.42 GPA, significantly higher than the 3.14 GPA of students who began their college admission at UW. The Running Start students also graduated at a higher rate than other students.

The state of Utah has encouraged high school participation in dual and concurrent enrollment for many years, partly as a means to accelerate students' educational progress in order to cope with the projected demands for increased access at the state's colleges and universities. In 1999, Governor Michael Leavitt announced a new initiative to award New Century scholarships to any Utah high school students who accelerated their educational progress and completed the requirements for an associate degree prior to September 1st of the year in which they graduated from high school. The New Century scholarship awards the student 75% of actual tuition costs for two years at any of Utah's public or private colleges and universities. The associate degree may be earned by a combination of credits earned through concurrent enrollment, AP and/or summer school attendance.

More recently, a number of states are reporting new initiatives between community colleges and universities to promote dual admission. Community college students who ultimately want to complete a baccalaureate degree are encouraged to simultaneously apply for acceptance to a four-year university and community college which have entered into a partnership. In many of these programs the jointly admitted student receives counseling and/or mentoring by a faculty advisor or admissions counselor from the community college and university, ensuring a guaranteed and smooth transition between the two- and four-year institutions.

Funding for dual and concurrent enrollment comes from a wide mix of sources. Five states require the local school district to pay student tuition costs for dual enrollment classes, while in four others the state automatically picks up tuition costs. In 20 states high school students are responsible for paying their own tuition. Twenty-seven states allow both the K-12 school district and the community college to count the dually enrolled high school student as an FTE (full time equivalent) for purposes of generating state support.

Conclusion

Despite the emerging fiscal crisis in the states, there is no evidence that state policymakers are showing any hesitancy in continuing to promote greater cooperation between secondary, two- and four-year colleges and universities as a means to ensure more seamless education systems.

In light of drastic cutbacks in state revenues and the inevitable reduction in support to higher education that can be expected as a result of the current fiscal crisis, it is more critical than ever that all educational institutions work together to overcome or ease any barrier that may limit the ability of our most at-risk citizens from getting the education or training they need to participate fully in our economy and to access the American dream.

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Articulation: A Primer on Partnerships

by Rob Kerr, Illinois Community College Board

Articulating the Articulation Issues

Education reform programs, such as Tech Prep and Education to Careers (ETC), have opened up state-level debate on many issues that local educational systems have been dealing with for some time. One of the most important of these issues centers around articulation. Often it seems that the questions outnumber the answers on this topic - What does articulation mean? How can it be accomplished? What effect will it have or should it have on the relationship between schools and colleges?

Much of the confusion over articulation rests in the terminology associated with this topic. What one system calls “articulated credit,” another calls “credit-in-escrow;” what one college calls “dual credit” is defined elsewhere as “concurrent enrollment.” All of this creates a sort of “Tower of Babel” syndrome, especially when these topics are raised at statewide meetings. Precious time is spent trying to translate terms and detangle the web of confusion. If we are to effectively share best practices and learn from the success and failures of our peers, we must first agree as to what we are talking about. To that end, I offer the following as a starting point in this endeavor.

Making a Whole from the Parts: A Three-Phase Definition

Basic Articulation: While articulation is not the wholly owned domain of Tech Prep, due to its legislative charter, this program has spent considerable time and energy exploring the topic and attempting to define and exploit its various components. The state of Illinois Tech Prep guidelines describe articulation as:

Activities to update or implement written agreements designed to provide students with a nonduplicative course of study, which includes incentives and leads to an associate degree in a technical field, two-year certificate or apprenticeship in a Tech Prep program.

This definition provides a good basis to begin the task of expanding and defining the more specific *degrees* of articulation. The state definition itself does not attempt to detail the particular form or substance that any articulation process should adhere

to. Instead, it provides a conceptual framework that guides administrators as they attempt to tackle articulation issues as a part of their efforts to implement the essential elements of Tech Prep.

What we can take directly from the Illinois definition is that articulation is an *activity* (i.e. a process) that must produce some sort of *written agreement*. Further, this agreement must be the basis of a *nonduplicative* program, which includes *incentives*, and leads to an approved credential of some kind. There is quite a bit of latitude in how local consortia may define these terms, and this is where much of the confusion over articulation begins.

In its most basic form, Tech Prep articulation is the process by which secondary institutions and postsecondary institutions come together in order to connect their parallel programs. This has been going on in career and technical education (CTE) well before Tech Prep, and in fact it was partnering of this type in areas like agriculture that helped lay the groundwork for Tech Prep’s development in the early 1990’s. It is fairly clear now that this level of cooperation is good for education in general, and serves to strengthen curriculum offerings at all levels. Basic articulation does not necessarily need to include any discussion of college credit or enrollment. This initial step focuses instead on course and program content, and seeks to identify the curricular gaps and start the process of bridging those gaps. It brings educators together to align content, reduce curricular duplication, and develop some basic written coordination agreements that will ultimately help students succeed.

After that first step, then things can get rolling.

Articulated Credit (a.k.a. “Credit-in-Escrow” or “Tech Prep Credit”): Once a basic agreement has been reached, actions can turn to expanding the depth of these partnerships through articulated credit. In this model, articulated credit is granted by the community college after a student completes specific requirements as spelled out in a written agreement. In many instances, secondary courses (or a sequence of courses) are considered equivalent to community college courses, as

determined after analysis of their intended learner outcomes. This approach requires representatives of secondary and postsecondary institutions to come to the table with relevant course information and begin the process of matching outcomes to reduce duplication. At the end of the session, if all goes well, an agreement is reached identifying a nonduplicative pathway that offers students college credit for their work and/or allows them to bypass the entry-level course(s) in the community college program. The secondary students are not normally considered enrolled in the college and the credit associated with the agreement is usually awarded at a later point.

The actual act by which credit is granted to the student varies by location. In most cases, credit is not transcribed immediately; instead the student is required to finish high school and enroll at the community college in the appropriate program. Often colleges require students to successfully complete a preset number of hours, after which the articulated credit is placed on the student's transcript. This allows the college to effectively guarantee the student's ability in given subject areas *before* credit is granted. Credit granted in this manner is similar to transfer credit, whereby the hours are added to the student's total without a specific letter grade (affecting cumulative hours, but not G.P.A.).

Dual Credit (a.k.a. Advanced Placement) vs. Dual Enrollment (a.k.a. Concurrent Enrollment): Building on the articulated credit agreements, dual enrollment takes this cooperation to the next level. In this case the secondary and postsecondary program linkages are strengthened to the point that high school students are actually enrolled at the community college. What was previously an agreement that merely laid out similar learner outcomes develops into a truly seamless program. What was a simple agreement between administrators becomes a process by which faculty at both levels are brought together to structure, plan, and teach an integrated "2+2" program of study.

Dual credit, extends access to affordable higher education, reduces college costs to students, enables timely degree completion, and delivers a truly cumulative and sequential curriculum. These courses offer *simultaneous* credit (secondary and postsecondary), and can be offered at either the high school or community college. However, they must reflect the same content and rigor as those offered to college students. Ultimately, the students transition to postsecondary education through

a slow and steady process during their junior and senior years, and graduate high school with real college credit on an official transcript.

Available data clearly shows that dual credit/concurrent enrollment programs are increasing. Enrollments by high school students in Illinois community colleges have risen significantly over the past few years. In the fall semester of 2000, 5,767 high school students attended Illinois community colleges, up 26.6% from 1999, up 38.7% from 1998, and up a staggering 100.6% from 1997 (*Data and Characteristics of the Illinois Public Community College System, 2001/2000/1999/1998*). Of the 2000 group, 41.6% chose occupational or vocational courses and 53% enrolled in baccalaureate/transfer courses, compared to 36.0% of students enrolled in vocational and occupational courses and 40.3% enrolled in baccalaureate/transfer courses in the community college system as a whole.

Much of the recent increase in dual credit can be traced to two actions that the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) has taken. First, in 1996 the board made an administrative rule change relative to concurrent enrollment and credit hour grants. The changes allow community colleges offering dual credit courses to receive funding regardless of whether the secondary school receives average daily attendance (ADA) funding. Prior to this, only 63% of colleges were offering dual credit courses, but just three years later all 48 colleges were offering them (Andrews, 2000). Second, since FY 2001, the ICCB has dedicated \$2.5 million to the Accelerated College Enrollment (ACE) grants. These funds allow community colleges to expand the services they offer high schools students by providing funds to cover tuition and fee costs. The result has been an increased emphasis on dual credit/concurrent enrollment partnerships by the individual colleges, and an overall rise in the profile of these programs within the state.

Many questions confront any consortia that embark on a new articulation process. What level of articulation are they comfortable with? Who will teach the courses and where? How will roadblocks like college tuition, book purchases, and student transportation be overcome? These questions must all be addressed to establish a viable system. However, for the process to ultimately succeed, it comes down to simple trust. State definitions and regulations cannot replace the foundation that must be laid institution-to-institution, program-to-program, and most importantly,

teacher-to-teacher. Each of these groups must be certain that what is being taught under the banner of articulation is, in fact, what was agreed upon. High schools need to be a true partner in this process and not marginalized or left behind. Colleges need to know that all of the program components are strong and that the content is true to the spirit of the agreement. This trust is the heart of any articulation agreement at any level, and it is the one thing that, if achieved, can serve to improve student learning and student success.

For more information on ICCB rules on dual credit/dual enrollment programs, see <http://www.iccb.state.il.us/pdf/manuals/sysrules.pdf>, page 61.

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Dual-Credit Partnerships

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During fiscal year 2001, John A. Logan College had dual credit agreements with each of the eleven high schools in the College district. Dual credit courses are college courses offered to secondary school students who enroll and receive college credit as well as credit toward secondary school graduation. The College has fully implemented this agreement with three possible options. Participation from the high schools is voluntary and some high schools have selected participation in all three options while others have chosen only one.

The first option involves dual credit courses delivered in secondary schools and offered during the regular school day. The second option provides courses offered at the college or at other off-campus sites during the day or evening. The third and most popular option is the participation in Tech Prep articulated programs offered at the high schools. The dual credit agreement provides secondary school administrators, teachers and counselors an option to challenge students during their junior and senior years.

Quality safeguards have been implemented in dual credit courses, including points approved by the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) in 1996:

- College courses offered at off-campus sites, including high schools, are of the same quality,

cover the same content, and have the same rigor as courses at John A. Logan College.

- All state policies specified by the Illinois Community College Board, accreditation standards specified by the North Central Association, and John A. Logan College policies that apply to courses, instructional procedures and academic standards at the college apply to college-level courses offered by the college on campus, at off-campus sites, and at secondary schools.
- The instructors for these courses are selected from full-time faculty and/or from adjunct/part-time faculty with appropriate credentials and demonstrated teaching competencies at the college level.
- Courses are selected from transfer courses that have been previously articulated with senior institutions in Illinois or from the first-year courses in ICCB-approved Associate in Applied Science degree programs.
- The outlines and materials utilized for courses offered at secondary schools are the same as for courses offered on campus, and at other off-campus sites, and contain the content previously outlined in articulation agreements with colleges and universities in the state of Illinois and outside the state.

- The determination for whether a college course is offered for concurrent credit is made jointly between the secondary level and John A. Logan College according to the policies and practices of the school district and College.

This program has resulted in a number of benefits to students and the educational community. We have seen increased enrollment on campus of students committed to obtaining an Associate Degree. College completion rates are expected to improve over the next few years. Relationships between the College and the high schools have improved. Increased visitations have occurred by faculty and administration on both the College campus and at the individual high schools. There is also a greater number of students from the high schools visiting John A. Logan College.

However, the collaborative effort between the College and the high schools has met some resistance on both the College and high school campuses. The respective teachers' unions were quite involved in trying to resolve and, at times, to block this effort. Concerns were expressed about the qualifications, compensation, and possible penalties for teachers of these classes. Issues related

to quality of teaching, academic freedom, and possible loss of students also came up. Open lines of communication between teachers, administrators, students, parents, board members and community members have been an important factor to help resolve the issues and to implement the dual credit program.

Dual credit programs are not designed to replace a substantial segment of the academic experience on the college campus, but rather are created to provide high-achieving high school students with opportunities for acceleration. The transition from high school to college is eased by dual credit programs, giving students time to adjust to rigorous academic expectations while remaining in a more comfortable setting, often with smaller classes and more opportunity to ask questions. Dual credit saves students time and money on their journey to earning a degree in higher education, and supports the P-16 (Pre-kindergarten through higher education) movement that is emerging as a priority throughout the nation.

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Dual-Credit: Delivery Options for Secondary Students

by Hans A. Andrews and Jackie L. Davis, Olney Central College

In many high schools large numbers of juniors and seniors simply “blow off” the senior and part of the junior year. Leon Botstein (2001) stated that, “the majority of college-bound seniors admit that their final year of high school is a waste of time.” Increasingly, that criticism is being leveled at the last two years.

Concerns

Acceleration of course work for students has been well researched and is a desirable option that has been shown to improve achievement for gifted students (Benbow & Lupinski, 1996). However, acceleration was rarely a solution chosen by schools until recent years (Jones & Southern, 1989). It was often felt that students receiving advanced class work would quickly outpace the curricular offerings that the school could provide.

Further, concerns were expressed about quality standards, including the acceptability of these courses to the colleges and universities to which the students might apply.

This state of affairs has dramatically changed during the last years of the 20th Century and leading into the 21st Century, with increasing numbers of states and schools offering accelerated course options. In the process, quality standards are also being addressed. Andrews (2001) identified 48 states in which state laws and administrative guidelines or local policies are helping to assure that programs are meeting the required standards for college transfer to colleges and universities. Many states are coming to realize the value of this new option and are being pressured by parents, students and secondary schools to make it more widely available.

One Campus: Various Options

Various options are utilized in the delivery of these dual-credit courses. While many are taught at the high school utilizing the college course syllabus, textbook, and grading standards, others may be offered on a community college campus, or at workplaces. While location at a high school increases accessibility for high school students, other locales offer situations in which students can take advantage of hands-on learning opportunities, or the more extensive resources of a college campus.

Olney Central College (OCC) and seven of its district high schools make up a service area in rural Southeastern Illinois which is highly committed to offering dual enrollment options to high school students. This program has become a major force in the education of local juniors and seniors over the past four years, providing them access to both academic and career and technical courses.

In recent years many area secondary schools had had to curtail their career and technical education offerings due to lack of available faculty or resources. The dual-credit option with the community college opens the door to over 100 students a year in six vocationally-oriented program options. The courses, type of delivery, location, and high schools are outlined in the *boxed Delivery Options*. Some students from East and West

Richland High Schools are bussed to the college campus while enrolled in semester long career and technical education segments, taught by Olney Central College faculty.

Students from five high schools attend Industrial Maintenance courses at the Hella Electronics plant in Flora, Illinois. They are given lecture time in the industry training room, followed by live observation and hands-on experiences using equipment on the plant floor. The industry sees this as a means of attracting and orienting potential future workers.

Delivery Options

- A. Career and Technical Classes: OCC On-campus Option
Course/Program: *Collision Repair Technician, Automotive Service, Cisco Networking, Web Designer Certification, Woodworking*
- B. Career and Technical Classes: In-plant Option
Course/Program: *Industrial Maintenance*
- C. Transfer Option at East Richland High School
Course: *Calculus I, US History I & II, World Literature, General Psychology, Business Law, General Biology I*
- D. Two-way Telecommunications Option
Course/Program: *Principles of Economics, English I and II, Fundamentals of Speech*

Transfer classes have also been developed to help local high schools offer a greater variety of classes, while also providing dual credit options. These classes address the general education requirements for most colleges and universities and are offered in the secondary school during the regular school day for dual credit. They are taught by high school teachers who are carefully selected and meet the employment qualification guidelines of the college district. In addition, college transfer courses are offered via telecommunications to Flora High School students at their school, located 25 miles from campus. The courses are offered over the college and high school distance learning system, and the classes contain a mix of college and secondary dual-credit students. Faculty chosen to teach these classes come from the full-time faculty on the OCC campus.

Summary

The dual-credit course option provides an exceptional marriage between secondary schools, community colleges and some universities. The growth over the last few years has been phenomenal. Andrews (2000-2001) found in Illinois a 240% increase in secondary schools coming into this program since 1996-1997.

The 21st Century is off to a great start in the area of innovative planning and delivery of services involving partnerships among secondary schools and community colleges and universities. Cooperative dual-credit programs meet the needs of high school juniors and seniors by jump-starting their college careers and providing a challenge.

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Helping High School Students to “Think College”: The Prairie State College Experience

by Linda Uzureau, *Prairie State College*

It is well known that 85% percent of the jobs in the new economy require postsecondary education, though not necessarily a baccalaureate degree. Yet many high schools continue to track students into either a college prep or a vocational track. Unfortunately, the message received by students who are enrolled in career or technical courses is that they are not preparing for college. A major challenge for community colleges is to help high schools change that mindset. We need to be sure that Tech Prep students, their parents and guidance counselors understand how important it is for these students to prepare for college too. Prairie State College’s new dual credit initiative, which we refer to as “AP credit for tech students,” is one way to encourage career and technical students to “think college.”

In 2000, the Illinois Community College Board launched the Accelerated College Enrollment (ACE) grants that support tuition waivers for high school students who are enrolled in dual credit courses. Many of the downstate community colleges, serving small, rural high school districts unable to provide college-level academic courses (e.g., calculus or physics), are using the ACE grants to provide those courses to their district high schools. Because the Prairie State College district is located in the south suburbs of Chicago, our eight suburban high schools already offer many honors and AP courses and would not welcome our offering dual credit in traditional academic courses.

Instead, the college saw the ACE grants as an excellent opportunity to develop a dual credit program focusing on specific career and technical courses in our local high schools. By removing one major obstacle—tuition payments!— these grants facilitated work with high school administrators and faculty to convert some Tech Prep, fully articulated courses into dual credit courses. The response of our high school colleagues exceeded expectations. We had initially hoped to establish one dual credit course in each of a limited number of high schools. However, due to the

enthusiastic response of both high school administrators and faculty, in the first year (2000-2001) we offered at least one dual credit course in all eight high schools. A total of 233 high school students successfully completed the courses and were awarded Prairie State College credit. Homewood-Flossmoor High School, the high school with the largest career and technical program, offered four dual credit courses.

The foundation for this effort was the close partnership already established between Prairie State College (PSC) and district high schools through the Career Preparation Network (CPN), the regional Tech Prep coordinating council. Every two years the College and the CPN have co-hosted an articulation meeting between the career program coordinators at the College and their faculty counterparts in the high schools. At these meetings, College faculty members review the qualifications of the high school faculty and the content of their course outlines to ensure comparability and then sign articulation agreements. Typically a technical class (e.g., Welding 1), which meets for two semesters at the high school, is found to be equivalent to the introductory college course (Welding 101) which meets for one semester. Students who successfully complete the high school course are given a certificate of articulated credit which, upon enrollment at PSC, is posted to their transcript. This grants college credit to the student and permits him/her to advance to the next course in the career program, thus saving the student and family time and money. These bi-annual meetings and articulated credit agreements have built a solid foundation of mutual respect and cooperation between the career faculty at the College and in our high schools.

Why, when some community colleges have experienced strong resistance from their high school districts, has Prairie State College been so successful in this dual credit initiative? Clearly the focus upon career and technical courses was the basis of our success. When we first approached our high school principals with this opportunity, we made it clear we did not intend to “invade

their territory” in the honors and AP program. They were, however, very receptive to providing students enrolled in their Tech Prep courses with the opportunity for dual credit. The vocational administrators and high school faculty who teach in the Tech Prep programs also felt that the dual credit option would help them build interest and enrollment in their programs, as well as providing students with an important linkage to the College.

Prior to approaching our high school counterparts, PSC administrators developed two sets of guidelines for this dual credit program. The administrative guidelines outline the procedures for determining which courses are eligible, communicating with parents, and advising, enrolling, and grading students. They also address faculty qualifications and compensation and the coordination of College and high school administrative procedures.

The student guidelines, presented in a straightforward question-and-answer format, focus on the issues of greatest interest to students and their parents. We take great care to ensure “truth in advertising” for this program: students and their parents are informed that, although these dual credit courses provide college credit in specified career and technical programs (e.g., automotive technology, computer networking (NetPrep), welding, manufacturing technology, CAD/CAM, office administration technology) at Prairie State College, other colleges and universities will probably not grant credit for these courses unless the student completes an A.A.S. degree and matriculates into a capstone baccalaureate degree program.

To enroll in a dual credit course, the high school student, his/her parent and the high school guidance counselor must all sign a contract, which clarifies the procedures. In anticipation of guidance counselors’ concerns that high school students may earn a poor grade on their college transcript, PSC included a guideline requiring the faculty members to notify us of any high school student at risk of getting a D or F in a dual credit course. That student is then administratively withdrawn from the course at the College.

Prairie State’s dual credit program has had several important benefits to the College. It has led to even closer collaboration and articulation with

the career and technical faculty and programs in our district high schools. We view this initiative as the culmination of a long effort to develop a clear curricular continuum in technical education, which starts in our high schools, leads to enrollment in A.A.S. programs at the College, and then provides opportunities for our students to complete a baccalaureate capstone program at Southern Illinois University, Governors State University, Purdue University Calumet or other private colleges in our region. In addition to significantly increasing the number of students enrolled in our career programs, this program has also enhanced our efforts to connect with Tech Prep students before they graduate from high school.

In addition, the ACE grant funding facilitated our establishment of a dual credit computer networking program with two of our high schools with probable expansion to a third high school next year. Moreover, we have been able to secure both a Special Initiative Grant in technology from the Illinois Community College Board and two technology grants from our State Representative, George Scully, to purchase equipment and provide faculty training for the NetPrep program, both in the high schools and at the College. Scully made it clear that we got his support for funding because we were able to demonstrate the close high school/College collaboration that is necessary to provide good technical education in our community.

Prairie State College intends to build upon its successful dual credit program. Five new dual credit courses have been added this year and the college anticipates increasing the number of student completers by 50%. Dual credit is a win-win program for the high schools and the College. The biggest winners, however, are the Tech Prep students who have begun to view themselves as “college material” and to make their postsecondary plans to prepare for a technical career.

Linda Uzureau is Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty at Prairie State College in Illinois. For further information on their dual credit program, including copies of the administrative or student guidelines, e-mail Linda at luzureau@prairie.cc.il.us.

West Virginia's Seamless Curriculum Initiative

by Kathy D'Antoni, West Virginia Joint Commission for Vocational-Technical-Occupational Education

An extensive review of West Virginia's education system during the 90's has prompted sweeping changes in the secondary and postsecondary education levels within the state. The data reported low college attendance rates, increases in remedial college courses for incoming freshmen, high postsecondary dropout rates, and a growing concern by the business community relative to the quality of education being delivered. Reaction to the reports resulted in the passage of state legislation intended to insure changes in the way education and training were being delivered in West Virginia. One of the outgrowths of the legislation was the "seamless curriculum initiative."

West Virginia defines a seamless curriculum as a *continuum of competencies which provides transition from one level to another without unnecessary duplication. Student progression is based on the mastery of competencies to established standards.*

At the onset of the seamless curriculum initiative, a major problem surfaced. The West Virginia Department of Education had established broad standards for each secondary subject area, but due to the scope of these standards, teacher interpretation became a variable. Additionally, the course content at the postsecondary level was not standardized, so there were variations in course content from class to class.

It quickly became apparent that in order to accomplish the seamless curriculum development steps, both education levels needed to use the same methodology to "unmask" the curriculum in their respective courses by identifying required competencies and mastery levels. To accomplish this task, both education levels agreed to use Instructional Performance Systems, Inc. (IPSI), a curriculum development process tool. The IPSI sessions resulted in two important products: 1) syllabi that could be analyzed for alignment, gaps and duplication, and 2) criterion-referenced test banks.

The process not only provided an effective medium for developing seamless curriculum, but a high level of trust began to evolve between the education levels. This trust materialized into a system that allowed for the development of an approach new to West Virginia's education system.

Transcript in Escrow

The seamless curriculum process has identified, to date, 26 courses that are duplicated between the high school and postsecondary levels. To eliminate the duplication, community colleges have agreed to award college credit for these classes. Students can access the credits by enrolling in the identified classes, which utilize the IPSI syllabi, and then obtaining a passing grade on the final exam which is developed from the criterion-referenced test banks (with a passing score of 70% on the grading scale). Upon successful completion of these classes, a college transcript is immediately generated for the student and is placed in escrow until the student enrolls in college. Once enrolled, the student's transcript is taken out of escrow and becomes an active, legal transcript. Currently, there are over 750 students enrolled in these classes.

While the West Virginia seamless initiative is in its infancy, its impact is already being noticed. In addition to Transcript in Escrow, the effort is reducing the number of students enrolled in college remedial classes, and the increase in the college-going rate is promising. All in all, this seamless initiative is proving to be an answer to some of West Virginia's most persistent educational challenges.

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Upcoming Conferences

COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP RETREAT
Sponsored by UIUC- College of Education
(third annual)
May 21st and 22nd, 2002
Allerton Park, Monticello, Illinois

- “Workforce Development Institute,” sponsored by the American Association of Community Colleges, January 30th-February 2nd in Miami, Florida. See www.aacc.nche.edu.
- League for Innovation in the Community College Innovations Meeting, March 17th-20th in Boston Massachusetts. See www.league.org.
- Council for the Study of Community Colleges, AACC, April 18th-20th in Seattle, Washington. See www.aacc.nche.edu.
- American Association of Community Colleges Annual Convention, April 20th-23rd in Seattle, Washington. See www.aacc.nche.edu.
- National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development International Conference, May 26th-29th in Austin, Texas. See www.nisod.org/conference/.
- A Call for Renaissance in Career and Technical Teacher Education, Career and Technical Teacher Education Institute, February 6th-9th in Scottsdale, Arizona. See www.nccte.com.

The Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL) was established in 1989 at the UIUC. *Our mission is to provide research, leadership, and service to community college leaders and assist in improving the quality of vocational-technical education in the Illinois community college system.* The Office is supported by the Illinois State Board of Education, Business, Community and Family Partnerships Center, with funding from the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1998.

The contents of this newsletter do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of OCCRL personnel or the Illinois State Board of Education.

See OCCRL’s website at <http://occr.l.uiuc.edu> for previous issues and other resources.

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