



Ensuring the Continued Success of Dual Enrollment

2017-19 Biennial Budget Initiative

Issue

Dual enrollment refers to aligning high school and postsecondary curricula to provide opportunities for high school students to take college level coursework while continuing to fulfill high school graduation requirements. Dual enrollment is a key component of high school student success, can help to address Wisconsin's skilled worker shortage by accelerating students into the workforce and provides a strategic opportunity for students and their families to reduce the cost of higher education. New, additional educational requirements for high school teachers who teach college level courses threatens Wisconsin Technical College System's (WTCS) ability to provide these benefits. WTCS requests additional state investment to ensure the pipeline of high school teachers qualified to teach WTCS dual enrollment courses in Wisconsin high schools.

Background

WTCS has made dual enrollment a priority for over two decades. WTCS is a significant provider of dual enrollment opportunities among Wisconsin's institutions of higher education. There are several options available to high school students to earn college credit at Wisconsin's technical colleges. Under one of the options, transcribed credit, high school students receive WTCS credit by attending courses taught at a local area high school by qualified high school teachers delivering the same WTCS college curriculum.

In 2014-15, 30,167 high school pupils earned over 117,217 WTCS college credits. High school students' participation in dual enrollment programs at WTCS has increased by 57 percent over the past five years.

Strategic Benefit: Student Success

Several studies have shown that students who participate in dual enrollment programs are more likely than their peers to finish high school, enroll in college and complete a degree. One longitudinal study (2008-2010) of students in 20 local area high schools, found that students earning dual credit from Fox Valley Technical College were more likely than their peers to experience a significantly higher rate of early college success and retention, graduate from

college more quickly (i.e., within three years), and have higher rates of employment and earnings at age 22.

Strategic Benefit: Helping to Address Wisconsin's Workforce Shortages

Wisconsin is experiencing a skilled worker shortage. According to the National Skills Coalition, middle skill jobs — those requiring a postsecondary credential, but not a baccalaureate — account for 56 percent of the Wisconsin's labor market, but only 49 percent of Wisconsin's workers are trained to the middle skill level. The shortage of available workers will only increase: demographers predict a 5.1 percent decrease in Wisconsin's prime working age population (i.e., 25 to 54) from 2010 to 2040, despite 6.2 percent increase in total state population. Dual enrollment is a critical talent development strategy, helping Wisconsin's future workforce attain their career and technical education (CTE) training and credentials faster and accelerate their entry into Wisconsin's workforce.

Strategic Benefit: College Savings

In 2015, it is estimated that WTCS dual enrollment programs provided students and families with the opportunity to save between \$14.6 and \$19.7 million towards the cost of higher education. With student debt at an all-time high, strategies that enable students to complete their degree or credential faster and with less cost are important tools in reducing student debt.

CTE Dual Enrollment at Risk

The many benefits dual enrollment confers on participating students, our workforce and the price of a postsecondary education and training are at risk due to new, minimum education requirements for high school teachers teaching certain dual enrollment courses. The vast majority — 75 percent — of WTCS college credits earned by high school students are transcribed credit courses taught by high school teachers. The new requirements from the accreditation body — beyond teacher licensure — for high school teachers of transcribed credit general education courses (e.g., science, mathematics, communications, etc.) threaten to decrease the number of high school teachers qualified to teach these dual enrollment courses. This would have a cascading effect: fewer qualified high school teachers means fewer dual enrollment courses taught at high schools and fewer dual credits earned by high school students.

General education dual enrollment courses serve as a foundation to many CTE programs offered by WTCS. An adequate number of high school teachers qualified to teach college level general education subjects is crucial for the success of WTCS dual enrollment CTE opportunities. High school students planning to pursue an associate degree in their chosen CTE field can take advantage of the opportunity to complete certain requirements (e.g., math and

communications) while in high school. General education dual enrollment courses also provide a “head start” to high school students who plan to begin their professional training at a WTCS campus and will later transfer to a four year institution.

New Accreditation Requirements

Wisconsin higher education institutions (i.e., WTCS, the University of Wisconsin System and member colleges and universities of the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities), along with those in 19 other states, are accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). In March of 2016, the HLC announced new, minimal qualifications for high school teachers of dual enrollment courses to bring them on par with those of the rest of the country. Essentially, HLC determined that all accredited higher education institutions in these 19 states that award dual credit “... must assure the quality and integrity of such offerings and their comparability to the same college credit offered on the institution’s main campus...” By extension, high school teachers “... teaching dual credit courses should hold the same minimal qualifications as required by the institutions of its own faculty.”

Of particular concern are the requirements for high school teachers who teach dual enrollment courses in general education subject areas. Such teachers must have a master’s degree in the subject they are teaching. Other options to meet this requirement include at least a four year teaching degree and 18 graduate credit hours in the subject they are teaching. A recent gap analysis found that statewide, approximately 85 percent of Wisconsin high school teachers teaching WTCS courses in their high schools, don’t yet meet this new HLC requirement.

Under HLC rules, higher education institutions must comply with this requirement by September of 2017, although institutions can apply for an extension through 2022. If an institution doesn’t comply, it runs the risk that the dual credits earned by students won’t be recognized and accepted by other institutions. Students will have to repeat courses at the new institution and pay for credits they have already earned. The institution also runs the risk that it will lose its accreditation. The loss of accreditation would be catastrophic. Degrees from an unaccredited institution may not be recognized by employers, credits are unlikely to transfer to other colleges and both the institution and the students would no longer be eligible to receive federal and state financial aid.

WTCS Best Practices to Ensure Qualifications of Dual Enrollment High School Teachers

The 16 WTCS colleges have always worked closely with their local high school districts to ensure the preparation of high school teachers teaching dual enrollment courses. Examples of best practices among WTCS colleges include the following:

WTCS Faculty Mentors – Some colleges assign WTCS faculty mentors to meet regularly with the high school teachers who teach the college courses. Mentors help ensure that high school

teachers deliver the college courses with the same content, rigor and evaluation standards of those taught on the WTCS campus.

District Stipends – Some colleges give a small stipend to high school districts to nominally reimburse the districts for the cost of hiring a substitute while the dual enrollment high school teacher is attending related meetings (e.g., with their WTCS faculty mentor).

Attending Courses at WTCS Colleges – To better prepare dual enrollment teachers, some colleges encourage dual enrollment high school teachers to attend the course at the college that they are/or will be teaching at the high school.

Membership in NACEP – Some colleges are exploring membership in the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP). Membership in this organization, which accredits dual enrollment programs, gives institutions access to standardized tools and policies to help ensure that the college courses taught by high school teachers are as rigorous as those taught by the sponsoring college.

Maintaining and Expanding WTCS Dual Enrollment Options

Given the new minimum high school teacher qualification requirements and an impending deadline, WTCS must institutionalize these best practices. Further, Wisconsin should join other states facing this issue and support partnerships with K-12 by providing financial incentives to assist high school dual enrollment teachers in meeting the new educational requirements. For example, WTCS colleges could offer scholarship funds to reimburse high school teachers in each of the 16 WTCS districts taking graduate level course(s) each year at a public or private university in Wisconsin that would “count” toward the new requirements. Selection of scholarship recipients would be done in conjunction with the high school districts in order to ensure that the recipients were teachers in the subject area(s) most critical for the success of WTCS dual enrollment opportunities.

Request

To support the continuation and expansion of WTCS dual enrollment options and strengthen K-12 partnerships, provide \$2.8 million in 2017-18 and \$2.8 million in 2018-19 in new state investment to enable WTCS colleges to implement new or expand existing best practices and provide scholarship opportunities to ensure that high school teachers teaching WTCS dual enrollment courses meet new minimum accreditation requirements.