

# Research Briefs

## KEY FINDINGS

- STC's dual enrollment has grown from 425 students since its initiation in 1999 to over 8,400 students in Fall 2009.
- More than half of the high school graduates who have participated in dual enrollment are enrolling immediately at STC or UTPA.
- The total number of STC dual students entering the FTIC cohort at UTPA has increased by about 500 students since fall 2006 or 42%.
- The more STC dual hours they complete, the better their GPA is at UTPA.
- Upon graduating from high school and transferring to UTPA, STC dual students earn significantly higher GPA's than their non-dual peers at UTPA.

## IMPLICATIONS

### For Practice:

- Continue to expand the high quality, rigorous dual enrollment program.
- Implement other dual enrollment academies as indicated by needs assessments for other careers.

### For Policy:

- Ensure that the hours students are completing are the appropriate ones to lead them to timely graduations.

### For Research:

- Study the graduation rates of STC dual students at UTPA and compare them to transfer groups.
- Identify advanced placement (AP) students and compare their performance to dual and transfer groups.

## Significance of Dual Enrollment Programs in Designing Student Success: Becoming College Ready Early

Dual Enrollment at South Texas College (STC) continues to grow rapidly which heavily impacts getting regional high school students ready for college early. Participation requires students to be college ready before enrolling in college level courses just as is the requirement for students wishing to take college courses on an STC campus. Becoming college ready early can accelerate the college going rate in the region. Data were analyzed to track the enrollment and performance of STC's Dual Enrollment students at the University of Texas-Pan American (UTPA), the primary recipient of these students following their high school graduation.

### Background

South Texas College's dual enrollment program provides eligible high school students the opportunity to enroll in college-level courses prior to graduation from secondary school. In compliance with STC Board policies and Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) regulations, high school students are eligible to earn college credits while still in high school. Students who have completed their sophomore year of high school are permitted to enroll as dual enrollment students. They must first meet all testing and/or coursework prerequisites in order to be enrolled in a dual enrollment class just as any other college student. Must do. College credit earned upon successful completion of the course may be

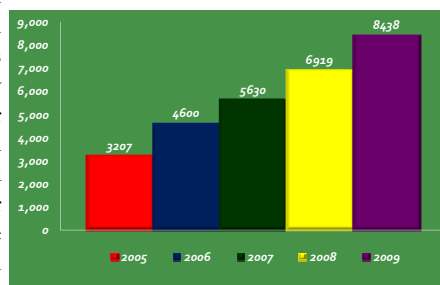
applied towards a degree at STC or transferred to other colleges and universities. Since its initiation in 1999, the dual enrollment program at STC has grown from 425 to a remarkable 8,438 dual enrollment student population in the fall 2009 semester (Figure 1). STC is currently partnering with 52 high schools from 19 school districts to offer dual enrollment courses. STC has also implemented innovative approaches to offering college courses to high school students. The Dual Enrollment Engineering Academy (DEEA) and the Dual Enrollment Medical Science Academy (DEMESA) allow eligible high school participants to complete a two-year Associate of Science degree in either

Engineering or Biology by the time they graduate from high school. The Dual Enrollment Computer Science Academy (DECSA) is the latest addition and will start in the fall 2010 semester.

Evaluating how successful these students are in transitioning from high school to STC or to UTPA is crucial. The evidence of success will catalyze implementation of other academies in

significant changes and improvements in regional educational performance. This study is an example of such collaborative research regarding the flow of students through the regional educational pipeline. For three years now, STC and UTPA have been collaboratively tracking students who move from STC to UTPA, either as a regular student or as a dual enrollment high school graduate. The cohort is captured the first time the student shows up at UTPA (see Table 1) and is either classified as a First-time Transfer, meaning the student has transfer hours from STC or some other college, or they are classified as an Entering Freshman if their only college hours were earned during high school. In other words, they have never attended any other college since graduating from high school. The number of students in each group, the credit hours they are bringing, and their grade point averages (GPA's) are compared.

Figure 1—STC's Dual Enrollment



the near future in other much needed careers and provide a momentum for the creation of college going culture by providing an incentive to the students to be college ready sooner.

### Purpose of Study

This study examines how well dual enrollment programs can be utilized to impact the college readiness rates of high school graduates in the service area of STC. It is also aimed at confirming whether the rigor of the dual enrollment courses is at level with that of non-dual college courses.

### Methodology

STC and UTPA have engaged in inter-institutional communication to make

### Research Questions

This research attempted to answer the following questions:

1. Is the percent of STC dual enrollment high school graduates who enroll at STC or UTPA the next fall increasing?
2. Is there a positive association between college hours completed prior and performance at UTPA?
3. Is the GPA of dual enrollment students who transfer to UTPA the same or better than non-dual transfers?



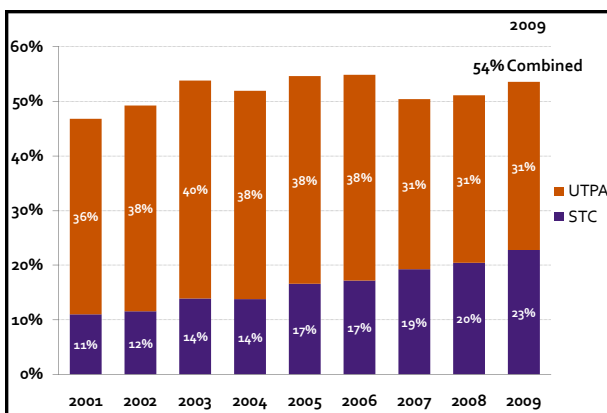
## Significance of Dual Enrollment Programs in Designing Student Success: Becoming College Ready Early

### Findings

The college going rate of dual enrollment students is increasing (Figure 2). More than half of the high school graduates who have participated in Dual Enrollment are enrolling immediately at STC or UTPA. In the most recent year 54% of them enrolled the next fall (23% at STC and another 31% at UTPA). Considering the growth of the Dual Enrollment itself, this is proving to be a very strong program for streamlining the transition from high school straight into higher education.

Table 1 exhibits the number of students among First-Time-at-UTPA cohorts of fall 2006, 2007, and 2008 classified as transfer from STC, transfer from other colleges, and entering freshman with STC dual credits. The data show that both transfer sub-categories of students

Figure 2—Percent of STC Dual Enrollment High School Graduates Who Enroll at STC or UTPA the Next Fall



Are dual enrollment students of the same caliber academically as other college students? After controlling for the number of credit hours earned, comparisons indicate that dual enrollment students earn higher GPA's than regular transfers. The significance tests also show that the 0-29 hour group earned a significantly lower GPA than all the other groups (Table 3). The literature on transfer indicates that when students transfer between institutions, they go through a "transfer shock". This study tends to indicate that students who transfer with less than 30 hours may have experienced that shock.

### Implications for Further Research

Designing student success comes by analyzing data about our students' educational journeys. From all indications, it appears that continuing to expand the high quality and rigorous STC dual

In summary, more students are flowing from STC to UTPA, largely dual enrollment students who make up more than half of UTPA's FTIC

Cohort. This is one way STC is helping to streamline the transition from high school to the university.

Does completing college hours improve the performance at the university? The data reveal that there is a very consistent relationship between having completed credit hours before transferring and the first fall GPA at UTPA. In other words, for students who transfer – whether they are a dual enrollment student or a first time transfer student coming from STC, the more hours they

complete prior to transfer, the better their GPA will be at UTPA (Table 2). It is interesting to note this was only true in the most recent year for transfers coming from other institutions. Furthermore the relationship is somewhat stronger for the STC dual enrollment students than for the STC transfers (the higher the correlation number the stronger the relationship).

	Fall 2006	Fall 2007	Fall 2008	% Chg
<b>First Time Transfer *</b>	847	817	797	
From STC	432	399	373	-14%
0 - 29	51	31	30	-41%
30 - 42	38	42	35	-8%
43 - 66	198	187	158	-20%
67+	145	139	150	3%
From Other Colleges	268	271	224	-16%
0 - 29	96	67	47	-51%
30 - 42	44	47	45	2%
43 - 66	99	103	77	-22%
67+	29	54	55	90%
<b>Entering Freshman Cohort *</b>	2,807	2,585	2,663	
STC Dual	988	1,071	1,404	42%
0 - 29	921	953	1,232	34%
30 - 42	56	86	123	120%
43 - 66	11	27	43	291%
67+	0	5	6	

\* Not all subcategories are shown.

have dropped in enrolling at UTPA by 14 and 16% respectively over the time period analyzed. This is not the case with dual enrollment students. Dual enrollment students are not considered transfer students, but rather are included in the Entering Freshman cohort which is sometimes referred to as the FTIC (first-time-in-college) cohort. It can be seen on Table 1 that the total number of STC dual students entering the FTIC cohort has increased by about 500 students since fall 2006 or 42%. Table 1 also shows how many credit hours students brought with them when they enrolled at UTPA. The number of hours the dual enrollment students bring with them is on the rise, noted by the numbers in red. As more dual enrollment students complete associate degrees at the same time as their high school graduation, the more hours they will bring.

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	Fall 2006	Fall 2007	Fall 2008
** p < .01	GPA	GPA	GPA
<b>First Time Transfer</b>			
From STC	0.215**	0.226**	0.257**
From Other Colleges	0.112	0.093	0.294**
<b>Entering Freshman Cohort</b>			
STC Dual	0.310**	0.310**	0.339**

	STC Transfer	Other College Transfer	STC Dual
<b>Fall 2008</b>			
<b>Credit Hours Earned</b>			
0-29 ★	2.31	2.35	2.68
30-42	2.74	2.80	3.22
43-66	2.89	2.88	3.39
67+	2.96	2.99	3.72

★ GPA significantly higher than other columns (p < .01)  
★ GPA significantly lower than other rows (p < .01)

enrollment program remains to be very valuable for the educational attainment rates of our region. There are no red lights to slow the College down in dual enrollment as the participating students are performing favorably and better than non-dual students. The STC dual enrollment program is encouraging high school students to become college ready very early on and motivating them to enroll in a college or university immediately after high school graduation without any lag. These students are also outperforming the other transfer and native students at UTPA in their first fall semesters. The next step in their educational journey should be timely graduation which will be included in further studies. STC is working to ensure that the hours students are completing are the appropriate ones to lead them to their goal. Another further inquiry will be to identify advanced placement (AP) students and compare their performance to the groups studied in this research.