

Research Briefs

KEY FINDINGS

- FTIC cohort comparisons indicate higher persistence (Fall to Spring and Fall to Fall), higher first semester GPA, and better course completion rates (C or better) for former dual credit students.
- College districts require the same course pre-requisites (96%), faculty credentials (100%), faculty evaluations (96%), course syllabi (94%), and textbooks (92%) for dual credit and non-dual credit sections of the same course.
- Nearly all colleges (98%) provide the same access to services for both dual enrollment students and other college students.
- 70% of colleges provide services to parents of dual credit students.
- Despite great variance in tuition charge practices, over 60% of college districts waive all or part of the student tuition.

IMPLICATIONS

For Practice:

- Continue providing dual enrollment as a pathway for increased educational attainment in the State.
- Promote early college readiness for high school students using dual enrollment as an incentive.
- Create innovative dual enrollment offerings, such as STC's Dual Enrollment Academies, where students can obtain an associate degree at the time of high school graduation.

For Policy:

- Continue to ensure rigor of college-level courses in any delivery mode or target audience.
- Provide state-level performance tracking from dual enrollment to FTIC.

For Research:

- Study if subpopulations benefit equally from dual enrollment.
- Examine how to strengthen and streamline the course offerings.



Dual Enrollment/Early College Participation: Findings from a Survey of Texas Community Colleges

The Texas Association of Community Colleges (TACC) Dual Enrollment/Early College Participation Survey was developed to collect basic data on dual enrollment from all Texas community colleges. The President of South Texas College (STC), Dr. Shirley A. Reed volunteered the services of the Research & Analytical Services (RAS) staff at her college to develop a survey research instrument that could be administered online to each of the public community colleges. The survey questions requested detailed information regarding the high school dual enrollment courses and was clustered around the following topics: participation, performance and completion, conversion from high school dual enrollment to the colleges as first-time-in-college students, curriculum and instruction, leadership and administration, student support services, and emerging trends and pressing issues. The findings reveal that dual enrollment is a viable strategy to meet the goals of Closing the Gaps and will continue to strengthen the economic stability of Texas. Overall, the course rigor in dual enrollment courses is clearly being maintained at the same level of other college courses.

Background

In November 2009 the P-16 Committee of the Texas Association of Community Colleges (TACC) identified a lack of data regarding the quantity and description of dual enrollment/early college high school courses being offered by the 50 Texas public community college districts. Although the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) does collect and publicly post enrollment numbers for high school dual enrollment, little else is known about the programs, i.e., descriptive information regarding courses offered, procedure and practice at each college. As the Legislative Interim Committees began the dialogue on dual enrollment, this information became more critical. The Dual Enrollment/Early College Participation Survey was developed, administered, and analyzed to exhibit that dual enrollment is a viable strategy to meet the Closing the Gaps goals and the course rigor is being maintained at the same level of other college courses.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study was to provide a state-wide snapshot of the quantity, size, description, rigor, and

future expectations of current dual enrollment/early college participation course offerings with their underlying programmatic support structure in Texas public community colleges. The institutional level information reported by each college or college district would potentially provide a comprehensive summary to promote a common and accurate understanding of the overall effort statewide. The institutional level data would also provide the opportunity to contrast and compare practices and procedures across institutions thereby lending itself to the identification of best practices which could be shared to further promote statewide improvement in policies and practices related to such course offerings.

Methodology

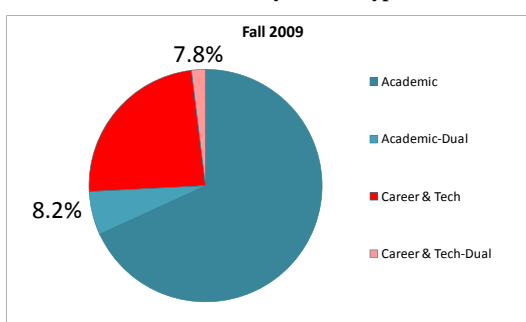
The survey was developed by RAS and was administered online via Checkbox Survey Software. The pres-

idents of all of the 50 community colleges or multi-college districts in Texas received an invitation with a personalized link to complete the online survey. Districts with multiple colleges responded to the questions as a single entity with only one response for the entire district. Both the President of STC, Dr. Shirley A. Reed, and the Director of RAS, Dr. Brenda S. Cole, sent emails and made follow-up phone calls to the Presidents of the 50 college districts and to the Directors of institutional research offices of the college districts to answer questions and to remind them about completing the survey. Although all of the 50 college districts completed the survey at some colleges did not respond to a few of the questions.

Research Questions

The research questions and detailed responses for this study were developed around the seven specific topics mentioned earlier in this report and may be found in the appendix to the [full report](#). Two definitions were used for this study: 1) *Dual enrollment* is a program which allows eligible high school students to enroll in college courses while attending high school and permits them to take courses in place of (i.e. dual credit), or in addi-

Figure 1—Dual Enrollment as a Percentage of Total Contact Hours by Course Type



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tion to, the normal course load at their high school. 2) *Dual enrollment sections* are college course sections opened specifically for eligible high school students participating in the dual enrollment program.

Findings

Participation. Dual enrollment headcount has increased over the past 4 years and has grown from 8% to 14% of the total headcount in community colleges. Currently, 1% more males and 3% more Hispanics participate in dual enrollment than in non-dual community college courses. Potentially, dual enrollment could serve to provide an open pathway to educational attainment for these targeted populations. For Fall 2009, 8.2% of the colleges academic contact hours and 7.8% of career and technical contact hours were provided to dual enrollment students (Figure 1). The average college district is participating with 6 school districts (13 high schools) within the college taxing district and 15 school districts (17 high schools) outside the taxing district.

Conversion from High School Dual Enrollment to Entering Freshmen at a Texas Community College. In Fall 2009, 46 of 50 Texas community colleges enrolled 124,734 first-time-in-college (FTIC) students, 14,105 (11%) of whom were formerly high school dual enrollment students. Additionally, large numbers of former dual enrollment students enrolled in Texas universities as Fall 2009 FTIC's which would undoubtedly double or triple this conversion rate. For example, STC and the University of Texas Pan American (UTPA) have conducted joint studies that showed that more than 50% of UTPA's Fall 2008 FTIC were students who had formerly completed STC dual enrollment courses while still in high school (see [Research Brief](#)).

Performance and Completion After Conversion. During the first year enrolled at the college as a regular college student, the dual enrollment students had course completion rates (earned a C or better grade) that were 19% higher than their peers who had not participated

in dual enrollment while in high school. Furthermore, formerly dual enrollment FTIC's also persisted at higher rates than did their non-dual peers as reported by the Texas community colleges for Fall 2009 (Table 1). These findings lend some confirmation that the overall rigor of the college-level courses being offered by Texas community colleges to Texas high school students is being maintained at the required college-level. Similar findings have been identified at UTPA in the afore mentioned research brief.

Curriculum and Instruction. Overall, the college districts reported that they require the same course pre-requisites (96%), faculty credentials (100%), faculty evaluations (96%), course syllabi (94%), and textbooks (92%) for all courses regardless of whether the courses are being offered to students who are still in high school or to students who have already graduated from high school and are now enrolled at the college. Forty-six percent of dual enrollment sections were taught by college faculty members. Another 46% were taught by ISD teachers who teach as part-time faculty for the colleges. Only 8% of the dual sections were taught by adjuncts who were neither full-time with the ISD nor the College.

Leadership & Administration. Most of the colleges stated that payment of tuition and fees are handled differently for different circumstances. For example, there are times when the College pays, the ISD pays, or the Student pays depending on the specific situation. Sometimes there are special scholarships or grants to pay the costs. Commonly tuition and fees are waived which would mean that the college would bear the costs involved. Text book purchase policies are largely determined by the school districts and most typically purchased by the ISD or the students. Ninety-four percent of the colleges participate in joint planning with ISD personnel. All colleges track dual enrollment students in their information systems and 91% identify dual enrollment course sections.

Student Support Services. Nearly all (98%) college districts reported that dual enrollment

students who take college courses only at their high school campus have access to the same student services that are offered on the college campuses, i.e., library, counseling/advising, degree plan development, transfer assistance, scheduling assistance, career counseling, financial aid counseling, online learning systems, technology resources, student orientation, tutoring, online student portals to access services via college websites. These various services were reported as being provided either on the high school campus (26%), on the college campus (42%), or online (32%). Additionally, 70% of the colleges reported that they provide services to the parents of dual enrollment students, i.e., college information nights, parent orientations.

Emerging Trends and Pressing Issues. The college administrators in charge of dual enrollment feel that dramatic growth brings both opportunities and challenges, i.e., student resources, qualified instructors, scheduling, limited and decreased funding. The increased demand has also led to a push in creating more online and hybrid courses. The majority of colleges reported that universities also offer dual enrollment courses within their taxing districts at high schools, the university campus or online.

Implications for Further Research

The findings from this study support the idea that dual enrollment is providing a pathway for students to successfully complete college courses while still in high school. This is giving them a head start toward degree attainment and should be encouraged and supported throughout the State as a viable strategy to meet the Closing the Gaps goals thereby continuing to strengthen the future economic stability of our State. There is sufficient evidence to show that overall the course rigor is clearly being maintained at the same level of rigor of other college courses. Dual enrollment students have been shown to do very well when they transition to institutions of higher education. Further study should be done to isolate impacting factors to further understand how to strengthen and streamline the course offerings. There may also be an opportunity to develop more career and technology options for high school dual enrollment students to assist them in not only leaving high school college-ready, but workforce-ready as well.

Table 1 - Performance of Former Dual Credit Students

	All FTIC	Former Dual FTIC	Difference
Fall 2009			
Fall to Spring Persistence	74%	81%	+7%
Fall to Fall Persistence	43%	45%	+2%
1st Semester GPA	2.36	2.64	+0.28