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**Higher Education Act Reauthorization Policy Recommendations to
Increase College and Career Readiness and Completion
*Supporting and Scaling Early College Designs and
Dual and Concurrent Enrollment Strategies***

August 2013

Overview

Early college high schools and dual and concurrent enrollment strategies

Early college high schools are public schools that allow high school students to earn college credits up to an associate's degree from an accredited college or university, tuition free, concurrently with their high school diplomas. Dual and concurrent enrollment programs allow high school students to take college credit-bearing courses from an accredited college or university at low or no cost. Early college high school and dual and concurrent enrollment programs serve a range of student populations, including low-income students and those underrepresented in higher education, and have a variety of focus areas, including liberal arts, STEM, and other career pathways. Approximately one third of early college high schools emphasize the STEM disciplines.

Successful Outcomes

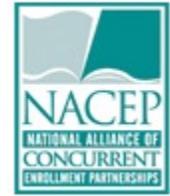
Early college high schools and dual enrollment programs have seen great success in helping students, including those underrepresented in higher education, access and succeed in college. The latest peer-reviewed, quasi-experimental research shows that students nationwide who completed two or more dual enrollment courses are 12% more likely to attain a Bachelor's degree than the comparison group. Jobs for the Future data from approximately 250 early college high schools across the country shows that early college high school graduates (including low-income graduates) earn 36 college credits on average, 25% earn a full Associates degree upon high school graduation, and approximately 76% enroll in college immediately following high school graduation. In Bard College's network of early colleges, the first of which opened in 2001, over 90% of students have completed a bachelor's degree.

Opportunities in the Higher Education Act

The Higher Education Act reauthorization presents an important opportunity to address low college completion rates and the rising cost of college through innovative evidence-based solutions such as early college high schools and dual and concurrent enrollment. These strategies can reduce costs for students and for taxpayers while improving college completion rates. Public support for early college and dual and concurrent enrollment strategies through the Higher Education Act is critical to scaling these solutions nationwide and to helping close the funding gaps that programs face as they offer the courses and supports needed for all students to complete college at an accelerated rate. The returns on this public investment in effective and efficient pathways are well-proven. Higher Education Act policies can also encourage more states and higher education institutions to invest in these evidence-based solutions.



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Policy Goals

The following recommendations address three goals of interest to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce:

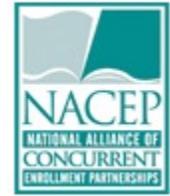
- Increase college accessibility, affordability, and completion;
- Encourage institutions to reduce costs; and
- Promote Innovation to improve access to and delivery of higher education.

Policy Principles

- Provide college courses and credits in high school at no or reduced cost to students, particularly those who are low-income and underrepresented in higher education.
- Promote improved alignment and resource sharing between secondary and postsecondary education systems, through faculty collaboration and institutional partnerships.
- Create a more efficient college cost structure for students by reducing time to degree completion and remedial education needs.
- Promote the integration of supports and counseling into dual and concurrent enrollment partnerships to improve student success, particularly among low-income and underrepresented students.
- Invest in creating and scaling up of evidence-based early college designs and dual and concurrent enrollment programs that support secondary and postsecondary success among all students, including low-income and underrepresented students.
- Leverage ongoing, flexible funding streams to support scaling up.
- Encourage college faculty, high school teachers, and others with graduate degrees in specific subject areas to teach in early college programs and dual and concurrent enrollment courses, and create a pipeline of qualified teachers, faculty, and advisors.



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Policy Priorities

Higher Education Act

- Support incentives for colleges to expand early college high schools and dual enrollment programs to promote college completion.
 - To encourage more colleges and universities to establish early college and dual enrollment programs, the Higher Education Act (HEA) should include flexible funding and incentives for evidence-based early college designs and dual and concurrent enrollment opportunities that have no cost or reduced cost for the student.
 - The Fast Track to College Act (H.R. 551), which would authorize competitive grants for tuition-free early college high school and dual and concurrent enrollment programs, is an example of how HEA can incent colleges to improve degree attainment rates through innovative programs that also reduce costs for students and support them to completion.
- Broaden sustainable federal resources for programs that provide college courses to high school students, in conjunction with student supports.
 - Create a federal student aid experimental site to extend Title IV eligibility, or specifically Pell eligibility, for dual and concurrent enrollment and early college high school courses. The evaluation of this pilot program would demonstrate the impact on student outcomes and cost savings resulting from allowing students to begin college while still in high school. The pilot would also create a blueprint for sustainably scaling early college high school and dual and concurrent enrollment programs while saving money for students and taxpayers.
- Continue College Access Challenge Grants (CACG) with an increased emphasis on enrolling the targeted low-income students in early college and dual and concurrent enrollment, as well as improved college and career counseling supports.
 - Specifically, encourage states to allow students in early college and dual and concurrent enrollment programs to be eligible for any CACG funds for need-based grant aid, in the allowable activities and eligibility sections.
- Continue GEAR-UP local partnerships to prepare low-income students for college.



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Resources for Innovation

- Use innovation funding (e.g. Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education or Race to the Top for higher education) to support and scale evidence-based early college programs and dual and concurrent enrollment opportunities. Language should specifically encourage the establishment or scaling of early college high schools and dual and concurrent enrollment programs, for example through competitive grants as authorized under the Fast Track to College Act (H.R. 551), and incent institutions of higher education to work with secondary school populations to improve college degree attainment rates.
- Support research and development of new models that show promise in reducing the cost of college and increasing college completion rates among all students.
- Include early college and dual and concurrent enrollment strategies within any STEM-related supports, programs, pathways, or professional development partnerships within HEA.

General Provisions

- Create a federal definition for "dual and concurrent enrollment program", which already appears in a number of sections of the HEA but is not defined in any federal statute. Any definition should be broadly applicable to a range of programs offered in all 50 states, such as:
 - "Dual or concurrent enrollment program" means a program of college courses offered by an institution of higher education to secondary school students.
- Ensure that any definition of early college high school includes a minimum threshold for the number of postsecondary credits a student may earn in while in high school, as well as a structured program of study, to ensure student momentum to persist in and complete postsecondary education.