Feature

High School Students Get a Jump on College

Dual enrollment brings college coursework to millions of students, but critics say it needs better access and accountability

RUSMARIEL ALCANTARA and her classmates are working in a windowless physics lab at a community college campus in the western Massachusetts city of Springfield, tackling an exercise in distance, acceleration, and velocity.

When she's here, Alcantara says, she's often mistaken for a college student. In fact, she still has a year and a half to go before she graduates from high school. But she already has enough college credits to add up to an associate degree.

"I feel very prepared," says Alcantara, who nearly detoured to a vocational high school at the end of 8th grade before enrolling instead at a charter high school called Veritas Prep that requires all of its students to take college courses.

Now Alcantara is planning to go on to a four-year university for a bachelor's degree.

"I had lost my passion for school. Now I feel purposeful, like I'm achieving something. I feel like I have to act more mature—watch

By JON MARCUS

Sulakshana Thanvanthri (center), an engineering and physical science instructor at Springfield Technical Community College, assists high school students Koji Nunez, Jay Lindell, and Rusmariel Alcantara during physics lab. All three students are gaining college experience at STCC while enrolled at nearby Veritas Prep Charter High School.

KATE FLOCK

how I say stuff and what I say. I know how to read a syllabus and what to do when I get to a campus. This isn't a new environment anymore."

That's what can happen when high school students are put into college courses, according to the many advocates of the approach, which is growing meteorically: they become more comfortable with the idea of college and can imagine themselves there.

Aspirations like this are particularly important in places like Springfield, a city of about 150,000 famous for the now-closed federal armory where the Springfield rifle was made. A quarter of the population here lives in poverty, more than double the state average. Only one in five residents 25 or older has a bachelor's degree, compared to nearly 50 percent statewide.

At Veritas Prep and the charter middle school that feeds into it, 83 percent of students come from low-income families, 71 percent are Hispanic, and a quarter are non-native English speakers, according to the state. The proportion meeting expectations on standardized tests is lower than the state average. All of these factors portend low levels of college-going.

Yet about 80 percent of 10th and 11th graders at Veritas Prep, and half of 9th graders, are taking at least one college course or have already earned college credits, taught by either high school teachers or college faculty in their own classrooms or at nearby Springfield Technical Community College, whose campus occupies the onetime grounds of the historic armory.

"So many of our kids don't even think college is an option for them," says Rachel Romano, the school's founder and CEO. "We want them to know that yes, they can."

It's an appealing innovation that enjoys bipartisan support from an array of groups that want it to succeed. Parents and policymakers like the idea that earning credits in high school can not only encourage students to go on to college but also reduce its time and cost. Colleges have embraced it as a way to offset an unprecedented drop-off in traditional enrollment. And students are grabbing on to the opportunity.

About 2.5 million high school students, or 16 percent, took at least one college course in the 2022–23 academic year. In some states, the proportion is much higher.

Figures released in August 2024 by the Department of Education show that, in the 2022–23 academic year, about 2.5 million high school students, or 16 percent, took at least one college course. That's about a million more than was previously estimated. In some states, the proportion is much higher, according to the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships, or NACEP: 58 percent in Idaho and Indiana, 57 percent in Iowa, 43 percent in Minnesota. Nine out of 10 high schools now offer college classes in some form, NACEP says. Texas alone, which accounts for 10 percent of the nation's high school students taking college courses, spent nearly $122 million on it in 2016–17, the most recent year for which the figure is available, suggesting that the cost of dual enrollment could be more than $1 billion annually nationwide.

Perhaps it's because dual enrollment has been so widely embraced and has grown so quickly, however, that the practice is attracting new and more skeptical scrutiny.

While a preponderance of evidence shows that students who earn college credits during their time in high school are at least slightly more likely to go to and persist in college, advocates and researchers are calling for more study, especially of glaring and persistent inequities in who has access to and benefits from college-level courses. Skeptics of the approach note that, because of the way the data are collected, it isn't possible to know if the positive outcomes occur at least partly because the students who choose to take these courses would have gone to college anyway. And 86 percent of dual-enrollment classes are taught in high schools, with many of them led by high school teachers, albeit those with a minimum number of graduate credits in the subjects they teach. In the great majority of courses, students don't get the exposure to a college campus that advocates say is an important part of dual enrollment. What's

Rachel Romano founded Veritas Prep Charter High School with the goal of showing students the possibilities that college can offer. "It gives them purpose," she says.

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College pennants hang on the office wall of counselor Mario Chavarria of Veritas Prep in Springfield, Massachusetts. Chavarria may be busier than your average college and career counselor, since 80 percent of Veritas 10th and 11th grade students are taking college courses.

more, the Century Foundation and others have questioned the courses' relative quality. "Accreditor regulations must continue to evolve to better meet these goals," the foundation asserted in an August 2024 white paper.

"Basically, it's only monitored by the colleges that engage in it," says Chester Finn, a senior fellow and president emeritus of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, a right-leaning education think tank, and a fellow at Stanford's Hoover Institution. "There's no external accountability for learning or for course quality or anything else. It's up to the college to determine what qualifies as a college-level course, what qualifies as a competent instructor, and what qualifies as adequate student work." He calls dual enrollment "kind of a grand bazaar. It's as close as American education has to a Wild West right now."

Dual-enrollment programs have grown so fast that the U.S. Education Department didn't even systematically track how many students were taking them until 2024.

"The research on dual enrollment has not kept up with its growth," the University of Utah Collaborative for Higher Education Research and Policy pronounced in a white paper. "There is still a lot of work to be done to deploy this important strategy to boost college access and success correctly."

How exactly dual enrollment works "is still a black box," concluded a study of the practice released in August 2024 by researchers at the University of Texas at Austin. "Policymakers, education leaders, and instructors have little information about which [dual-enrollment] course designs predict student success."

The extent to which earning college credits in high school

saves a student time and money "can vary considerably," the think tank New America says, "and depends on program design, number of credits earned, and college choice."

A coalition of advocacy groups called the College in High School Alliance, or CHSA, adds: "What the next phase of dual-enrollment policy work looks like is not set in stone, and it will take a concerted effort by policymakers, practitioners, and advocates to evolve the policy conversation."

CHSA, New America, the Utah researchers, NACEP, and others have proposed no fewer than 150 new questions about dual enrollment that need to be answered, in categories including how to make it more equitable, which models work best, and how to measure the results. Addressing these questions, the group says, is essential to moving dual enrollment to its next phase.

Experiencing college courses in high school "has a ton of value," says Alex Perry, coordinator of the CHSA. "But we're not maximizing that value for all students. Not the right students are taking these courses. The courses they're taking aren't in the right sequence." Students may not be completing general education requirements before taking electives, for example, or they may simply be offered courses in subjects high school administrators think they'll like, rather than those more likely to earn them college credits.

More research could help clarify the goals of dual enrollment, Perry says, providing information to create "policy that's focused on access and equity. And that's not what we have now."

Education's Platypus

Trying to untangle the complexities of dual enrollment makes it clear why developing universal goals and standards is such a challenge.

First, programs have evolved in different ways in different states and districts. That means researchers are trying to measure the results of "a bunch of grassroots programs that grew up in different times and spaces," says Amy Williams, NACEP's executive director. She refers to dual enrollment as education's version of the platypus, the fur-covered, duck-billed, egg-laying mammal that lives both in the water and on land.

"There are no common standards," Williams says. No single entity oversees the approach—including NACEP. "We are not like College Board," which runs the Advanced Placement program. The College in High School Alliance lists 80 different state and national organizations that involve themselves in some way with high school students taking college courses.

There's not even consensus about what to call this concept. One study by scholars at the universities of Iowa and Utah found 97 different names for it in the 50 states, including dual enrollment, dual credit, concurrent enrollment, and early college.

How these programs are evaluated also varies. Some states or districts consider the outcomes only of high school students who take college-level academic courses, not of those who take courses in technical and occupational subjects. That can make a big difference. In Kentucky, for example, one study found that students in academic dual-enrollment classes continued on to college at higher rates than their classmates who didn't. But those who took college-level career and technical education courses enrolled in college at lower rates. Lumping these two groups together can obscure this difference.

Students who take college courses in high school are more likely to go to, stick with, and graduate from college.

"Every study looks at a limited sample set," says Perry. "You have to choose the data that you're looking at, whether it's an individual state or district or a particular model."

Like research into other education innovations, quantifying the effects of dual enrollment faces yet another obstacle: the immovable constraints of time. It's grown so quickly that not enough time has passed to assess its widespread, long-term impact.

"Really what you want to know is whether students are more likely to end up with a degree, and that takes many, many years to see," says Lauren Schudde, an associate professor of educational leadership and policy at the University of Texas at Austin and co-author of the August report based on research conducted there.

Benefits and Disparities

Despite the questions surrounding dual enrollment, many studies suggest that it produces positive results.

"There's been a really strong track record of evidence," says John Fink, senior research associate at the Community College Research Center, or CCRC, at Columbia University's Teachers College. "There have been dozens of studies that have shown different types of dual enrollment across these state contexts have positive effects."

Students who take college courses in high school are more likely to go to, stick with, and graduate from college, for example. A CCRC study of 200,000 students who took at least one college course in high school found that 88 percent went on to college; most of those had earned associate degrees or transferred to a four-year university within five years.

The newest and most far-reaching study, released in October 2024 by Fink and his CCRC colleagues, followed 400,000 students who began to take dual-enrollment courses in the fall of 2015. It found that 8 in 10 went straight to college after high school, compared to 7 in 10 high school graduates overall; 36 percent earned bachelor's degrees, compared to 34 percent of students who did not take dual credit; 12 percent completed associate degrees, compared to

9 percent who didn't take dual-enrollment courses.

The study used National Student Clearinghouse data to track students' outcomes, providing a nearly comprehensive picture of their enrollment and success in completing degrees. As in virtually all research on the topic, however, the fact that students were not randomly assigned to take dual-enrollment courses makes it impossible to know whether participating students might have been more likely to end up in college anyway.

The extent of dual enrollment's impact also appears to vary widely, depending on where and how it's measured.

In Florida, for instance, dual-enrollment students who went on to college were 4.5 percentage points less likely than their classmates to drop out between the first and second semester of their first year. In Illinois, dual enrollment increased a student's odds of getting a postsecondary credential by 7 percentage points; a national study produced similar results. And in Texas, passing a dual-enrollment course increased the probability that a student would go on to college by 10 to 12 percent, depending on the subject, the UT Austin study found; Texas students who had completed at least one college course in high school were nearly twice as likely to earn a bachelor's degree within six years than their classmates who hadn't.

Alex Perry is coordinator of the CHSA, a dual-enrollment advocacy coalition.

Amy Williams, executive director of NACEP, calls dual enrollment education's "platypus."

Dual enrollment also appears to reduce how long it takes to graduate from college—and therefore the cost—though by how much also differs dramatically, depending on the number and type of college courses students take in high school. A study of students already enrolled at a large university, released in February 2024 by researchers at Washington University in St. Louis, found that dual enrollment had saved students an average of 30 days, which "likely makes no real difference" in the price of college.

It does pay off in other ways, however. The benefit of participating in dual enrollment exceeds its cost by $68,296 per student in Washington State, or by a factor of 17, based on the economic benefits of having a better-educated workforce less likely to require social services, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy has estimated. A separate study by the American Institutes for Research put the lifetime savings at about $58,000 per student, or a benefit-to-cost ratio of 15 to 1.

NACEP says the gains are greatest for the lowest-income dual-enrollment students, who it says are from 10 percent to 30 percent more likely to go on to college than their classmates of similar backgrounds who don't take college courses while in high school.

But one conclusion is incontrovertible: disadvantaged students are less likely to have access to dual-enrollment opportunities.

"What we're seeing is that dual enrollment has a ton of value," says CHSA's Alex Perry. "But we're not maximizing that value for all students."

White, female, suburban students with parents who have bachelor's degrees or higher and who also take Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate courses—students who are already almost certain to go on to college—are overrepresented in dual-enrollment programs. Black, Hispanic, urban, rural, low-income, and first-generation students, who might benefit the most, are underrepresented.

"The challenges are who's benefiting and who's being left behind," Fink says. "It primarily has been a program of privilege and more of a college acceleration strategy" than about equity or access.

White students make up 44 percent of elementary, middle, and high school enrollment nationally, but they account for 52 percent of dual enrollment, the CCRC finds. Meanwhile, Black students comprise 15 percent of the enrollment in grades K–12 but 8 percent of dual enrollment. For Hispanic students, the proportions are 29 percent and 20 percent, respectively. A study in Illinois found that participation in dual enrollment was higher in predominantly white districts and lower in those serving low-income students and in cities. Students of parents who never finished high school are 16 percent less likely to take dual-enrollment classes than students whose parents have bachelor's degrees and higher, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

A principal reason for these numbers is that high schools serving students in poverty are less likely to offer dual-enrollment courses than other high schools—19 percent less likely, the Government Accountability Office reports. Fewer urban than suburban high schools have it. And small high schools—those serving 200 students or fewer—are 32 percent less likely to offer dual enrollment than high schools with 1,000 or more.

"A lot of the disparity among populations is a consequence of access," Perry says.

Even among students who do take dual-enrollment classes, there's a stark divide between those who land in academic classes (English, biology, psychology) and those who end up taking college-level career and occupational subjects such as

construction management and HVAC technology, according to that UT Austin study. Higher achievers, women, and white students were more likely to opt for academic courses, while Black and low-income students disproportionately found themselves in career and technical education. "The differences are very stark in terms of who takes those classes," says Schudde, the study's co-author. "The demographics are very different."

There are other concerns stirring just below the surface of this seemingly win-win education policy.

One is the overlap between the dramatic decline in enrollment at community colleges and the rapid growth in the number of high school students taking classes from them, triggering suspicion about the extent to which these colleges are using dual enrollment as a strategy to fill seats.

After all, nearly three-quarters of dual-enrollment students take courses at, or in programs overseen by, community colleges. Without them, the already unprecedented 27 percent decline in enrollment at community colleges from its peak in 2010 to 2022 would have slid to an even worse 36 percent.

The only enrollment category that has grown for community colleges since the 2008 recession consists of students under age 18, according to the American Association of Community Colleges. They made up a fifth of students taking community college courses nationwide in 2022–23; in Idaho and Indiana and at 37 community colleges nationwide, they accounted for more than half. Across all postsecondary institutions, undergraduate enrollment among dual enrollees 17 and younger rose by more than 7 percent in fall 2024 over 2023, according to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

"Community colleges are hurting for students, so they're scrounging them wherever they can find them. And this high school market is huge," Finn says.

Quality Control

How states pay for dual-enrollment programs varies as wildly as the many ways they provide them. Yet many community colleges are losing money on dual enrollment and on the credits students bring with them when they later enroll as college students.

In some states, such as California, which fund community and public universities based on how many students enroll, that calculation includes dual-enrollment students who are still in high school. Others, like New Mexico, pay colleges and universities for the number of credits they award, including dual-enrollment credits. In Iowa and other states, community colleges pass along the cost of the programs to school districts, which in some cases can apply for reimbursement from their state. Still others, such as South Dakota, reimburse the institutions separately, or—as in Indiana—require families to pay, with the cost capped at $25 per credit hour, or between $75 and $100 per course.

But nationwide these subsidies typically cover only 72 percent to 85 percent of the cost, on average—and in some states, even less. Those Indiana classes, for example, are priced at more than $1,000 apiece for traditional undergraduates. In Texas, colleges spent $111 per credit hour to provide dual-enrollment programs but were reimbursed $38 per credit hour for doing it, the American Institutes for Research found. These kinds of shortfalls occur even when dual-enrollment courses are being taught by high school teachers, since the colleges administer the programs and provide advisers and other resources.

High schools serving students in poverty are 19 percent less likely to offer dual-enrollment courses than other high schools.

"The typical community college is taking a loss on dual enrollment, even though in many cases these are very cheap courses to offer because most colleges are offering a substantial if not a complete discount," Fink says. Yet in a survey by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, three out of four higher education institutions of all kinds that offer dual enrollment said they considered it a valuable recruiting tool—a loss leader of sorts. And, in fact, half of students who take dual-enrollment classes provided by a community college go on to attend a community college after graduating from high school, Fink and his colleagues have found. Eighty-four percent of those who do so stick with the community college from which they took their dual-enrollment courses.

John Fink, who researches community colleges at Columbia University, cites the positive effects of dual enrollment.

That's a good outcome for the colleges—but some question whether it's in the best interest of students.

Students who take dual-enrollment courses from a community college and stay at that college after graduating from high school—acting out of what researchers have dubbed "institutional inertia"—are 29 percent more likely to be "undermatched," according to that WashU study. Many of them have the grades and standardized test scores to qualify for more selective, better-resourced colleges and universities, from which they are more likely to graduate with degrees, the study found. They are also 33 percent less likely to eventually

transfer and earn bachelor's degrees compared to students who go directly to a four-year university. Fewer than half of former dual-enrollment students who go directly from their high schools to community colleges have earned postsecondary credentials within five years, the CCRC reports, compared to 64 percent who start at four-year universities.

Dual-enrollment students who stick with a community college are also disproportionately from low-income or racial-minority families, yet another study finds.

Some critics worry that dual enrollment also threatens to siphon students away from Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate programs. These require students to pay for and pass AP exams or IB assessments before they can potentially get college credits. Though such credit is not guaranteed, the providers of these programs argue that they're more carefully audited and monitored for quality.

"Dual-enrollment programs don't offer a standard way to measure whether students have mastered college-level work," College Board, which administers the AP tests, pronounces on the AP website. "Because of this, it's difficult for college admission officers to know the quality or difficulty level of any dual-enrollment course." And while College Board has a vested interest in people thinking this, it makes sense that AP credits are more likely to transfer than dual-enrollment credits, Finn says, "because AP is validated by a national organization in a course that has an actual syllabus. It's a known thing. It's an identifiable, knowable thing with a quality control system. And dual enrollment doesn't have a quality control system."

To make the point that these rules are often complicated and confusing, Finn cites various conflicting public and private university and college requirements for accepting dual-enrollment credit. (A few states require that dual-enrollment credit from public community colleges or four-year universities be treated the same way as any community college credits would be by other public community colleges and four-year universities.) Whether or not dual enrollment has cut into the number of students taking AP courses is hard to measure; the proportion of public high school graduates who took at least one AP exam rose from 32 percent in 2013 to 35 percent in 2022, though the number fell slightly in 2023.

There are also problems finding high school teachers to deliver classes to the 86 percent of dual-enrollment students who take their courses at their high schools, NACEP says. These teachers are typically required to have at least 18 graduate credits in the disciplines they're teaching, a qualification that can be particularly hard to find in rural places.

The supply of instructors often dictates what kinds of courses are taught. So does the inclination to cover subjects in which high school students might have a particular interest. But credits from those kinds of courses don't transfer as readily as credits from general education classes in disciplines such as history or math.

"That's a philosophical debate in the dual-enrollment community," says Perry. "If the student takes the history of rock 'n' roll and then they want to be a college student, great. But mostly we should be focused on value" by pushing students to earn credits that will transfer.

Veritas Prep students Aniyah Graham (left) and Samaria Guess work together on a speech for Public Speaking, a college-level course that exposes them to the demands of higher education.

KATE FLOCK

Students who took dual-enrollment courses led by high school teachers were more likely to pass and get higher grades than students in classes taught by college or university faculty or adjuncts, the UT Austin study found. Students say their high school teachers gave them more time when they needed it or the chance to resubmit assignments or earn extra credit. But taking the course on a college campus rather than in a high school increased the odds that students would go on to college.

That's probably a result of simply being exposed to higher education, Fink says. "What better of an experience to really turn a student on to college and to build confidence in those college knowledge skills than to have that efficacy of being told by a professor that you're good at this?"

He and others applaud those kinds of benefits. They say it's now essential to determine how to make them available more

widely—to make dual enrollment as much of an access as an acceleration strategy, and close longstanding socioeconomic and racial divides.

"It does really come down to how colleges and their high school partners are thinking about the purpose of these programs," Fink says. "What is it we're trying to do here?"

Aiming Higher

Veritas Prep Charter High School occupies a onetime distribution center at the end of a cul de sac in an industrial park on the outskirts of Springfield.

Opened in 2022, the high school so far goes up only to 11th grade. But in a city that has pinned some of its economic hopes on having landed the state's first large-scale casino since Massachusetts legalized gambling, the school is also making a big bet: that all of its students will graduate with at least 12 college credits.

That's a particularly ambitious goal considering that most of these students' parents never went to college, says CEO Romano, a former public school teacher and principal.

"From a very young age, our students don't necessarily see themselves in college. Early college helps them see the bigger picture. It gives them purpose," she says.

Not all of these students will go on to get degrees, Romano says. Some are highly focused on making an income as soon as possible. "It's an unrealistic expectation that they're going to go to a four-year school." But they still take college courses in a model that Veritas calls early college. Romano says it boosts their confidence.

"They've always been looked at through a deficiency lens. But now they're in high school taking college courses. They're proud."

Aidyn Baymon (right, with classmate Nicholas Grier), has ambitions to become an entrepreneur and sees dual enrollment coursework as a chance to get a head start.

KATE FLOCK

Higher achievers, women, and white students were more likely to opt for academic courses, while Black and low-income students disproportionately found themselves in career and technical education.

A few classrooms away, a group of 11th graders is taking a college-level class in digital art, experimenting on their laptops with computer animation. They're having varying levels of success but are intent on their screens. "You guys with me?" asks the instructor, Peter Zierlein, as he circulates among them. Zierlein stops to admire one student's creation. "Beautiful," he says, as the student beams.

An adjunct at Veritas dual-enrollment partner Springfield Technical Community College, or STCC, Zierlein once taught in another urban high school that did not have dual enrollment. When he would ask his students where they saw themselves in 20 years, he says, "the highest aspiration was to work at Taco Bell." Students at Veritas, says Zierlein, have begun to aim much higher.

Autumn Brown, for instance, is taking a college-level course at Veritas in public speaking. "I didn't think I was going to be sitting in this room," she says. "It opens your eyes to a whole bunch of opportunities."

Veritas students take their college classes either five miles away at STCC or at the high school from a college faculty member or an adjunct such as Zierlein. The school assigns an "early college liaison" to each class for student support. "They've got some training wheels," says Romano.

Other students say they've gradually become less intimidated by the thought of continuing their education after high school.

"In all honesty, I was super nervous about college. There are so many people. But these college courses soothe your nerves," says 11th grader Roderick Correa.

"I think it won't be as hard for me. I feel pretty confident," says D'Asia Braithwaite, who wants to become a teacher. She's already taken three college courses and has learned to email her professors for office hour appointments when she needs help.

"We know what to expect now," says Avianna Acevedo, a 10th grader who has taken four college courses so far, with two more

scheduled for next semester, and who wants to become a nurse. "These college classes, they give us a chance to know what college is going to be like. It's not really hard. As long as you take notes and do the work on time, you're fine."

Mindful of the cost of college, many of the students say they're focused simply on getting a head start. "It's good to get some of this stuff out of the way," says Aidyn Baymon, an 11th grader who's in a hurry to become an entrepreneur. "The most important thing is time, and taking this class saves me a lot of time," says Benjamin Lantigua, who is also in that public-speaking course.

Parents, meanwhile, like to see their kids get college credits, says Romano. "That's money." But "the thing we get excited about is those skills of being able to navigate the college process and that they actually can see themselves there and build a track record. They've done it. We really want them to have the confidence that leads to that economic mobility."

Research and Reform

That's what advocates see as the next phase for dual enrollment: expanding the idea to people who can benefit the most.

Some solutions are already being tried. NACEP has created national standards for dual enrollment, and a voluntary two-year accreditation process that has so far certified 134 programs. In an initiative called Your Path to College, Indiana last year started pushing its high schools to offer dual-enrollment courses that will transfer toward the 30-credit "college core," a slate of general education requirements shared by all Indiana public and some private universities and colleges. In other states, smaller high schools are teaming up to fill college classes that are then taught simultaneously in person and online; rural districts are "co-hiring" well-credentialed dual-enrollment teachers to circulate among the various schools.

But the most ambitious reforms are only now getting under way.

The College in High School Alliance is lining up seven states to pilot ways of closing gaps in access, toward a goal of eliminating them altogether, nationwide, by 2030. It has called for focusing on equity, making sure that dual-enrollment credits transfer, and standardizing terminology.

The Utah Collaborative for Higher Education Research and Policy wants future study of dual enrollment to support this push for equity—examining who does and doesn't benefit from which models, whether colleges are accepting dual-enrollment credits, and how dual enrollment affects employment outcomes.

The CCRC and other organizations are pushing dual-enrollment equity pathways, which they shorthand DEEP, to help make sure not only that more students take college courses while in high school, but also that those classes lead somewhere beyond the history of rock 'n' roll.

"We don't want students to haphazardly pick college courses. We want them to get some advising about what college major they're working toward, or else we risk them taking college courses that won't count to a degree," says UT's Schudde, who is also co-author of the book *Discredited: Power, Privilege, and Community College Transfer.* "They want those credits to count toward some kind of credential, and it's not clear that that's always happening."

DEEP envisions embedding college courses in the curriculum of high schools that serve low-income, rural, urban, racial-minority, and first-generation students; making sure that they're aligned with actual degrees in high-demand fields; providing advising that doesn't always now exist; and making sure instruction is of high quality and helps build students' confidence—especially students who could benefit from taking dual-enrollment courses but who aren't yet participating.

KATE FLOCK

STCC graphic design professor Peter Zierlein helps a student with computer animation in a college-level digital art class. Veritas Prep students "aim much higher," he says.

The challenge is not just about broadening access. "It's about upping the supports so students are successful in those courses," says Fink.

"Dual enrollment has great potential," he says. "It has yet to fully realize that potential."

And it isn't going anywhere, says Perry.

"Anybody who says this is going to get unwound is wrong," he says. "It's here, and it's staying."

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