

Early college credit leads to success, savings for students and the state

By Teresa Lubbers, Indiana's Commissioner for Higher Education

Education and training beyond high school are critical not only to our state's economic success but also to help Hoosiers reach their aspirations and live fulfilling lives. That's why Indiana adopted a goal for 60 percent of all working-age adults to have a quality credential beyond a high school diploma by 2025. Currently, 43.4 percent of Hoosiers have achieved that goal. To continue growing that number, we must focus on students at every stage in the education pipeline—from our K-12 students to our current college students and returning adults looking to improve their lives. It is our job to meet Hoosiers where they are and identify pathways for success.

For high school students, early college credit is one way to increase preparation and ensure postsecondary success. Our [recent data](#) show that more Hoosier high school students are earning college credit through Advanced Placement (AP) and dual credit courses than ever before—nearly two-thirds are graduating with early college credit. This trend leads to higher success rates and cost savings for students and the state. We have also seen evidence that dual credit participation and exposure to college coursework in high school can play a crucial role in closing achievement gaps for low-income and minority students.

Success and savings

Hoosier students who earn early college credit are more likely to enroll directly in college, achieve early success in college and graduate on time or early. When it comes to dual credit students, roughly three-quarters of them enroll directly in college after high school compared to less than half of students with no pre-college credit. Dual credit earners also require less remediation than their peers when they get to college.

In addition to academic gains, early college credit offers Hoosier students significant cost saving opportunities. Specifically, dual credit courses save Hoosier students an estimated total of \$69 million in tuition costs, which is equivalent to roughly \$1,600 per student over the course of his or her postsecondary education.

Dual credit also has the potential to save the State of Indiana millions of dollars each year. The state appropriates \$50 per dual credit hour, which is significantly less than the amount appropriated per

credit at a college campus. When Hoosier students utilize dual credit opportunities wisely, it can save the state over \$62 million annually.

Closing the achievement gap

In 2013, the Commission passed a resolution to close the state's achievement gap for low-income and minority students by 2025. While this is a very ambitious goal, we are encouraged to see that exposure to college coursework in high school can play a role in closing these gaps.

Dual credit offers low-income students the opportunity to experience and earn college credit in high school at no cost. Fortunately, our data indicate that more low-income students are taking advantage of this opportunity than ever. Nearly one-third of all dual credit earners in Indiana qualify for free and reduced lunch, and dual credit completion rates have increased by double digits for students of all racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Our data show that Black and Hispanic students who take dual credit courses in high school are more than twice as likely to graduate college on time than their peers who do not have any early college credit.

From the postsecondary institutions who offer dual credit opportunities to state legislators who have supported making these opportunities accessible, the evidence shows that our statewide efforts are paying off for students and our state.

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