INTRODUCTION TO CHANCELLOR’S OFFICE

MONOGRAPH SERIES

The Chancellor’s Office has initiated a series of monographs that connect Vision 2030’s priorities to Federal and State investments in higher education. These documents highlight advances in different areas of our roadmap and why continued support by policymakers is important.

We know that the eight years between 9th grade and baccalaureate degree attainment are critical to student’s future success. Given that this is when students participate in dual enrollment and that a baccalaureate degree is a powerful predictor of higher wages, the first monograph of the series focuses on this key pathway.

OVERVIEW OF DUAL ENROLLMENT IN CALIFORNIA

THE OPPORTUNITY

Dual enrollment refers to students taking college courses while simultaneously enrolled in high school or adult education programs and community college. It is a powerful lever for closing equity gaps, extending pathways and accelerating the completion of degrees and credentials. It provides opportunities for high school students to take college courses and earn college credit or participate in career technical education before they graduate. This helps students save both time and money on college tuition by reducing the number of college classes they need to graduate. Dual enrollment improves students’ economic mobility while helping to meet California’s workforce needs. Participating in dual enrollment helps shift the mindsets of students who may not have considered higher education by helping them envision their future at college.

While participation in dual enrollment is increasing, disparities persist. Black and Latino high school students tend to be underrepresented in dual enrollment courses throughout California. According to 2022 data, most districts are enrolling a lower percentage of Black, African American, Latino, Hispanic and Native American students than students who are attending the high schools within their boundaries. Highlighted as one of the greatest barriers to participation, access to dual enrollment continues to be a challenge. Most students — those already well represented in postsecondary education — participate in dual enrollment by making their own way to a college campus; Black and Latino students often do not have this option.

There is a clear and pressing opportunity to increase enrollment with an equity lens, bringing college to students as well as growing the number of high school students who see college in their future.
CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND DUAL ENROLLMENT

California Community Colleges recognizes that there are significant numbers of students — especially historically underrepresented students, like Black and African American students — who would benefit from participating in dual enrollment programs. The system supports students with earning college credit while in high school, allowing students to get a head start on their educational goals.

California Community Colleges’ road map — Vision 2030 — recognizes that equity in access, support and success are inextricably linked, with equitable dual enrollment as a key component. The system is increasing equitable access, success and support for students on dual enrollment pathways as well as for students and future learners impacted by increasing income inequality and poverty. It cultivates the conditions and designs their programs for students to thrive. These include systems of support such as community-building activities and cultural affirmation and identity classes. The system also supports professional development through networking, mentoring and leadership opportunities.

Chancellor Sonya Christian spotlighted the “critical eight years – 9th grade to baccalaureate degree attainment” early in her tenure as state chancellor. Through Vision 2030’s 9th Grade to Baccalaureate Strategy focusing on those critical eight years, California Community Colleges is working toward a future in which all California students have the opportunity to graduate from high school with at least 12 college credits. Beyond high school students, the system is bringing college to adults. The California Adult Education Program offers free credit programs to everyone enrolled in the program.

SUMMARY OF FEDERAL AND STATE POLICIES

FEDERAL POLICIES AND DUAL ENROLLMENT

Passed by then-President Barack Obama in 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act allows state and secondary schools to fund dual enrollment opportunities. The law also advances equity by upholding critical protections for students who are historically underrepresented. President Joe Biden is building on these efforts and focusing on his domestic priority to help Americans save money, including on higher education. This includes allocating $7.2 billion to enroll high school students in colleges under their Classroom to Career program. This would help students afford postsecondary degrees by providing states with matching funds to offer at least 12 free postsecondary credits through career-connected dual enrollment for all students. Under the Biden administration’s proposed fiscal 2025 budget, California and other states would receive part of this federal funding.

STATE POLICIES AND DUAL ENROLLMENT

California has continued to elevate dual enrollment as a strategy to improve student success rates for all students, particularly working adults of low income. State leaders have recently increased support for dual enrollment with the aim to support students for whom dual enrollment might not otherwise serve. California State Representative Chris Holden passed dual enrollment legislation in 2016 — Assembly Bill (AB) 288 — to make college equitably accessible for all California high school students. Passing this bill launched College and Career Access Pathways to broaden student access. Other pieces of legislation, including Senate Bill 379 (2013) and AB 413 (2019), allow students to earn both a high school diploma and up to two years of
college credits. The Newsom administration and California Community Colleges have developed a multiyear roadmap that includes a plan for expansive work for Equitable Dual Enrollment.

CASE STUDY EXAMPLES

MCFARLAND HIGH SCHOOL AND BAKERSFIELD COLLEGE PARTNERSHIP

Bakersfield College partnered with McFarland High School as the first school for its strategy to scale dual enrollment and close equity gaps. Nearly all (98%) of the school’s students are Latino, and less than 3% of the community’s adults over 25 have a bachelor’s degree or higher.16

Instead of waiting for McFarland High School students to graduate and go to Bakersfield College, the institution brought college to McFarland’s students. All ninth graders at McFarland High begin with a student development course that focuses on college navigation skills and helps them choose a postsecondary credential goal. Regular college faculty or high school instructors who meet the minimum qualifications to teach college courses teach the in-person courses, or college faculty with a high school teacher as a facilitator teach online courses.

Through this partnership, students are graduating with an associate degree or a career pathway certificate or are earning significant credits toward their degree or certificate.

MENDOCINO COLLEGE REACHES NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENTS

Fewer Native American students enroll in college compared to the overall U.S. population,17 and affordability is the primary obstacle to college completion for Native students.18

Mendocino College recognized the need to increase access to and completion of educational programs at the College for Native American students. It provides direct support to students through textbook purchases, lending library, specialized counseling and assistance with technology purchase to aid learning. Through the Pomo Pathway program, Mendocino College provides wraparound services and a cohort model of instruction in transfer level English, math and other key courses.

Between the 2020-21 and 2021-22 academic years, it nearly doubled the number of Native students in dual enrollment. Today, Mendocino College has the largest percentage of Native American students enrolled within the California Community Colleges.

RESULTS

According to the Public Policy Institute of California’s 2023 report,1 participation in dual enrollment programs is associated with higher high school completion, college readiness and higher academic achievement. Educators cite dual enrollment as helping students prepare for the challenges of college by building their confidence as well as learning the skills they need to succeed.19
GROWING PARTICIPATION

A recent study by the University of California, Davis highlights a huge jump in dual enrollment participation in California over the last few years. Around 10% of all ninth through 12th graders attending California’s public high schools were enrolled in a community college course in 2021-22. Enrollment across the California Community College system increased 8% at the end of 2023, surpassing 2 million students, accounting for 50% of the nation’s growth in dual enrollment.

IMPACT

Dual enrollment efforts have contributed to higher associate degree attainment in California, with an 11% growth in Associate Degree for Transfers between 2015-16 and 2021-22. Through Vision 2030, the system is leading the Rising Scholars Network program, which offers educational pathways — including dual enrollment opportunities — to currently and formerly incarcerated learners. California is the first state in the nation to dedicate higher education dollars to justice-impacted youth. Thanks to the state’s recent investments serving incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students — and by supporting this program across 80 community colleges — California Community Colleges is poised to become the national leader in using higher education to reduce youth detention.

Federal and state investments in pathways to certificates and degrees are making a difference to California’s students.

MAKING THE CASE FOR DUAL ENROLLMENT

MEETING WORKFORCE NEEDS

Community colleges can help more high school students get a head start on their career journeys through dual enrollment. Several sectors, like health care and education, are facing crippling shortages. Recent reports recommend expanding community college programs to welcome into the workforce additional professionals of low income and those who are underrepresented. They also recommend investing in community college to four-year university pathways that recruit and prepare aspiring teachers earlier in the educational process.

SUPPORTING THE STATE’S PROGRESS ON EDUCATION

The California Community Colleges system plays a critical role in supporting the state’s goal of achieving 70% postsecondary degree and certificate attainment among working-aged Californians by 2030. The Governor’s Roadmap includes goals to “increase the percentage of TK-12 students who graduate with 12 or more college units earned through dual enrollment by 15%” and to “close equity gaps in access to dual enrollment.” While participation in dual enrollment is more equitable at ninth grade, enrollment disparities persist between ninth through 12th grade. Through the Chancellor’s 9th Grade to Baccalaureate strategy and Vision 2030, California and the system can drive equitable participation together.
OUR TIME IS NOW

As the nation’s most diverse state and with a growing population, dual enrollment participation in California faces a widening equity gap. As the first step for high school students to see themselves on the college path, dual enrollment helps meet students’ career aspirations while strengthening the state’s economy. California Community Colleges calls on the federal government and Newsom to continue their investments in dual enrollment initiatives to realize California students’ dreams and ambitions as well as our state’s workforce needs by 2030 and beyond.

Citations
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5 “Advancing dual enrollment Equity through State Policy” — Education Commission of the States
6 “Deep dive into California’s dual enrollment data” — Community College Daily
7 “Student support services | dual enrollment” — California Community Colleges
8 “Making the most of State investments in dual enrollment” — Public Policy Institute of California
9 “Understanding Policy Issues in dual enrollment” — Higher Education Today
10 “Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)” — U.S. Department of Education
11 “High Schoolers would earn College Credit under Biden’s Budget” — Bloomberg Law
12 “Fact Sheet: The President’s budget lowers costs for the American People” — White House
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17 “Giving back in Mendocino County: Native American Scholarship Fund” — Ukiah Daily Journal
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