



Press Release

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Dual Credit Programs Provide a Head Start for Students as Enrollments Swell

SPRINGFIELD – Students in high schools across the state are earning college credit and saving money thanks to a push by the community college system to increase access to dual credit opportunities. Over the last five years, enrollment in community college dual credit courses has increased over 16 percent. In the last year alone, over 57,000 high school student were enrolled in 11,000 dual credit courses.

Dual credit programs allow academically qualified high school students to explore various academic areas and experience the rigor of college-level coursework. Upon successful course completion, students earn both high school and college credit. In acknowledgment of this valuable educational opportunity, the Illinois Senate recently declared March 18 to 24 as “Dual Credit Week.”

“The community college system has long been a leader in the development and expansion of dual credit programs. The steady rise in dual credit enrollment reflects an understanding among secondary and postsecondary educators that early college experience is an integral part of preparing students for college and career success,” said Dr. Karen Hunter Anderson, executive director of the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB).

For students, dual credit programs mean savings on college tuition costs and a job start on college completion. “I would recommend taking dual credit to anybody” shared Tyler Behrends, a 2014 graduate of Sauk Valley Community College. “It worked out great.” After he graduated high school, Tyler was already done with his general education requirements and jumped right into classes at Sauk Valley.

Danelle Helton a freshman at Lake Land College took three dual credit classes in high school earning 13 credit hours. “You usually would get a little intimidated to be taking a college class in high school, but since I was taking college courses with my peers, I knew my teachers and I was comfortable going to my teacher and asking questions. When I transitioned here to Lake Land, I found myself feeling just as comfortable with my teachers and I knew the curriculum and what to expect.”

“It was great to get some of my credits out of the way and allowed me to cut down on the hours I had to take this year so I could keep my jobs,” said Helton who in addition to school was working three jobs.

Over the past five years, the ICCB has provided nearly \$1 million to community colleges through the Dual Credit Enhancement Grant to support the development, enhanced delivery, and articulation of local dual credit programs and to expand student access. These grant dollars have allowed colleges to implement new dual credit offerings and utilize innovative instructional models including distance learning and competency-based education.

“The grants reflect the Board’s commitment to strengthen the pathway for students from high school into college,” said Anderson. “As we look ahead to the future, the Board is focused on expanding dual credit opportunities especially in rural and other underserved areas of the state.”

As the third largest community college system in the country and the leading public workforce development trainer in the state, Illinois community colleges serve over 600,000 residents each year in credit, noncredit, and continuing education courses. Illinois is home to 48 colleges in 39 community college districts which provide high quality, accessible, cost-effective educational opportunities to the entire state. The Illinois Community College Board is the state coordinating board for community colleges and has statutory responsibility for administering state and federal grants to community college districts and adult education providers and managing high school equivalency testing for Illinois.

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