Navigating academic momentum: Investigating the policies, practices, and perceptions pertaining to a dual enrollment program that is accredited by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships

by

Michael Gayle

B.A., California State University, San Bernardino, 2007
M.S., Western Governors University, 2020

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational Leadership
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2025

Abstract

This qualitative case study examines the policies, practices, and stakeholder perceptions of a dual enrollment program at a two-year community college accredited by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP). Using Adelman's (2006) model of academic momentum as the theoretical framework and the NACEP standards as a conceptual guide, the study explores how such accreditation influences program design, implementation, and student outcomes. The research focuses on one Midwestern institution, analyzing document artifacts and conducting interviews with eight stakeholders including faculty, counselors, and administrators. Findings reveal that NACEP accreditation provides structural clarity and academic rigor, while stakeholder collaboration enhances student access, retention, and success. Key themes include governance, curriculum alignment, faculty credentialing, evaluation strategies, and equitable outreach. The study concludes that an intentionally structured dual enrollment program can foster academic momentum by enabling students to earn transferable credits, adapt to postsecondary environments, and graduate on accelerated timelines. Recommendations highlight the need for dedicated advising, improved enrollment systems, and broader access strategies to expand program efficacy.

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Approved by:

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Co-Major Professor
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Julie. Thank you for your unwavering dedication and belief in me. Through life's struggles and frustrations, you stood by my side with compassion, humor, and love. This accomplishment would not have been possible without you.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Enrolling in college marks a significant milestone in the academic journey of many individuals. It opens doors to personal growth, intellectual development, and career advancement opportunities. College enrollment entails interested individuals applying for and gaining admission to institutions of higher education. It is not merely about accessing education but also about building networks, exploring diverse fields of study, and preparing for future endeavors.

Enrollment metrics play a pivotal role in an institution's financial landscape (Romano, 2003). The tuition and fees paid by students contribute to the revenue colleges rely on to fund academic programs, salaries, campus facilities, and student services. Generally, higher enrollment translates to more financial resources available to enhance the overall student experience (Romano, 2003).

According to Nelson and Breneman (1981), enrollment is crucial for fostering a diverse and inclusive student body. Colleges strive to create a vibrant community that reflects a wide range of backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences. As noted by Lehtomäki et al. (2016), a diverse student body enriches the educational experience by promoting cross-cultural understanding, tolerance, and readiness for a globalized world. Ultimately, enrollment serves as a means for colleges to fulfill their educational mission and contribute meaningfully to society by providing access to higher education and opportunities for personal growth, skill development, and career advancement.

In higher education, strategies are employed to boost enrollment and attract students, especially from diverse backgrounds (Nelson & Breneman, 1981). These include targeted marketing, outreach efforts, financial aid and scholarships, online presence, alumni engagement, data analysis, and dual enrollment programs (Cassidy et al., 2010; Cirelli et al., 2018; Rudd &

Mills, 2011; Singer & Hughey, 2002; Tierney & Venegas, 2009). Targeted marketing employs various advertising channels to reach specific audiences, whereas outreach activities suck as recruitment events and campus tours aim to inform and engage prospective students (Rudd & Mills, 2011).

Competitive financial aid packages and scholarships make institutions more appealing and accessible to incoming students (Tierney & Venegas, 2009). Alumni engagement can also bolster enrollment by allowing former students to share their success stories with prospective ones (Singer & Hughey, 2002). Data analysis and predictive modeling help institutions identify trends and factors influencing enrollment, enabling informed decision making and resource allocation (Cirelli et al., 2018). Partnerships between higher education institutions and high schools, leading to dual enrollment programs, are designed to facilitate a smoother transition from high school to college (Cassidy et al., 2010).

In recent years, community colleges and universities have intensified their efforts to improve enrollment and prioritize student success, with a particular focus on dual enrollment programs. These programs, also known as dual credit or concurrent enrollment, allow high school students to take college-level courses for credit. The prevalence of dual enrollment programs has surged (Williams & Perry, 2020), particularly since the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic, which first appeared in 2019 and later became a worldwide health crisis (Karakose, 2021). Such programs offer students valuable opportunities to earn college credits while still in high school, as described by Bailey et al. (2002).

Statement of the Problem

Dual enrollment programs have emerged as one of the most widely embraced approaches by higher education institutions to boost college readiness and enrollment. These programs offer

benefits for both high school students and the colleges they attend. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2022), dual enrollment initiatives promote college readiness, cost savings, and increased college enrollment, facilitating a smoother transition to higher education and academic advancement (Wang et al., 2015). However, marginalized learners have often found dual enrollment underused, particularly in schools serving lower-income students or students of color. Participation rates at these institutions tend to be lower (Wang et al., 2015).

Amanda Ellis from the U.S. Department of Education (2022) emphasized the need for careful implementation of state policies to support dual enrollment, combating systemic inequities. Accessibility has remained a concern, with some programs failing to offer transferable credits (California Law, n.d.). This means although students may earn college credit through partnered community colleges, these credits may not transfer to 4-year universities.

Over time, state policies have spawned additional dual enrollment programs tailored to student needs. Prominent among these are Advanced Placement (AP), Early College High School (ECHS), and Middle College High School (MCHS). Each state may also have unique programs like California's Career and College Access Pathways (CCAP), New York's CollegeNow, or Ohio's College Credit Plus. Inconsistent policies have led to disparate dual enrollment programs, negatively impacting students' opportunities for success (Venezia & Kirst, 2005).

Dual enrollment programs lack a standardized blueprint and establishing such a program involves navigating numerous stakeholders and policies at federal, state, and local levels. This complexity demands a nuanced approach that balances student success with political considerations. Developing such programs requires purposeful resources and dedication from institutions. Some institutions opt to invest time and resources to earn accreditation from the

National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP). The executive director of NACEP underscored the importance of program alignment, refinement, and innovation, focusing on equity-oriented best practices to design programs that genuinely advance students (U.S. Department of Education, 2022).

Background of the Problem

Dual enrollment programs are established through partnerships between high schools and colleges to broaden educational opportunities for high school students (Amey et al., 2010). Recognizing the necessity for reevaluating the transition from high school to postsecondary education, recent efforts have focused on refining dual enrollment programs to enhance equity, expand access, and establish pathways for underrepresented students (M. Jones et al., 2002; Pitre & Pitre, 2009; St. John & Masoba, 2011).

Regulatory frameworks in 47 states have governed agreements between school districts and local postsecondary institutions for dual enrollment programs. According to Thomson (2017), policies typically delineate aspects such as course instruction, locations, and student eligibility. Each state sets its minimum requirements for dual enrollment programs, with variations in mandates for student participation, credit limits, transferability, and eligibility based on previous academic performance. Dual enrollment classes are offered through diverse modalities, including online, at local high schools, or at postsecondary institutions (Thomson, 2017).

Between 2002–2003 and 2010–2011, dual enrollment programs in the United States expanded by 72%, with enrollment increasing from 813,000 to over 1,400,000 students across 82% of public high schools (Thomson, 2017). As stated by Zinth (2014), these programs have shown a considerable focus on career and technical education (CTE) courses. For instance,

Florida mandated career dual enrollment programs, enabling students to earn industry-standard certifications alongside high school credits (Zinth, 2014). CTE courses must adhere to stringent accreditation and regulatory requirements, ensuring program costs are covered by institutions rather than students, thus enhancing accessibility. Policies emphasized delivering postsecondary level content aligned with industry needs, ensuring credits earned were transferable or led to a certificate (Zinth, 2014). Similarly, Hendricks et al. (2021) reported CTE programs are now offered in both middle and high schools. In 2019, federal and state governments officially recognized CTE's value in meeting market demands and economic growth.

Benefits of Dual Enrollment

Dual enrollment courses offer benefits to both students and community colleges. By completing a single course, students can earn credit for both high school and college, often at no cost or a reduced cost (Bailey & Karp, 2005). Engaging in dual enrollment allows students to initiate their undergraduate journey early and transition smoothly from high school to college (Barnett & Stamm, 2010). Research has indicated that students participating in dual enrollment programs during high school experience higher persistence rates and improved first-year college grade point averages (S. J. Jones, 2013). Community colleges often benefit from dual enrollment programs through increased funding and enrollment.

Consequently, these programs can influence a college's funding and key performance indicators. By attracting a larger student population, dual enrollment initiatives can positively impact metrics such as enrollment rates, completion rates, persistence, and full-time equivalent (FTE) measures (Cassidy et al., 2010). Through partnerships with high schools, colleges may receive subsidies from local governments to cover the costs associated with courses taken by high school students (Karp et al., 2004). In some instances, students themselves pay tuition

directly to the college, further bolstering its financial resources. Improvements in enrollment or completion rates may render colleges eligible for increased base funding, providing additional resources to enhance educational quality and expand academic programs.

NACEP

Established in 1999, the NACEP has addressed concerns regarding the quality of dual enrollment courses and serves as a national accrediting body for such programs (NACEP, n.d.). NACEP set rigorous standards, comprising 16 dual enrollment standards and 13 college-provided faculty model standards across six categories: partnerships, curriculum, faculty, students, assessment, and program evaluation.

Dual enrollment programs seeking accreditation from NACEP must undergo a thorough process. This process begins with colleges submitting letters of intent, notifying NACEP of their intentions to apply for accreditation. Subsequently, they complete and submit accreditation applications, detailing the structure, policies, faculty qualifications, and student support services of their dual enrollment programs. The process includes a comprehensive self-study report analyzing program goals, curriculum, faculty qualifications, student outcomes, and program evaluation.

Following the submission of the self-study report, the program undergoes a site visit by NACEP representatives to assess the dual enrollment program in person. During the visit, representatives may meet with administrators, faculty, staff, and students to gather information and validate the self-report's accuracy. Finally, NACEP evaluates the program against current standards and criteria before rendering a decision.

Funding Dual Enrollment

Funding is a critical resource for any dual enrollment program, and it can be sourced from multiple avenues including student payments, institutional funds, government allocations, or donations. For instance, the California Community College Chancellor's Office (California Community Colleges, n.d.) implemented changes to the funding formula in 2018, emphasizing degree and certificate attainment and transfers in the community college system. The financial benefits of increased enrollment and credit completion resulting from dual enrollment support institutions.

In Georgia, the dual enrollment program received state funding through the Dual Enrollment Act, covering tuition, books, and fees for eligible students (Lee, 2021). Similarly, Tennessee's Dual Enrollment Grant program, financed by the state lottery and administered by the Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation, offered students opportunities to earn tuition-free college credits while pursuing a high school diploma (State of Tennessee, n.d.). To qualify for the grant, students must meet admission requirements and apply as state residents during their junior or senior years of high school.

In Kansas, support programs aimed to alleviate the financial burden of dual enrollment tuition for students. These initiatives, which may include grants or specific legislation, offered free or discounted tuition based on predetermined criteria. Notably, the recent passage of the EXCEL in CTE bill in Kansas provided free college access for CTE programs offered through the dual enrollment program (Johnson County Community College, 2023).

Conversely, in states such as Arizona, up until recently, there has been no direct state funding, students typically paid full or discounted tuition rates based on partnerships between community colleges and high schools (Estrella Mountain Community College, n.d.). However,

recent legislative changes in Arizona allocated up to $15,000,000 in funding to community colleges, covering tuition costs for high school students with a minimum grade point average of 2.5 or higher for the fiscal year 2023–2024 (Hupka, 2023). In summary, state and federal policies have played a pivotal role in shaping the funding landscape of dual enrollment programs.

Access to Dual Enrollment

Early versions of dual enrollment programs were initially tailored for high-achieving or gifted students, excluding a broader demographic (Bailey et al., 2002). However, Bailey et al. (2002) argued that extending dual enrollment opportunities to middle- and low-achieving students can enhance program equity and accessibility. Prioritizing high achievers has historically marginalized students from disproportionately affected groups, hindering their access to and benefits from dual enrollment initiatives (Kuh et al., 2006).

Beyond academic performance, financial constraints have often impeded college access. Hoffman (2005) suggested that dual enrollment mitigates the overall cost of higher education, thereby lessening the burden on taxpayers and expediting degree completion. Hoffman advocated for early support interventions, potentially beginning in the 11th or 12th grade, to bolster success among underrepresented students.

Although many colleges have offered dual enrollment programs, disparities have persisted in access. Xu et al. (2019) identified racial gaps in dual enrollment participation across numerous U.S. districts. Without equitable access and targeted support for minority students, the achievement gap is likely to widen. Emphasizing inclusivity, the California Community College system, as articulated by the CCCCO, prioritized providing learning opportunities to foster community productivity and economic growth (American Association of Community Colleges, n.d.).

Academic Momentum

Dual enrollment programs play a role in fostering academic momentum among students, which refers to the pace and progress they make toward their educational objectives. Attewell et al. (2012) explained the importance of acknowledging early advancement and continuous forward movement, highlighting how academic momentum emphasizes sustained progress in a student's educational journey. Building academic momentum enhances students' likelihood of persisting in their studies and successfully completing their degree programs (Attewell et al., 2012). By maintaining steady progress, students are more likely to remain engaged, motivated, and committed to their educational goals (Goldrick-Rab, 2007). Participation in dual enrollment programs further increases the probability of students graduating in a reasonable timeframe.

Consistent academic advancement empowers students to enhance their comprehension of subjects and refine their critical thinking skills (Attewell et al., 2012). As students maintain academic momentum and attain favorable outcomes, they cultivate confidence in their capabilities and nurture a sense of self-efficacy. This bolstered confidence serves as a catalyst for students to confront more demanding coursework and pursue higher levels of academic attainment (Attewell et al., 2012). Academic momentum transcends mere credit accumulation; it underscores the depth of student engagement and the quality of learning (Goldrick-Rab, 2007). Despite extensive research on the advantages of dual enrollment and the requisites for program development, little attention has been given to the perspectives of the stakeholders who practice the policies of a dual enrollment program. This study aimed to fill this gap by examining the policies, practices, and stakeholder perceptions of a dual enrollment program.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the dual enrollment policies, practices, and stakeholder perceptions of a community college dual enrollment program, accredited by the NACEP, contributing to the academic momentum of students.

Research Questions

Two research questions (RQ) guided this study:

RQ1: What are the dual enrollment policies and practices of a dual enrollment program accredited by the NACEP at a community college?

RQ2: How do stakeholders perceive the NACEP-accredited dual enrollment program contributing to the academic momentum of students?

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

The theoretical framework guiding this study was Adelman's (2006) model of academic momentum. According to Adelman, students who achieve academic momentum experience smoother transitions to college, demonstrate higher persistence rates, and are better positioned to complete their degrees on time or even ahead of schedule. Adelman further suggested students who earn college credits in high school may alleviate some traditional pressures associated with timely graduation, such as credit overload or inadequate course placement. He asserted failing to complete at least 20 credit units by the end of the 1st college calendar year may impede timely degree completion. This study applied the model of academic momentum to the case study to explore whether the program fostered academic momentum.

The conceptual framework for this research project was grounded in the NACEP standards. These standards were designated to ensure that dual enrollment courses adhered to the rigorous academic criteria of the sponsoring college. They also ensured alignment with the it's

courses, faculty involvement, collaboration with local high schools, and ongoing program assessment. The standards are categorized into six key areas: partnership, faculty, assessment, curriculum, student, and program evaluation. Each standard and its components require supporting evidence and commentary. The evidence was necessary for completing the application process while the commentary served to clarify the standards, addressing common questions and aiding in the peer review process. For the complete list of standards and their associated commentary, please see the NACEP standards labeled as Appendix A. Dual enrollment supports both frameworks by immersing students in college-level coursework, enabling them to adapt to higher education and build momentum toward their academic goals.

Methodology

The research for this study used a qualitative case study approach, aimed at exploring a dual enrollment program to discover the policies, practices, and strategies implemented in a dual enrollment program by a 2-year community college, as well as the perceptions of those who run it. This approach aligned with Yin's (2012) perspective on case studies, which emphasized understanding complex real-world situations. Semistructured interviews and document analysis were employed as data collection methods in this study, as Yin suggested using multiple methods of evidence collection to gain a comprehensive understanding of the case.

Semistructured interviews provided participants with the opportunity to articulate their experiences and perspectives regarding the dual enrollment program. Document analysis entailed inspecting pertinent documents, including program guidelines, policies, and website materials, to glean insights into the strategies employed to support students and the measures implemented to ensure program accessibility.

Alignment Table

The alignment table in Appendix B demonstrates the alignment and consistency throughout this study. This table shows the alignment of the problems based on the literature, research questions, theoretical and conceptual frameworks, methodology used, and interview questions.

Delimitations

This study focused on individuals directly affiliated with the dual enrollment program and employed at the selected institution. Students and individuals not directly affiliated with the dual enrollment program were excluded from the study. Eight participants were interviewed, achieving saturation. Only one institution accredited by the NACEP was studied. The study and analysis took place during Fall 2024.

Assumptions

It was anticipated that employees of the selected community college would be inclined to share their experiences willingly. It was assumed that the institution in question was committed to upholding its accreditation status. Lastly, it was assumed that participants in the study provided candid responses to interview inquiries and were forthcoming in sharing any pertinent documentation regarding the program upon request. It was also assumed that each participant was truthful about their experiences and actions.

Significance of the Study

This study was designed to inform community college leaders about an accredited institution's dual enrollment program's policies and practices contributing to academic momentum. This information may equip community colleges to develop comprehensive and

equitable programs for their students, with the intent of augmenting their key performance indicators.

Definitions of Terms

The study used the following operational terms in this study:

Academic Momentum is a theory that refers to the rate at which a student progresses through their college education (Attewell et al., 2012).

Accredited refers to institutions currently certified by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or making satisfactory progress toward achieving accreditation (20 USC 1067K: Definitions, n.d.).

Best Practices refer to the wide range of individual activities, policies, and programmatic approaches to achieve positive changes in student attitudes or academic behaviors (Arendale, 2010).

Dual Enrollment Program refers to college classes taken by high school students through a partnership with a college. This can also be referred to as dual credit or concurrent enrollment (Mehl et al., 2020).

Enrollment is the total number of students registered in a given school unit at a given time. At the postsecondary level, separate counts are also available for full-time and part-time students, as well as full-time equivalent enrollment (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.).

Persistence indicates a student who returns to any college for their 2nd year (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2022).

Retention is the percentage of students who return to the same institution (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2022).

Saturation is the point when further data collection fails to yield new insights or information (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Student Success is when students earn grades sufficient to meet graduation requirements (Kennedy & Upcraft, 2010).

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced dual enrollment and the need to document the experiences, policies, and practices of a NACEP accredited dual enrollment program. Next, the chapter included the background of the problem, the purpose of the study, and the research questions that this study answered. Then the theoretical and conceptual frameworks were introduced, along with the chosen methodology, alignment table, delimitations, and assumptions. Finally, the chapter introduced the significance of the study and provided a definition of terms to be used in the study relevant to the specific field.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 provided an overview and introduction to the study. Chapter 2 provides additional information about dual enrollment programs, which will highlight the gap in research. Chapter 3 reviews the research methodology used and how the study was conducted. Chapter 4 discusses the findings of the study. Lastly, Chapter 5 concludes the study and provides implications and future research recommendations.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

In Chapter 2, a literature review is provided in which research pertaining to dual enrollment is explored. The chapter is organized using the following themes: (a) definition of dual enrollment, (b) dual enrollment programs and benefits, (c) effects of dual enrollment, (d) student access, (e) existing legislation on dual enrollment, (f) accreditation, (g) theoretical framework, (h) conceptual framework, and (i) conclusion and identified gap(s). Prior to the literature review, there is an explanation as to which databases were used and the types of resources used.

The Literature Search

During the literature review, the author observed various terms employed to denote dual enrollment, including dual credit and concurrent enrollment. Despite these differences in terminology, they all pertain to the same program type and are frequently used interchangeably across numerous studies and articles. The literature examined for this review encompassed dissertations, reports, articles, peer-reviewed journals, websites, books, government documents, and state and federal legislation. To conduct the literature review, databases such as Google Scholar, EBSCO, ProQuest, and ERIC were employed.

What Is Dual Enrollment

Bailey et al. (2002) characterized dual enrollment as a program enabling students to engage in college-level courses before completing high school. They further explained that this involvement provides students with direct exposure to college-level curriculum while earning credit for both high school and college. Additionally, some dual enrollment initiatives afford students the opportunity to obtain a college credential prior to high school graduation (Hodges, 2018). These courses may be conducted on either high school, college campuses, or through

online platforms, according to Bailey and Karp (2003). Bailey and Karp explained how some programs mandated physical attendance at college campuses, allowing students to familiarize themselves with the college environment before graduating. Bailey and Karp emphasized the importance of campus presence to facilitate the transition to college life after high school. Dual enrollment programs contribute to student success by exposing them to academic standards and noncognitive skills beyond the scope of high school curriculum (Witkowsky & Clayton, 2019). Franklin (2010) supported this notion, asserting dual enrollment aids students in adapting to college life, thus better preparing them for the challenges of postsecondary education. Engaging in college-level coursework also heightens the probability of students pursuing and thriving in college (An, 2013).

Dual enrollment programs are part of a broader category known as college transition programs. In contrast, Early College High Schools, International Baccalaureate, and Advanced Placement (AP) programs fall under the umbrella of credit-based transition programs (Hofmann, 2012). These dual enrollment programs, alongside their limitations and legislative frameworks, have varied significantly from state to state, with costs ranging from reduced to entirely free for students (Thomson, 2017). When establishing a dual enrollment partnership between a college and a high school, three main elements are typically considered. First, the issue of who teaches the courses arises, with options including high school teachers hired as part-time faculty by the college or existing college faculty members. Second, the location of the courses is determined, which could be online, at a high school, or on a college campus. Finally, eligibility criteria for participation are established, often determined by a combination of legislative mandates and matriculation agreements (Thomson, 2017).

Benefits

The literature on dual enrollment has underscored numerous benefits for students. Dual enrollment incentivizes students to pursue achievements beyond a high school diploma (Bailey, 2009). Bailey and Karp (2005) highlighted that dual enrollment enables students to acquire college credit either free of charge or at a minimal cost, facilitating a smoother transition into college. The authors noted these programs have effectively supported students in their college endeavors. As a result of this success, policymakers have increasingly considered expanding these programs to include students beyond the traditionally high-achieving cohort, encompassing individuals who may not have historically been among the top performers academically (Bailey & Karp, 2005).

Per Barnett and Stamm's (2010) findings, dual enrollment represents a strategic initiative aimed at affording students an early introduction to college. This approach proves especially advantageous for underrepresented students, who often face hurdles during the high school-to-college transition. Studies have suggested enrolling in college-level courses while in high school substantially enhances the likelihood of these students enrolling in and thriving throughout their college experience (Barnett & Stamm, 2010).

Rivas (2013) underscored the pressing issue of student retention in postsecondary institutions. Despite a surge in enrollment, a concerning 40% of 1st-year students opted not to return for a 2nd year. Rivas presented research indicating students who accrued college credits in high school exhibited a higher likelihood of success in their initial college year and subsequent continuation into the 2nd year. This observation resonated with Adelman's (2006) model of academic momentum, which emphasizes that students achieving at least 20 credit units in their inaugural college year tend to experience a smoother transition and demonstrate greater

persistence in their educational pursuits. These findings suggested dual enrollment programs can wield a pivotal influence in bolstering the retention rates of students who might not conventionally be deemed academically gifted but demonstrate potential for excellence with the early exposure and support afforded by such initiatives (Adelman, 2006).

In Cook's (2017) study, counselors and instructors were surveyed as part of a quantitative investigation; 92% of the respondents advocated for dual enrollment, with 80% affirming students engaged in dual enrollment were adequately prepared for higher education learning. These findings aligned with other literature reviewed, indicating secondary students who participated in dual enrollment programs were well-prepared for the postsecondary environment upon graduation. Additionally, Karp (2012) asserted that students' perspectives and confidence in their ability to pursue college education were positively altered following their initial experience with dual enrollment courses. This assertion was particularly relevant to the current study as it validated the influence of Tinto's (1975) theory of student departure on students' perceptions and attitudes toward higher education. In the subsequent section, alternative programs that bear resemblances to dual enrollment are examined.

Dual Enrollment Programs

It is crucial to differentiate between the various programs such as dual enrollment from AP and International Baccalaureate (IB). Although AP and IB courses offer college credit, they are primarily intended for high-achieving high school students. In contrast, dual enrollment courses, as outlined by Lewis and Overman (2008), are crafted for college-level students and extended to high school students. Understanding the distinction between the programs helps students choose what is best for them, based on their educational goals and level of preparedness.

AP

Although 2-year community colleges have often forged unique partnerships with local high school districts, specialized programs have emerged to facilitate the attainment of college credit during high school. One prominent program in the United States is AP, predominantly tailored for high-achieving students according to Warne (2017). In standard dual enrollment programs, students earn credit for both high school and college upon successful completion of the course. Conversely, AP courses necessitate students to pass the class for high school credit and pass an exam to earn college credit. Enrollment in AP courses has surged due to financial support and popularity; yet, the correlation with passing rates has declined with the rise in enrollment. Warne (2017) suggested this trend may signal a potential saturation point, with many new students lacking adequate preparation for the exams.

In a study, Clayton (2021) delved into the history of the AP program, which predated dual enrollment. Clayton used the term "concurrent enrollment" to denote a similar program, synonymous with dual enrollment. To maintain consistency throughout this study, the term dual enrollment will be used in lieu of concurrent enrollment. Clayton noted, owing to the longevity of the AP program, it has often been favored over dual enrollment. In certain cases, it is perceived as more prestigious by colleges due to the ample time available to establish policies surrounding the AP program (Clayton, 2021). However, with dual enrollment gaining popularity and proving to be more cost effective, students seeking college credit are reevaluating AP as the preferred pathway (Kolluri, 2018). Concerns regarding the heightened pressure and costs associated with AP exams, coupled with changes in college acceptance policies, are driving this shift in perspective. Colleges have adapted their acceptance requirements to be more inclusive of dual enrollment programs, recognizing the earned credits.

Clayton (2021) illustrated that high schools typically incentivized students to take AP or dual enrollment courses by assigning additional value to these courses when calculating grade point averages. Although the study investigated the relationship between AP and dual enrollment programs, the findings were largely inconclusive. Clayton highlighted that in conducting the survey, the presence of both programs in the same school allowed for more flexible course offerings and scheduling. One notable observation from the study was the two programs served distinct populations in 5 of the 9 schools examined (Clayton, 2021). Unlike the AP program, the IB is a global program that collaborates with colleges worldwide.

International Baccalaureate Program

The IB program was established to cater to the needs of geographically mobile students who seek academic credentials recognized worldwide (Nugent & Karnes, 2002). Nugent and Karnes (2002) explained how this credential has been increasingly acknowledged by university entrance committees globally. In the United States alone, 712 colleges accepted IB credentials for both high school and college credit, with an additional 289 colleges spanning 34 countries. At the time of this study, 327 high schools in the United States and 940 across 105 countries hosted the IB program. The program's rigor ranged from standard high school coursework to advanced college-level mathematics. Recently expanded, the program now offered an online format known as the IB Diploma Program, accessible to students aged 16–19 (International Baccalaureate Organization, n.d.). The organization's website outlined fees, indicating that each student must pay a per-class fee, or they may choose to purchase a bundle. Like other programs, there were minimum grade point average requirements for program participation and graduation. Obtaining college credit through the IB program can differ, depending on the college. Some colleges give credit for simply completing the Diploma Progamme. Others will award credits based on the IB

test scores received along with the completion of the associated course (International Baccalaureate Organization, n.d.).

Early College High School

Another rigorous program is the Early College High School (ECHS). These programs, as explained by Hutchins et al. (2019), are often situated in a 2- or 4-year college setting, facilitating students' acclimation to the college environment. This initiative integrates high school and 2 years of college credit, enabling students to earn both a high school diploma and 2 years of transferable college credit upon completion of the program in 4 to 5 years. According to Hutchins et al. (2019), there is typically no financial cost to students or their families, and the programs mandate student engagement in addition to coursework.

However, Leonard (2013) presented findings that contradicted this notion, suggesting that ECHS schools can be financially burdensome, with costs sometimes shared between the college, high school, and student families. Despite this, Leonard argued that shared costs foster increased parental engagement, student commitment, and administrative attention, asserting that college affordability and sustainability are paramount. Regarding access, Leonard noted students in the lower academic quartile may not be eligible to participate in the program. Both Leonard and Hutchins et al. (2019) emphasized that in ECHS settings, students were required to engage more with faculty and staff due to elevated academic standards. Both Hutchins et al. and Berger et al. (2013) observed that the ECHS program typically targeted underrepresented, minority, and first-generation students.

The objective of the ECHS program is to harmonize expectations with college culture, as the two cultures of high school and college intersect, often leading to higher academic standards (Mollet et al., 2020). ECHS provides numerous advantages to students. Research conducted by

Mollet et al. (2020), Hutchins et al. (2019), and Schwartz (2019) provided insights into the program's high success rates and its efficacy in facilitating a smooth transition to college. Mollet et al. (2020) also shed light on faculty perspectives, revealing that some professors, initially hired to teach college-level courses, found themselves instructing high school students. The sentiment of "I didn't become a professor to teach high school" resonated strongly in Mollet et al.'s findings. Despite occasional faculty reservations, the program offered robust support and resources for students, which may be lacking in traditional dual enrollment programs (Mollet et al., 2020).

Middle College High School

Middle College High Schools (MCHS) were established in 1973 and sponsored by local community colleges (Cunningham & Wagonlander, 2000). Both Cunningham and Wagonlander (2000) and Viadero (2009) asserted that MCHS served as an alternative schooling option for at-risk students. Viadero further revealed that attending an MCHS did not necessarily enhance students' likelihood of staying in school or graduating compared to their peers in conventional high schools. Viadero also noted, akin to ECHS, MCHS were typically situated on college campuses. Additionally, Viadero's research indicated that certain variations of MCHS programs offered 5-year curricula, enabling students to graduate with both a high school diploma and either an associate degree or 2 years of college credit. Notably, Viadero's research underscored that 14 studies on MCHS failed to meet the evidence standards set by the What Works Clearinghouse. The What Works Clearinghouse, established by the Institute of Education Sciences (n.d.), serves as a central and reputable repository of education-related programs, products, practices, and policies supported by scientific evidence.

Effects of Dual Enrollment

Numerous studies have delved into the impact of dual enrollment programs on students' success and their transition to college. Speroni (2011b) conducted a study that recognized the growing necessity of easing the high school to college transition. Analyzing cohorts from 2000–2001 and 2001–2002, Speroni's research found no substantial evidence that participation in dual enrollment significantly enhanced students' prospects of high school graduation, college enrollment, or college completion. Despite being conducted during the early stages of dual enrollment, Speroni noted only 23 states had legislation for such programs. However, by 2005, this number had risen to 47 states, demonstrating the increasing popularity of dual enrollment. Speroni further revealed that rigorous academic coursework yielded positive student outcomes; students who completed college algebra in high school exhibited a 16% higher likelihood of enrolling in college and a 23% higher likelihood of obtaining a college degree.

Catron (2001) conducted a study that identified several benefits for high school students participating in dual enrollment programs. This study, along with another conducted by Cassidy et al. (2010), demonstrated that students primarily benefited from earning college credit early while in high school. Additionally, it revealed that accruing college credit in high school shortened the time required to obtain a degree. Another significant advantage was students who would typically not consider enrolling in college but succeeded in dual enrollment discovered that college was a viable option, as they found they could perform college-level work.

Hoffman (2005) studied dual enrollment programs in Florida, Utah, and New York to develop a strategy to enhance the success rate of underrepresented students. Hoffman highlighted dual enrollment has the potential to save money for students' families and taxpayers while also reducing the time it takes for students to earn a degree. Additionally, Hoffman emphasized the

need for policy and legislative changes in dual enrollment to improve college access and success. S. J. Jones (2013) offered insights for school administrators regarding how dual enrollment participation prepares students for academic success. S. J. Jones's research also provided details on how students who enrolled in dual enrollment courses exhibited higher grade point averages and improved persistence metrics.

Dual enrollment is recognized for providing numerous benefits to students, including access to career and technical education (CTE) programs. A study conducted by Karp and Hughes (2008) revealed students engaged in CTE courses through dual enrollment programs exhibited superior educational outcomes compared to their counterparts. The findings suggested CTE programs not only equipped students for college but also adequately prepared them for future careers. The study supported the notion that enhancing the academic rigor of the curriculum enhances student success. Additionally, CTE programs were found to benefit low-achieving students by offering additional academic opportunities at minimal cost, while concurrently preparing them for higher education (Karp & Hughes, 2008).

Although the rapid expansion of dual enrollment programs has continued, and ongoing studies have aimed to assess their outcomes, some researchers have argued that this expansion may not always align with the intended goals. Thomson (2017) posited that in certain instances, dual enrollment blurred the boundaries between high school and college. Even though dual enrollment programs effectively addressed issues of motivation, cost, and completion rates by fostering strong connections between high schools and colleges, Thomson contended that they may detract from the transformative college experience. He emphasized that the college environment offers opportunities for students to develop critical skills such as critical thinking and undergo personal transformation, which can significantly impact their future employment

prospects. In contrast, high school dual enrollment programs often prioritize curriculum completion and earning college credits over creating transformative experiences. Thomson highlighted the importance of students' connection to peers, faculty, and staff in promoting persistence and graduation rates. However, he noted some teachers in dual enrollment programs may not consistently uphold college-level expectations, thereby undermining the educational experience for students. Even though some programs addressed the issue of cost, affordability remained a concern for students in others.

The Colorado Department of Higher Education (2021) published a report on the affordability of dual enrollment for students. According to the report, dual enrollment significantly boosted college enrollments. Specifically, the report revealed 77% of students engaged in dual enrollment programs proceeded to college, compared to only 52% of those who did not participate. Regarding persistence, 82% of students who commenced college with some level of academic momentum continued their educational pursuits. In contrast, among non-dual enrollment students, only 77% continued their higher education journey.

Despite its popularity and benefits, dual enrollment can present challenges for institutions (Catron, 2001). Philosophical concerns arise regarding whether high school students possess the capability to engage in college-level coursework, particularly in subjects like English, and whether they possess the maturity required for some of the material, as noted by Catron (2001). Additionally, Catron highlighted unique administrative challenges associated with dual enrollment programs, including potential travel requirements for students, scheduling courses, and the time commitments required from faculty. For instructors teaching full time on campus, managing their regular assignments, advising students, serving on committees, participating in professional development activities, and potentially engaging in extracurricular activities can

become burdensome. High school teachers involved in dual enrollment may be asked or even required to invest additional time and effort into the program. Finally, Catron underscored the financial aspect, noting although the cost of dual enrollment programs was often covered for students, it was typically assumed by the high school through matriculation agreements.

Even though numerous studies have recognized the benefits dual enrollment provides to both students and institutions, it is important to acknowledge the challenges associated with it. Kinnick (2012) conducted a study involving three different institutions, revealing internal tensions stemming from enrollment growth and resource scarcity. Kinnick's research highlighted difficulties in comparing programs among the institutions due to their distinct differences, exacerbating the challenges faced. Additionally, state funding formulas did not adequately address the financial burdens, further complicating matters for these institutions (Kinnick, 2012).

Cassidy et al. (2010) authored a report addressing the hurdles involved in establishing a successful dual enrollment program. These challenges affected the program's development and its accessibility to students, particularly concerning the formation of partnerships necessary for program creation. Multiple stakeholders were engaged in this process, including program directors, counselors, faculty members, staff from both college and high school administrations, and other members of executive leadership, like governing boards. Each partnership involved intricate details that must be negotiated and agreed upon by both parties, covering aspects such as articulation, funding, student access, and the provision of support services. Through an examination of these challenges associated with partnership creation, Cassidy et al. outlined a set of recommendations aimed at overcoming these barriers during the implementation of a dual enrollment program.

The recommendations put forth by Cassidy et al. (2010) included the establishment of clear roles and the appointment of a liaison responsible for the program's day-to-day operations. They advocated for formalizing agreements through written memoranda of understanding to provide stability to the program and ensure the involvement of faculty and leadership, thus fostering greater support for the program. Additionally, they offered guidance on addressing issues related to funding, articulation, and student support.

As the phenomenon of dual enrollment has continued to expand, state legislators have been actively enacting or amending laws to bolster its growth and accessibility. Kentucky stood as an example in this trend, with multiple legislative adjustments observed in recent years to fortify dual enrollment initiatives, as outlined by Dai (2021). Dai elaborated that Kentucky enacted two laws in 2015 and 2016. The first piece of legislation recommended high school students complete a minimum of three courses encompassing general education and CTE. The subsequent law furnished an opportunity for junior and senior high school students to enroll in two college courses without incurring any expenses.

An additional scholarship was later introduced, covering the costs of two CTE courses. As indicated by Dai (2021), these initiatives fueled a surge in dual credit hours and eliminated financial obstacles for students by waiving tuition and fees for these courses. Dai's literature review revealed several benefits of dual enrollment, including improved college readiness, higher college enrollment rates, enhanced academic performance, and increased college completion rates.

Several authors and researchers have discussed how dual enrollment programs contribute to cost savings for institutions, students, and taxpayers throughout the course of a student's degree pursuit. Reichardt and Christeson (2020) conducted a study on the cost model and return

on investment of a dual enrollment program in Colorado. Their research analyzed expenses, revenue, state and federal taxes, and savings from associated programs. The findings indicated a lifetime return on investment exceeding 600%, underscoring dual enrollment as a sound investment.

Student Access

Many factors influence access to dual enrollment programs. Ideally, all students should have access to these programs and receive the necessary support to graduate from high school with college credit and transition into college. Venezia and Kirst (2005) outlined several challenges that affect student access and academic success. Drawing directly from student perspectives, their study revealed a lack of information about college and inadequate support for college enrollment, including basic knowledge about colleges. Despite limited connections with partnering colleges, high school teachers often go the extra mile to inform students and assist them in college applications. However, students may not seek additional out-of-classroom support from counselors due to unawareness or reluctance, necessitating proactive engagement from students to access support services (Venezia & Kirst, 2005).

Regarding information about colleges, events like college nights or college tours are typically reserved for high-achieving or college-bound students, including those in honors or AP courses, as noted by Venezia and Kirst (2005). Middle- or lower-achieving students may miss out on such opportunities. Additionally, information on SAT or ACT preparation courses and tests may not be communicated to all students. Venezia and Kirst also highlighted that certain events and information are exclusive to juniors and seniors, further limiting outreach. Venezia and Kirst emphasized that postsecondary institutions often overlook middle- or lower-achieving students, potentially exacerbating inequities. Museus et al. (2007) also conducted a study

demonstrating how dual enrollment programs may increase existing inequities and proposed policy changes to enhance opportunities for minority students.

Speroni (2011a) also presented policy recommendations in her study and conducted a comparison of the outcomes between AP and dual enrollment programs for two cohorts from Florida. The findings indicated both programs enhanced student access to and attainment of a degree. Additionally, the study revealed that although students participating in either program were more inclined to enroll in college, those who opted for AP courses showed a higher likelihood of attending a 4-year university. Interestingly, Speroni noted that the favorable outcomes for dual enrollment students were observed primarily among those who took courses at the local college, rather than at the local high school. The study suggested a need for quality control in the program, as there was a lack of standardized curriculum and concerns regarding the capacity of high school teachers to deliver college-level education effectively (Speroni, 2011a).

Even though certain dual enrollment programs have aimed to cater to students across all academic levels, others impose limitations, thereby constraining access. In a study conducted by Wozniak and Palmer (2012), related legislation did not mandate articulation agreements; however, it did necessitate students to pass an assessment test before completing the courses, which are predominantly offered online or on a college campus. According to the reviewed legislation, if a dual enrollment course is available on a high school campus, it must be accessible to all college students.

Several studies and reports have been conducted, focusing on the growing popularity and expansion of dual enrollment programs. In a report by Holten and Pierson (2016), they highlighted the declining overall completion rate for students attending both 2- and 4-year

institutions in the United States. This decline has persisted despite numerous studies and reports emphasizing the direct correlation between an individual's level of education and improved employment prospects, income, and overall health.

As outlined in Holten and Pierson's (2016) report, many states have turned to dual enrollment programs to address the challenges associated with lower enrollment rates in higher education. The report indicated several states enacted legislation intended to expand dual enrollment initiatives and allocate additional funding to these programs. This concerted effort aimed to expose more high school students to the academic rigor of college-level courses at an earlier stage, thereby potentially enhancing their preparedness for postsecondary education and future success (Holten & Pierson, 2016).

High school students who are provided the opportunity to participate in dual enrollment courses have a higher rate of high school and college graduation, along with decreased time to earn a degree and increased degree attainment (Holten & Pierson, 2016). Holten and Pierson's (2016) report also focused on the expansion of dual enrollment in Idaho to eliminate the tuition barriers for high school students through additional funds. This effort to improve access goes beyond just funding and opened the program up to Grades 7–12. The report indicated, historically, dual enrollment in Idaho was strictly reserved for students in their junior and senior years (Holten & Pierson, 2016), thereby limiting access for freshman and sophomores who could greatly benefit from the program.

There are varying levels of student access to dual enrollment programs, and these levels differ from state to state. Some limitations to the programs have been based on whether students are deemed academically gifted, whereas others may be linked to students' socioeconomic status. Xu et al. (2019) conducted a study and identified racial disparities in AP and dual enrollment

programs across the United States. The authors noted AP programs, which are often geared toward higher-achieving students, exhibited larger racial gaps compared to standard dual enrollment programs. Interestingly, Xu et al. discovered some districts in their study showed no racial gaps, and in certain instances, even negative ones. They recommended further research to identify and document effective policies and practices in both high school districts and their partnering colleges that effectively serve students through dual enrollment programs (Xu et al., 2019).

Mehl et al. (2020) published a report with findings similar to Xu et al. (2019). Historically, advancement opportunities have been limited to a select few students, leaving many others excluded. Mehl et al. argued for deliberate course correction in dual enrollment to avoid replicating the same inequalities found in other programs. According to their report, successful dual enrollment programs in high schools and community colleges require equity-minded leadership, robust student support, meaningful access strategies, and high-quality, rigorous coursework to ensure a positive and inclusive experience for all students.

In a recent journal article, Clayton and Guzman (2022) discussed the advantages of academic momentum, citing Adelman (1999) and highlighting advancement opportunities as long-standing predictors of post-secondary success. They noted districts and schools across the United States have often opted to offer dual enrollment and AP courses to maximize advantages for high school students seeking college attendance (Clayton & Guzman, 2022). Access to these programs, however, varies both within and between school districts (Iatarola et al., 2011; Xu et al., 2019).

AP programs, with their elite origins and associated prestige, have faced criticism regarding access, particularly from low-income, non-White, and rural students (Kalogrides &

Loeb, 2013; Klopfenstein, 2004a, 2004b; Klugman, 2013; Kolluri, 2018). Clayton and Guzman (2022) also highlighted dual enrollment as an alternative method for expanding academic opportunities, particularly for students not targeted by AP (Bailey & Karp, 2003; Hugo, 2001; Smith, 2007). Clayton and Guzman's research indicated participation in the AP program increased the likelihood of students attending universities, corroborating findings by Speroni (2011a). However, Clayton and Guzman expressed concerns over uneven access for underprepared or underserved students, noting more robust AP programs were typically found near larger, wealthier, and higher-achieving schools, catering primarily to traditional college-bound students.

Clayton and Guzman (2022) emphasized that dual enrollment programs offer significant access to advanced academics by leveraging partnerships with local community colleges, thereby reaching schools that may not otherwise have the capacity to offer college credit courses. These programs widen access for underrepresented students and those in rural areas, potentially facilitating academic momentum. They highlighted the flexibility of dual enrollment, noting its availability in charter schools and schools with low enrollment.

The major current challenges confronting colleges have included declining enrollments, escalating tuition costs, a lack of diversity among student populations, and prolonged time to degree completion (Karp et al., 2007; Smith, 2007). In addressing these issues, dual enrollment has emerged as a viable solution, as highlighted in a study by Dyer et al. (2022). Dyer et al. underscored the inadequacy of standardized assessments such as the ACT and SAT in predicting academic performance and retention. Consequently, states that rely on these assessments to determine students' eligibility for dual enrollment courses may need to reassess their criteria. Instead, the research has suggested that success in dual enrollment is closely linked to long-term

goal setting, robust support systems, and a positive self-concept. These factors exhibit the strongest correlation with academic achievement and persistence.

Remediation

According to Phipps (1998), most higher education institutions have established criteria for determining college readiness. Students who do not meet these standards must undergo remedial education. Phipps defined remediation as the process wherein students enroll in noncollege-level courses to attain the necessary proficiency for college-level coursework. This remedial process is known by various terms, including remedial education, developmental education, college prep, and basic skills development.

Remediation has often prolonged the time it takes for many students to graduate. Although not directly linked to dual enrollment, it has implications for it. Kurlaender and Howell (2012) described remedial education, also known as developmental education, as the process intended for students who enter college unprepared for the academic demands of college-level coursework. They noted that reading, English, and math are the fundamental skills assessed and often measured through entrance exams, placement tests, or standardized tests like the SAT or ACT. Kurlaender and Howell highlighted in their brief that the demand for remedial education tended to be higher at 2-year, open-access institutions.

Bailey (2009) noted a significant proportion of students entering community colleges exhibited academic weaknesses in at least one area, posing a challenge to their success in college-level courses. For those students scoring below the required threshold, multiple courses may be necessary to develop the requisite skills, potentially extending the time needed to complete their degree. Kurlaender and Howell (2012) highlighted that between 21% and 33% of students identified for developmental math and reading failed to enroll in college-level

equivalent courses in their initial 3 years of college. This could stem from their placement level or, as outlined in the brief, the limited availability of suitable courses offered by the institution. Importantly, Kurlaender and Howell referenced Adelman (2006), underscoring the significance of academic momentum—or its absence—as a predictor of college outcomes, particularly in institutions lacking robust academic standards.

Part of the mission of community colleges in the United States is to ensure equal access (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.); as a result, community colleges have embraced underprepared students. Oudenhoven (2002) pointed out that basic skills classes often operated independently, lacking integration with the standard curriculum. This approach has impacted students differently as they each have unique goals. This scenario highlights one of the potential drivers behind the rapid growth of dual enrollment programs. Drawing from these reports and studies, one might speculate that by completing foundational college courses in high school, students could potentially bypass remedial classes and even complete their 1st semester, potentially shortening their time to degree completion.

Lewis and Overman (2008) contended these benefits may not be substantial enough to justify the development and implementation of such programs. Their report suggested academically gifted students could benefit from the efficiency and rigor advantages of dual enrollment, potentially reducing the need for remedial education. These advantages were particularly valuable for students deemed academically at risk. Additionally, Lewis and Overman posited dual enrollment programs could broaden options and motivation for at-risk students. However, the report also raised concerns about the quality of education provided in dual enrollment programs. Although the findings may not always be statistically significant, they

supported the argument that dual enrollment programs could lower costs and enhance the educational process's effectiveness.

When it comes to CTE courses, Lewis and Overman (2008) concluded that evidence has suggested an impact on academic skills, which poses a significant barrier to success for CTE students. They argued these barriers could be addressed through curriculum integration in the CTE courses that students are interested in pursuing. By incorporating curriculum integration into these classes, students' academic skills can improve, thereby reducing the necessity for developmental courses that might impede their ability to focus on the occupational skills they are eager to develop.

Dual enrollment and other accelerated learning options play a crucial role in mitigating the need for remedial coursework and propelling students toward academic success. Policies dictate the guidelines that must be adhered to for dual enrollment courses. As highlighted by Hoffman et al. (2009), states can enhance alignment between the high school and college sectors. Even in states with existing foundational policies, room for improvement has remained, allowing for the creation of additional opportunities for student success.

Legislation

At the time of this study, no federal legislation had been passed to create consistency among dual enrollment programs, leading states to develop their own policies. According to Wilkins (2022), 48 states enacted legislation related to dual enrollment, with 28 states offering multiple programs and two states offering four programs, creating challenges in achieving consistency among institutions and raising access issues.

Twenty-one states did not mandate communication about dual enrollment programs with parents or students, contributing to the lack of information discussed in the reviewed literature.

Eligibility criteria also varied among states, ranging from grade level requirements to entrance exams, with 19 states requiring a recommendation from a school official. Additionally, 42 out of 48 states had instructor requirements specified in their legislation (Wilkins, 2022).

Appendix C, "Dual Enrollment Programs by State," was adapted from Berlinsky-Schine's (2019) study, wherein the author cataloged legislation by state. This information outlines key characteristics of dual enrollment programs in each state. Firstly, it specifies the state and clarifies whether access to the dual enrollment program is mandatory or voluntary. Secondly, it delineates who bears the responsibility for tuition fees, a factor crucial in determining student access, particularly for those from lower-income backgrounds. Lastly, the data in Appendix C include descriptions of program requirements and additional notes detailing any limitations or restrictions specific to each state's programs.

Starkey (2020) focused on investigating the funding models of dual enrollment programs, an aspect that has received less attention in previous research. Hunt and Carroll (2006) observed that school districts often used articulation agreements to subsidize or fully cover the costs for students to participate in dual enrollment courses offered by community colleges or universities. However, Starkey's study revealed the consistency of these articulation agreements varied significantly due to the unique governing policies of each partnership. This inconsistency was also noted in the works of Howley et al. (2013), Hunt and Carroll, Pretlow and Patteson (2015), and Struhl (2013).

Starkey (2020) shed light on the experiences of students in dual enrollment programs. Starkey found students expressed how dual enrollment prepared them for college, including handling the college workload and navigating campus more effectively. The students' own phenomenological experiences revealed participating in dual enrollment fostered independence,

responsibility, and accelerated maturity (Starkey, 2020). These findings aligned with Tinto's (1975) theory of student departure, as students' ability to be socially and academically immersed while maintaining academic momentum positively influenced their transition to college, time to degree, and overall success rate. In Starkey's study, students discussed the financial incentive to perform well in the courses, as failure would result in having to pay the full price of tuition. This motivated students to complete the courses at a discounted rate or, in some cases, for free. The affordability of the courses led some students to enroll in more classes than they would have if they had to pay out of their own pockets.

Starkey's (2020) study also highlighted certain challenges associated with dual enrollment. There was some misinformation and lack of understanding regarding how the courses were paid for, and scheduling dual enrollment courses proved to be difficult for both the college and high school institutions involved. In light of these findings, Starkey recommended further research on the financing of dual enrollment programs and how financing can impact student experiences.

Implementation of Dual Enrollment Initiatives

Barnett et al. (2004) aimed to provide practitioners and policymakers with valuable information on effectively implementing dual enrollment initiatives. One of the main areas of concern highlighted by Barnett et al. was the importance of ensuring the availability of quality college-level courses. Additionally, the study emphasized the need for transferable courses, appropriate funding mechanisms, and open access to these courses. It is crucial to ensure students of all skill levels and backgrounds have access to these opportunities. Barnett et al. selected colleges based on recommendations from representatives of community college organizations. The chosen schools represented a diverse range in terms of the number of students

served, geographical location, and the presence of unique program components (Barnett et al., 2004).

Dual enrollment programs have been working to address several emerging issues. Some examples are as follows (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2002; Andrews, 2001; Boswell, 2001; Clark, 2001; Pierce, 2001):

- Reducing college costs for families and the state.
- Accelerating student progress toward degree completion.
- Providing greater challenges to advanced students.
- Ensuring a productive senior year of high school.
- Providing access to college resources and facilities, especially important to small, rural schools.
- Helping students to visualize themselves as "college material."
- Supporting college goals such as improved student recruitment, better community relations, and expansion into new, potentially fund-generating, areas.

Barnett et al. (2004) identified 10 critical decisions that must be made, with a brief description of each. The key critical decisions necessary for a high-quality dual enrollment program that provides excellent opportunities to students include (a) program approach, (b) organization and funding, (c) course delivery, (d) student selection and guidance, (e) faculty selection and supervision, (f) quality assurance, (g) relationships with high schools, (h) credit award and transfer, (i) marketing and public information, and (j) monitoring and evaluation.

Theoretical Framework

Adelman (2006) was the first researcher to introduce the concept of academic momentum in 1999, which was further explored in research conducted by Attewell et al. (2012). The model

posits students must commence their college education with a robust trajectory, as it significantly influences their persistence and eventual completion. By engaging in dual enrollment and summer courses, as advocated by both Adelman and Attewell et al., students establish a momentum of success, enhancing their prospects for timely or early graduation. Any disruption in this momentum can diminish a student's likelihood of success. Attewell et al. suggested, theoretically, momentum could align with Tinto's (1993) approach, asserting students who enroll in more courses are more likely to integrate into college life and embrace its culture, compared to those taking fewer courses. Academic momentum can influence the relationship between dual enrollment and educational outcomes (NACEP, n.d.). One of the benefits of dual enrollment is it creates the opportunity for additional attempted credits often leading to starting college with no delay (NACEP, n.d.)

According to Wang et al. (2015), dual enrollment plays a pivotal role in fostering academic momentum during high school, thereby facilitating a seamless transition from high school to college, sustaining their trajectory. They noted the positive correlation between dual enrollment and student outcomes can be attributed to the students' attainment of academic momentum. They identified other studies, such as those conducted by Doyle (2009) and Freeman (2008), that used academic momentum as a measure. Doyle found a direct relationship between the number of college credits a student completed and their transfer rate, whereas Freeman demonstrated a correlation between academic momentum and obtaining an undergraduate degree. Additionally, Attewell et al. (2012) also integrated academic momentum into their study, although they modified it from courses completed to courses undertaken.

Numerous other studies (Attewell & Douglas, 2014; Attewell et al., 2012; Barnett, 2016; Chan & Wang, 2017; Clovis & Chang, 2019; Davidson & Blankenship, 2016; Doyle, 2011; Pani

& Fabozzi, 2021; Strahan, 2008; Wang et al., 2015; Webber, 2018; Zhang, 2019) have validated the significance of achieving Adelman's (2006) academic momentum, characterized by the accumulation of sufficient college credits before high school graduation. This momentum facilitates a smoother transition and enhances the likelihood of student achievement.

Conceptual Framework

A recurring theme in much of the research presented in this literature review was the inconsistency in policy regarding dual enrollment programs. Some studies have raised concerns about the quality of education provided or the negative consequences for students resulting from poorly managed partnerships between high schools and community colleges (Lewis & Overman, 2008; Venezia & Kirst, 2005; Xu et al., 2019)

To address these concerns and establish high-quality dual enrollment programs, some of the longest-standing and most successful partnerships formed the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP; Scheffel et al., 2015). The NACEP ensured courses taught in high schools as part of dual enrollment programs met the same rigorous standards as those taught by the sponsoring college (NACEP, n.d.; Scheffel et al., 2015). According to their website and Scheffel et al. (2015), NACEP was the sole accrediting body for dual enrollment partnerships, holding institutions to the highest standards. The NACEP standards aimed to facilitate a seamless transition to college for students and promote ongoing professional development for teachers.

Obtaining accreditation is quite challenging and often optional. There is usually no tangible reward, incentive, or advantage to achieving accreditation. Meeting many of the standards requires a substantial amount of evidence and documentation (NACEP, n.d.). Institutions must demonstrate well-organized processes, systems, and documentation for every

aspect of the program, including courses and faculty qualifications. Because dual enrollment programs are typically viewed as secondary initiatives in most institutions, they often face challenges related to staffing and financial resources. Consequently, implementing some of the necessary requirements can be difficult, as sustaining adequate staffing and funding over time is crucial for ensuring accreditation.

The partnership standards require the dual enrollment program aligns with the college's mission and that it is supported by the administration and academic leadership (NACEP, n.d.). These standards also demand evidence of ongoing collaboration between the institution and its high school partners.

The faculty standards ensure dual enrollment instructors meet the same minimum qualifications as the faculty teaching at sponsoring institution (NACEP, n.d.). These instructors must be approved by the college's leadership. Before an instructor begins teaching a dual enrollment course, they receive specific training from the designated faculty liaisons. This training covers key areas such as course philosophy, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. Additionally, dual enrollment instructors are required to participate in annual professional development, which includes ongoing collegial interaction provided by the host institution. The final faculty standard mandates instructors are knowledgeable of and follow the policies and procedures of the dual enrollment program (NACEP, n.d.). There is only one assessment standard that ensures the academic outcomes of students enrolled in the dual enrollment program are comparable to those students at the sponsoring institution.

The curriculum standards require the courses provided meeting the high school dual enrollment standards are catalogued courses with the appropriate numbers, credits, titles, department designations, and course descriptions (NACEP, n.d.). The learning objectives of

these courses must also reflect the respective discipline. The faculty standards stipulate faculty liaisons conduct sit visits to ensure that the courses being taught at the high school are equivalent to those offered on the college campus. These visits include the observation of course content and delivery, as well as student interaction and rapport (NACEP, n.d.). For the student section, there are four standards that must be met.

The first student standard mandates that the program's registration and transcription policies are consistent with those of the college (NACEP, n.d.). The program must also ensure students meet the college's prerequisites. Additionally, students must be informed of the benefits of dual enrollment courses and the relevant policies and expectations. Institutions are also required to collaborate with their secondary school partners to provide students with access to support services and learning resources (NACEP, n.d.).

Lastly, there is the evaluation standard of which there are two components. The standards require institutions use the results of ongoing evaluations to drive continuous program improvement. They also mandate institutions assess the effectiveness of the dual enrollment program to ensure alignment with the college's goals, mission, and strategic plan, contributing to the program's continuous improvement (NACEP, n.d.).

Conclusion

The literature review underscored the advantages of dual enrollment programs along with some inherent challenges. Establishing partnerships between a community college and high school districts presents numerous obstacles. The intricacies of this partnership can influence the program's efficacy and its impact on students and educators alike. The program must develop in the confines of state legislation, often necessitating the creation of new legislative measures to support innovative program expansions.

Numerous program models, such as AP, IB, ECHS, and MCHS, have been implemented across the nation, each with its own set of constraints or targeted student populations. Notably, the literature highlighted efforts by certain organizations to uphold partnerships to rigorous standards to address prevalent issues encountered in dual enrollment collaborations nationwide. The literature delved into the exploration of theoretical and conceptual frameworks pertinent to dual enrollment programs. Despite the abundance of studies showcasing the benefits and outcomes of dual enrollment, a notable gap has persisted in understanding how the specific actions undertaken by institutions assist students in achieving academic momentum.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

This chapter begins by presenting the study's purpose, the research questions, and the theoretical and conceptual frameworks. It then outlines the research design, study setting, participants, and instrumentation. This is followed by a description of the data collection procedures and data sources, as well as the data analysis. The chapter concludes with an overview of the alignment table, ethical considerations, limitations, study quality, and a summary of the chapter.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the dual enrollment policies, practices, and stakeholder perceptions of a community college dual enrollment program, accredited by National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP), contributing to the academic momentum of students.

Research Questions

Two research questions (RQs) guided this study:

RQ1: What are the dual enrollment policies and practices of a dual enrollment program accredited by the NACEP at a community college?

RQ2: How do stakeholders perceive the NACEP-accredited dual enrollment program contributing to the academic momentum of students?

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

Adelman's (1999, 2006) model of academic momentum served as the theoretical framework for this study. According to Adelman, academic momentum reflects the culmination of preparation and effort, suggesting the likelihood of college completion increases as students

accumulate more college credits. The key variables identified by Adelman include immediate college enrollment following high school, persistence through the college years, participation in summer courses, and first-year college grade point average. This theoretical framework aligns with the research questions, which were designed to examine the dual enrollment program.

Employing the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) standards as a conceptual framework provided a strong foundation for evaluating the dual enrollment program. These well-established benchmarks, emphasizing academic rigor, curriculum alignment, faculty qualifications, and program integrity, ensured that the study was grounded in widely recognized standards. The framework also guided the development of the semistructured interview questions and informed the data analysis process.

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative approach, using the case study methodology. According to Lochmiller and Lester (2016), a case study involves an in-depth examination of one or more cases in a bounded system. A bounded system, as defined by Lochmiller and Lester, encompasses a coherent set of operations or components functioning together as a unified whole, thus warranting investigation. Creswell (2014) underscored that case studies offer a wealth of rich and nuanced information from respondents.

Yin (2018) emphasized that case studies are particularly suited to exploring contemporary phenomena, requiring a detailed description of events. They provide a platform to examine the phenomenon in its natural context, enabling researchers to comprehend the interactions among various factors and their impact on outcomes. Yin further highlighted that case studies offer a holistic approach to understanding the complexities of a case by capturing the interrelationships among different elements. Importantly, Yin noted case studies are often

selected for their practical relevance to real-world issues and situations. A case study design was employed to explore and document the policies, practices, and stakeholder perceptions associated with a community college dual enrollment program. To gain deeper insight into the case and its operational dynamics, keywords suggested by Yin (2018) were incorporated while developing the research questions.

Study Setting

To ensure the selection of an appropriate study setting, specific criteria were established. The selected setting was a two-year community college offering a dual enrollment program accredited by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP). Choosing a NACEP-accredited program allowed access to a network of higher education institutions that follow nationally recognized standards and guidelines.

In determining eligibility, data were collected from both the NACEP and the *Community College Review* (2023) website to identify eligible institutions, as outlined in Appendix D titled "NACEP Accredited Community College Student Count." This appendix includes institutions meeting the NACEP criteria along with their corresponding student and faculty statistics. From this list, a large suburban college in the Midwest, College Prime, was selected due to its transparent program and ample information available publicly on the internet. Following approval from the Kansas State University Institutional Review Board (IRB), and College Prime's approval process, a Letter of Introduction (see Appendix E) was sent to the institution that was ultimately selected as the study site.

Institution and Study Participants

The institution chosen for this study was a large suburban college in the Midwest with a dual enrollment program accredited by NACEP; additionally, it had more than 30 high school partners. To protect the anonymity of the college institution, it is referred to as College Prime.

The participants for this research study were selected through two sampling strategies. Criterion-based sampling, as outlined by Palinkas et al. (2015), involves selecting participants who meet specific criteria deemed essential for participation. In this study, participants were chosen based on their presumed comprehensive understanding of their institution's dual enrollment program. Initially, there were not enough eligible participants identified using the criterion-based strategy; therefore, snowball sampling was used. Snowball sampling, also described by Palinkas et al. (2015), entails identifying additional participants through referrals from individuals already meeting the established criteria. Both criterion-based and snowball sampling methods were employed with the goal of identifying eight to 15 participants for the study. The final sample size was eight, which allowed for a saturation point to be reached. As defined by Creswell and Creswell (2018), saturation is the point when further data collection fails to yield new insights or information.

All eligible participants in this study were employed by the selected community college. Participants who were recruited held roles such as deans, program manager, program director, instructor or faculty, counselor, faculty liaison, and other members of the dual enrollment program. Additional roles encompassed individuals directly engaged in student support, including those involved in outreach efforts and the institution's dual enrollment program or supporting student success.

The involvement of each participant in the dual enrollment program contributed to a diverse and well-rounded perspective on its implementation and effectiveness. Leadership participants offered insights from a higher organizational level, covering available resources, political challenges, and various aspects of programs policies and planning. Individuals directly involved with the program shared firsthand experiences and detailed information regarding the strategies. Outreach and support staff contributed insights focused on student support perspectives.

Instrumentation

The instruments used in this study included the researcher as an instrument, semi-structured interviews, and archival documents. Participants were presented with the interview questions outlined in Appendix F. As noted by Lochmiller and Lester (2016), semistructured interviews offer an opportunity to explore the phenomenon under investigation (i.e., dual enrollment) and facilitate the discovery of unforeseen insights. The semistructured interview format enabled adaptation to each participant, ensuring comprehensive coverage of all pertinent topics (Adler & Clark, 2014).

In addition to interviews, the websites hosting information about the dual enrollment programs were examined, including details such as eligibility criteria, course offerings, and application procedures. Emails intended to inform or educate potential students and parents about the college's dual enrollment programs were requested for analysis. Finally, any printed materials that could be obtained were analyzed, such as brochures or pamphlets, providing information about the dual enrollment programs offered by the institution. Through this document analysis, an understanding of the program's policies and communication strategies was attained.

Data Collection and Data Source

Prior to commencing data collection, approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Kansas State University (KSU), as detailed in Appendix G was obtained. A letter of introduction (see Appendix E) and the IRB approval letter were sent to the president of College Prime to request permission to conduct the study; College Prime subsequently requested the full proposal for its own IRB review. Once approvals were received from both the president and College Prime's IRB, the study officially commenced.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the study, triangulation was employed through multiple data collection methods: conducting document analysis and semistructured interviews. A pilot interview was first conducted with community college professionals familiar with dual enrollment but not involved in the study to validate the efficacy of the interview questions.

Data collection began with a review of College Prime's website and relevant online documents related to the dual enrollment program. All retrieved materials were saved to guard against future website changes. Following the document review, communications with known eligible participants were initiated by sending the potential participants an Invitation to Participate (see Appendix H) and a Consent Form (see Appendix I). Upon receipt of signed consent forms (see Appendix I), 30 to 45-minute interviews were scheduled and conducted via Zoom, chosen for participant convenience. Participants were recorded using Otter.ai during the Zoom interviews, with their informed consent.

Otter.ai software was used for the initial transcription of the interviews, which were subsequently reviewed. Each transcript was then edited to ensure accuracy before being sent to participants for member checking. Feedback from participants were incorporated into the final versions. All documents, websites, transcripts, and audio files were securely stored in

compliance with Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements and will be retained for five years.

Due to the broad network of partnerships and the limited number of direct employees involved in the dual enrollment program, the snowball sampling method was used to identify additional eligible participants. During interviews, participants were asked to identify other eligible people for the study and to share relevant documentation for further analysis.

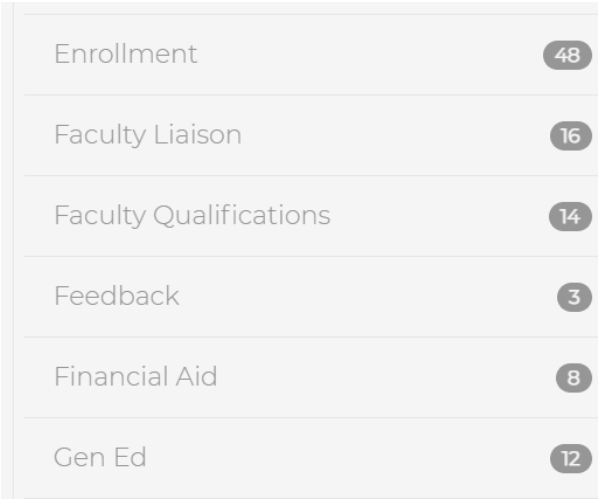
Data Analysis

In the data analysis phase, Taguette software facilitated the application of provisional coding, a strategy where a preliminary set of codes was established prior to in-depth analysis and as stated by Saldaña (2012, p. 114), "as qualitative data are collected, coded, and analyzed, Provisional Codes can be revised, modified, deleted, or expanded to include new codes." Saldaña continues to explain that the codes created during the analysis process should then create a set of categories which then combine into five or six major themes.

By utilizing data tagging, a method involving the categorization of qualitative data through the application of specific labels, Taguette facilitated the efficient retrieval of related documents and interview excerpts, thereby ensuring a robust and systematic exploration of the data. Below is a screenshot of several codes created using the Taguette software. These codes were the first step of the coding process which helped to develop the categories that led to the creation of the themes. The number displayed to the right of each code indicates the frequency with which excerpts of data were associated with that code during the analysis process.

Figure 1

Screenshot of codes listed in Taguette software



The analysis generated 41 codes, which were subsequently organized into 10 categories. These categories were further synthesized into five overarching themes. Appendix J presents an Alluvial Diagram illustrating a sample of the coding process. The diagram, read from left to right, shows selected codes, which then flow into their associated categories and ultimately into the themes. Memoing was also employed throughout the coding process to document reflections, insights, and analytical decisions, further enhancing the depth and rigor of the analysis.

Alignment Table

The alignment table provided in Appendix B illustrates the alignment of research problems with pertinent literature, research questions, theoretical and conceptual frameworks, methodology, and the interview questions.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to the policies mandated by the KSU IRB to guarantee the protection of study participants. Upon receiving the KSU IRB approval letter (see Appendix G), each participant was provided with an informed consent form (see Appendix I), which had to be completed before their participation in the study. Additionally, participants were verbally

reminded that their involvement was voluntary, and they retained the right to withdraw their consent at any point, as delineated in the consent form.

The informed consent form furnished participants with a comprehensive overview of the study's objectives, the intended use of participant data, the established confidentiality protocols, and notification of their voluntary participation. To uphold confidentiality and anonymity, all participant and institutional names were kept confidential, with pseudonyms assigned to each participant and institution. For secure storage of electronic data, the OneDrive platform provided by KSU was used, which offered secure access via multifactor authentication. Any physical data collected were securely stored in a locked cabinet. In compliance with policy requirements, all data, whether physical or digital, collected for this study will be securely retained for a period of five years. To account for any assumptions, biases, and experiences (Lochmiller & Lester, 2016) that may have impacted the study, the following reflexivity statement was included.

Reflexivity Statement

At the time of this study, I dedicated over 10 years of service to a community college, working with the noninstructional side while simultaneously raising a daughter. Our educational paths converged, as we both attended the same high school. My awareness of our local dual enrollment program emerged through my role at the college and conversations with other parents whose children were in my daughter's class. Eager to explore the benefits of dual enrollment, I encouraged my daughter to consider participating in such a program. However, year after year, she found herself ineligible, despite my attempts for her to gain access to the high school's dual enrollment program. There seemed to be a glaring absence of information about the program—no emails, no meetings, and no mention on the high school website. It was not until her senior year that she was finally able to enroll in a dual enrollment psychology course. Yet, just before

the school year commenced, she was informed that the class conflicted with another course, resulting in her removal from the roster.

Reflecting on my own high school experience, I realized the dual enrollment program had never been promoted during my time there. Instead, the focus seemed to be solely on Advanced Placement courses, which required hefty fees for exams, both during my time as a student and when my daughter attended. This disparity troubled me, especially considering the socioeconomic diversity of our community. I wondered why dual enrollment was not more accessible. This discrepancy sparked my curiosity about the accessibility and effectiveness of dual enrollment programs in general. With a limited understanding of the topic but a strong desire to promote inclusivity and accessibility, I embarked on this research journey.

Limitations

The sample size for this study was limited by the need for participants to assist in identifying additional eligible candidates. Identifying all eligible participants at the designated institution was challenging. Another limitation stemmed from restricted access to relevant documents, as the institution was located beyond a practical driving distance. The study specifically concentrated on a community college as the chosen case. This focus enhanced the transferability of findings to other 2-year institutions, as they might share similar characteristics and circumstances.

Study Quality

According to Tracy's (2010) "Big Tent" criteria, quality qualitative research must meet eight essential criteria. These include (a) addressing a worthy topic, (b) maintaining rich rigor, (c) demonstrating sincerity, (d) establishing credibility, (e) resonating with readers, (f) making a

significant contribution, (g) upholding ethical standards, and (h) ensuring meaningful coherence. Subsequently, how these criteria were fulfilled in this study will be illustrated.

The topic of this study was deemed worthy due to its timeliness, relevance, and significance, particularly concerning issues surrounding student persistence, and inconsistencies in access to dual enrollment programs. This study may serve as a valuable resource for other community colleges. The robustness of data collection and analysis processes, coupled with the appropriate theoretical framework, underscored the rich rigor of this study. Triangulation, rigorous transcription validation, member checking, secure data management, and provisional coding ensured the study's findings were trustworthy, credible, and thorough. Sincerity was demonstrated through transparency of methods and encountered challenges, supplemented with a reflexivity statement. This reflexivity statement aided in recognizing experiences and potential biases that could affect the study.

Credibility was established by collecting and analyzing data, offering detailed descriptions, concrete interview examples, recording any field notes, and employing triangulation techniques. The study's resonance with readers and practitioners was achieved by providing transferable findings. Ethical criteria were met through adherence to procedural ethics. Documentation and execution in this study exhibited meaningful coherence, ensuring all components aligned effectively. Additionally, the alignment table in Appendix B provides a visual representation of the study's alignment and consistency.

Summary

This chapter explored the methodology and research design employed in this study. It commenced with an introduction to the methodology, identified the study's purpose, presented the research questions, and furnished details regarding the study setting and its participants. It

delineated the instrumentation slated for use in conducting the research, along with comprehensive insights into data collection and sources, data analysis approaches, the alignment table, ethical considerations, study limitations, assessment of study quality, and a summary of the chapter.

Chapter 4 - Research Findings and Analysis

This chapter presents the findings of the research and the corresponding analysis. It begins by revisiting the study's research questions, followed by an analysis organized around themes. The discussion concludes with a summary of unexpected findings.

Research Questions

This study was designed to explore the dual enrollment policies, practices, and stakeholder perceptions of a community college dual enrollment program, accredited by National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP). The research questions (RQ) that guided this study were:

RQ1: What are the dual enrollment policies and practices of a dual enrollment program accredited by the NACEP at a community college?

RQ2: How do stakeholders perceive the NACEP-accredited dual enrollment program contributing to the academic momentum of students?

Findings

Shortly after conducting the first interview, it was revealed the dual enrollment program being studied was not the only option to earning college credit at College Prime while in high school. The first participant listed three additional dual enrollment programs and expanded on them. However, these programs were not accredited and thus not included in this study.

The accredited dual enrollment program identified as meeting the study's criteria and serving as the primary focus of the research involved high school students earning transferable college credits through College Prime's NACEP-accredited dual enrollment program. The courses taken to earn college credit were taught at the high schools the students attended. The program leveraged an extensive support network to simplify class registration, attendance, and

final examinations for high school students. Not only did each high school student enrolled in the program have access to the same support services and amenities as all other College Prime students, but they were also assigned a dedicated counselor at their home high school or district who acted as a liaison between the students and College Prime.

The faculty in this program were high school teachers who met the requirements established by both NACEP and the state accrediting organization. This ensured that the coursework maintained the same level of rigor and academic quality as the equivalent college courses. In contrast to the counselor stationed at each high school who supported the students, faculty members were supported by faculty liaisons. For every subject taught in the high schools, a faculty liaison was assigned. This person was always a full-time college professor, from College Prime, whose job was to act as a direct contact for the high school teachers teaching dual enrollment. Their role was to provide professional support and guidance to high school instructors, in accordance with the NACEP policies. Building on this understanding of roles and support structures, the next step in the analysis involved identifying broader patterns within the data.

Analysis integrated both participant data and document review. From these findings, five overarching themes were identified:

- Creating Benchmarks through Academic Rigor and Curriculum
- Establishing Program Quality through Faculty and Assessment
- Strengthening Program Structure Through Governance and Policy
- Expanding the Program and Resources Through Strategic Partnerships
- Student Access and Success as Drivers of Academic Momentum

Creating Benchmarks through Academic Rigor and Curriculum

The theme of Creating Benchmarks through Academic Rigor and Curriculum highlights how College Prime maintains alignment between dual enrollment courses and their on-campus equivalents, ensuring students experience both the curriculum and the expectations of a true college-level education.

A review of the course catalog on the College Prime website indicated that the titles and course numbers for dual enrollment classes were consistent with those of the institution's regular courses. One document presented information reinforcing that when a student took a dual enrollment course and earned the associated college credit, the course content and learning outcomes were aligned with those of its university partners and were transferable. A list of academic pathways was provided to guide students and parents through course selection, helping them to identify which courses supported their chosen educational plan and met the academic standards of the partnering institutions. Documents reviewed emphasized the significance of NACEP accreditation as evidence of the program's dedication to maintaining academic rigor equivalent to that of community college courses. A brochure reinforced this by noting that accreditation not only guarantees the integrity of the curriculum but also ensures students receive robust support services from both their high school and College Prime.

Ensuring compliance with syllabus submission requirements also reinforced faculty accountability and provided the necessary evidence for the curriculum standard. Specific information such as student outcomes, grading scales, and course assignments could be obtained from the course syllabi; thus, when some instructors had not submitted syllabi at all, concerns were raised about whether their courses met the required standards. To mitigate this issue, submission deadlines were established, and liaisons were given direct access to monitor

compliance. Additionally, a standardized template was introduced, ensuring all necessary information required by College Prime was placed at the front of the syllabi, while the remaining portion contained the high school's required content. For example, Participant 2 said, "[The] plan was to make individual templates for each discipline with the liaison and figure that out so that things could change."

This structure enabled instructors to include both the required College Prime and high school information within the syllabus. Participant 2 emphasized the importance of this standardization stating, "Some syllabi were 50 pages long because high schools required additional content, while others barely included the required course objectives. We needed consistency." The implementation of this system improved documentation and compliance with the NACEP curriculum standard, ensuring syllabi were consistently collected, reviewed, and retained.

In their interview, Participant 1 said:

> The faculty liaison also approves the textbook. When the teacher gets a new textbook, we have to make sure the faculty liaison reviews it along with the syllabus every year to make sure that the course is truly aligned.

Another aspect of the curriculum standard was performing site visits and observations. For example, Participant 1 explained:

> They do also have to facilitate an observation or site visit. And we have a rotation where once every three years, a teacher is due for an observation. And the faculty liaison is the person who goes out to do that observation. Those are our checks and balances to make sure that the faculty who does that work every day is checking off on the quality of the high school courses.

Establishing Program Quality through Faculty and Assessment

Faculty and Program Quality emerged as a central theme, emphasizing the critical role of instructor qualifications, preparation, and professional support in sustaining the rigor of dual enrollment courses and ensuring alignment with institutional standards. The website for College Prime, a document associated with the State Accrediting Organization (SAO), and the document outlining the NACEP standards highlighted the requirement for high school teachers to teach in the dual enrollment program, which set clear expectations for teachers applying to teach dual enrollment courses. A PowerPoint document from the program director presented to the board of trustees reviewed the SAO and NACEP instructor credential requirements. A designated webpage outlined the application process for high school teachers, detailing the responsibilities of a liaison, available district contacts, and the necessary qualifications. The information found on the website also included College Prime's policies, procedures, and guidelines for prospective faculty to read. They further disclosed the institution's goals and links to relevant documentation and applications. The PowerPoint presentation also provided information on the textbook program, where College Prime would offer free textbooks to students and a copy for the instructor upon request.

Participant 1 explained how faculty credentialing remained a significant challenge in dual enrollment programs, particularly in maintaining compliance with NACEP Faculty standard, stating that strict credentialing requirements must be upheld [by College Prime]. This difference often led to concerns from high school counselors who questioned why one institution approved a teacher for dual enrollment while another did not. As Participant 1 explained:

> A high school counselor will call me and say, "our teacher applied to teach physics for [your school], and you said no, but [another institution] let them teach for them. We're

> going to go through [the other institution] to offer dual [enrollment] physics, because they let our teacher teach."

This inconsistency created challenges in maintaining partnerships with high schools, as institutions with more flexible credentialing policies may be perceived as more accommodating.

To ensure consistency and quality, faculty liaisons played a critical role in mentoring high school teachers and upholding NACEP's Faculty standards. These liaisons were assigned by discipline, with some overseeing multiple instructors across different schools. For example, in English, the most common dual enrollment subject, a single liaison supported all high school English teachers. Liaisons provided guidance, approved instructional materials, and ensured alignment with college expectations. Participant 1 stated, "Part of NACEP requirements make us have a faculty liaison assigned to the high school teachers." Experiences with faculty liaisons differed from one to another. Participant 1 shared some information on this by stating:

> Some of our liaisons have not lived in the high school world, and we've heard from some high school teachers that they feel a little detached from their liaison, and it's hard to connect and share those issues because our liaison just doesn't quite understand. And we're trying to figure out ways to help those relationships get a little bit stronger because of that disconnect.

Beyond curriculum oversight, faculty liaisons must conduct professional development and site visits. Each high school teacher underwent an observation rotation every 3 years, during which the liaison visited the classroom to evaluate instruction and provide feedback. These evaluations helped ensure instructors were maintaining college-level rigor. Participant 2 said, "When they had good liaisons who really worked with their teachers and did impactful evaluations, I think it improved the program." They then said, "For example, in the math

department, a liaison really started to visit schools, work closely with instructors, and provide meaningful feedback. Instructors who were open to that feedback became much more solid in their teaching."

Participants expressed frustration with accessing application materials for prospective dual enrollment instructors. Participant 2 expressed concern over the difficulty of finding application materials, stating, "[speaking to a teacher], 'Hey, have you applied to be a college faculty? Have you applied? And they [replied], 'Well, I just can't find it.'" Additionally, excessive printed materials and outdated website content caused confusion regarding policies, particularly when deadlines or requirements change. Participant 2 recounted a situation where a miscommunication about another organization requirement led to incorrect assumptions, saying, "There was something printed about stipends, and someone had read it and thought they had until [a certain time]; but they didn't."

Despite these challenges, participants reported that students generally had a positive experience in dual enrollment courses. High school instructors who taught college-level classes were often highly engaged, and students benefited from both rigorous coursework and strong faculty support. Participant 5 said:

> Our students that enroll in the college credit classes at high school are very happy in them. Even though it's hard, it's really engaging. They like the teachers, and I think they get a good group of students that want to be there and want to learn.

Participant 4 also recounted an email that was received from a parent, stating, "I had a mom email me, 'oh, my God, this is the greatest thing that's ever happened for my son.'" However, ensuring students enrolled in the correct courses remained a key responsibility of the high school counselors, who acted as the main point of contact between the institution and the high school.

"A lot of times we'll see where [students will make a mistake with their enrollment], for example, Susie enrolled in the wrong English course. And the high school counselor helped us catch those errors," Participant 1 explained.

In addition to assisting with enrollment, counselors served as a direct line of support for teachers, particularly those new to teaching dual enrollment. Teaching a college-level course for the first time, on top of high school responsibilities, can be overwhelming; especially when a course is also aligned with Advanced Placement (AP) standards. Participant 2 described the workload for dual enrollment teachers by stating, "You're teaching a double class when you really think about it. A lot of these teachers also teach [the same dual enrollment class] as an AP class, which has a whole other set of rules." Finding ways to balance high school, college, and AP requirements in one class while maintaining academic integrity was an ongoing challenge. Participant 2 emphasized, institutions must remain flexible in supporting high school teachers while still maintaining college-level rigor. They said, "Meet your standards, don't bring them down. But let's be flexible in how we can meet them. It's not black and white." The high school counselors also assisted the faculty liaison by helping high school faculty with information on the qualifications to teach dual enrollment.

To obtain and maintain NACEP accreditation, College Prime had to ensure high school faculty possess the necessary credentials to teach at the college level. This was another way the program upheld the rigor of its college-equivalent courses. Participant 6 explained they "didn't want another master's [degree]" but had "taken 18 graduate-level math classes" to qualify.

Beyond faculty credentialing and instructional oversight, there was also a growing concern about retention and institutional competition. Some high schools allowed teachers to choose through which institution they wanted to offer dual enrollment, which could result in

declining enrollment if another college is perceived as easier to work with. “We found out recently that some schools let the teacher pick who they want to do dual [enrollment] with. And a teacher chose to stay with [another institution] and dropped us,” Participant 2 shared. To prevent attrition, institutions must proactively engage students early in the process, providing clear guidance on course options and transferability.

Although these sessions focused primarily on subject-area enrichment, they also covered institutional policies and best practices. Participant 2 described the intent behind professional development, stating:

> The professional development was always focused on the content area, improving that enrichment of the content. Sometimes it could be a little about policies at the college, or other things, but [it’s also about] enriching your knowledge of [a subject] and how you can take that and apply it to your class.

According to the findings, ensuring faculty liaisons remain engaged in these efforts is critical to maintaining program integrity. Participant 6 reinforced this necessity, stating, “I think that it should. I mean, someone should be making sure that we’re doing the right thing.” Such faculty engagement is closely tied to assessment practices, as maintaining program integrity requires that student learning outcomes are evaluated with the same rigor as on-campus courses.

In alignment with the NACEP assessment standard, College Prime’s website provided information on textbooks along with approval forms for new classes. Instructors had to use approved textbooks and College Prime provided additional course materials used in the on-campus courses. Assessment ensured courses offered through the high school’s dual enrollment program maintained the same academic rigor, expectations, and student learning outcomes as their on-campus counterparts. One way College Prime maintained appropriate learning outcomes

was by requiring students to take finals created by college faculty. Although this requirement did not apply to all subjects, it was mandatory for math. Participant 6 stated:

> It's my fourth year teaching it, I'm learning, but my role is that I give the grades to the students. I get to have my own notes, homework, test, and quizzes. I get to control all of that as the professor, and then the only thing I don't control is their final [exam].

To make sure students were assessed appropriately, there was a regular systematic review of course syllabi from high school instructors. Syllabi served as a critical tool in aligning dual enrollment courses with college-level expectations and maintaining the rigor necessary for accreditation. Interviews revealed there was initially no formalized process for syllabus collection, as the responsibility was left to individual faculty members and their liaisons. Although some liaisons consistently gathered and reviewed syllabi, others did not, leading to gaps in documentation and inconsistent oversight of course content. Participant 2 acknowledged this issue, stating, "We had 260-some instructors, yet when we checked, only seven syllabi were on file. That was a problem." Participant 2 continued to tell how there was no real system in place; everything was sent via email, which created additional issues. Participant 2 said:

> I was sick of email that we had so many processes where people would email even with the [SAO] plan, that's why I created that, that system to even turn in the transcripts, because before it was just email, well, the person left the job, and then all of a sudden, we were trying to backtrack and figure all these people out, things from five years ago and files weren't saved. I wasn't here. Sometimes [the teachers] were very frustrated. Like, I don't know why you don't have this. I've sent this four times. We lost things. We didn't lose, I think the process just wasn't great, because it was email. And that was the

problem, and you're just relying on this. It was too individual, too siloed. It needed to be a department thing.

As explained by Participant 2, to address this issue, a centralized system was established to streamline syllabus submission and review. Faculty were directed to upload their syllabi through an online platform, creating a structured and accessible repository for accreditation purposes. This replaced the previous reliance on email submissions, which resulted in lost records, tracking difficulties, and inefficiencies in compliance verification. By transitioning to a shared system, multiple staff members, including directors, coordinators, and faculty liaisons, were granted access to review and verify syllabus submissions, ensuring continuity in the event of personnel changes. Participant 2 explained:

> Then I use teams or SharePoint, and I created files and gave permission to the liaison to get in there. Then they would get the syllabi, and dump them in. If faculty failed to provide them, then [Participant 2 would] contact them.

While syllabus review contributes to consistency at the course level, broader evaluation processes are also critical for monitoring institutional effectiveness. As part of these efforts, a PowerPoint document outlined the findings from the program evaluation process, including specific data collected and identifying necessary actions for program improvement. This document displayed some key performance indicators such enrollment numbers and how many dual enrollment students were in each of the top 10 enrolled courses. Number one on the list was composition of the student population of over 1,200 students, displaying College Prime's dual enrollment students made up over 20% of the college's overall enrollment. This document also listed the top five largest school districts and how many students were enrolled from each. The top district showed over 2,700 students while the bottom district showed four students. It also

provided specific information on the feedback received from surveys and outlined the plan of action based on it.

College Prime is required to conduct end-of-term surveys to collect feedback from the students. Participant 6 confirmed this when stating:

> They give out a survey that has a specific QR code, and the kids have to fill it out. The students are the ones that fill it out and then they send the information to me…like a college evaluation, but they do it on me, and then I think they read that information, and then I get a copy of it too, which I like. I like reading how the kids think that I have done as their professor, and then I do another one that's the same type of questions, but I asked my students for feedback from all my classes.

The program evaluation process was characterized by a strong emphasis on quantitative data and ongoing performance monitoring. Participant 7 stated, “I know from our side, we strictly look at numbers. Got a whiteboard outside my door, and we’re always trying to be plus one of where we were last year.” Expanding on this from another perspective, Participant 8 discussed how the high school representatives also provided feedback to better the programs offered by College Prime, stating, “We welcome feedback from our high school liaisons – who are our connection to families participating in our [dual enrollment] programs. We are always interested in learning what works well/could use improvement with our programs and events.”

In addition, enrollment data were reviewed in a structured manner during the period leading up to the enrollment deadline. Processes included analyzing previous semester enrollment trends, initiating targeted email communications, and involving registration teams to encourage student enrollment. Past enrollment data collected during that period indicated enrollment typically began at approximately 50% at the start of the week, increased to about 75%

by midweek, and reached roughly 80% as the deadline approached. These observations served as a basis for timely interventions. Participant 7 explained:

> I'll run the week or so before the enrollment deadline. I'll run some things. Who enrolled in Comp[osition] 1 last semester, who hasn't enrolled in Comp 2, and we'll get email blasts out, and if there's time, and if the list isn't incredibly long, we'll send it out to registration team folks to call them and encourage them to get enrolled in the next section. It's funny, the, you know, the Monday before the enrollment deadline, we're always at about 50% where we should be, and every administrator goes crazy. Oh my god. Why aren't they enrolling yet? Dude, why would they want to enroll? You know, it's not due until Friday. We're a deadline driven society now, so we're at 50% on Monday, by Wednesday, we're at about 75% and then Thursday, we're at about 80% or so, and then that Friday of the deadline is always just freaking nuts.

At the program level, institutional research played a critical role in program evaluation through the collection and analysis of survey data. Surveys were administered periodically to educators and high school counselors, as well as the students after every course. The feedback was systematically relayed to relevant stakeholders. Participant 1 noted, "I think just numbers don't lie. So, I think when we get those data reports from institutional research, I think that helps us know exactly what to attack and exactly what to fix." This system helped in the process of identifying specific areas for improvement and communicating necessary adjustments to high school representatives.

The administration continually reviewed survey methods to improve response rates and that feedback reflects participants' experiences. Feedback from high school counselors, who acted as a connection to families in the dual enrollment program, was also welcomed and

reviewed as part of the overall assessment strategy. Participant 1 described the surveys conducted by institutional research department by stating:

> We partner with our institutional research office, and they conduct surveys across the students, the teachers and even the high school principals. We get a survey every couple of years. I would say that determines the effectiveness that is found in our data, and there's still a lot we have to do to work on that. I know, for example, I was just in a meeting, the one that I came from before here was with my director, and we were talking about, when students are enrolled, do they know what they can access while they're [College Prime] students?

Participant 1 described these surveys as impact surveys and provided more information by stating:

> We have what's called an impact survey that goes out every couple of years to our teachers and to our [high school counselors], and I mentioned to the principals. We don't directly work with the principals, but we just hear what they think about the program. We have a survey that goes out to them as well. And once those results come in, I look at those, I take back any feedback that needs to go up through the chains here, and then if there's anything that we can address, I'll circle back to the high school and say, hey, we got a survey that says this. We've done this to fix it. Let's make sure that we're on the same page now. That is what I do, to assess and evaluate that data, and then circle back and make sure stuff gets handled.

Participant 2 talked about accreditation and the surveys that needed to be sent out by the faculty liaisons and if the feedback was being applied when they shared:

> You had to demonstrate you were supporting your faculty and your student experience. Were you sending out student surveys? Are you taking feedback they give you and doing something with it? Are you making sure your [dual enrollment] faculty have college level syllabi and that they're teaching. Are you doing evaluations?

Strengthening Program Structure Through Governance and Policy

Governance and policy form the structural backbone of dual enrollment programs, ensuring that institutional policies provide accountability and sustainability. Some of the documents highlighted the program's NACEP accreditation and referenced the official accreditation guide, which serves as a comprehensive resource for higher education institutions offering dual enrollment opportunities. It outlined the NACEP national standards (NACEP, n.d.), a set of rigorous criteria designed to ensure dual enrollment programs uphold high academic integrity. The guide served as both a framework for institutions to assess and improve their programs and as the primary resource for becoming or maintaining accreditation. The guide also provided detailed information on standards across various categories, including partnerships, curriculum, faculty, students, assessment, and program evaluation. The guide offered insights into how institutions can document and demonstrate compliance with these standards.

Supporting institutions in offering college-level courses in high school settings with the same rigor as on-campus courses, the guide also included information on the college-provided faculty model and the standards relevant to that type of program. Other documents pertained to the state's governing body; however, to protect College Prime's identity, references to the governing body have been anonymized in this study. These documents listed in detail the guidelines the program needed to follow and information about transferring from College Prime to other colleges or universities, general education requirements, and dual enrollment eligibility

guidelines. One of the PowerPoint documents presented to the board of trustees informed them the program was accredited by NACEP, the date when College Prime was accredited, and when they need to go through the reaccreditation process.

In addition to NACEP, participants noted the role of the state governing board, which establishes policies higher education within the state, but does not directly govern the community colleges. College Prime works closely with the board and adheres to its policies, maintaining consistency within higher education. The state governing board has established statewide dual enrollment programs that permit participation by students in the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades. This information was also supported in the program and the summer camp brochures. Additionally, there was an exception for ninth-grade students with a gifted IEP. Participant 1 explained this concept by saying:

> We have the [state governing board], is our governing body for the state, and they have established that all current enrollment programs across the state allow 10th, 11th, and 12th graders into their programs. There also is an exception for ninth grade students who have a gifted IEP, and so that is statewide, across the board, for everyone's eligibility [in dual enrollment]. Now it's interesting, because [the governing board], they govern the universities, and the community colleges don't necessarily fall under that, but they do partner very well with the community colleges, and then they do have Task Forces and everything where they include community college leadership across the state. We [follow their policies] because it just is the best practice across the state. Those policies govern our eligibility, then as far as the institution communicating them, thankfully, [the governing board] does really appreciate and acknowledge the voice of the K–12 institutions. A lot of our high school partners are really in tune with [the governing body]

already, because of different committees and task forces. But how we communicate that, it all comes through me. If I get updates from the state, it'll come from my [associate vice president] and then through my director to me, and then I'm that person who gets all the information out to the high Schools.

In addition to establishing eligibility standards, the state governing board-maintained oversight of universities while also collaborating with community colleges. Although it lacked direct authority over the latter, the board engaged them through policies, task forces and leadership initiatives. It also collaborated with K–12 institutions, ensuring that high school partners remained involved through committees and collaborative groups At the institutional level, communication of these policies followed a structured process. Updates from the state are relayed through the executive leadership level and then through a director before reaching the program staff. Consequently, Participant 1 stated, "I serve as the primary point of contact responsible for distributing this information to high schools, ensuring that all partners stay informed and aligned with statewide policies."

During the interviews, one participant expressed concern regarding the absence of policies governing high schools' selection of higher education partners. This absence permitted high schools to determine which dual enrollment courses to offer and which college to partner with. Due to its NACEP accreditation, College Prime had higher teacher eligibility requirements; if no teachers met these criteria for a particular class, high schools could opt to partner with an institution that permitted teachers to instruct college-level courses without adhering to such requirements.

Participant 1 stated, "So NACEP really guides everything that we do in the program." Its standards drove daily operations even in a state where accreditation was not required, in contrast,

Participant 2 noted that "Minnesota requires [NACEP Accreditation]". Accreditation policies were described as comprehensive and served to maintain consistency and accountability within the program. Participant 2 stated, "The program being accredited again just helps keep things in line. It's helpful to keep people accountable." Finally, these policies, although sometimes open to interpretation, established key operational standards and include initiatives aimed at increasing student engagement on campus. Participant 1 described how NACEP established best practices, as they shared:

> NACEP is the only accrediting body in country who offers accreditation for dual [enrollment] programs, and so that is really kind of our leading guide, because I've learned from other institutions who don't operate under the NACEP standards, you can just do whatever you want. And this helps us say, "if you want to be successful with this, you've got to hit this box, and you've got to do this." NACEP is guiding our whole program on a daily basis because of the best practices they've outlined and established. Other colleges don't seem to prioritize [NACEP], but I've learned for example, Minnesota is a state where their governor, requires that every institution is NACEP accredited, and everybody follows the same guidelines. And so, it makes a big difference there. Everyone's in NACEP, and everyone has to hit those check marks and things like that. But with us, it's different. We're on our own, and we know that other institutions do things that follow best practices, but we again align very closely with NACEP. That is an accomplishment, or an achievement because it is a lot of work, because you have to really document [the program]. So, we're very, very proud as an institution to be [a] NACEP accredited institution in the in the state.

Other than the governing body overseeing the universities, there is also the State Accrediting Organization (SAO). They align with NACEP and require dual enrollment teachers to have specific qualifications. However, this was not always the case, as Participant 2 explained how policies were enforced starting in 2015, as they shared:

> [SAO] essentially buckled down on their own policies, which is funny. It used to be a little bit more, we leave it to the college, but then, depending on the college or university, it was a little wild west. Some people were definitely getting credentialed who maybe shouldn't have been credentialed. In 2015, the hammer was laid down. Extra laid down. It wasn't just as it was always, this policy was always in place where you either had to have a master's in your content area, or a master's of anything with 18, graduate units in that content area, and I'm speaking on the gen ed classes. This talk is pure general education, histories, your English, your Biology, that kind of stuff.

This enforcement of policy meant College Prime had to begin auditing their instructors and develop plans to become compliant, as Participant 2 continued to state, "I remember when this happened, we had to audit all of our people."

Participant 7 also discussed the policies set by the state's governing body, NACEP, and the SAO and how it impacted the students, as they shared:

> [The state governing body], requires high school freshman be deemed gifted on an IEP to enroll. It's rare that a [dual enrollment] course is open to a high school freshman, but it has happened before, and typically they are on a gifted IEP, but it pains me a couple of times a year to tell someone that I know you're a freshman, and kudos to you for being in this higher level class, but without that gifted IEP, unfortunately, you won't be able to enroll in the course. Between that and, the whole instructor credential thing that [SAO]

and NACEP requires is the most painful thing, but from a student enrollment standpoint, from a prerequisite standpoint, I Say, instructor qualifications, are a bit as just as painful as that instructor qualification requirement. Yeah, trying to convince someone that I know you've worked your way up in the high school and you are in this class, which we say, equates to our class, but you still have to prove that you can take our class; that can sometimes be a difficult conversation.

Expanding the Program and Resources Through Strategic Partnerships

While policy enforcement and compliance created certain challenges for instructors and students, College Prime simultaneously focused on its partnerships and course offerings, demonstrating the institution's commitment to sustaining program growth and accessibility. Based on information from its website and interviews, College Prime has a comprehensive staff structure that goes beyond the requirements for NACEP accreditation. The program is led by one or two directors who report to a college administrator. Additional non-leadership roles include high school faculty, faculty liaisons, high school counselors, and outreach and event coordinators.

This strong organizational framework has supported significant program growth. According to a recent presentation for the board of trustees, College Prime has established partnerships with more than 25 postsecondary institutions. These collaborations enabled the college to offer 378 course sections taught by over 250 instructors, spanning 30 academic disciplines and featuring 77 unique courses. In addition to academic offerings, College Prime extended partnership benefits to students through initiatives such as a college preparation summer camp and a university outreach event, where students could connect with representatives from local four-year universities. A flyer about the summer camp event welcomed high school

sophomores, juniors, and seniors; the event was free to all residents. It was a multiday event located on the main campus. The flyer provided registration information and advertised components exploring college majors and career fields. The flyer also advertised about learning how to find one's place in college and discovering healthy stress-reducing and time management techniques. It also invited students to participate in a question-and-answer session with current college students.

A brochure for a University Connection Night outlined event details and registration information. It also promoted the benefits of the dual enrollment program, highlighting how students could save both time and money by earning college credits early and getting a head start on their bachelor's degrees before enrolling at one of the participating universities. Additionally, the following was also advertised:

- exploring College Prime's dual enrollment program and student resources
- learning about the statewide governing board and the general education framework
- hearing from university admissions representatives and a student panel
- meeting with the financial aid team to get a jump start on the FAFSA application

During an interview, Participant 1 discussed how College Prime collaborated with over 250 teachers across 30 high schools within its eight partner districts. Popular courses included English, history, and biology, as they fulfilled general education requirements for many degree programs. Participant 1 said:

> I know I did mention that we have the different stakeholders internally and then externally. I mentioned that we have 30 high schools, we do also touch 30 different disciplines here. Our biggest three disciplines are English, History and Biology. Most of our students are enrolling in those three courses. We realize they do that because those

> are Gen Ed requirements for many degrees. A lot of students might take those and transfer to [one of the universities in the area], we've seen a lot of students take interest in those three courses because they're easily transferable and they're needed for any degree.

Program information was distributed through posters, newsletters, and social media, with additional outreach efforts such as high school visits, committee initiatives, and direct engagement with educators and students.

To effectively engage different audiences, the organization was refining its social media strategies, using Facebook to connect with parents while leveraging Instagram and Snapchat to reach high school students. Participant 1 said:

> We're also dipping into social media with our marketing team. It's hard because social media platforms are preferred by different groups, and we've learned that parents, we can target parents through Facebook, but high school students are not on Facebook, they're on Instagram or Snapchat. How can we find ways to market on Facebook a certain way to capture the audience or the attention of parents. Then how can we find ways to market on Instagram and Snapchat that are going to be cool enough? You know, for the students.

However, social media was just one aspect of their outreach efforts. Counselors, who served as designated program representatives, played a crucial role in communication and advocacy, receiving stipends for their efforts in disseminating information, hosting enrollment events, and assisting students during enrollment. As Participant 3 noted, "I think a huge portion of it is relationship building with the high school counterparts, going to them when you need to." These representatives acted as the primary link between College Prime and high schools, using their established relationships with students to facilitate enrollment and ensure accuracy in course selection.

Beyond the digital engagement of social media, College Prime was strengthening its partnership with the local library to promote student resources such as tutoring and fitness center access. Although social media and committee efforts contributed to awareness, traditional methods such as flyers, school visits, and an up-to-date website remained essential. Participant 1 discussed the growing partnership with the library, use of social media, and hosting events at the high schools when they said:

> We also do have a partnership that we're continuing to grow with our library here. And like I mentioned before, with students, you can access the library. They can access tutoring. One thing we're trying to do is send out [information], did you know you can access the library? Did you know that if you're a student, you can visit the fitness center and come for tutoring online or in person. We're trying to find different things to get that information out there. The committees have a strategy. Tapping into social media has been a strategy, but right now, we just create a lot of flyers for things from our events coordinator and send them through the [high school counselors], and that's been helpful. We're trying to also do a few more visits at the high schools.

Counselors and staff generally found the enrollment process manageable, benefiting from a strong collaboration with the college, which ensured flexibility in addressing student needs, including transferring credits when necessary. However, some counselors expressed concerns about the complexity of the admissions process. To address these concerns, subcommittees were analyzing procedural inefficiencies and exploring technological improvements to modernize the application process.

The high school counselors played a pivotal role in this process, not only assisting with enrollment but also advocating for students and addressing academic concerns. However,

logistical challenges, particularly transportation, were identified as barriers to student participation. One counselor emphasized the importance of increasing College Prime events at local high schools or K–12 district offices to make access easier. Participant 5 explained:

> The school does a lot of good events at the various college locations, and I know they would love to figure out how to engage more high schoolers in their offerings there. I think that's hard for high schoolers, just not always the transportation thing, but a lot of the kids that do the dual credit are very involved in the school.

The participant continued, suggesting shifting events closer to students could improve engagement, as she said:

> I think if there were events hosted in the [K–12] district, not even at each specific high school, that were the types of events, similar to informational nights and things that they're doing. If we could bring them to us instead of kids having to go to them, I think they would have a better turnout.

In addition to accessibility concerns, students frequently asked how to transfer their College Prime credits to local universities. According to Participant 5, "If we could bring those presentations to us, I think they would be better attended."

For the events coordinator, outreach and communication about the program was one of their key responsibilities, as described by Participant 8, who said, "My role on the team is focused on community outreach. I develop and implement events to raise awareness of [College Prime's dual enrollment] programs as well as the many resources [College Prime] offers our community." Participant 8 revealed the programs at College Prime not only used events but also word of mouth for advertisement. Participant 8 said:

> We offer information nights for our programs that are highly attended by families of the largest area school districts. However, word of mouth and promotion of our programs by district counselors is most likely our most successful and effective form of marketing. Word of mouth marketing is vital to the success of our [dual enrollment program]. While there is always room for improvement, knowing our programs are growing is a testament to the quality of our campus leadership, program directors, instructors, and facilities. We are grateful for a community who continues to generously pour financial resources into our college to be able to provide such excellent programs, instructors and services to our students.

Participant 8 further discussed the effectiveness of the high school representatives in disseminating information to the appropriate stakeholders, stating:

> Our [high school representatives] are our biggest allies and advocates. It is nearly impossible to pass along information to our [dual enrollment program] students without liaisons dispersing it on our behalf. High school students, generally speaking, do not use or check their [College Prime] email addresses.

Participant 1 discussed how the collaboration between College Prime and high school representatives was generally strong, with open lines of communication. They described the ongoing exchange between counselors and College Prime, stating, "I would say that we have good communication because they share ups and downs, and they're calling me, emailing me if they need anything." However, the participant also acknowledged a challenge when stating:

> I think one thing that's a challenge is just their level of knowledge, because these are high school counselors, and they have their own workload. And on top of that, there are other

institutions in the area who offer dual [enrollment] to them, and they must try to remember, what does [College Prime] do? What are their deadlines?

Student Access and Success as Drivers of Academic Momentum

The theme of Creating Student Access and Success highlights how dual enrollment programs go beyond course offerings to ensure students are both prepared for and supported throughout their academic journey. At College Prime, these supports were designed to remove barriers, promote equity, and foster long-term achievement for dual enrollment students. A program advertisement document outlined a range of student support services designed to foster academic success and career readiness. Resources included interview practice sessions, free tutoring, and access to counselors at the Career and Development Center, who assisted with resume building, career planning, and professional development through workshops and one-on-one sessions. Students were encouraged to consult with their high school counselors to explore enrollment options and receive guidance on navigating the dual enrollment process, while additional support was offered through college prep activities that provided educational guidance, stress reduction strategies, time management techniques, and opportunities to engage in question-and-answer sessions with current college students.

The enrollment guide was a critical resource, offering detailed information on application procedures, fees, financial aid, placement requirements, and the full range of student support services available. Documentation regarding a university outreach night and College Connection Night advertised dedicated student information sessions that provided direct engagement with university representatives, financial aid counselors, and academic advisors, as well as guidance on earning transferable credits and reducing tuition costs. Further documentation highlighted

services such as assistance with obtaining student IDs, academic advising to navigate admissions, and support for a seamless transition between high school and College Prime.

Students had access to a wealth of online resources, including links to academic support services and on-campus amenities; contact information for resources at both College Prime and partnering high schools was also readily available on the institution's website. Another brochure informed students of additional benefits and academic support services. The program offered small class sizes that allowed for more individualized teacher attention, contributing to an environment that fostered academic success and a sense of community and belonging. Additional resources included information on seamless transfer pathways and placement testing requirements, further supporting students' preparation for continued academic success.

To make it easy for the high school counselors working in the program to identify pathways for students, a spreadsheet was made available to each of the school districts outlining the various pathways and the college courses needed to get a head start. The dual enrollment calendar was provided to inform stakeholders of important dates such as enrollment, application deadlines, last day to add or drop a course, and a list of student resources.

High school counselors at College Prime played a central role in connecting students with their postsecondary goals. They assisted students in learning how to apply for scholarships and in completing the necessary paperwork. As Participant 1 explained, "We do have scholarships available too, and so for them to learn how to apply for a scholarship and fill out paperwork on that is also really helpful."

Academic support was also a key component of the student experience at College Prime. High school students enrolled in the dual enrollment program had access to free tutoring services like on-campus students. Participant 1 also noted, "I looked at a survey, an end of course survey

that was sent to all our students last year, and it said that, like, 42% of the students were aware that they could even come for tutoring." Although the tutoring service was well established, this feedback indicated more work is needed to ensure a higher percentage of students are aware of and engaged with the many academic supports available to them.

In addition, College Prime supported student engagement through targeted enrollment and outreach activities. Presentations were held at the beginning of the school year for both students and their parents to explain the enrollment process, course options, credit transfer, and financial aid opportunities. When asked about how the students perceived their instructors and the support they provided, Participant 5 stated:

> Our students that enroll in the college credit classes at high school are very happy in them. They like the teachers, the teachers that teach those courses. Even though it's hard, it's really engaging. And I think they get a good group of students that want to be there and want to learn. In those classes, the kids seem happy. They go visit their teachers for help. Every class that I've observed or been in or heard about has been positive.

One of the participants stated some feedback also highlighted challenges in digital communication and enrollment processes at College Prime. Concerns were raised about the complexity of the College Prime website and the overwhelming number of emails sent to students and parents, which can obscure important deadlines and updates. As Participant 5 stated, "I know, at least the feedback we've gotten about emails is that there's just so many emails and parents don't know what's important, what's not important." Additional information highlights concern about the level of dedicated counseling support for dual enrollment students.

Some participants indicated high school students were not receiving the level of guidance needed to navigate course selection and academic advising. In support of this view, Participant 2 stated:

> I think there should be a full-time counselor, if not a part-time counselor, full-time counselor who's going to do academic advising. It would be great to have an outreach person that can be kind of all-encompassing of Admissions and Student Services, because I think they could work in tandem with the team.

Participant 2 remarked, "They are not being serviced by counselors, like at all. These two girls taking these classes, they're just taking whatever, and they'll just sometimes just take too much. And I'm like, No one needs six histories." Participant 7 added to the concern when they stated, "Kudos to you, you got a 4.0 yay. But you don't have enough English and history. So being careful and laying out proper groundwork for students to be taking courses that are going to count towards whatever degree they want at whatever institution they want." These participants both underscored the need for additional, dedicated counseling resources within the dual enrollment program to ensure students receive appropriate academic advising and support.

There were two opposing views on the admissions process for dual enrollment students. One perspective came from a high school counselor, Participant 5, who complimented the process, stating:

> I was familiar with the program from when I was in high school, so transitioning into this role was seamless. I think even our counselors that aren't as familiar with it find it easy. [the county] has been great to work with. I don't do too much of the figuring out which teachers are eligible to teach what classes I just do, helping kids get into the classes once they're enrolled with us. They've been very flexible. They help with what we need help

> with. They have a good grasp of understanding that we are working with high schoolers. If kids mess up things or do something wrong, they're good at fixing them or finding a way to make it work. I just had really great experience with them. Last week, I had a new student that was coming to our school mid-year that was enrolled in a dual credit program from another college but didn't finish the course there because it was a yearlong course, and they worked with the other community college to allow the work to transfer so that [the student] could still earn the credit. They've just been great, and if it's good for students, then they make it happen.

In contrast, another perspective was shared by someone working at College Prime who had received feedback from multiple high school counselors, some of whom felt the process was not as straightforward. Participant 1 explained:

> I know one thing we're trying to work through is just our admissions process, because when students apply for admission, they have to create a login just to do the application. And then a lot of times, they think that login is what they need to be a student. And then once they get admitted, they get a [College Prime] login. And there are a lot of different kinds of clunky pieces with our admissions process that we're trying to go through. Because we have 4000 students, a lot of our counselors [have shared], this is an issue.

When discussing the program more broadly, Participant 5 also commented on how students were able to graduate with enough credits to transition directly into university enrollment. Participant 5 said:

> We have kids that are graduating high school with 24 credits that they can just transfer on to [a university] with them, and they don't have to repeat the coursework. That's what we tell kids all the time, you're doing the work anyway, you might as well just get the credit for it, so

you don't have to repeat it. If you don't do it now, you're going to have to do it then. We have a lot of kids that really are taking advantage of it and realizing how helpful it is.

The enrollment guide included instructions on how to apply, meet placement requirements, manage tuition payments, and access student resources. Another document advertised an on-campus event connecting students with 4-year universities. The event served as a key access point, engaging students with university representatives, exploring financial aid options, and learning about transfer opportunities.

Additional documentation included information on college prep activities, such as academic advising and a review of available disciplines. The event offered students the opportunity to meet with counselors for guidance on navigating the admissions and enrollment processes. One website provided links for Career and Technical Education (CTE) enrollment, while others offered information on transferring credits efficiently and accessing financial aid resources. Contact information was available on several websites and links for both College Prime and the partnering high schools, offering support to students, along with a dedicated frequently asked questions page, details on adding or dropping classes, key policies, and the student handbook.

Several of the participants mentioned financial aid was available to those who needed it and the high school counselors were willing to support the students. Participant 1 stated, "We do have scholarships available too, and so for them to learn how to apply for a scholarship and fill out paperwork on that is also really helpful." Although the high school counselors supported enrollment for students from their high school, the staff of the program had to support over 4,000 students from all their respective high schools, which Participant 1 pointed out when they said:

> I know one thing we're trying to work through is our admissions process, because when students apply for admission, they create a login just to do the application. Then a lot of times, they think that login is what they need to be a student. And then once they get admitted, they get a College Prime login. There are a lot of different kind of clunky pieces with our admissions process that we're trying to go through. Because we have 4000 students, a lot of our counselors [have stated], this is an issue. How can you fix it? Fix it now? It was something that I can't control.

Although Participant 1's perspective was about the total program, other participants had different perspectives. Participant 5 explained their role and discussed how they supported students through the enrollment process and what they thought about the enrollment process when they shared:

> I'm like the representative at our [high school], I am the person that communicates between the students, parents, and the community college. I help with recruitment, but more like enrollment, making sure that people have the information about what is [dual enrollment program], how do they get signed up for it? How do they get in the classes to get dual enrollment? At the beginning of the school year, I'll do a presentation to all the kids that are enrolled in a [dual enrollment] class, talking them through the process of how to enroll, what classes they get, briefly about how the classes could transfer somewhere else with them, how much they cost, and those things, I also do a parent presentation. It's the exact same presentation, and then I spend probably the next three weeks helping kids apply to the community college, enroll in the classes, connect them with scholarships or grant applications if they need help paying for the courses. Then in the Spring, some of the classes are Fall and Spring enrollment. Some are Spring

> enrollment only. A smaller presentation, I just do it to the classes that this is their first time enrolling, and then kind of just send out the information. [Reminding them], this is a re enrollment period for a class you're in if you're wanting to take it. Now is the time to sign up.

Although Participant 1 noted they received complaints about the enrollment process, Participant 5 stated:

> How [College Prime] has it set up, is, it couldn't be easier. I think for kids, of course, there are some hurdles that they face of, how do I apply to a college? Things like that, but nothing that's not manageable in high school, and once they get their account, it's like, type in this number, push, add, and then you're in the course.

Several participants mentioned communication was key to a solid program.

One of the main responsibilities of the designated high school counselors was to disseminate information to the faculty, students, and parents. Participant 1 said:

> [They] are our mouthpiece, and we do actually give them a stipend for their work. And we do have a set aside amount in our budget to give them a stipend every year, just because we do ask them to funnel information out to their students and parents, and they do have, back to school nights, where they'll have information available about our program, and so nine times out of 10, we're going to lean on them to help us get information out.

Participant 5 stated transportation was an issue for many students. The participant commented on how holding events within the school district versus at one of the college sites may have a higher turnout due to proximity of the high school. They also suggested bringing the placement testing to the high school would yield more test takers as some of the students were unable to locate

transportation. The participant stated one solution would be for College Prime to arrange transportation from the high school to the college campus. Participant 5 said:

> The biggest thing that we have talked about, is there are a lot of placement tests, which I understand that there have to be placement tests, and we have to make sure that kids get into it. If there was an option that we could administer those placement tests here [at the high school], whether it's like a program that they put on the computer and we can host, like a placement testing day or something like that. That would be so helpful, because we aren't far from the community college. But sometimes it disproportionately affects kids that will want to take the classes, whether it be they go to work after school, or it's a transportation issue to get there, and then they're trying to figure out, how can I take this placement test so I can take the college course at school? There have been times when I've asked our principals, like, can I borrow a school vehicle to drive kids over and do it. If there was a way that we could just offer that placement testing in this building, whether we get trained as proctors, or they send a proctor over, or something like that, it would take away a barrier for some.

Unexpected Findings

Two unexpected findings emerged from the data. The first was that several participants described personal experiences with College Prime's dual enrollment program, either as former students themselves or through their children's participation. The second unexpected finding involved notable differences in perspectives among participant groups regarding communication, collaboration, and engagement with the program.

The first finding highlighted the program's deep integration within the community. Participant 5, for example, reflected on their own experience with the program: "I was familiar with the program from when I was in high school, so transitioning into this role was pretty seamless." Similarly, when discussing college readiness, Participant 7 noted:

> Let's get the students who are college ready, let's get them some [college] credits under their belt. My daughter and son are prime examples. I'll say that my daughters already graduated and my son is going to graduate this year. Both of them had close to 30 hours [in the dual enrollment program before graduating high school].

These reflections suggested that participants' personal connections to the program extended beyond professional roles and shaped how they viewed its effectiveness. Participant 8 reinforced this point by emphasizing that word of mouth served as an effective and trusted method of outreach for dual enrollment within the community.

The second finding revealed variations in experiences across participants groups. Designated high school counselors reported frequent interactions with College Prime staff, students, parents, the local event coordinator, and high school faculty. Counselors described working closely with the program director and providing numerous firsthand accounts of their collaborations to support students. For example, one counselor emphasized how they partnered with the program director to address challenges and share important information with their school community, a partnership echoed by other participants. In contrast, high school faculty described having limited or no direct contact with the program director or College Prime administrators, with most communication occurring only through students, parents, or assigned faculty liaisons. Similarly, College Prime staff who worked directly with high schools noted collaborating primarily with faculty liaisons and designated counselors rather than faculty at

large. Senior administrators, meanwhile, reported a very different perspective, describing their focus on institutional metrics, such as key performance indicators, and their primary engagement with the program director. Unlike counselors or staff members, these administrators reported little to no direct interaction with students, parents, or other K–12 personnel.

Summary

This chapter began with a review of the research questions and an introduction to the dual enrollment opportunities at College Prime. The findings related to the accredited program were then presented, followed by a discussion of unexpected results. Chapter 5 offers an analysis of the findings in relation to the research questions, explores their implications, provides recommendations for future research, and concludes with a summary.

Chapter 5 - Conclusions and Recommendations

Chapter 5 presents the conclusions drawn from the data analyzed in Chapter 4. It begins with an overview of the problem, the purpose of the study, and a review of the research questions. This is followed by a discussion of the conceptual frameworks, methodology, and interpretation of the findings in relation to the research questions. The chapter then examines how the findings align with the existing literature and discusses their implications, including implications for practice. Finally, recommendations for future research and overall conclusions are provided.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the dual enrollment policies, practices, and stakeholder perceptions of a community college dual enrollment program, accredited by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP), contributing to the academic momentum of students.

Research Questions

Two research questions (RQ) guided this study:

RQ1: What are the dual enrollment policies and practices of a dual enrollment program accredited by the NACEP at a community college?

RQ2: How do stakeholders perceive the NACEP-accredited dual enrollment program contributing to the academic momentum of students?

Discussion of Findings

This section addresses the findings as they relate to the study's RQs. The information presented is derived from interviews, document analysis, and the literature review. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks inform the interpretation of these findings.

Research Question 1

RQ1 asked, what are the dual enrollment policies and practices of a dual enrollment program accredited by the NACEP at a community college? The theme of expanding the program and resources through strategic partnerships emerges as a central component of the dual enrollment programs development. At the foundation of the program are the policies established by the state governing board, which define eligibility standards, transfer guidelines, and general education requirements. While College Prime is not governed by the state like the Universities, the institution aligns with their policies to follow best practices and maintain collaboration with the state and partnering universities. Compliance with the State Accrediting Organization (SAO) is mandatory, establishing requirements related to eligibility, assessment, and institutional accountability. When looking at how College Prime implemented these policies, and those from NACEP, the theme strengthening program structure through governance and assessment emerges.

Findings indicated that although not required, College Prime pursued program accreditation through the NACEP. The SAO policies focused primarily on institutional compliance, whereas NACEP accreditation emphasized program quality. For instance, NACEP standards outlined faculty qualifications, curriculum alignment, academic rigor, and student access to appropriate support services. Participants described this added accreditation as an

intentional choice by College Prime, aimed at strengthening program quality and ensuring broader transferability of earned credits across partner institutions.

The study findings indicated that practices of the dual enrollment program established clear structures for supporting staff, faculty, and students. Each high school or district had a designated counselor, who received a stipend by College Prime, to support the students and faculty. Faculty liaisons supported the faculty from all secondary institutions. Communication practices were also enhanced, with some participants noting the program "over-communicates" with staff, faculty, parents, and students. Practices related to student enrollment were under review to improve the enrollment experience, as stated by Participant 1, "We put a committee together that's working on researching other ways that institutions funnel their students through the enrollment process, and so that is helping us kind of analyze what we're doing right, what we're doing wrong." Additional measures ensured high school students enrolled in the dual enrollment program could access support services and resources on College Prime campuses. Participant 2 explained, "Then I use Teams or SharePoint, and I created files," describing how they developed new practices to collect the necessary information from faculty in order to gather evidence for accreditation and maintain compliance.

Finally, evaluation practices were implemented to assess both the faculty and the overall program, establishing program quality through faculty and assessment. Multiple perspectives and objectives were considered through various evaluation processes. First, reports were generated to analyze program enrollment, student success rates, and the transition of students from high school to College Prime or other postsecondary institutions. These reports monitored key performance indicators relative to the college's goals. Next, evaluations gathered feedback on the program itself for the program leadership to analyze. This information was used to make changes

to the program that would impact the student experience and other practices to ensure program quality and compliance. In addition, information on faculty performance and curriculum quality was analyzed to meet NACEP and SAO requirements.

Research Question 2

RQ2 asked, how do stakeholders perceive the NACEP-accredited dual enrollment program contributing to the academic momentum of students? When discussing NACEP accreditation, participants emphasized it represents nationally recognized standards, as acknowledged by the State Accrediting Organization (SAO). By pursuing NACEP accreditation, College Prime used these standardized guidelines to enhance its program and ensure credits are transferable, a goal due to the number of neighboring institutions that were primarily universities.

By being accredited and facilitating partnerships with other institutions College Prime has ensured its courses met rigorous standards. As a result, nearly all credits earned at College Prime were transferable according to the participants, “it’s a transferability thing” (Participant 2 stated when discussing general education courses). This transferability was essential, as students can transition from high school to a university, or community college, with advanced standing due to accumulated college-level credits as shared by Participant 5, “we have kids that are graduating high school with 24 credits that can just transfer on to [a university], they don't have to repeat the coursework.” Consequently, these students could reduce the time required to complete a degree by a semester or more, saving money and accelerating academic progress. The data collected from the participants here helped in the discovery of the theme, student access and success as drivers of academic momentum.

Academic momentum, sustained engagement, and progress in postsecondary education, can be further driven by improved student experiences. College Prime actively surveyed students and parents to continually refine the educational experience. For example, the college hosted university events where regional universities met with dual enrollment students, allowing them to build early connections and establish clear educational pathways. Additionally, participants noted the state was working to streamline general education requirements, aiming to establish a standard framework across universities and community colleges, which would further facilitate the transfer of credits.

Although not asked about it, multiple parent–participants reported that their children were able to graduate early from neighboring universities because they earned a significant number of credits at College Prime. This outcome supports the effectiveness of the faculty and staff's efforts and underscores the benefits of the program in promoting academic momentum.

The theme of creating benchmarks through academic rigor and curriculum emerges as the stakeholders viewed the NACEP-accredited dual enrollment program as setting rigorous academic benchmarks that prepare students for college-level expectations. Through challenging coursework and early exposure to college systems, participants perceived students gaining confidence and a stronger sense of readiness for post-secondary success. This comprehensive approach not only enhances student readiness but also contributes significantly to academic momentum, positioning students for continued success in their educational and career endeavors.

Additional Discussions

Many studies have emphasized removing barriers and providing equal opportunities for student success (Cassidy et al., 2010; Dai, 2021; Holten & Pierson, 2016; Lewis & Overman, 2008; Mehl et al., 2020; Reichardt & Christeson, 2020; Xu et al., 2019). As required by NACEP

and the state governing board, College Prime mandates all students complete a placement test to determine eligibility for the program. It was found that some students encountered transportation barriers that prevented them from participating in the required testing, ultimately excluding them from program eligibility. This discrepancy highlights a potential oversight in administrative evaluation, where key performance indicators may fail to account for access-related challenges.

An additional discovery was about the need for more academic advising oversight. As participants shared, some students would elect to take courses that did not advance their academic progress, such as taking multiple math classes that were not a general education requirement. Several participants expressed concern over the lack of oversight and resources to address this issue. One participant recommended College Prime invest more in dedicated academic advising for dual enrollment students. Although these students had access to college advising services, the support was not tailored exclusively to high school students; rather, it was distributed across the entire college body. This situation can hinder the accumulation of transferable credits and delay the development of academic momentum, a critical factor for early academic success.

Finally, valuable insights regarding faculty support were uncovered. Dual enrollment teachers reported the available support greatly enhanced their teaching. One faculty member highlighted two primary sources of support: a designated local high school counselor to help address student issues and a comprehensive curriculum support system, via a faculty liaison, that includes curriculum guidance, access to materials, and regular observations. These observations not only ensure curricular rigor is maintained but also provide meaningful feedback. Such support mechanisms contribute to a smoother transition to college and foster the development of academic momentum. These findings suggest both academic momentum and the overall student

experience are influenced by a variety of factors that range from administrative policies and resource allocation to targeted academic advising and robust faculty support.

Discussion of Findings Related to the Literature

When comparing the findings of the study to the literature reviewed, similarities and additional insights were discovered. When reviewing the literature, studies (Bailey & Karp, 2005; Speroni, 2011a; Wozniak & Palmer, 2012) often spoke about state policies that were created and how they impacted the dual enrollment program. College Prime is no different in that it is held to the policies put in place. However, College Prime used NACEP policies to create a robust program. State policies also force restrictions on the dual enrollment program at College Prime.

Most importantly, the program set eligibility requirements requiring students to take an exam to determine if they were eligible or not. They also restricted the program to sophomores, juniors, and seniors with the exception for freshman who are identified as gifted. This is similar to programs identified by Venezia and Kirst (2005). In these cases, the eligibility requirements were creating artificial barriers for students, which can perpetuate inequalities within the education system.

Cost is another barrier high school students face (Bailey & Karp, 2005; Reichardt & Christeson, 2020). College Prime was able to obtain funding for all students coming from lower-income families to enroll in their dual enrollment and other similar programs for free. This finding aligned with Bailey & Karp (2005) and Reichardt & Christeson (2020) as it is saving the students money in the future and provides them with college credit for free or minimal costs. Multiple participants mentioned this option, identifying cost would not be a barrier for students to enroll at College Prime. One of the program counselors even stated when a student showed

interest in the program, they would help them complete any financial aid and grant applications needed to ensure they receive support.

One of the participants, a faculty member, mentioned the students found the academic rigor of their dual enrollment class to be beneficial. This observation aligned with a study by Speroni (2011b) that revealed rigorous coursework leads to positive student outcomes. Another participant noted students who initially doubted their ability to excel in college eventually discovered they could complete the coursework, making college seem like a realistic option, a finding similar to Catron's (2001) conclusion that success in dual enrollment courses makes college a viable option.

Cassidy et al. (2010) addressed the challenges institutions may face when establishing a dual enrollment program. They emphasized the importance of defining clear roles within the program. College Prime implemented this approach by establishing multiple layers of administration and support staff. This structure included designated personnel responsible for overseeing the program's alignment with the college's goals, individuals managing day-to-day operations, staff providing faculty support, and specific personnel dedicated to assisting students from each of the high schools or institutions. These roles were largely guided by the policies outlined in the NACEP standards, ensuring College Prime's dual enrollment program maintains its accreditation.

Barnett et al. (2004) highlighted the importance of offering high-quality college-level courses. College Prime addressed this concern by adhering to NACEP standards and implementing multiple strategies. One such strategy was ensuring faculty members met the required educational qualifications in their respective disciplines when teaching dual enrollment students. Another key method, as outlined by NACEP, involved using faculty liaisons, whose

responsibilities are outlined in the standards. This information was systematically documented and submitted to NACEP as part of the accreditation renewal process. Following the NACEP standards, College Prime was able to standardize their curriculum ensuring that the courses offered at the high schools are following the same standards, objectives, and rigor as its on-premises counterpart. This was one of the suggestions made by Speroni (2011a) as they stated the need for quality control.

Barnett et al. (2004) identified 10 critical decisions necessary to develop a high-quality dual enrollment program. The 10 decisions are italicized in the bullets below which explain how College Prime addressed each:

- *Program approach*: College Prime implemented policies established by both the state and NACEP to guide the program approach.
- *Organization and funding*: The structure and organization of the program was developed by identifying the roles needed to meet accreditation. College Prime funded the dual enrollment program mostly through tuition fees and state funding. Tuition fees were either free or mostly covered through available grants and scholarships.
- *Course delivery*: Effective course delivery was ensured through established partnerships with local K–12 districts, as detailed in formal agreements.
- *Student selection and guidance*: College Prime used local high school or district contacts, usually a counselor, to oversee and support enrollment for the program. They provided guidance and support for the students at the high school. If the students choose, they could also seek guidance and support from counselors located

at College Prime or any of its locations. Eligibility criteria were set by the state and followed by College Prime.

- *Faculty selection and supervision*: Faculty were selected through a standard hiring process through College Prime. They were supervised by the faculty liaison of their appropriate discipline. Although NACEP requires a faculty liaison, they do not state a minimum amount. College Prime made the decision to provide a liaison for all faculty in each discipline in order to provide the appropriate level of support for their dual enrollment faculty.
- *Quality assurance*: Adherence to NACEP standards ensures quality across all program components, including student support, faculty qualifications, curriculum standards, and program structure.
- *Relationships with high schools*: College Prime worked to build partnerships with multiple districts and private institutions. Even though they partnered with many districts and high schools, as stated by Participant 1, they were continuing to work on expanding their program to add additional school districts.
- *Credit award and transfer*: Through its partnerships with high schools, College Prime offered courses that contributed to general education requirements and certifications, facilitating credit award and transfer.
- *Marketing and public information*: College Prime regularly updated its website and disseminates extensive information online. Additionally, both college and high school staff communicated regularly with high school personnel, parents, and students.
- *Monitoring and evaluation*: College Prime developed the necessary tools and policies to monitor and evaluate their program to identify key performance indicators for the

college and to check progress toward its goals and additional measures taken to ensure compliance with the NACEP standards.

Discussions of Findings Related to the Conceptual Framework

This section examines the practical and institutional implications of the study's findings as they relate to the conceptual framework, the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) standards. By evaluating program components considering these nationally recognized benchmarks, the analysis underscores how adherence, or gaps in adherence, can shape the overall effectiveness of dual enrollment initiatives. The Partnership standards outlined by NACEP emphasize the importance of institutional alignment and collaboration between colleges and their secondary school partners. Specifically, Partnership Standard 1 requires that a dual enrollment program align with the mission of the sponsoring college and be supported by its academic leadership and administration. At College Prime, institutional support is evident through the allocation of resources and the establishment of a structured support system for secondary partners.

Partnership Standard 2 highlights the need for sustained and ongoing collaboration with secondary school partners. The findings provide substantial evidence that College Prime meets this expectation. For example, Participant 1 noted that during the week of her interview, the institution held a meeting with a potential new secondary partner, demonstrating proactive engagement. College Prime and its secondary partners regularly organize informational events for prospective students and their families, reinforcing transparency and accessibility.

To maintain strong collaboration, a dedicated high school counselor is assigned to each partner school. These counselors ensure effective communication with the appropriate audience and provide direct support to students and staff. In addition to supporting daily operations, the

counselors help expand the program through outreach and word-of-mouth advocacy. They also serve as a critical feedback channel by reporting concerns or challenges experienced by students or school staff directly to College Prime, facilitating timely responses and continuous improvement.

The faculty standards focus on instructor qualifications, training, ongoing professional development, and adherence to institutional policies. According to Faculty Standard 1, all dual enrollment instructors must be approved by the appropriate academic leadership at the sponsoring institution and meet the same minimum qualifications as on-campus faculty. Both NACEP and the SAO require strict adherence to this standard. Before approval, prospective instructors undergo a credential review to verify that they meet the necessary academic qualifications. For example, Participant 6 shared that they were required to complete an additional 18 graduate-level credits in mathematics, as their existing master's degree was in a different subject area. Participant 2 noted that College Prime previously identified instructors who did not meet credentialing requirements and issued deadlines for those individuals to obtain the necessary qualifications. In some cases, adherence to this standard resulted in faculty not being selected to teach certain dual enrollment courses. As Participant 2 explained, one instructor was not accepted because they did not meet the qualifications required for college-level instruction. That individual was later hired by an institution that did not hold NACEP accreditation and had lower standards.

In accordance with Faculty Standard 2, all new dual enrollment instructors receive course-specific training prior to teaching. This training includes guidance on course philosophy, curriculum expectations, pedagogical strategies, and assessment practices. To maintain instructional quality, Faculty Standard 3 requires that instructors engage in ongoing, discipline-

specific professional development and collaborate with college faculty through structured collegial interactions. Faculty liaisons play a central role in supporting high school instructors, ensuring they receive both the initial training and the continuing professional development mandated by NACEP. College Prime ensures that each discipline offering dual enrollment courses to any of its partners has an assigned faculty liaison.

Finally, Faculty Standard 4 requires that instructors are informed of and comply with all program policies and procedures. Both faculty liaisons and high school counselors serve as key support contacts in this area. These individuals are responsible for disseminating important information and serve as accessible resources when instructors require assistance. Participants from both the secondary schools and College Prime confirmed that relevant program updates are consistently shared with high school teachers to ensure alignment with institutional expectations. The faculty liaisons and the program administrators monitor faculty to ensure that they are compliant with all program policies and procedures.

The Assessment standard ensures that student participating in dual enrollment courses are held to the same academic expectations as those in equivalent on-campus courses. In accordance with Assessment Standard 1, institutions must apply comparable grading criteria and assessment methods to verify that dual enrollment students are achieving the same learning outcomes as traditional college students. This alignment preserves the integrity and credibility of the academic credit earned through the dual enrollment program.

At College Prime, this standard is upheld through rigorous curriculum approval processes and the use of consistent instructional materials. Courses must use the same curriculum and textbooks as their on-campus counterparts. As discussed by Participant 6, one method of maintaining academic rigor is through the administration of final exams in key general education

courses. Participant 6, a mathematics instructor discussed how they are required to use a final exam developed by their assigned faculty liaison, identical to the exam used in the college-level course.

Additionally, College Prime reviews and approves syllabi submitted by high school instructors. Faculty liaisons are responsible for ensuring that course syllabi meet institutional standards in terms of grading criteria, course expectations, and academic rigor. Participant 2 discussed these practices in detail during their interview, noting the implementation of improved processes for collecting and reviewing syllabi.

Further support for assessment standardization is evident on College Prime's website, which provides a portal for faculty to submit textbooks for approval and request approved instructional materials. This system promotes consistency across instructional sites and reinforces the institution's commitment to assessment integrity and academic quality.

The Curriculum standards require that all dual enrollment courses be identical in title, description, course number, and credits to their on-campus equivalents and appear in the official college catalog. When reviewing the catalog of courses, College Prime lists the college courses available to each of its secondary partners displaying course titles and descriptions that match the courses listed in its main course catalog.

Beyond catalog alignment, these standards also mandate that the content of each course reflects the sponsoring institution's learning objectives, pedagogy, theoretical orientation, and disciplinary philosophy. To ensure that instructional delivery upholds these standards, faculty liaisons conduct site visits to observe course implementation. These observations allow for the evaluation of content coverage, teaching strategies, and student engagement, ensuring equivalency with on-campus instruction.

At College Prime, this practice is consistently implemented. Two participants confirmed that site visits are regularly conducted, in accordance with NACEP requirements. These visits serve as a mechanism to verify that high school instructors and their courses meet all curricular expectations, thereby preserving academic rigor and compliance with the curriculum standards.

The student standards are designed to ensure equitable access and informed participation in dual enrollment opportunities. Registration and transcription policies must be consistent with those applied to traditional college students. Participants during the course of the research confirmed that while there are some extra steps, the final part of the enrollment process does mirror that of the on-campus college students. Additionally, the program must implement a process to confirm that students meet course prerequisites before enrollment. To meet this part of the standard, College Prime has implemented an entrance exam that needs to be completed prior to enrollment in the program. During the interviews, a potential barrier was identified related to the exam's location. Participant 5 explained that, because the exam is administered on College Prime's campus, some students were unable to participate due to transportation challenges.

Students must also receive guidance about the benefits and consequences of taking college-level courses, including information on institutional policies and academic expectations. Through College Prime's outreach and the high school counselors, this information is provided. Additionally, the counselors serve as an additional resource for students if they have any questions. In collaboration with secondary school partners, institutions must provide students with access to appropriate learning resources and support services, such as advising, tutoring, and library materials. The outcome of the enrollment process includes the assignment of a college student identification number and email which provides them with access to all the same benefits and resources provided to the adult college students.

While College Prime does show evidence of meeting this standard, there was information received by Participant 1 that showed for some people, the enrollment process can be a little complex. During the interview, Participant 1 stated that they were looking and new technologies that would help simplify and streamline the process.

The Evaluation standards support ongoing program improvement and institutional accountability within dual enrollment programs. In alignment with Evaluation Standard one, institutions are required to administer end-of-term course evaluations for each dual enrollment course, providing instructors with student feedback that can be used to inform and refine their teaching practices. Participant 6 confirmed that they administer student surveys before each course concludes. In addition to the standard survey required by College Prime, they also collect supplemental feedback through an additional survey focused on specific aspects of classroom instruction, allowing for more personalized and actionable insights.

Evaluation Standard 2 requires institutions to conduct regular and systematic evaluations of the overall effectiveness of their dual enrollment programs. These evaluations are intended to inform institutional decision-making and contribute to continuous program enhancement. At College Prime, this standard is actively implemented. As confirmed by Participants 1 and 2, the institution administers periodic surveys to high school instructors and counselors. Feedback from these stakeholders is reviewed by institutional leadership and used to inform programmatic adjustments. Evidence of this process was further supported by a reviewed PowerPoint presentation, which documented the feedback received and a plan of action to be made in response to evaluation data. These practices demonstrate College Prime's commitment to using feedback loops for data-driven improvement aligned with NACEP standards.

College Prime and its partners are actively working to make the dual enrollment program as accessible as possible. While the NACEP standards require that student support services provided to traditional college students also be available to dual enrollment students, College Prime, due to its strong partnerships and commitment to the program, delivers these services directly on high school campuses through a dedicated program counselor. This approach significantly enhances accessibility to academic support.

Participants 1 and 5 indicated that the cost of dual enrollment courses can present a barrier for students. However, they explained that scholarships are available, which help to eliminate this obstacle. Although students are required to complete an additional application to receive this financial support, the high school counselor assigned to the program not only distributes the application but can also assist students in completing it.

It is important to acknowledge that NACEP accreditation is not mandatory for College Prime; it is a voluntary pursuit. The institution's willingness to invest the necessary resources to achieve and maintain accreditation demonstrates its commitment to the local community. With strong support systems and structured processes in place, the program has continued to grow.

Finally, the eligibility criteria used by College Prime for participation in the dual enrollment program are determined by the state's governing body. In addition, aspects of the conceptual framework align with policies set forth by the SAO, such as the qualification requirements for high school faculty.

Implications for Practice

This case study examined the policies and practices of a community college dual enrollment program accredited by the NACEP and explored the perceptions of individuals who

support the program and its students. The study provided insights into strategies for effectively supporting dual enrollment initiatives.

One implication of this study is that several participants expressed consistent perspectives: using a standardized set of policies from NACEP established a robust structural framework and support system for the dual enrollment program. These guidelines not only defined the basic operational structure but also provided clear directives for student support and accountability. Faculty reported receiving adequate resources and support from both faculty liaisons and designated high school counselors, which reinforced the academic rigor of the program.

The second implication is some participants disclosed mixed feelings about the enrollment process. High school counselors stated the enrollment process was easy and they would help students enroll; if there were any issues, they said they would contact one of the people running the program and receive the necessary support. Program leadership identified through surveys that they needed to modernize the enrollment process and make it more streamlined. The enrollment process can be quite challenging due to the complexities of modern systems and the way they interconnect; the student experience needs to be a factor. College Prime worked on addressing the issues with the feedback they received but it would take time for them to implement it. It is recommended that other institutions take this into consideration when developing or improving their programs.

A third implication is enhanced academic advising is necessary to ensure students select courses contributing toward a degree or certificate. Several participants noted students occasionally enrolled in courses that did not align with their major or general education requirements. This misalignment was attributed, in part, to the challenges high school counselors

faced when managing multiple responsibilities. One of the participants stated these counselors could be easily overwhelmed with their daily work in addition to the work they did for the college. Not to mention, the counselors might support multiple programs from different schools. Consequently, participants recommended College Prime allocate additional resources to provide dedicated academic advising for dual enrollment students.

A fourth implication concerned accessibility. One participant highlighted some high school students experienced transportation challenges, which could hinder their ability to participate in entrance testing or attend program events held at the main campus. Thus, it is recommended that College Prime hold more events or testing at the high schools or within the high school districts themselves. As the participant explained, some students who would never think about going to college have found success and a new future in the dual enrollment program; thus, many more students could have a similar journey if they could attend those events or take the entrance test. To make the program more equitable, this opportunity is recommended for consideration by all institutions offering a dual enrollment program in order to better support students.

The final implication for practice is that participation in dual enrollment programs appears to facilitate a smoother transition to college. Interview data indicated that students in the program developed greater familiarity with the demands of college-level coursework, benefited from instruction delivered by college-approved faculty, and engaged with academic materials that had been vetted and approved by the institution. Collectively, these factors contributed to a more prepared and transferable academic experience, suggesting that similar practices may enhance college readiness across other dual enrollment contexts.

Recommendations for Future Research

Direct input from individuals who supported students in their daily academic experiences yielded valuable insights. However, based on the findings from the participants, further research is recommended in the following areas to help administrators more accurately determine which interventions are most effective:

- Partnerships: Further research is essential to understand how large-scale dual enrollment programs have successfully established and sustained institutional partnerships. An analysis of the partnerships surrounding these collaborations can offer valuable guidance for smaller institutions aiming to develop or expand similar initiatives. By investigating the strategic decisions and policy contexts that shape these partnerships, smaller colleges and school districts may gain a clearer framework for initiating or enhancing their own dual enrollment efforts. Such research could serve as a practical guide for navigating common challenges and promoting more equitable, seamless transitions from high school to higher education.
- Enrollment processes: Further research is needed to conduct an analysis of enrollment procedures within dual enrollment programs. These programs offer high school students the opportunity to earn college credit while still enrolled in secondary education, thereby facilitating a more seamless transition to postsecondary studies. However, the enrollment process itself can serve as either a critical enabler or a barrier to participation, particularly if it is overly complex or inaccessible. Investigating these procedural dynamics can provide stakeholders with a clearer foundation for designing and implementing equitable enrollment systems that improve access and support student success.

- NACEP accreditation: The conclusions and findings of this research were about one accredited program. Comparative research is recommended of dual enrollment programs at NACEP-accredited institutions and those without such accreditation. This examination would help assess whether alignment with NACEP standards provides a stronger foundation for program development and yields measurable benefits in student outcomes. By conducting this comparison, educators and policymakers can gain critical insights into the extent to which NACEP accreditation functions as a reliable framework for building effective dual enrollment initiatives. These findings could inform future policy recommendations and guide institutions in refining their strategies to enhance student achievement and evaluate the potential for establishing NACEP accreditation as a national standard.
- Eligibility policies: Eligibility requirements for dual enrollment programs emerged as a consistent theme throughout both the literature review and the current study. Mehl et al. (2020) emphasized that such requirements may act as barriers, contributing to inequities similar to those observed in other areas of education. Fostering a more inclusive dual enrollment experience involves emphasizing robust student support systems, equitable access strategies, and the delivery of rigorous, high-quality coursework. Further research is warranted to examine differences in student outcomes between programs that enforce eligibility criteria and those that adopt more open-access models.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate the dual enrollment policies, practices, and stakeholder perceptions of a community college dual enrollment program accredited by NACEP

and its contribution to student academic momentum. The policies that supported College Prime's dual enrollment program were derived from multiple organizations, each implemented with a specific purpose. Institutional practices were then developed to ensure compliance with these policies while simultaneously evolving to enhance outreach, expand the program, and improve support for both staff and students.

The findings demonstrate that participation in a NACEP-accredited program supports a smoother transition to postsecondary education by offering rigorous coursework, early exposure to college-level general education, and reduced financial barriers. Collectively, these components foster academic momentum through multiple pathways. First, students can begin accumulating college credits early, advancing beyond the typical freshman level and shortening their time to degree completion. Second, by completing general education credits early, students gain the opportunity to enroll in courses more closely aligned with their field of study during their 1st year. Third, as evidenced by College Prime's metrics and participant feedback, dual enrollment students predominantly transition directly to college, maintaining continuous enrollment and minimizing interruptions in their education. In addition, early success in college-level coursework reduces or even eliminates the need for remedial courses, further accelerating academic progress.

Improved student experiences drive academic momentum. College Prime continuously surveyed students and parents to refine the educational experience and hosted university events where regional institutions engage with dual enrollment students. These initiatives enabled students to establish connections with prospective universities early, setting a clear educational pathway and further enhancing their academic trajectory.

Creating a dual enrollment program involves no universal formula; it requires navigating a complex network of federal, state, and local policies and stakeholders. This intricate process necessitates a careful balance of political considerations and a focus on student outcomes. Institutions must invest time and resources, with some opting to pursue accreditation from the NACEP. The executive director of NACEP highlighted the need for continuous alignment, refinement, and innovation, with an emphasis on equity-oriented best practices that genuinely support student advancement (U.S. Department of Education, 2022).

When reviewing the findings from the study, pursuing NACEP accreditation offers community colleges an opportunity to enhance their dual enrollment programs. The standards provided by NACEP offer a blueprint for developing rigorous, high-quality programs that promote student success. Based on participant perceptions, for institutions that need guidance, using the NACEP standards as a guiding framework can still lead to improvements in program quality and student outcomes. By creating a well-structured and rigorous program, College Prime provides a meaningful student experience that mirrors college-level expectations. This process fosters academic momentum and supports overall student success.

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Appendix A – National Concurrent Enrollment Partnership Standards

Partnership Standards	
Partnership 1 (CEP - P1)	The concurrent enrollment program aligns with the college/university mission and is supported by the institution's administration and academic leadership.
Partnership 2 (CEP - P2)	The concurrent enrollment program has ongoing collaboration with secondary school partners.
Faculty Standards	
Faculty 1 (CEP - F1)	All concurrent enrollment instructors are approved by the appropriate college/university academic leadership and must meet the minimum qualifications for instructors teaching the course on campus.
Faculty 2 (CEP - F2)	Faculty liaisons at the college/university provide all new concurrent enrollment instructors with course-specific training in course philosophy, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment prior to the instructor teaching the course.
Faculty 3 (CEP - F3)	Concurrent enrollment instructors participate in college/university provided annual discipline-specific professional development and ongoing collegial interaction to further enhance instructors' pedagogy and breadth of knowledge in the discipline.
Faculty 4 (CEP - F4)	The concurrent enrollment program ensures instructors are informed of and adhere to program policies and procedures.
Assessment Standards	
Assessment 1 (CEP - A1)	The college/university ensures concurrent enrollment students' proficiency of learning outcomes is measured using comparable grading standards and assessment methods to on campus sections.
Curriculum Standards	
Curriculum 1 (CEP - C1)	Courses administered through a concurrent enrollment program are college/university

	catalogued courses with the same departmental designations, course descriptions, numbers, titles, and credits.
Curriculum 2 (CEP - C2)	The college/university ensures the concurrent enrollment courses reflect the learning objectives, and the pedagogical, theoretical and philosophical orientation of the respective college/university discipline.
Curriculum 3 (CEP - C3)	Faculty liaisons conduct site visits to observe course content and delivery, student discourse and rapport to ensure the courses offered through the concurrent enrollment program are equivalent to the courses offered on campus.
Student Standards	
Student 1 (CEP - S1)	Registration and transcripting policies and practices for concurrent enrollment students are consistent with those on campus.
Student 2 (CEP - S2)	The concurrent enrollment program has a process to ensure students meet the course prerequisites of the college/university.
Student 3 (CEP - S3)	Concurrent enrollment students are advised about the benefits and implications of taking college courses, as well as the college's policies and expectations.
Student 4 (CEP - S4)	The college/university provides, in conjunction with secondary partners, concurrent enrollment students with suitable access to learning resources and student support services.
Program Evaluation Standards	
Evaluation 1 (CEP - E1)	The college/university conducts end-of-term student course evaluations for each concurrent enrollment course to provide instructors with student feedback.
Evaluation 2 (CEP - E2)	The college/university conducts and reports regular and ongoing evaluations of the concurrent enrollment program effectiveness and uses the results for continuous improvement.

Note. Adapted *National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships*. (n.d.).

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Appendix B – Alignment Table

Problems based on literature findings	Research questions	Theoretical/conceptual frameworks	Methodology
Not all dual enrollment programs are accessible to all students (Mehl et al., 2020; Venezia & Kirst, 2005; Wozniak & Palmer, 2012; Xu et al., 2019).	RQ1. How are the dual enrollment policies, strategies, and practices implemented in the NACEP-accredited program at a community college?	Tinto's Theory of student departure	Semistructured interviews (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15) and document analysis.
Information on the dual enrollment program is sparse (Venezia & Kirst, 2005; Starkey, 2020).	RQ1. How are the dual enrollment policies, strategies, and practices implemented in the NACEP-accredited program at a community college? RQ2. How are the dual enrollment policies, strategies, and practices implemented in the NACEP-accredited program at a community college?	Tinto's Theory of student departure Adelman's theory of academic momentum	Semistructured interviews (1, 2, 6, 7, 9, 12, 14) and document analysis.
More dual enrollment courses are needed to help with the transition to college (Bailey & Karp, 2005).	RQ1. How are the dual enrollment policies, strategies, and practices implemented in the NACEP-accredited program at a community college?	Tinto's Theory of student departure Adelman's theory of academic momentum	Semistructured interviews (2, 3, 7, 15)
Policy restrictions or the lack of policy impacts student access and academic momentum (Dai, 2021; N. Hoffman, 2005; Museus et al.,	RQ1. How are the dual enrollment policies, strategies, and practices implemented in the NACEP-accredited program at a community college?	Tinto's Theory of student departure Adelman's theory of academic momentum	Semistructured interviews (2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15)

Problems based on literature findings	Research questions	Theoretical/conceptual frameworks	Methodology
2007; Wilkins, 2022).			
Lack of transparency of the dual enrollment program (Venezia & Kirst, 2005).	RQ2. How are the dual enrollment policies, strategies, and practices implemented in the NACEP-accredited program at a community college?	Tinto's Theory of student departure	Semistructured interviews (2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15)
More dual enrollment programs need to offer transferable credits (Barnett et al., 2004; *California Law,* n.d.; Thomson, 2017, Zinth, 2014).	RQ1. How are the dual enrollment policies, strategies, and practices implemented in the NACEP-accredited program at a community college? RQ2. How are the dual enrollment policies, strategies, and practices implemented in the NACEP-accredited program at a community college?	Adelman's theory of academic momentum	Semistructured interviews (2, 3, 7, 9, 15)

Appendix C – Dual Enrollment Programs by State

Content from *Dual enrollment Programs by State*. By L. Berlinsky-Schine, 2019, College Vine Blog (https://blog.collegevine.com/dual enrollment-programs-by-state/)

State-by-State Dual and Concurrent Enrollment Programs

Alabama

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Voluntary

Tuition responsibility:

- The student/parent's responsibility, "unless otherwise negotiated between the college and the local board of education"

Requirements and other information:

- Students in Grades 10-12 with a minimum B average in their high school courses may be eligible to participate in Alabama's dual enrollment program.
- They must receive written approval or a recommendation from their high school, and they must meet the postsecondary institution's entrance requirements.
- Private school and homeschooled students may also participate, pending an agreement with the college or university.

Alaska

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- No state policy.

Tuition responsibility:

- Student/parent

Requirements and other information:

- Dual enrollment is offered on an institutional basis; there is no statewide policy in place.

Arizona

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Mandatory (the decision on whether to offer community college courses in high school is up to the community college's governing board)

Tuition responsibility:

- Local decision

- Tuition is the responsibility of the student/parent unless the student's high school or postsecondary institution volunteers to pay
- The contract or agreement between the school district and community college district must specify tuition and financial aid policies

Requirements and other information:

- Arizona offers two options: (1) a dual enrollment program, which they define as courses are offered on high school campuses or a joint technical education district campus; and (2) concurrent enrollment, which offers courses on college campuses.
- Courses offered at high schools are limited to 11th- and 12th-grade students. Students under 18 who meet the prerequisites and entrance requirements of the postsecondary institution are required to be admitted. Students must achieve a combined or composite score of 93 on the PSAT, 930 on the SAT, or 22 on the ACT to be eligible.

Arkansas

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Voluntary

Tuition responsibility:

- Local decision
- The student/parent are responsible, unless paid for by the school district, college scholarship, grant, or private foundation

Requirements and other information:

- Arkansas offers three programs: (1) an endorsed concurrent enrollment course, which is a single-course program offered at high schools, through which students earn both high school and postsecondary credit; (2) a dual enrollment program, through which students earn college credit; and (3) the opportunity to enroll in a publicly-supported community college or 4-year institution, thereby earning both high school and postsecondary credit.
- Students must receive approval and a recommendation and achieve certain test scores to qualify. Private and home-schooled students may be eligible.

California

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Voluntary

Tuition responsibility:

- The student/parent is responsible for financial obligations under California's original dual enrollment
- The tuition responsibility is unclear for College and Career Access Pathways partnerships

Requirements and other information:

- There are two dual enrollment programs in California. The original program enables high-school students to enroll in colleges or universities part-time, whereas the College and Career Access Pathways partnership offers dual enrollment opportunities to underrepresented students and those who may not intend to go to college.
- For the original program, students must receive written approval or a recommendation and meet the postsecondary institution's entrance requirements. Criteria for participation in the CCAP program are not specified.

Colorado

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Voluntary

Tuition responsibility:

- The local education provider is responsible for tuition

Requirements and other information:

- Colorado also offers two programs: concurrent enrollment for students in Grades 9–12 who seek to complete college-level coursework, and ASCENT (accelerating students through concurrent enrollment) for students who have completed 12 hours of postsecondary coursework before the end of 12th grade and are currently in their "5th year" of high school.
- Students must receive written approval or a recommendation, meet the postsecondary institution's requirements, and develop an academic plan of study. For ASCENT, students must be recommended by their principal and the department of education.

Connecticut

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Voluntary

Tuition responsibility:

- The student/parent is responsible for tuition costs

Requirements and other information:

- Students may complete courses at accredited institutions and apply these credits toward fulfilling high school graduation requirements.
- Requirements for participation are not specified.

Delaware

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Voluntary

Tuition responsibility:

- Tuition responsibility is decided locally
- This responsibility will depend on the type of dual enrollment and district policy

Requirements and other information:

- In Delaware, students have access to dual enrollment. The state stipulates that students must have "multiple points of access" for dual credit (earning both high school and postsecondary credit) and dual enrollment courses. This can include courses offered at high schools, on college campuses, online, or a combination of these approaches.
- Eligibility requirements are not specified.

District of Columbia (DC)

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Voluntary

Tuition responsibility:

- This responsibility is decided locally

Requirements and other information:

- DC offers a dual enrollment program through its postsecondary institutions.
- Requirements for eligibility are not specified.

Florida

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Mandatory

Tuition responsibility:

- The student's district (for public institutions) is responsible for tuition expenses

Requirements and other information:

- Students in Grades 6–12 may participate in Florida's dual enrollment program, provided they have at least a 3.0 unweighted GPA or a 2.0 unweighted GPA for initial and continued enrollment in career certificate dual enrollment courses. The student must achieve a minimum score on a placement test to verify that he or she is prepared for college-level coursework. Private and home-schooled students may also participate.

Georgia

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Mandatory

Tuition responsibility:

- The state is responsible for tuition expenses

Requirements and other information:

- The "Move On When Ready Act" enables students to receive dual credit at their high school through a postsecondary institution, or via a virtual program.
- Eligibility requirements are not specified.

Hawaii

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Not specified

Tuition responsibility:

- The student/parent is responsible
- If the student is eligible for free-/reduced-price lunch, she or he may apply for a GEAR UP Hawaii Running Start Scholarship to cover dual enrollment costs

Requirements and other information:

- Students may receive dual credit at a postsecondary institution.
- They must receive approval and meet the requirements of the college or university, and they must also pass an exam administered by that institution. They must also be under the age of 21 at the beginning of the academic year in which they take the course (which begins on September 1).

Idaho

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Voluntary
- High schools must provide dual credit, advanced placement, tech prep, or International Baccalaureate options or offer students the opportunity to take college courses

Tuition responsibility:

- Tuition responsibility is decided locally

Requirements and other information:

- Idaho offers postsecondary enrollment options through high schools, postsecondary institutions, and virtual programs.
- Students must indicate whether they are seeking secondary, postsecondary, or dual credit at the time of enrollment.
- Individual admissions requirements are established by the school district, institution, and State Board of Education Governing Policies and Procedures. Students under the age of 16 must petition their high school and the postsecondary institution.

Illinois

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Voluntary

Tuition responsibility:

- Tuition responsibility is decided locally.

Requirements and other information:

- Students may take a dual credit course for both high school and college credit. Students must demonstrate a high level of motivation and have time to study for college-level courses.
- They will also need to meet the entrance requirements set by the college or university, which may include placement testing.

Indiana

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Mandatory
- Additionally, high schools must provide at least two dual credit and two AP courses to students who qualify.

Tuition responsibility:

- Usually, this responsibility is student/parents, although the commission for higher education may receive state funding for "priority" dual credit courses.
- Tuition may cost no more than $25/credit hour (as of 2013–2015)
- The school corporation may be required to pay tuition at Ivy Tech Community College for students enrolled in the postsecondary enrollment program.

Requirements and other information:

- Indiana offers three options: (a) dual credit courses taught by high school, college, or adjunct faculty members for both high school and college credits; (b) a concurrent enrollment course taught by a high school teacher for high school and college credit, pending an agreement between the institutions; and (c) a postsecondary enrollment program that enables high schools to offer courses taught by postsecondary faculty.
- Eligibility requirements are set by the institution and school corporation.

Iowa

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Mandatory for postsecondary enrollment options
- Voluntary for other Senior Year Plus programs
- For all programs, eligible students must be allowed to participate.

Tuition responsibility:

- The student's district is responsible for tuition expenses.

Requirements and other information:

- Senior Year Plus is an umbrella program meant to encourage equal access to college credit for high school students. Specific programs include concurrent enrollment, Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program (PSEO), AP courses, Career Academies, Regional Academies, and Project Lead the Way.
- Requirements vary by the program, but there are options for students in Grades 9–12 who qualify.

Kansas

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Mandatory

Tuition responsibility:

- The student or parent is responsible for tuition.

Requirements and other information:

- Students in Grades 10–12 who have received authorization from their high school principal and meet the postsecondary institution's requirements may take advantage of Kansas's concurrent enrollment partnerships, which enable them to enroll in higher education institutions or access college-level coursework from their high school.
- They can also make dual credit arrangements with their school district and the college or university.

Kentucky

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Mandatory

Tuition responsibility:

- Local decision

Requirements and other information:

- Kentucky offers two programs: (a) dual credit courses, through which students receive credits from their high school and the college or university; and (b) dual enrollment, which simultaneously enrolls students in both their high school and the postsecondary institution.
- To be eligible, students must meet the requirements of the institution, be willing to participate in a rigorous curriculum, and demonstrate a mastery of prerequisite coursework.

Louisiana

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Mandatory for dual enrollment
- Voluntary for Tech Early Start (TOPS).

Tuition responsibility:

- For dual enrollment, the tuition responsibility lies with the state for public school students and with the student/parent for nonpublic school students.
- For course Choice Dual Enrollment, the responsibility is that of the student/parent.

- For TOPS, the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission will pay $150 for three-credit courses for up to two courses per semester for students in Grades 11–12.

Requirements and other information:

- Louisiana offers three options for students seeking to complete college-level courses as high schoolers.
- First, through dual enrollment, students may complete coursework toward degree completion or a career certificate.
- Alternatively, students may elect to complete this work under the Course Choice program, through which they are taught by approved providers. Dual enrollment candidates must be in Grades 11–12 and meet the requirements set by the postsecondary institution.
- Students in Grades 11–12 may also use TOPS Award to fund a technical course and earn a technical certificate. These students must have at least a 2.0 GPA and must prepare a 5-year education and career plan; they also must meet certain testing requirements.

Maine

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- General program — not specified.
- Dual enrollment career and technical education program — voluntary

Tuition responsibility:

- The department of education and student/parent (general program)
- The DOE pays 50% of tuition for the first 6 credit hours per semester, for up to 12 credit hours per academic year.
- If the student meets certain eligibility requirements, a student may receive a state subsidy.

Requirements and other information:

- Maine's general dual enrollment program enables students to enroll in postsecondary courses, whereas their dual enrollment career and technical education program allows 11th and 12th graders to enroll in postsecondary career technical education courses for high school and postsecondary credit.
- In the general program, students must receive school unit approval and a recommendation; they must also undergo an assessment by the school administration.

Students must also have a minimum 3.0 GPA (a requirement that may be waived) and meet course prerequisites and institutional requirements.

Maryland

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- General dual enrollment program: not specified.
- Dual enrollment career and technical education program: voluntary

Tuition responsibility:

- The responsibility is shared between the district and the student/parent.
- Students are eligible for tuition reductions if the courses are career-related.
- Public institutions of higher education cannot charge dual enrollment students tuition.

Requirements and other information:

- Students may dually enroll in public high schools and higher education institutions in Maryland.

Massachusetts

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Voluntary

Tuition responsibility:

- Not specified for the general dual enrollment program
- Students participating in the Commonwealth Dual Enrollment Partnership (CDEP) can take their first course at minimal or no cost; the cost of following courses will be determined by the higher education institution.

Requirements and other information:

- Massachusetts offers a general dual enrollment program, which allows high school students to earn dual credit through postsecondary courses.
- Massachusetts also offers the CDEP. Through CDEP, 2- and 4-year institutions receive grants to offer courses for dual credit, focusing on providing access to first-generation students, low-income students, students of color, and those who are interested in high-demand careers.
- Requirements are not specified for the general dual enrollment program. CDEP applicants must have a minimum 2.5 GPA or provide a recommendation from a guidance

counselor, teacher, or principal. Home-schooled students should submit a letter from a parent or guardian. All students must meet their individual institution's requirements.

Michigan

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Mandatory

Tuition responsibility:

- PSEO and Career and Technical Preparation Act: cost responsibilities are shared between the district and the student/parent.
- PSEO, Career and Technical Preparation Act, and Concurrent Enrollment: the district is responsible for tuition, with possible further support from Department of Education awards.

Requirements and other information:

- Michigan offers three dual enrollment programs: (a) postsecondary enrollment options, which enable students to earn dual credit; (b) career technical education enrollment under the Career and Technical Preparation Act (CTE); and (c) concurrent enrollment, where advanced courses are taught at high schools.
- To qualify for postsecondary enrollment, the student must achieve a qualifying score in every subject area of a readiness assessment. If the student does not achieve a qualifying score in all areas, he or she will be limited to courses in the subject areas in which she has achieved a qualifying score. Students must also achieve qualifying scores on all subject areas if they have not taken the Michigan merit examination to participate in CTE program, although they may still be eligible if they receive a qualifying score in math and pass a job skills assessment test.

Minnesota

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Voluntary

Tuition responsibility:

- Local decision

Requirements and other information:

- Students in Minnesota may participate in dual enrollment for either postsecondary credit alone, or to earn both high school and postsecondary credit. The state also offers

concurrent enrollment, where college-level courses are taught by high school teachers or faculty at a high school or an alternative location.

- These options are available to 11th- and 12th-grade students, though there are some exceptions for underclassmen.

Mississippi

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Voluntary

Tuition responsibility:

- Tuition responsibility is decided locally.

Requirements and other information:

- In Mississippi, students may dually enroll in a community or junior college or state institution while remaining enrolled in high school. They may also receive dual credit, earning both high school and college credit.
- For both options, students must receive approval from their high school, meet a minimum GPA requirement, meet the postsecondary institution's requirements, and have earned at least 14 core high school credits.

Missouri

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Voluntary
- Students "must have access to postsecondary preparation," such as advanced courses, the AP program, IB program, technical skills attainment, dual enrollment, or dual credit options.

Tuition responsibility:

- Tuition responsibility is decided locally.

Requirements and other information:

- Missouri offers a dual credit option, where college-level courses are taught by high school instructors. It also offers a dual enrollment option, which allows students to enroll in both a high school and a postsecondary institution.
- Requirements are only stipulated for dual credit. Students in Grades 9–12 must have at least a 3.0 GPA to be eligible; 11th and 12th grade students who have a GPA between 2.5

and 2.99 may receive written approval. To qualify, ninth graders must score in the 90th percentile or above on the ACT or SAT. All students must meet the postsecondary institution's requirements.

Montana

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Voluntary

Tuition responsibility:

- Tuition responsibility is decided locally.

Requirements and other information:

- Montana offers Running Start, a dual enrollment program that enables students to earn dual or college credit through the Montana University System. The state also offers concurrent enrollment, which enables students to earn college credit at their high schools. A third program, called Early College, allows high schoolers to take courses at a college or online to earn dual or college credit.
- For all programs, students must be in Grades 11–12 and meet the admission requirements of the institution. Students who have not reached their junior year must be 16 years old and have completed the high school courses required for their grade; they also must be on track to graduate from high school in 4 years.

Nebraska

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Voluntary

Tuition responsibility:

- Not determined by state policy

Requirements and other information:

- Dual enrollment courses in Nebraska are taught at both high school and postsecondary institutions. The Educational Service Units Act provides guidelines for dual credit and concurrent enrollment (which offers college credit only), but these guidelines are not enforced by law.
- Typically, students must have at least a 3.0 GPA, an ACT composite score of 20, sub-scores of at least 20, rank in the top 50% of their high school class, or demonstrate "the

capacity for academic success in the desired course or courses" through other materials, such as a portfolio or recommendation.

Nevada

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Voluntary

Tuition responsibility:

- This responsibility is typically the student/parents.

Requirements and other information:

- Students may apply credit received at a community college or university toward fulfilling their high school graduation requirements.
- To participate, they must have the approval of the institution and meet the procedures and requirements of admission for students who do not have a high school diploma at the given institution. Only 11th and 12th graders may enroll.

New Hampshire

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- No state policy

Tuition responsibility:

- No state policy

Requirements and other information:

- New Hampshire has no state policy regarding dual enrollment.
- However, students may dually enroll through the Community College System of New Hampshire and Southern New Hampshire University.

New Jersey

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Voluntary

Tuition responsibility:

- Not set by state policy
- Eligible students may not be excluded because of inability to pay.

Requirements and other information:

- In New Jersey, school districts and public postsecondary institutions may enter into agreements to provide college instruction to high school students on high school or college campuses. The agreement must describe eligibility requirements and include a provision that ensures that students who are not able to pay are able to participate.

New Mexico

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Mandatory

Tuition responsibility:

- This responsibility is the state's.

Requirements and other information:

- Students may receive dual credit from both 2- and 4-year institutions and tribal colleges.
- They must receive high school approval and meet the postsecondary institution's entrance requirements, including undergoing a course placement assessment.

New York

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- No state policy

Tuition responsibility:

- The student/parent is responsible for tuition.

Requirements and other information:

- There is no statewide dual enrollment policy in New York. Dual enrollment is offered on an institution-by-institution basis.

North Carolina

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Mandatory

Tuition responsibility:

- The state is responsible for dual enrollment tuition.

Requirements and other information:

- North Carolina offers the Career and College Promise program. In this program, students can pursue the Career Technical Education Pathway, which leads to a certificate or diploma associated with a high school Tech Prep Career Cluster. Alternatively, students

can pursue the College Transfer Pathway, which leads to a certificate after students complete 30 semester hours of transfer courses.

- The College Transfer Pathway is open to students in Grades 11–12 who have a minimum 3.0 GPA and demonstrate readiness in English, reading, and math on an assessment. To participate in Career Technical Education Pathways, students must be in Grades 11–12 or have a school official recommendation. Under some circumstances, students in Grades 9 and 10 may also participate in the CTE program.

North Dakota

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Voluntary
- All high schools must offer at least one AP or dual credit course.

Tuition responsibility:

- The student or parent is responsible for tuition.

Requirements and other information:

- Students in Grades 10–12 who receive approval from the district superintendent and meet the institution's entrance requirements may participate in the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program.

Ohio

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Mandatory

Tuition responsibility:

- Tuition is the district's responsibility.

Requirements and other information:

- Students can earn college credit, high school credit, or both through the College Credit Plus program. However, they must choose which credit option to pursue when they enroll in a course.
- To participate, they need to meet the postsecondary institution entrance requirements and demonstrate college readiness according to the Ohio Statewide Remediation-Free Standards.

Oklahoma

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Mandatory

Tuition responsibility:

- The student/parent is responsible for tuition.
- Oklahoma makes an exception if the student's school district doesn't offer the course selection necessary for the student to meet graduation requirements; in this case, the district will pay for dual enrollment tuition, books, fees, and transportation.

Requirements and other information:

- Students may earn both high school and college credit through Oklahoma's concurrent enrollment program.
- Students must receive a counselor's recommendation and a signed statement from the principal indicating (a) that they will meet high school graduation requirements by spring of their senior year and (b) that they also meet the postsecondary institution's entrance requirements. They may only enroll in subject areas in which they have met the ACT requirements for college placement. Benchmarks are different for juniors and seniors.

Oregon

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Not specified
- All districts must offer an opportunity for Accelerated College Credit
- All community colleges must provide at least one Accelerated College Credit program.

Tuition responsibility:

- For Dual Credit programs, the responsibility is the state's.
- For Expanded Options, tuition responsibility is decided locally.

Requirements and other information:

- Oregon offers accelerated college credit programs, which include Dual Credit, Two-plus-Two (a CTE option), AP, and IB programs. Expanded Options enable students to enroll in a postsecondary institution either full- or part-time.
- Students in Grades 9–12 who meet the entrance requirements may participate in these accelerated programs. To be eligible for Expanded Options, students must be in Grades 11–12 or at least 16, enrolled in an Oregon high school, and have an educational learning plan.

Pennsylvania

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Voluntary

Tuition responsibility:

- The responsibility is shared between the district and the student/parent.

Requirements and other information:

- Pennsylvania's concurrent enrollment program is currently inactive because of insufficient state funding.

Rhode Island

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Not specified
- Local education agencies must offer pathways such as AP, CTE, dual enrollment, and other applied learning opportunities.

Tuition responsibility:

- Not set out in state policy

Requirements and other information:

- In Rhode Island, students may dually enroll at high schools and postsecondary colleges.
- Requirements are not specified.

South Carolina

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Voluntary

Tuition responsibility:

- The student/parent is responsible, unless otherwise specified in local policy.

Requirements and other information:

- Dual enrollment is open to students in grades 11-12 who meet a minimum GPA requirement (for courses at 4-year and 2-year University of South Carolina campuses only). The student must receive approval from their high school principal or designee and meet the postsecondary institution's entrance requirements.

South Dakota

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Voluntary

Tuition responsibility:

- Generally, tuition responsibility is decided locally.
- For dual credit (the South Dakota High School Dual Credit program), the student/parent covers instructional costs, with no additional fees.
- For concurrent enrollment, the student/parent covers instructional costs, with no additional fees.
- For campus enrollment, the student/parent covers tuition costs.

Requirements and other information:

- South Dakota offers a variety of dual enrollment options:
    - Dual credit: the student enrolls in a course at a postsecondary campus and receives dual credit.
    - Concurrent enrollment: the student earns college credit through a course offered through her school district.
    - Rising scholar: a concurrent credit program in which high school instructors teach courses for dual credit at a reduced tuition rate.
    - Campus enrollment: high school juniors and seniors enroll in college courses.
- General requirements are not specified; they vary by individual program.

Tennessee

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Voluntary

Tuition responsibility:

- Tuition is the state's responsibility.

Requirements and other information:

- Tennessee offers dual credit and dual enrollment options. Students may also be considered for early admission if they are 12th graders with at least a 3.5 GPA and ACT composite score of 25.
- Dual credit and dual enrollment requirements are not specified in the state policy. Only 11th and 12th graders who meet other criteria may receive a dual enrollment grant.

- The state also offers joint enrollment, in which students enroll in postsecondary classes while in high school, but only receive credit for the coursework from *one* of the two institutions. Students may also receive high school credit for courses taken at a postsecondary institution or online.

Texas

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Voluntary
- School districts must offer 12 college credit hours in high school, but are not required to offer dual credit options.

Tuition responsibility:

- Tuition responsibility is determined locally.

Requirements and other information:

- The state offers dual credit.
- Students must receive approval from a school official and meet all course prerequisite requirements and entrance requirements; students must also meet the minimum high school passing standards, as laid out under the Texas Success Initiative, or pass an approved assessment that measures college readiness.

Utah

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Voluntary

Tuition responsibility:

- Tuition responsibility is shared between the state and the student/parent.

Requirements and other information:

- Concurrent enrollment is available to students in Grades 11–12; concurrent enrollment is available to students in Grades 9–10 by exception only.
- All students must meet the entrance requirements of the postsecondary institution and pass an English and math assessment; they must also meet any prerequisites for the courses they intend to take.

Vermont

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Mandatory for general dual enrollment
- Voluntary for technical programs

Tuition responsibility:

- The state is responsible for dual enrollment tuition for up to two courses.
- For more than two courses, the student/parent are responsible.
- The district is responsible for tuition for technical programs.

Requirements and other information:

- Students may participate in a dual enrollment program, taking courses at a postsecondary or high school campus or online.
- Students must be in Grades 11–12 and must factor dual enrollment into their personalized learning plans.
- Vermont also offers a technical program, which allows students to enroll in postsecondary technical courses if they are accepted and approved.

Virginia

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Mandatory

Tuition responsibility:

- Tuition responsibility is decided locally.

Requirements and other information:

- To participate in Virginia's dual enrollment program, students must be in Grades 11–12 (for community colleges), receive approval from their principal, and meet the institution's entrance requirements. For community colleges, they must also achieve minimum test scores.

Washington

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Voluntary

Tuition responsibility:

- Running Start: tuition responsibility is shared between the state and the student/parent.
- College in High School: tuition responsibility is decided locally.

Requirements and other information:

- Washington offers several dual enrollment programs:
    - Dual credit: Students earn high school and college credit simultaneously. The state does not stipulate requirements for this program.
    - Running Start: Students apply to higher education institutions to enroll in courses. Students must be in Grades 11–12 and meet the institution's entrance requirements.
    - College in High School: students earn high school and college credit through program partnerships between the district and institution of higher education. The program is available to students in Grades 10–12. Further eligibility criteria are set by the high school and postsecondary institution.

West Virginia

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Voluntary
- State institutions must collaborate with schools to increase educational opportunities for prospective college students.
- For West Virginia EDGE: mandatory

Tuition responsibility:

- Dual credit: the tuition responsibility varies, but tuition is reduced.
- West Virginia EDGE: the postsecondary institution is responsible for tuition.
- Early enrollment: the student/parent is responsible for tuition, although the institution may offer special tuition to improve educational access.

Requirements and other information:

- West Virginia offers a variety of dual enrollment programs:
    - Dual credit and dual enrollment courses: credit-bearing courses offered by an institution of higher education at a high school.
    - West Virginia EDGE (Earn a Degree, Graduate Early): Students may enroll in CTE courses and earn credit by passing an exam. Students must be in Grades 11–12.

- Early enrollment: Public institutions offer courses primarily for high school students. Students must meet the institution's entrance requirements and receive approval from their high school. They must be in Grades 11–12.
- Early admission: high school students enroll in college-level courses.

Wisconsin

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Youth Options: not specified
- Course Options: voluntary
- Section 118.15(1)(b): mandatory
- Dual enrollment: voluntary
- Section 18.55(7r): Voluntary

Tuition responsibility:

- Youth Options: if the course is not comparable to a course offered by the district and is taken for high school credit, the district is responsible for tuition; in all other cases, the student/parent is responsible for tuition expenses.
- Section 118.55(7r): the student/parent is responsible for costs associated with courses taken for college credit.
- Course Options: the district is responsible for tuition.
- Section 118.15(1)(b) and dual enrollment: tuition responsibility lies with the student/parent.
- Section 118.55(7r) only: tuition responsibility is the district's.

Requirements and other information:

- Wisconsin offers a variety of dual enrollment opportunities and has a variety of regulations that apply to some dual enrollment students:
    - Youth Options: enables students in 11th and 12th grades to enroll in a higher education institution.
    - Course Options: extends open enrollment to high schoolers who seek to attend a public or nonprofit postsecondary institutions or tribal college.
    - Section 118.15(1)(b) of the school's code enables students who are at-risk or at least 16 to attend a technical school instead of high school.

    - Section 118.55(7r) of the school's code stipulates that students in good academic standing who are not at-risk may enroll in a technical school or postsecondary institution.
- The state also offers standard dual enrollment.

Wyoming

Is offering access mandatory or voluntary?

- Voluntary
- School boards must make postsecondary education options "reasonably accessible."

Tuition responsibility:

- The student's district is responsible for tuition expenses.

Requirements and other information:

- Wyoming offers two programs:
    - Concurrent enrollment, in which high school instructors teach an approved community college curriculum, and
    - Dual enrollment, where students earn high school credit by taking college-level courses taught by community college instructors.
- To participate, students must be in Grades 11–12, have written approval from a designated school official, and meet the postsecondary institution's entrance requirements.

Appendix D – NACEP Accredited Community College Student Count

Institution	Faculty count	Student count	Partnership	City	State
Ivy Tech Community	4471	63708	Office of K-14 Initiatives & Statewide	Indianapolis	IN
Northern Virginia Community	2318	52873	Dual enrollment program	Arlington	VA
South Texas College	1992	28233	Dual credit program	McAllen	TX
Des Moines Area Community	1131	23051	DMACC Career Advantage	Des Moines	IA
Johnson County Community	1368	13891	College Now Program	Overland Park	KS
Kirkwood Community	1072	12277	Credit in high school	Cedar Rapids	IA
Grand Rapid Community	810	12107	Grand Rapids Community College	Grand Rapids	MI
College of Wester Idaho	752	10200	Dual credit/college readiness	Nampa	ID
Monroe Community	1101	10161	Dual enrollment program	Rochester	NY
Normandale Community	459	9420	Concurrent enrollment program	Bloomington	MN
Hudson Valley Community	928	9348	College in the High School	Troy	NY
Onondaga Community	785	8545	Onondaga College Credit Now	Syracuse	NY
Anoka Ramsey Community	375	8482	Concurrent enrollment	Coon Rapids	MN
Erie Community College	1136	8364	Advanced studies	Williamsville	NY
Century College	457	8203	CitHS College in the High School	White Bear Lake	MN
Everett Community	601	7580	College in the High School Program	Everett	WA
North West Arkansas	539	7411	Early college Experience	Bentonville	AR
Eastern Iowa Community	313	7081	College Connection	Davenport	IA
Edmonds College	674	6545	College in the High School	Lynnwood	WA
Minneapolis Community and	391	6429	College NOW	Minneapolis	MN
Snow College	446	5800	Snow College CPF IVC Program	Ephraim	UT

Institution	Faculty count	Student count	Partnership	City	State
Iowa Western Community	519	5791	College Early Start Program	Council Bluffs	IA
Minnesota State Community and	515	5757	Concurrent enrollment program	Fergus Falls	MN
North Hennepin Community	290	5756	Concurrent enrollment program	Brooklyn Park	MN
Mohawk Valley Community	518	5704	MVCC Dual Credit	Utica	NY
SUNY Broome Community	531	5386	Fast Forward	Binghamton	NY
Western Iowa Tech Community	434	5360	College Now	Sioux City	IA
Rochester Community and	313	5115	Rochester Concurrent Enrollment Program	Rochester	MN
Hawkeye Community	503	5042	CollegeNow!	Waterloo	IA
Minnesota North College	341	4997	College in the Schools	Hibbing	MN
West Kentucky Community and	357	4893	West Kentucky College Academy	Paducah	KY
Moberly Area Community	346	4878	MACC Dual Credit Program	Moberly	MO
Tompkins Cortland	318	4764	CollegeNow	Dryden	NY
Lake Superior College	257	4762	College in the Schools	Duluth	MN
Iowa Central Community	472	4704	Earlybird Program	Fort Dodge	IA
Central Lakes College	126	4491	College in the Schools	Brainerd	MN
Crowder College	414	4194	Crowder College Dual Credit	Neosho	MO
Northeast Iowa Community	455	4162	High School Partnerships	Peosta	IA
Spartanburg Community	410	4108	Early College Program	Spartanburg	SC
Hennepin Technical College	300	4094	Hennepin Tech in the High Schools	Brooklyn Park	MN
Inver Hills Community	232	4071	InCollege	Inver Grove Heights	MN
Corning Community	256	4063	Accelerated College Education (ACE)	Corning	NY
St. Cloud Technical &	240	3931	Discovery Academy Program	St. Cloud	MN
Owensboro Community and	243	3903	Discover College	Owensboro	KY
Laramie County Community	455	3838	Concurrent enrollment program	Cheyenne	WY

Institution	Faculty count	Student count	Partnership	City	State
Jefferson College	329	3740	Jefferson College Dual Credit Program	Hillsboro	MO
Riverland Community	195	3494	Riverland Concurrent Enrollment Program	Austin	MN
Jamestown Community	359	3430	College Connections	Jamestown	NY
John A. Logan College	337	3328	Dual Credit Program	Carterville	IL
Mid Michigan College	194	3291	MMCC Off-Campus Program	Harrison	MI
Indian Hills Community	464	3279	Connect 2 College	Ottumwa	IA
Minnesota West Community and	171	3253	REACH Program	Worthington	MN
Ridgewater College	230	3176	College in the Schools	Willmar	MN
Wenatchee Valley College	277	3090	WVC College in the High School	Wenatchee	WA
Northland Community and	153	2962	College in the High School Program	Thief River Falls	MN
Pennsylvania Highlands	137	2752	Accelerated College Education Program	Johnstown	PA
Whatcom Community	350	2719	College in the High School Program	Bellingham	WA
North Iowa Area Community	292	2681	Career Link	Mason City	IA
Jefferson Community	252	2658	Jefferson EDGE	Watertown	NY
South Central College	234	2653	Concurrent Enrollment Program	North Mankato	MN
Alexandria Technical and	91	2549	Concurrent Enrollment	Alexandria	MN
Hocking College	225	2431	College Credit Plus / Dual Enrollment	Nelsonville	OH
Mineral Area College	148	2410	Dual Credit	Park Hills	MO
Phillips Community	210	2400	Concurrent Enrollment	Helena	AR
Iowa Lakes Community	260	2288	Career Connect	Emmetsburg	IA
Southeastern Community	267	2260	JumpStart	West Burlington	IA
Wytheville Community	129	2244	Wytheville Community College	Wytheville	VA
Fond du Lac Tribal and	59	1976	College in the Schools	Cloquet	MN
National Park College	243	1912	Concurrent High School Student	Hot Springs	AR

Institution	Faculty count	Student count	Partnership	City	State
Minnesota State College-Southeast	114	1912	Connect 2 College	Red Wing	MN
Pine Technical & Community	84	1724	Pine Technical and Community College	Pine City	MN
Northwest Iowa Community	148	1666	College For You	Sheldon	IA
North Arkansas College	226	1604	Concurrent Enrollment Partnership	Harrison	AR
North Central Missouri College	139	1591	NCMC Dual Credit Program	Trenton	MO
Southwestern Community	180	1503	Concurrent Enrollment Program	Creston	IA
University of Arkansas	156	1224	UACCB Concurrent Credit	Batesville	AR

Note. Adapted from Community College Review. (2023, July 13). *Community College Review Profiles of USA community colleges*. https://www.communitycollegereview.com/ and *National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships*. (n.d.). https://www.nacep.org/ Retrieved July 13, 2023, from https://www.communitycollegereview.com/ and https://www.nacep.org/.

Appendix E – Letter of Introduction

Dear (Name of CEO),

I hope this email finds you well. The purpose of my email is to seek your permission to conduct a research study at College Prime. I am currently enrolled in a doctoral community college leadership program at Kansas State University. This program requires me to complete a research study and present my findings through a dissertation and oral defense.

My study will be focusing on the exploration of the policies and practices of a National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships-accredited dual enrollment program and identifying the experiences of the staff and faculty. This will include investigating various support strategies implemented to assist students in achieving academic momentum. As part of my study, I plan to conduct interviews with stakeholders involved in your institution's dual enrollment program. Due to the geographical distance between myself and your institution, all interviews will be conducted online.

I want to assure you that I take the protocols and processes for conducting my research seriously. I will adhere to all Kansas State University guidelines and ethical considerations, including maintaining the confidentiality of the school and its employees' responses. I will be operating under the guidance of my Major Professor, Dr. Sandy Robinson, and my Co-Major Professor, Dr. Margaretta Mathis, who are both copied on this communication.

I will soon be applying for approval to conduct my study through Kansas State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once I obtain the approval, prior to conducting any interviews or contacting any employees from your institution, I will provide you with my IRB approval. To provide consent, all that is needed is a response to this email with your approval and a main point of contact. Additionally, I will also apply to your institution's IRB, if applicable.

I truly appreciate your time, assistance, and support on behalf of myself and the Kansas State University Program.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Gayle

Appendix F – Interview Questions

1. How do you contribute to the community college's dual enrollment program through your role and what has been your experience with the program?
2. Describe your institution's dual enrollment program and its objectives.
3. How many high schools and school districts does your college partner with and how would you describe these partnerships?
4. Where do students attend your dual enrollment courses, and what modality is used for instruction?
5. How does your community college conduct outreach to inform students about the dual enrollment program and which methods do you find most effective? Additionally, what are your perceptions regarding the effectiveness of these outreach efforts?
6. Please describe the role of liaisons and how do you perceive their effectiveness.
7. What key policies govern the dual enrollment program, especially concerning student eligibility and participation, and how does the institution communicate them to stakeholders? What are your insights into the effect of these policies on the students?
8. How would you describe the transparency of your dual enrollment program?
9. What strategies have been utilized to promote student success and retention within the dual enrollment program?
    a. How are the outcomes of the program assessed and evaluated?
    b. Which practices or policies do you believe contribute most to promoting student success?
10. How has accreditation guided the development and implementation of policies, practices, and strategies within the dual enrollment program, and what notable achievements or

success stories have emerged as a result? What are your perceptions about the program being accredited and the accreditation process itself?

11. Describe the interactions between students in the program and college staff and faculty, as well as the support services available to them. How do you perceive the quality and effectiveness of these support services?
12. How do you ensure equity and inclusivity in the dual enrollment program, particularly concerning access and participation, and how are disparities or challenges addressed among dual enrollment students?
13. How do you gather feedback from stakeholders to inform decision-making and improvement efforts within the dual enrollment program, and what are some lessons learned that would be beneficial for other colleges to know?
14. Lastly, could you recommend other faculty or staff members for further interviews regarding the dual enrollment program?

Appendix G – IRB Approval Letter

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY | Office of Research Integrity, Compliance and Security

TO: Sandy Robinson
Educational Leadership

Proposal Number: IRB-12350

FROM: Lisa Rubin, Chair
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 09/22/2024

RE: Proposal Entitled, "Navigating academic momentum: Investigating the policies and practices of a dual enrollment program that is accredited by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships."

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects / Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Kansas State University has reviewed the proposal identified above and has determined that it is EXEMPT from further IRB review. This exemption applies only to the proposal - as written – and currently on file with the IRB. Any change potentially affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation and may disqualify the proposal from exemption.

Based upon information provided to the IRB, this activity is exempt under the criteria set forth in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, **45 CFR §104(d), category:Exempt Category 2 Subsection ii.**

Certain research is exempt from the requirements of HHS/OHRP regulations. A determination that research is exempt does not imply that investigators have no ethical responsibilities to subjects in such research; it means only that the regulatory requirements related to IRB review, informed consent, and assurance of compliance do not apply to the research.

Any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, the University Research Compliance Office, and if the subjects are KSU students, to the Director of the Student Health Center.

Electronically signed by Lisa Rubin on 09/22/2024 8:25 PM ET

203 Fairchild Hall, 1601 Vattier St., Manhattan, KS 66506 | 785-532-3224 | fax: 785-532-3278 | comply@k-state.edu

Appendix H – Invitation to Participate

Interview Email Invitation

Dear (Name)

I have been approved to conduct a study regarding your accredited dual enrollment program by Employee, the Executive Director of a Department, and another Employee, chair of the faculty IRB approval committee.

I am conducting a study to investigate the policies and practices of an NACEP-accredited dual enrollment program and to investigate the perceptions of the staff to discover various support strategies implemented that assist students in achieving academic momentum. I am emailing to request your participation in a short interview that should take approximately 15 to 30 minutes of your time. If you are unavailable for an interview, I can send you the questions for you to answer when you have time.

The interviews will be conducted via phone, Zoom, Webex, or any other software you prefer. In the interview, the use of your camera is optional. Your participation is voluntary, and your name and institution will be kept confidential. The transcript of the interview or a copy of your answers will be provided to you after all data has been collected to ensure accuracy.

The confidential information you provide will contribute not only to helping with my study but may also provide valuable information for other community colleges to improve their dual enrollment programs to better support their communities and, most importantly, their students.

If you are interested in participating in my study, can you please complete the attached form and return it to me. From there we can set up a time to conduct a quick interview. If you have any questions about the research project, please contact me directly via Webex, Teams, or email at (xxxxxxx@collegeofthedesert.edu).

I appreciate you and the time you are taking to help me conduct this study about your dual enrollment program.

Sincerely,

Michael Gayle
Director, Networks and Technical Services
College of the Desert

IRB Approval: 09/22/2024

Appendix I – Example Informed Consent Form

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
University Research Compliance Office

Institutional Review Board (IRB)
Informed Consent Form
comply@k-state.edu | 785-532-3224

PROJECT TITLE:

Navigating academic momentum: Investigating the policies and practices of a dual enrollment program that is accredited by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships

PROJECT APPROVAL DATE:	05/31/2023	**PROJECT EXPIRATION DATE:**	03/31/2025	**LENGTH OF STUDY:**	6-months

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Sandy Robinson

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Margaretta Mathis

CONTACT DETAILS FOR PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS: 216-509-6421 / slrobins@ksu.edu

IRB CHAIR CONTACT INFORMATION: Lisa Rubin / 785-532-3224

PROJECT SPONSOR: None

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

The purpose of this study is to investigate the dual enrollment policies, practices, and stakeholder perceptions of a community college dual enrollment program, accredited by the NACEP, contributing to the academic momentum of students.

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED:

A Letter of Introduction will be dispatched to the site, expressing interest in conducting the study at their institution. These letters will include a copy of the KSU IRB approval and inquire about the necessity of obtaining IRB approval from the respective institution. Before the onset of data collection, you will receive a KSU IRB consent form and an invitation to participate, along with any requisite consent forms from the host institution, if required. Data collection will begin with the document analysis followed by conducting 15–30-minute interviews with eligible participants. The interviews will be recorded and a copy of the transcript will be sent to you, the participant, for your review. The document analysis will persist after the interviews are completed to ensure all pertinent college documents are reviewed. None of the collected information will be used for future projects.

BIOLOGICAL SAMPLES COLLECTED (Describe procedure, storage, etc.):

None

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES OR TREATMENTS, IF ANY, THAT MIGHT BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO SUBJECT:

None

RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED:

None

BENEFITS ANTICPATED:

The information provided by the selected participants may provide valuable insights to help other community colleges improve their dual enrollment program to better support their community.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY:

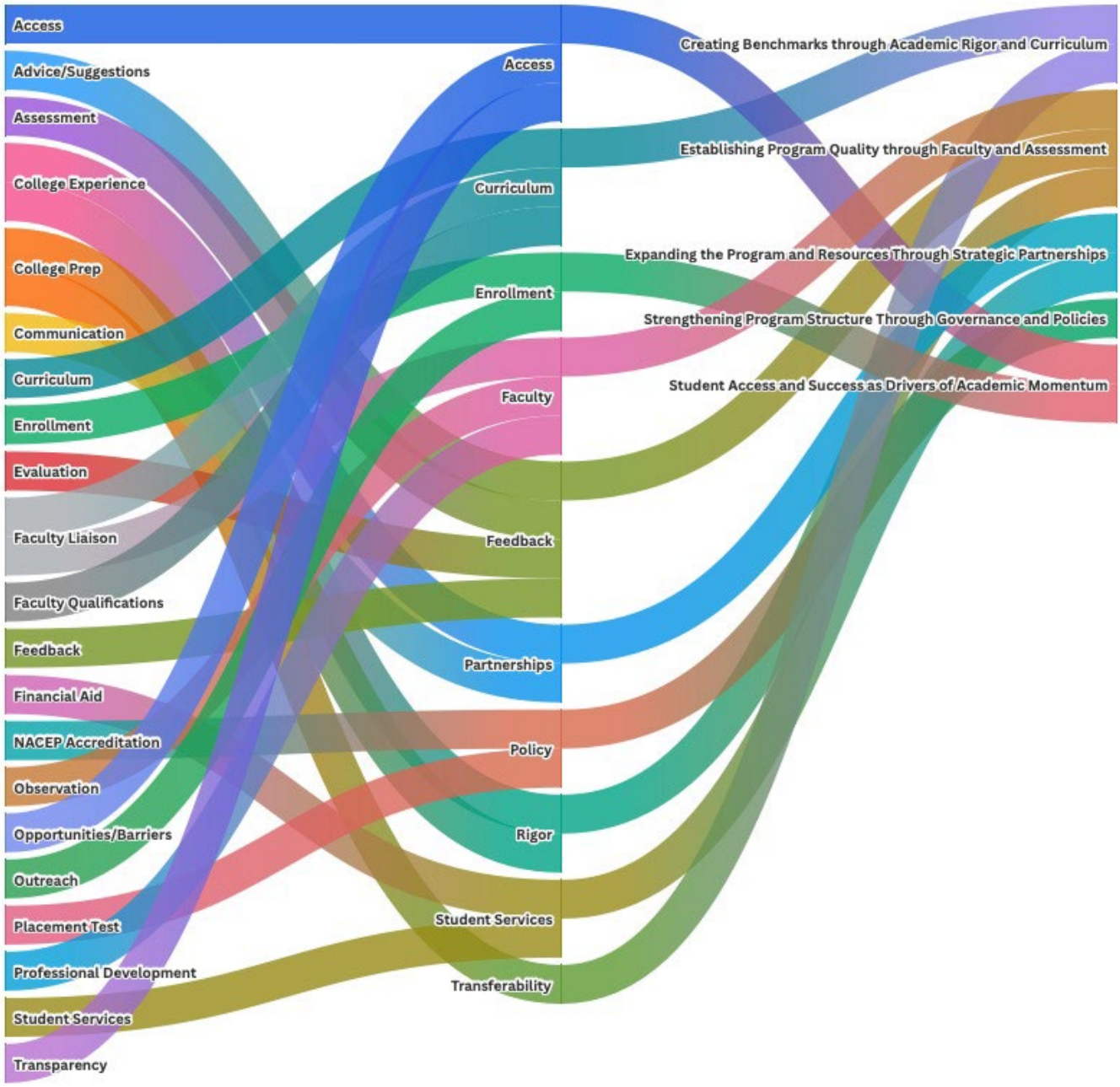
The chosen site (college) and all participants will be provided with pseudonyms, protecting the confidentiality of the institution and individuals who participate. No identifiers of either will be shared with anyone other than the researcher and will not be used in future research projects.

IS COMPENSATION OR MEDICAL TREATMENT AVAILABLE IF INJURY OCCURS? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Terms of participation: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

PARTICIPANT NAME:

PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE: **DATE:**

Appendix J – Alluvial Diagram of the Coding Process