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DUAL ENROLLMENT: ACADEMIC, ENROLLMENT, AND FINANCIAL IMPACT

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James D. Fielder, Jr., Ph.D., Secretary

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MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION
6 N. LIBERTY STREET • 10TH FLOOR • BALTIMORE, MD 21201

As a one-time requirement of the College and Career Readiness and College Completion Act of 2013 (CCRCCA), the Maryland Higher Education Commission, in collaboration with the State Board of Education, the University System of Maryland, Morgan State University, St. Mary's College of Maryland, and the Maryland Association of Community Colleges shall report the academic, enrollment, and financial impacts of being a dually enrolled student. By definition in statute, a "Dually enrolled student" means a student who is dually enrolled in: (i) A secondary school in the State; and (ii) An institution of higher education in the State (§18-14A-01, Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland). Most dual enrollment opportunities are memorialized through Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between a college and a local school district, which allow a student to earn college credit and meet a high school graduation requirement concurrently.

The Maryland Longitudinal Data System (MLDS) submits an annual report on the rates and trends in dual enrollment, the courses in which students were dually enrolled, and the college enrollment outcomes of dually enrolled students in Maryland. The information provided in this report is intended to supplement, rather than repeat, information provided in the MLDS dual enrollment reports.

Academic Impact

Dual enrollment opportunities are plentiful in Maryland and have become a critical part of the educational landscape in Maryland. Since the enactment of the 2013 CCRCCA, Maryland high school students may access dual enrollment opportunities in a variety of ways. First, a student may simply take one or two college courses for credit or a course that satisfies a high school requirement. Second, there may be more formal dual enrollment programs where there is a meaningful collection of college courses that create a pipeline to a specific knowledge base and set of skills. These opportunities are often considered 'early college programs'. Third, there are formal early college programs that specifically lead to the completion of an associate's degree or another specific credential. These dual enrollment opportunities are commonly known as middle college programs. The first of these programs was offered at Prince George's Community College. These programs are now being offered at Howard Community College, Hagerstown Community College, The Community College of Baltimore County, and Montgomery College. Pathways in Technology Early College High (P-TECH) Schools are another example of a middle college program. There are currently five local school systems and eight P-TECH Programs in Maryland. Additionally, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) supports Career Technology Education (CTE) programs which maximize dual enrollment opportunities while providing high school students the opportunity to earn industry-recognized credentials and early college credit.

Dual enrollment opportunities have a significant positive academic impact for high school students. Simply put, dually enrolled students can complete high school requirements while simultaneously earning college credit, and these opportunities increase student access to and student success in postsecondary education and decrease student debt. However, there are administrative challenges students may face.

Transfer of college credit between colleges in Maryland is a challenge, and credit earned while dually enrolled in high school is no exception. Through formal articulated pathways, dual

enrollment programs provide the opportunity for credits earned by students at a community college to transfer to public and private 4-year institutions in the State of Maryland. Local Education Agencies (LEAs) work closely with institutions of higher education to create formal articulated pathways that provide the best fit for their high school students.

As dual enrollment programs continue to grow in the State, particularly early/middle college programs, institutions are directing much of their attention toward addressing admissions requirements, financial aid, scholarships, housing, campus orientations and other support services for this group of students. Many of the four-year colleges and universities have encountered challenges in addressing the growing number of students that have advanced standing (because they have earned college credit through dual enrollment opportunities) and are requesting admission. These students do not meet the traditional guidelines developed by colleges and universities to address “first-time” freshman or “transfer” student. Such status affects eligibility in housing, institutional financial aid, and other student services because they are enrolling with college credit. To illustrate, a student who has completed an associate degree while in high school may be eligible for a different category of financial aid or scholarship award in comparison to a “first-time” or “freshman” student starting college without prior college credits.

Currently, there is an ad-hoc workgroup with representatives from the University System of Maryland institutions, community colleges, private and independent colleges and universities, MSDE, and MHEC working to address this issue. One of the initial tasks of the workgroup is to make a recommendation on how to accurately communicate expectations to students, parents, and families, as well as high school counselors, administrators, and staff, for students engaged in dual enrollment opportunities, as well as ensuring that there are supports available to the student for successful completion of their degree. MHEC will be working with the various segments of higher education to review and update COMAR regulations that address this issue. While students need to demonstrate that they are “college ready” for many dual enrollment opportunities, this college readiness is often only an academic marker. High school students may be able to demonstrate that they are academically college ready, but they may not have the emotional maturity to engage with the experience of college work. College work requires independent thinking, motivation, and self-regulatory skills that develop with time and experience. In addition, students may not have developed the ability to live on their own or manage both academic and non-academic demands.

There is also variability in how the college course is delivered. While some local education agencies will bus students to a community college, some local education agencies have college instructors (i.e., faculty members that have a contract with a college) physically go to a high school to teach a course. Alternatively, some colleges hire high school teachers to teach a college course. The challenge is ensuring that the individual teaching the college course meets the legal requirement to be a college faculty member and accreditation requirements for the college. In Maryland, a faculty member must have a “master's or first professional degree, or its equivalent, in the field in which the faculty member teaches” (COMAR 13B.02.02.17.B). Additionally, institutional accreditors (e.g., Middle States Commission on Higher Education) have similar requirements for faculty.

Enrollment Impact

The Maryland Longitudinal Data System submits an annual report that provides information on the enrollment impact of dually enrolled students. Below is an excerpt from the executive summary of the 2017 report.¹ There are several tables presented in the report with enrollment counts and percentages by school system, race, gender, grade level, and other variables of interest.

“A total of 9,761 Maryland public high school students were dually enrolled in the 2015-2016 academic year. This is a 14% increase from the prior year. Maryland Community Colleges were the most common location for students accessing dual enrollment opportunities. Dually enrolled students more closely reflected the demographics of the Maryland college-going population than the Maryland public high school population. The majority of dually enrolled Maryland public high school students were female, white, and not eligible for free and reduced price meals, although there were increases in participation amongst lower socioeconomic students, and African American, Hispanic, and Asian students.”

Community colleges are the largest partner with the LEAs to advance dual enrollment programs in Maryland. All LEAs have MOUs in implementing dual enrollment opportunities. MOUs between LEAs and community colleges differ, and some LEAs have been slow to implement dual enrollment programs. These variations in MOUs likely have an impact on enrollment trends of dually enrolled students.

It should be noted that the College and Career Readiness and College Completion Act of 2013 allows dual enrollment for Continuing Education certification courses related to preparation for occupation. To date, there has been no participation in these courses.

Financial Impact

The College and Career Readiness and College Completion Act of 2013 sets various financial standards for dually enrolled students (§18-14A-04, Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland). Public institutions of higher education may not charge tuition to a dually enrolled student. Instead, county boards pay a percentage of tuition to the institution. A county board shall pay up to a maximum of four courses, and the payment varies by type of institution (public senior institution of higher education, 75% of the cost of tuition; community college, the lesser of 5% of the target per pupil foundation or 75% of the cost of tuition). For each course in excess of four, the county board payments increase to 90% (or, for community colleges, the lesser of 90% or 5% of the target per pupil foundation). Additionally, the county board may charge a dually enrolled student a fee not to exceed 90%-100% of the amount paid to the institution. These fees are waived for students who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals.

This creates two significant financial impacts. First, students may be charged by the county board to participate in dual enrollment opportunities. However, formal dual enrollment programs, like early-college or middle-college programs, are often designed to be provided at no cost to the student. Second, higher education institutions are not receiving the full cost of tuition

¹ https://mldscenter.maryland.gov/egov/publications/MLDSDualEnrollmentReport_2017.pdf

for dually enrolled students. Colleges are not allowed to charge tuition to dually enrolled students and are only receiving a percentage of tuition costs from the county board. Although this has an impact on the institutions, it can be extremely beneficial to the student and their families in a realization of tuition dollars saved.

While Maryland's independent colleges and universities are not covered under the dual enrollment funding provisions in the CCRCCA legislation, many do offer dual enrollment opportunities for high school students. To help make this an attractive and affordable option, some institutions provide lower tuition rates, institutional grants, or free tuition on a competitive basis for dually enrolled students. Data on students who are dually enrolled at independent institutions in Maryland are included in the annual Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center report.

Beyond tuition, there are additional financial considerations for dual enrollment opportunities. One of these additional costs is transportation. For students who are expected to travel to a location where the dual enrollment program is offered, either the student or the county is responsible for covering the cost. Regardless of whether the student or county pays, transportation is a real cost factor. Similarly, students may be confronted with additional financial burden of fees when participating in a dual enrollment program that may be offered on the college campus. And finally, most notable is the cost of textbooks that remains a challenge for a portion of eligible students in dual enrollment programs. To help address the cost of textbooks, the University System of Maryland Kirwan Center for Academic Innovation is partnering with community colleges and 4-year institutions to further expand the use of Open Educational Resources (OER) to reduce the textbook burden for students.

In summary, dual enrollment programs facilitate a student's access to and success in postsecondary education. And, throughout Maryland our educational stakeholders are continuously working collaboratively to further advance dual enrollment opportunities for our students to obtain a degree in a career pathway that meets the workforce demands in our state and region. Dual enrollment expansion should be continued to assist in reaching MHEC's stated goal of "increasing student success with less debt."