

# Building Momentum for Innovative Dual Enrollment Pathways Policies

ACCT Pre-Congress Session

New Orleans

October 22, 2025



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**Agenda**  
**Building Momentum for Innovative Dual Enrollment Pathways Policies**  
**ACCT Pre-Congress Session**

**Session objectives:**

- Learn about innovative state policies increasing access to dual credit and enrollment pathways in Texas and California
- Hear about the trajectory of major dual credit and enrollment reforms in both states
- Gain lessons relevant to your efforts to shape dual credit and enrollment policies

**1:00-1:15 Project overview**

**1:15-1:25 Overview of dual credit and enrollment research and policy levers**

**1:25-1:35 Building a Bridge to Opportunity: The Rise of Dual Credit Pathways in Texas**

**1:35-2:25 Diving Deeper into Texas**

**2:25-2:40 Break**

**2:40-2:50 Expanding Opportunities for Students: Lessons From the Growth of Dual Enrollment Pathways in California**

**2:50-3:40 Diving Deeper into California**

**3:40-3:45 Poll**

**3:45-4:30 Lessons Learned from Community College Trustees and Presidents**

# Project Overview



# Who is here today?



**What is your current level of understanding of dual enrollment pathways?**



**Is your state making efforts to increase dual enrollment?**

# Overview of Dual Credit/Dual Enrollment Research and Policy Options

Amy Ellen Duke-Benfield,  
Independent Consultant

October 22, 2025



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# Benefits of Dual Enrollment

- Shortens time to a credential or degree
- Reduces costs
- Builds stronger connections between education and the workforce

# Dual Enrollment Outcomes

- Research shows dual enrollment students are more likely to
  - Earn better grades
  - Graduate from high school
  - Enroll in college
  - Complete a credential
  - Have increased engagement and motivation

# Who Doesn't Access Dual Enrollment?

- Nationwide, dual enrollment is largely limited to those who are already college-bound
- Economically disadvantaged and first-generation students have insufficient access
- High school students with lower access rates include:
  - Black and Latino students
  - Students in rural areas
  - Youth in foster care
  - Students experiencing homelessness

# Characteristics of High-Impact Dual Enrollment Pathways

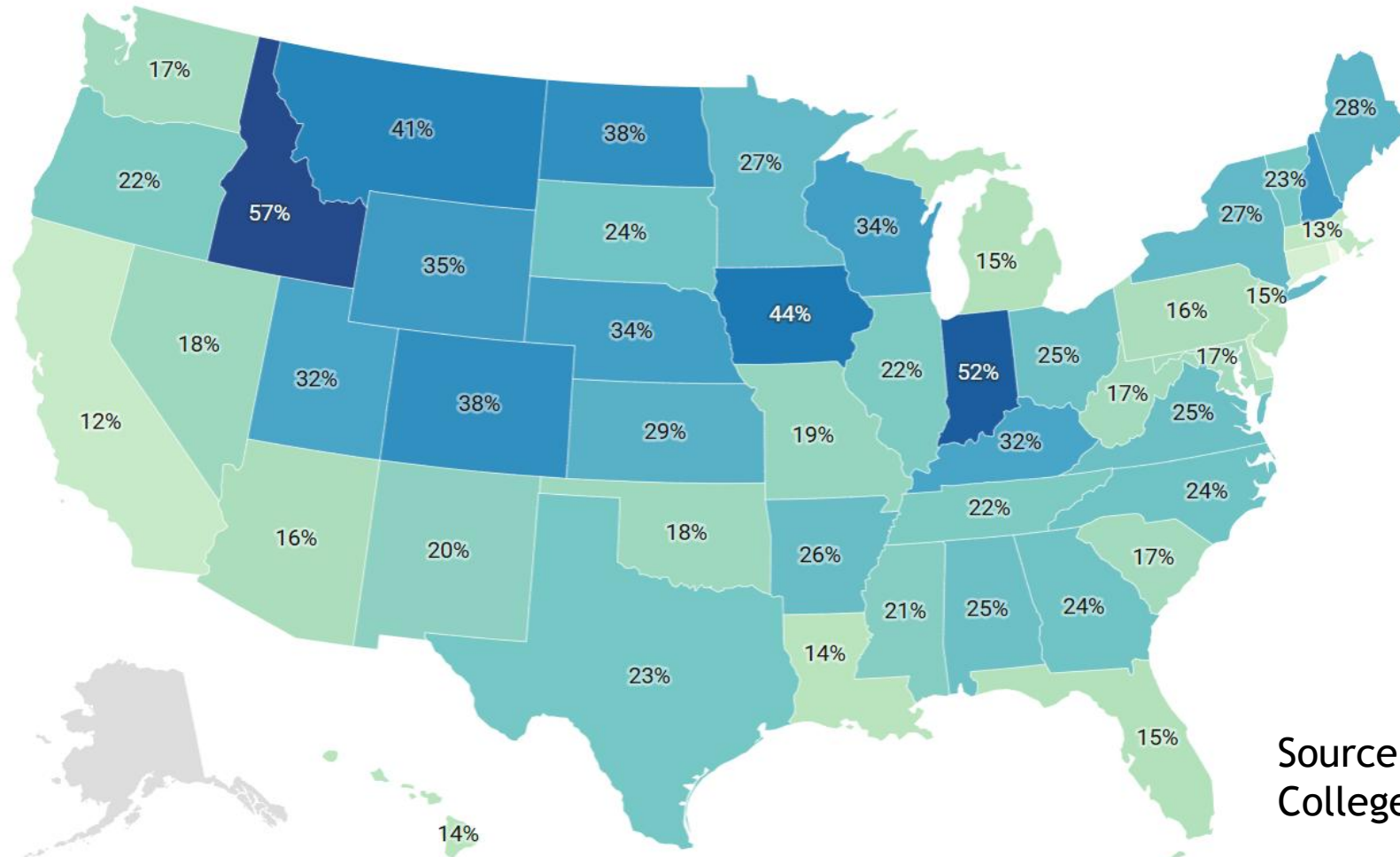
- Are structured in coherent sequences that lead to credentials and degrees, including transfer
- Intentionally target underrepresented students
- Remove tuition and fee barriers
- Provide tailored early advising, counseling, career exploration, tutoring, and college readiness skills so students can succeed in college-level work while in high school
- Are aligned to labor market demand and with a career or transfer path of the students' interest

# The State of Dual Enrollment

- There are nearly 2.5 million dual enrollment students, making up 21% of community college students (2022-23)
- State funding has increased but access- and success-oriented policies have not kept pace
  - Too few programs intentionally align dual enrollment course sequences with postsecondary programs of study in high-demand, high-wage fields
  - Students who are white and whose families have higher incomes are more likely than their Black, Latino, and low-income peers to take dual enrollment courses
  - Eligibility barriers like test scores, grades, and teacher recommendations can prevent students from participating

## Percentage of Community College Students in High School in 2022-23

Dual enrollment as a percent of community college headcount



Source: Community College Research Center

# Dual Enrollment Policy Levers

- Legislation
- Funding
- Regulation
- Guidance
- Technical assistance

# Building a Bridge to Opportunity: Lessons from the Rise of Dual Credit Pathways in Texas

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# Texas's Story (2015)

- Lawmakers lifted limits on number of dual credit courses students could take per semester, year, or high school career, and removed grade limits on when student could begin
- Increased interest by policymakers & stakeholders followed
  - Concern about rigor, relevance of credits to college and career goals, lack of access for underrepresented students

# Texas's Story (2017-2018)

- Legislature directed Texas Education Agency & Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board **establish statewide goals** to ensure all students who could benefit could access quality dual credit pathways and required school districts and partnering colleges **formalize partnerships through MOUs**
- Dual Credit Task Force co-convened by UT and TACC
  - Drew from multiple sectors and agencies
  - Studied how dual credit could support the state's new higher education strategic plan
  - 2018 report on access, funding, and alignment geared toward legislature

# Texas's Story (2018-2019)

- Legislative agenda followed
  - More MOU requirements
  - Establishment of common advising strategies
  - Alignment of HS and dual credit courses with postsec pathways and credentials at the college and industry certification
  - Use of free- or low-cost open educational resources
  - Identification of one staff person from an independent school district or college for providing academic advising before students enroll in dual credit coursework
  - Requirement that dually enrolled students with 15 SCH declare a meta-major or field of study

# Texas's Story (2019-2020)

- Dual credit enrollments grew: reached 25% by 2019
- Cost challenge remained
  - Funding mechanisms and cost-sharing arrangements varied by district to district
- Inequitable access, particularly for low-income students
- Continued interest in providing greater access to dual credit college and career **pathways** at K-12 and college level

# Outcomes-Based Funding

- Commission on Community College Finance and HB 8 (2021-23)
  - Dynamic outcomes-based funding formula
    - **Fundable outcomes**
      - Credentials of value awarded, including credentials from credit and non-credit programs;
      - Credentials of value awarded in high-demand fields;
      - **Students who complete a sequence of 15+ semester credit hours through academic and workforce dual credit programs: \$3,500**
      - Students who transfer with 15+ credit to 4-year institutions

# Financial Aid for Dual Credit

- Financial Aid for Swift Transfer (FAST)
  - Made dual credit coursework free for students receiving free and reduced-price lunch and capped the cost for other students
  - Represented a sizable financial investment in dual credit coursework
    - State reimburses colleges at \$58 per SCH for students who receive FRPL in the current year or any of the previous four years

# Lessons Learned from Texas

- Make dual credit coursework free
- Ensure dual credit coursework is embedded in a coherent pathway that leads to credentials of value and/or transfer to higher levels of postsecondary education
- Level up investments in career and technical education
- Investing in dual enrollment pathways strengthens a state's workforce and economic competitiveness
- Integrate dual credit into the state's broader strategic vision

# Lessons Learned from Texas

- Ensure students have the academic supports to succeed
- Build a strong coalition motivated by student success
- Develop a plan to upskill teachers so they have the qualifications to teach dual credit/enrollment
- Invest in research for casemaking

# Diving Deeper into Texas

Dr. Brenda Kays, Kilgore College

Carol Scott, Trustee, Del Mar College

Ray Martinez, President & CEO, Texas  
Association of Community Colleges

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Dr. Brenda Kays,  
President  
Kilgore College



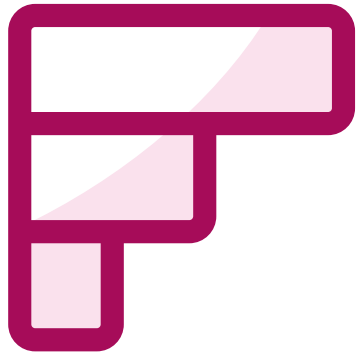
Carol Scott  
Trustee  
Del Mar College



Ray Martinez  
CEO & President  
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Community Colleges



Is the dual enrollment coursework offered at your college more likely to be standalone courses or embedded in a college or career pathway?



**What are the top 4 barriers that exist to offering more dual enrollment pathways to more students in your area?**

# California's Bridge to Opportunity: Lessons From Investments in Dual Credit Pathways

Dr. Mike Munoz, President-Superintendent,  
Long Beach Community College District

Andra Hoffman, Trustee, Los Angeles  
Community College District

Dr. Naomi Castro, Director of Programs,  
Career Ladders Project

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# California's Story

- Over the past decade, California policymakers and community college leaders have made sustained investments and reforms in multiple forms of dual enrollment through:
  - legislation,
  - funding, and
  - integration with workforce and economic development initiatives
- Shared concern about access

# California's Story: College and Career Access Pathways (CCAP)

- 2016 legislation created CCAP partnerships between community colleges and school districts
- Focused on developing or increasing access to dual enrollment pathways for students least likely to traditionally pursue dual enrollment
- Goal: Develop seamless pathways from high school to community college for CTE or preparation for transfer, improving high school grad rates, and helping high school students achieve college and career readiness

# California's Story: CCAP (2016)

- Dual enrollment changes in CCAP legislation (2016)
  - Made it free
  - Permitted college courses to be taught on high school campuses solely for high school students
  - Authorized students in CCAP partnerships to enroll in up to 15 units per term
  - Required partnerships to align coursework with transfer pathways and high-demand career fields
  - Explicitly required focus on underserved students

# California's Story: CCAP (2019)

- Made partnerships easier to establish and expand by decreasing administrative barriers
- Reduced bureaucratic hurdles
- Clarified CCAP students had same rights as other community college students (e.g., access to counseling and libraries)
- Reaffirmed partnerships must be designed to increase participation of underrepresented students
- Encouraged between alignment of CTE pathways with regional and statewide labor market demand
- Refined MOU requirements

# California's Story

- Governor and Community College Chancellor share strategic commitment to dual enrollment
  - Multi-Year Roadmap for CA Community Colleges (2022)
    - Increase by 15% the percentage of HS students who graduate with 12+ college credits earned through dual enrollment
    - Doubled down on increasing access for underrepresented students: establish annual metrics to track equity gaps
  - Chancellor's Ninth-grade strategy
  - Complements guided pathways

# California's Story: Funding

- California College and Career Pathways Trust (2013-2014 and 2014-2015): \$500 million
- One-time general funds (2022-23): \$200 million for dual enrollment to be spent over five years, including \$100 million for CCAP
- Golden State Pathways Program (2022-23): \$500 million to develop high-quality career pathways in high-wage, high skill, and high-growth occupations
- Other education and economic development funding streams have called out dual enrollment

# CCAP Outcomes to Date

- CCAP has the smallest access gaps of any CA dual enrollment model by both race and socioeconomic status
  - Latino students enroll at rates consistent with their share of overall high school population
- 82% of CCAP students enroll in college within one year of graduating from HS: state average is 66%
- 51% of CCAP students enroll in a CA community college
- 31% of CCAP students enroll directly in a four-year institution

# Lessons Learned from California

- Embed dual enrollment in clear pathways
- Set and reinforce a strong vision
- Be intentional about providing access to dual enrollment for underrepresented students
- Investing in dual enrollment pathways strengthens a state's workforce and economic competitiveness
- Develop a coordinated strategy to expand dual enrollment access

# Lessons Learned from California

- Distinguish between local and statewide barriers
- Start early with ninth-grade access
- Expand the teaching pipeline
- Confer meaningful high school and college credit
- Ensure students have the academic supports to succeed

# Diving Deeper into California

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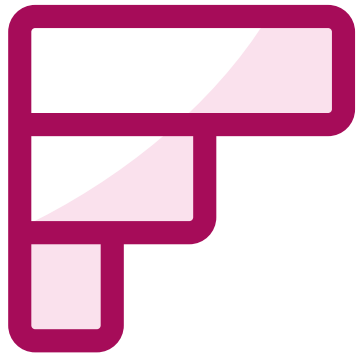
**Andra Hoffman**  
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Los Angeles Community  
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**Do you feel better prepared to speak about dual enrollment pathways in your state?**



**What three lessons about dual enrollment will you take away from today's session?**



After hearing today's information, how would you rate your new level understanding of dual enrollment pathways?



# What additional resources do you need to be better prepared?

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