Dear Esteemed HECC Commissioners,

Representing the thousands of community college faculty of the Oregon Education Association, the OEA Community College Council (OEA CCC) wishes to share with you our analysis and recommendations regarding the best methods to expand Oregon's Dual Credit programs. Please see our attached paper, which represents the wisdom of the state's experts on what constitutes a quality college course – college educators. Expanding quality college educational options for Oregon's high school students is an important goal, and community college faculty are ready to be a part of creating a system that offers increased opportunities for those Oregon high school students wanting to take on the challenge of college-level work.

The Accelerated Learning Committee's "Senate Bill 222 Legislative Report" has put forward a model for how to expand dual credit. We believe their report fails to consider the merits (and demerits) of the various dual credit options available to Oregon, and as a result their legislative recommendations will adversely affect the quality education received by Oregonians. Our paper provides the missing analysis and a much more promising vision for dual credit in Oregon.

Attached is an Executive Summary and a copy of our Analysis and Recommendations paper. We hope you will find time to read and consider our analysis and recommendations; we look forward to being a part further discussion and debate on this important topic.

Sincerely,
The Political Action Committee of the Oregon Education Association Community College Council

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Oregon's Dual Credit Options: Analysis and Recommendations

By Oregon Education Association's Community College Council

Executive Summary

January 2015

Speaking on behalf of Oregon Education Association (OEA) community college faculty across the state, the OEA Community College Council (OEA CCC) welcomes the opportunity to work with state education officials to expand the dual credit options for high school students. Nothing matters more to community college faculty than providing a high-quality education to all college students. Those dual credit courses that provide the student with a true college educational experience with appropriate college-level rigor will be the most effective in transitioning high school students to successful college careers.

To facilitate and promote high quality dual credit options in Oregon's high school students, this paper evaluates the and ranks nine options currently in use or under consideration and makes recommendations for their success, expansion, or curtailment. Our ranking is based on each option's ability to provide students with an authentic college educational experience—college-level rigor and exposure to college educational culture. It is our hope that the State will devise strategies that will allow students and their school districts to choose the highest-ranking options, and we believe that even the most rural school districts have the ability to choose one of the better options.

Based on our analysis, we believe that the best option would be for high school students to take college courses on college campuses, and therefore we suggest that the State develop strategies to expand what we have called the:

A. *Whole College Immersion Experience*; and
B. The *Early or Middle College* option.

We know many high schools are not close enough to have their students take classes directly on college campuses, so the State should also develop strategies to create and expand:

C. *College Comes to the High School (college instructors teaching at high schools)*; and
D. *Supported Online College Courses with a High School Mentor*.

Further, we recommend that the most problematic and lowest rated option, the Eastern Promise and its various replications, should be used sparingly if at all because in all cases, including highly rural school districts, better options exist.

Oregon's Dual Credit Options: Analysis and Recommendations

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Summary

To facilitate and promote high quality dual credit options in Oregon, this paper evaluates and ranks nine options currently in use or under consideration and makes recommendations for their success, expansion, or curtailment.

Introduction

As a part of a movement for statewide educational reform, state officials have launched a major initiative to expand the options for making college courses available to prepared high school students. Citing studies that indicate that students who take college courses in high school are more successful in college, state education leaders seek to expand that success to a broader range of students. While the studies cited are not actually very compelling,[1] the basic vision is that if students have a successful college experience while in high school, more of them will begin to see a college education as a real possibility, will be far better prepared for the transition to college, and will have started earning credits toward a degree.

To date, this initiative has had minimal college faculty input. This paper seeks to remedy this by identifying the best methods to expand college opportunities while maintaining rigor and an authentic college experience for students.

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[1] The studies did not receive the academic vetting process for quality involved in submission to a peer-reviewed journal. They also conflate correlation with causation, assuming that because students who take dual credit courses in high school are more likely to do well in college, one caused the other. We believe these two characteristics of successful students are correlated instead. Therefore, getting more students in dual credit courses will not necessarily lead to more successful college students.

What is a True College Experience?

The primary goal of the dual credit expansion effort is to increase opportunities for high school students to take college courses. But what are the unique features of a college class that distinguish it from a high school course? There are a number of common elements of a college course that can be used to evaluate the various dual credit options available in Oregon.

1. College courses combine objective knowledge with a focus on the development of students' analytical and critical thinking skills. These skills will not only help them succeed academically, but also are in high demand in the professional world and in life.

2. College courses introduce students to how scholars in the discipline construct meaning and analyze the world. Students are introduced to the different schools of thought in the discipline and get a sample of the discipline's focus, aiding them in their decision on a college major and a career choice.

3. College courses occasionally use adult material and topics to enhance this adult learning experience.

4. In college courses, the content expert is the instructor in the front of the classroom. As a result, much of the content in college courses comes from outside the bounds of the textbook. It relies on the expertise of the instructor.

In addition to the contours of the curriculum of a college course, there is a unique college educational culture. Exposing high school students to this college culture will give them a better sense of what they can expect if they continue their college studies. This college culture includes:

1. Attending class with a wide variety of students, with differences that include ethnicity, race, class, gender, geography, age and life experience. As a result the classroom discussions will be richer and more complex than one might see in most high school classroom.

2. Completing a majority of the course work outside of class time, including the reading of textbooks.

3. Learning at a fast pace, particularly in Oregon where public colleges are on the quarter system. There are no slow moments in a term. It is an accelerated learning experience where an entire course is completed in ten weeks. For example, the college Math 95 course is roughly equivalent to the high school Algebra 2 class; while MTH 095 is taught in ten weeks at colleges, the material in Algebra 2 is taught over an entire year.

4. Completing assignments on time, even when absent from class, as self-disciplined learners. As in the adult work world, students are expected to perform like responsible professionals, and those who don't pay the price. And as adults, students may not seek parental assistance to intervene on their behalf.

Dual Credit Options

There are many options available for high school students wanting to take on the challenge of college courses. These are presented below, ranked from the most likely to replicate college-level rigor and a college educational culture to the least. Also, we note that some proponents of dual credit argue that more rural school districts will be unable to implement the highest quality options, and therefore out of fairness that all school districts should be limited to the options available to all. We categorically reject such thinking: school districts should be able to choose the best option or options available to them. Indeed, we

believe that even the most rural school districts have the ability to choose one of the better options. Finally, we strongly recommend that students and their school districts be allowed to choose the highest-ranking option available, and to limit the use of less promising options only to situations where no better option is available.

A. *The Whole College Immersion Experience*

To give high school students an authentic sense of what they can expect at college, providing a way for them to take college courses from college instructors on a college campus is ideal. Washington State's long-running *Running Start* program is a good example of this model.[2] We believe that the State of Oregon should devise strategies that make this high quality option available to as many students as possible who live within a short distance from a community college or university.

B. *Early or Middle College*

Many community colleges have partnered with local high schools to develop Early or Middle College educational programs that combine the high school and college experience. The success of these programs in effectively transitioning students to college has been well established. At many colleges, the structure of this program allows high school students to receive intensive counseling and other services at both the high school and the college. Once deemed ready, these students can then take regular college courses. This model would be equivalent to the *Whole College Immersion Experience* in Section A above. With alternative

[2]Information on this program can be found at https://www.k12.wa.us/SecondaryEducation/CareerCollegeReadiness/RunningStart.aspx

models, college courses may be taught exclusively to high school-aged students within the program, being slightly less representative of the diversity of a college student population.

This approach does have advantages but also disadvantages: while Early College offers students intensive counseling, increasing chances for student success, this type of counseling will not be present once the students enters college, so it does not simulate the self-directed nature of the educational experience in higher education institutions in the U.S.

No matter what the structure of the program, we believe this is an excellent model for high school students taking college courses and that the State should look at expanding this option for high school students who are in close proximity to a community college or university.

C. *College Comes to the High School*

Many state documents on dual credit have argued that the state lacks educators who have the educational qualifications to teach college courses to high school students, and concluded that we need to lower the college instructor qualifications in order to expand dual credit options. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Oregon is blessed with thousands of qualified college instructors, teaching both full-time and part-time at the state's educational institutions. Many of them would be eager to travel to the high schools, even if that means travelling large distances, to teach college courses on the high school campuses, and would be open to teaching at alternate locations that are accessible to high school students as well. The result would be a course that reflects both the academic rigor and some of the culture of a college course.

Such college-within-a-high school experiences would *not* provide high school students with a full sense of the college culture. For example, while some high schools certainly

provide significant ethnic and social class diversity, many others don't and they virtually all lack the age, geographic and life experience diversity that students find at Oregon's community colleges. However, on the whole, we believe this approach does offer excellent option for Oregon, and that Oregon should pursue strategies to eliminate barriers that currently prevent school districts from using the *College Comes to the High School* model.

D. Supported Online College Courses with a High School Mentor – The Columbia Gorge Model

Another model for extending college courses to high school students entails having them take online courses from college faculty. College online courses already exist at every college in the state, and if financially supported by the local high school, this can be an easy option for students and schools that may be particularly appealing for students who live far from a college campus. However, online courses have a number of limitations, including less student contact with the more diverse adult learners that occurs in a face-to-face course and limited interaction with faculty. More importantly, many students do not learn well in an online environment.

To overcome these limitations, one option would be to follow a model developed at Columbia Gorge Community College to bring educational opportunities to more remote school districts. In this model, high school students take one of the online courses offered by the college. At the high school, the students have a mentor—one of their high school teachers—who conducts classes on this subject a couple of times a week. The mentor is in contact with the college instructor, and together they discuss, in general, what materials should be presented in the mentoring sessions. In addition, since the mentor is on site they can detect where students are struggling with the material and devise exercises or lectures to help students. Even a model where the high school mentor does not supplement the educational

experience and merely provides structure and technical support would enhance the likelihood of student success in a new learning environment.

This model has all the advantages of an online class, plus it has a face-to-face component for those students who have difficulties with purely online classes. Furthermore, since the college faculty is the instructor of record—it is truly their class—the instructional qualifications of the high school teacher are not an issue. This model also ensures college-level rigor and exposure to some elements of the college educational culture.

Most importantly, this model is available for *all* high schools, no matter how remote the location, opening up educational opportunities for all in a way that does not require the creation of new courses or new proficiency exams. It simply piggybacks on existing college online courses.

E. *Experiencing College Online*

One of the stated goals of Oregon's dual credit expansion is to give each prepared high school student the opportunity to take three college courses for free. The focus has been on standard introductory courses such Math 111 or Writing 121. These courses would attract large numbers of students and the Columbia Gorge model works well in those situations because all high schools have Math and English teachers. But what if a student wants to take a course like the *Geography of the U.S. and Canada* (GEG 207)? A fifth option that addresses this problem is to have high school students enroll in an online college course without a high school support network. Such an approach will expand other courses to students, who will learn the importance of self-discipline and organization that will be crucial for their future success in college. They will experience the academic rigor of a college course and some of the college culture in an online learning environment.

This option is readily available for all high schools, no matter how remote the location, but currently lacks methods to fund it. We recommend that Oregon develop mechanisms to reimburse high school students who take one of their three dual credit courses online.

F. *College Credit Now and Two-Plus-Two Dual Credit Programs*

Many community colleges in Oregon already operate extensive dual credit programs called College Credit Now or, for career-technical courses, Two-Plus-Two. College faculty are expected to ensure the academic quality of these programs and there is close collaboration between high school and college faculty. High school faculty meet the college instructor qualification standards so are able to teach an authentic college course where the instructor is a content expert. This program can be administered even at significant distance from a college, as the bulk of the collaboration between high school teachers and college professors can occur online or by phone with only infrequent face-to-face meetings. Downsides to these programs include the slower pace of learning as it is integrated into a high school learning environment, lower levels of student diversity (especially age and geographic), and potentially low levels of support for the high school/college educator.

If high school teachers don't have the necessary educational qualifications to teach in this type of program, Oregon should make available summer online graduate courses and funding to allow teachers to gain the credentials they need to teach.

G. *Proficiency-Based Model -- AP and IB programs*

A proficiency based model is one where students takes a class at the high school from a high school teacher. Whether the student receives college credit depends on their passing a proficiency assessment. A major drawback of this model is that it does not give the student

the opportunity to experience the culture of a college education. For proficiency-based programs to be an effective dual credit option, the proficiencies must be constructed and evaluated in a manner that insures that the class has college-level rigor. The Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs are well-accepted proficiency models. These programs have national boards to construct their proficiency assessments to assure college equivalency. These boards also design the rubric and oversee the grading, which is done on a national level by a large group of high school teachers and college instructors. AP and IB exam results are generally accepted for college credit at all colleges across the nation.

H. *Eastern Promise Program—Regional Proficiency-Based Model*

The Eastern Promise program developed in Eastern Oregon operates on a regional proficiency-based model. Some state officials see this as a model that can be replicated across the state and Replication Grants are working on that goal. One that is particularly advanced is coordinated with Western Oregon University in the Mid-Willamette Valley and is called the Willamette Promise project. We are impressed by the great efforts made by those in the Eastern Promise to ensure college-level rigor of their courses, but we worry that as the excitement, and potentially the funding, for this new program fades whether this level of effort and commitment can be maintained into the indefinite future. As for attempts to replicate the Eastern Promise model across the state, there are serious concerns about the quality of the proficiency assessments based on what we have seen of the Willamette Promise project.

The Eastern Promise model connects college professors and high school teachers in Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) that meet throughout the year. They discuss the content and proficiency assessments for the course. As with the AP or IB model, the courses

are taught in the high schools by high school teachers but unlike the AP and IB model, these high school instructors must meet the same instructor qualifications that are in place for all faculty at the college. In this way, it is equivalent to a College Credit Now program.

The students who enroll in these college courses take a proficiency exam or submit a portfolio of work at the end of the course. College and high school teachers jointly grade the assessments using a variety of models depending on the discipline. The emphasis is on consistency and quality in the grading models and college professors are attentive to maintaining college-level rigor. For example, in Writing every student's portfolio is anonymously read by at least two different evaluators. If a student receives a high enough score on the assessment then they receive college credit.

This Eastern Promise model was constructed to meet the needs of a rural area of the state where access to college campuses is limited. But extending this model to the rest of the state – where most students do not face the same constraints -- should be given serious thought. Indeed, there are a host of concerns about this model that make it an undesirable choice that should be used sparingly if at all.

First, this model greatly increases the workload of participating college faculty and high school educators. College faculty will be required to create quality proficiency assessments equivalent to those offered by AP and IB. When creating AP exams, the College Board utilizes the expertise of dozens of academics and support staff and has tremendous resources annually invested in the creation of an assessment recognized as an indicator of college-level work. In the Eastern Promise model, one or two professors in each discipline will complete this enormous task for each region.

In addition, the required cross-grading of student assessments - a key quality control - will itself require a tremendous investment of time for college faculty. The workload for high

school instructors would be negatively impacted as well, as they prepare to teach a new course, attend Professional Learning Committee meetings periodically and participate in grading for the course. When grant money disappears, this work may be a permanent addition to the workloads of all educators with additional compensation uncertain. And the additional workload is significant. For example, in 2014 twenty-two Eastern Promise Writing evaluators (college and high school educators) collectively read 694 pieces of student writing. The lead college professor alone spent 221 hours reading 129 portfolios for quality control.[3]

Second, from what we have seen of the Willamette Promise and the Accelerated Learning Committee's legislative report, if the Eastern Promise model is expanded statewide, it will likely be constructed in a fashion that would negatively impact the quality of the proficiency assessments.[4] Without any state standards for proficiency, each school district or Educational Service District would be able to negotiate with their partner college about the content and rigor of the proficiency assessments as well as the standards to be used to evaluate those assessments. If the school district or ESD doesn't like proficiency assessments proposed by their partner college, then they could negotiate with other colleges until they find a set of proficiencies to their liking. This might happen if the school district perceives that too few high school students are passing the proficiency assessments. The result will likely be greatly differing standards throughout the state.

The incentive for school districts to shop among colleges for the lowest proficiency standards and the incentive for colleges to reduce proficiency standards to attract school districts is enhanced by the state Accelerated Learning Committee's suggested new legislation,

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[3] *2014 Portfolio Report*, 23 September 2014, Eastern Promise Language Arts PLC.
[4] Senate Bill 222 Legislative Report, Accelerated Learning Committee, 1 October 2014, http://education.oregon.gov/Documents/archive/CORRECTED%20ALCLegReport11.1.14.pdf.

which proposes that the state pay each school district and its partnering college extra money for every student who passes a dual credit class.[5]

Defenders argue that colleges would never lower their standards, and that professors and college administrators are unaffected by monetary and other incentives. We believe this is magical thinking. Creating a system that forces colleges to compete for the school districts' business based on ease of their proficiency exams will only lead to a degradation of the quality of college education in the state.

Third, the Eastern Promise model could be easily constructed in a way that eliminates the important quality control of having college instructors cross-grade proficiency exams. Indeed, this is the current grading model planned for the Willamette Promise Replication Project in 2014-2015.[6] This quality control is important because college faculty are the experts on what constitutes college-level work. Further, they are disinterested graders and will ensure that high school teachers are fairly and objectively evaluating student work. There is a reason that College Board has a cross-grading method utilizing both high school and college educators in the evaluation of AP exams. It ensures objectivity and earns the program legitimacy in the eyes of college admissions offices. Given all the pressure that superintendents, principals and high school teachers will feel from politicians and parents to award college credit, such a quality measure will be crucial to ensure an objective evaluation of a student's college work.

Overall, as a vehicle for delivering college level courses to high school students, the Eastern Promise model has many potential pitfalls and will require significant accountability

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[5] Senate Bill 222 Legislative Report, 1 October 2014.
[6] As reported by Keith Ussery of Willamette Promise at a Eastern Promise Replication Project meeting in Keizer, Oregon on January 14, 2015.

and quality measures to maintain quality. This will require an ongoing and high level of commitment of college and high school educators and significant additional funding to pay for ongoing professional learning communities, continuous development of new assessments, and extensive cross grading. There are serious questions as to whether the necessary level of commitment can be maintained into the indefinite future. Of equal concern is the fact that the Accelerated Learning Committee's funding model has a number of incentives built into the system that would tend to lead to actions that would undermine the quality of the proficiency assessments. Overall, the Columbia Gorge Online Model is a far superior choice for rural districts and this superiority would be true even if one had confidence in the long-term quality of the Eastern Promise's proficiency assessments. Using the Columbia Gorge model it is far easier to insure college-level rigor.

I. Lowering College Instructor Qualifications to Expand Dual Credit Programs

As concerning as the Eastern Promise model of proficiency assessment is, the Willamette Promise Replication Project and the state Accelerated Learning Committee's recommendations to the OEIB and state legislature offer the possibility of the creation of a dual credit program with even more quality concerns.

College professors are the state's experts in what constitutes a quality college course and what qualifications are needed to teach those courses effectively. Their expertise in this area has been recognized since the time there have been colleges over a thousand years ago. Oregon's colleges and universities currently align with national standards for setting college instructor qualification. They require instructors to have a master's degree in the academic discipline, or a related master's degree with a substantial number of graduate hours in the discipline. This standard ensures instructors understand not only the content of a course, but

can introduce students to how the discipline analyzes the world and its different schools of thought. Educators with a graduate education have a deep knowledge of the subject from which they can answer student questions and direct more in-depth student assignments. They know where to search to find the latest studies and academic work to keep their course current and relevant, and finally, having experience reading professional journal articles, they have the ability to understand and to place these works in their proper context.

Yet in the Willamette Promise Replication Grant, the college instructor qualifications required in the Eastern Promise program have been dropped. Instead, high school principals have been given the power to determine which of their teachers are qualified to teach a college-level course.[7] The only guidelines they have been given is that a qualified college instructor must have taught the subject matter at least three years in high school.[8] Even these inadequate qualifications were ignored in the assignments of a few of the instructors.

Further, the Accelerated Learning Committee has recommended that alternative college instructor qualifications be approved as statewide standards that are binding on all higher educational institutions. These proposed alternative qualifications will minimize the exposure of instructors to a graduate education in the academic discipline, thus weakening their ability to provide a college-level education to their students beyond those already delineated in Sections F and H above.

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[7] This is technically in violation of OAR 589-008-0100 and OAR 589-007-0200. In both OARs it states "Institutional standards for instructor qualification (standards for teachers of lower division collegiate courses must include a master's degree in a subject area closely related to that in which the instructor will teaching; however in subject areas in which individuals have demonstrated their competencies and served in professional fields and in cases in which documentation to support the individual's proficiency and high level of competency can be assembled, the master's degree requirement may be waived by <u>the college president</u> or substituted according to the community college's personnel policy);" [underlining added]

[8] Willamette Promise teacher qualifications can be found in the FAQ document on the Willamette Education Service District website at http://www.wesd.org/Page/342.

The reason given for lowering the educational requirements for teaching a college course is that without an expansion in the pool of qualified instructors we will be unable to expand dual-credit programs sufficiently to meet the needs of our students. This is empirically false. There are ample college instructors in Oregon (many currently underemployed) to expand *The Whole College Immersion Experience, Early or Middle College, College Comes to the High School, The Columbia Gorge Model* and *Entering College Online.* In addition, AP and IB could also expand because these courses don't require a master's in the content area in order to teach them.

If the State's goal is to give students an authentic college experience that prepares them for further college study, lowering college instructor qualifications should not even be contemplated.[9]

Conclusion

Our recommendations represent the professional assessment of the community college educators represented by the Oregon Education Association's Community College Council. In order for dual credit courses to work as a bridge from high school to a successful college experience, these courses must mirror actual college courses in both academic rigor, college educational culture, and instructor qualification. We believe that the best option would be for high school students to take college courses on college campuses, and therefore we strongly recommend that the State develop strategies to expand what we have called the:

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[9] In addition, some have argued that because college standards for instructor qualification vary from college to college, high school faculty are discouraged from pursuing opportunities to teach dual credit courses. It has led some state officials to suggest that the State should not only lower instructor qualifications, but create uniform instructor qualifications across the state. We believe such a strategy constitutes a serious threat to the quality of collegiate education in Oregon, and offers a false solution to a minor problem. Clearly, in order to ensure that high schools do have qualified instructors, Oregon should promote and support methods for faculty members to become qualified, not *lower* such qualifications.

A. *Whole College Immersion Experience*; and

B. *Early or Middle College* options.

We also recognize that many high schools are not physically close enough to have their students take classes directly on college campuses, so we recommend that the State also develop strategies to create and expand:

C. *College Comes to the High School*; and

D. *Supported Online College Courses with a High School Mentor* options.

In addition, the State should find a way to reimburse students who want to enroll in online college courses.

To expand the College Credit Now option, the State should make available summer online graduate courses and funding to allow teachers to gain the credentials they need to teach these courses.

Finally, we believe that the Eastern Promise model should be used sparingly if at all. There are a number of potential problems with the proficiency assessments. Quality concerns would multiply with the lowering of instructor qualification standards. There are better options for Oregon's students, both urban and rural, that more effectively introduce them to college.