

# **Concurrent Enrollment in Utah: Access and Quality**

**Policy Brief: September 2007**

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## **Introduction**

As the consensus that every school student should be prepared for postsecondary education grows, educational programs that aim to bridge the gap between high school and college have increased dramatically over the last 10 years. One of these programs is concurrent enrollment, also referred to as “dual enrollment” and “dual credit.” These programs allow public high school students to enroll in college courses to earn high school and college credits simultaneously. As these programs become more prevalent across the nation, there is increasing concern about who has access to the programs and about the quality of the curriculum. Those states with concurrent enrollment programs have taken a variety of approaches to address access and quality. Some states have detailed policies guiding the types of courses offered, instructor qualifications, admissions requirements, and course content, while other states provide little or no guidance.

## **Growth of Concurrent Enrollment across the Nation**

Concurrent enrollment programs date back to the 1950s, but in the past 7-10 years, concurrent enrollment courses “have taken hold across the country” (Marshall and Andrews 2002, 238). As of 2005, forty states offer these programs (see Table 1) (U.S. Department of Education 2004; 2005).

Eighteen of those states have mandated concurrent enrollment programs, meaning that high schools “must inform students of their options to take college courses and must accept at least some credits earned in college toward high school graduation. Likewise, postsecondary institutions in these states are not permitted to deny access to students for the sole reason that the students are still enrolled in high school” (U.S. Dept of Education 2004, 14). During the 2002-2003 school year, seventy-one percent of all public high schools in the United States offered concurrent enrollment courses (Waits, et. al. 2005). Current estimates indicate that approximately 680,000 high school students are enrolled in concurrent courses nationwide during the 2002-2003 school year (Kleiner and Lewis 2005).

Table 1: Concurrent enrollment programs in the states

State	CE Program
Alabama	Yes
Alaska	No
Arizona	Yes
Arkansas	Yes
California	Yes
Colorado	Yes
Connecticut	No
Delaware	No
Florida	Yes
Georgia	Yes
Hawaii	Yes
Idaho	Yes
Illinois	Yes
Indiana	Yes
Iowa	Yes
Kansas	Yes
Kentucky	Yes
Louisiana	No
Maine	Yes
Maryland	Yes
Massachusetts	Yes
Michigan	Yes
Minnesota	Yes
Mississippi	Yes
Missouri	Yes
Montana	Yes
Nebraska	No
Nevada	Yes
New Hampshire	No
New Jersey	Yes
New Mexico	Yes
New York	No
North Carolina	Yes
North Dakota	Yes
Ohio	Yes
Oklahoma	Yes
Oregon	Yes
Pennsylvania	No
Rhode Island	No
South Carolina	No
South Dakota	Yes
Tennessee	Yes
Texas	Yes
Utah	Yes
Virginia	Yes
Vermont	Yes
Washington	Yes
West Virginia	Yes
Wisconsin	Yes
Wyoming	Yes

Source: U.S. Department of Education 2005.

States with concurrent enrollment programs have seen substantial growth in student enrollment over the years. Minnesota was the first state to institute a program in 1985, with just over 3,500 students (Boswell 2001). By the 1994-1995 school year, enrollment in Minnesota's program increased to 6,671 students (Gerber 1987 cited in Marshall and Andrews 2002). In Virginia, enrollment increased from 2,800 students in 1991 to 6,700 students in 1998 (Reisberg 1998 cited in Marshall and Andrews 2002). Enrollment in Florida's program increased from 3,609 students in 1991-1992 to 5,883 students in 1998-1999 (Florida Community College System 2000 cited in Marshall and Andrews 2002). Utah has experienced similar growth since the 1995-1996 school year when more than 11,000 students took concurrent courses. By the 2005-2006 school year there were

27,396 students enrolled in the state’s program (Utah State Office of Education 2007a). In addition to the number of students enrolling in courses, the number of credit hours taken by students has also increased since the 1995-1996 school year from 117,438 (quarter hours) to 189,838 (semester hours) in the 2005-2006 school year (Utah State Office of Education 2007a).

**Purpose and Goals of Concurrent Enrollment**

The purposes of concurrent enrollment are focused generally on providing curricular options, preparing students for the college experience, providing motivation through raising expectations, and opening up the realms of higher education to those who may not have traditionally attended college. Figure 1 shows the federal goals of concurrent enrollment and other forms of credit-based systems such as AP courses (U.S. Department of Education, 2005.) According to the Utah State Office of Education the purpose of concurrent enrollment is: “to provide a challenging college-level and productive secondary school experience, particularly in the senior year, and to provide transition courses that can be applied to postsecondary education.” (R277-713-2(b)). The Utah Board of Regents states a similar purpose for the program: “to provide an option for prepared high school students to take courses necessary to graduate from high school, and at the student’s option, to become better prepared for the world of work or complete selected college-level courses corresponding to the first year of coursework at a USHE institution leading to program completion or a degree” (R165-2).

Figure 1: Federal Goals and Purposes of Concurrent Enrollment
Prepare students for the academic rigors of college
Provide more realistic information to students about the skills that they will need to succeed in college
Help high school faculty prepare their students for the college experience
Expose traditionally non-college bound students to college
Provide curricular options for students
Improve motivation through high expectations
Lower the cost of postsecondary education for students
Promote institutional relationships between colleges and high schools

Concurrent enrollment programs have been found to have a positive effect on students by increasing educational aspirations, preparing students for the rigors of a college curriculum, reducing the time to complete a college degree, and increasing the likelihood of completion of a bachelor’s degree (Krueger 2006).

**Utah’s Concurrent Enrollment Program**

*Funding*

The Utah System of Higher Education first adopted a rule regarding concurrent enrollment in 1988. However, it was not until 1991 when the Utah Legislature passed SB 196, the Minimum School Program Act Amendment, that state funding was provided. State funding began in FY 1992. In 1996, the Legislature passed HB 405, the Minimum School Program Act Amendments, which added the goal of funding concurrent enrollment at \$33 per quarter credit hour or \$50 per semester credit hour. The Legislature

continues to fund concurrent programs through an appropriation to the State Board of Education through the Minimum School Program. The funds are distributed to school districts based upon the number of credit hours successfully completed in the previous year. In 2007, the Legislature passed HB 79 which creates a new funding policy. Starting July 1, 2007, funding will go to institutions via the State office of Education and the Board of Regents, with 60% going to the school district and 40% to higher education institutions (53A-17a-120.5).

*Course Offerings*

One of the primary goals of Utah’s program is to “assist students towards post-secondary degrees” (R277-713-4(b)). Therefore, courses are currently limited to the core subjects of English, mathematics, fine arts, humanities, science, social science, and world languages, in addition to courses within the career and technical education program (Utah State Board of Regents R165; R277-713-4(b)). Career and technical education program courses include a variety of subjects such as finance, business, computer studies, and the more “hands on” courses such as woodworking and auto service.

The career and technical education (CTE) courses consistently have the highest number of credits earned—followed by math, social sciences, and language arts. During the 2003-2004 school year more student credit hours were earned in career technology courses (73,770) than courses in the social sciences, math, language arts, and science combined (69,950).<sup>1</sup> Courses in the area of foreign language, health education, and physical education have the lowest credits earned (see Table 2 for a historical perspective on concurrent enrollment subject areas). CTE courses have had the most growth, increasing from 41,042 credits in the 2000-2001 school year to 80,874 in 2005-2006.

**Table 2: Concurrent Enrollment Credits Earned by Subject Area\***

Subject	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004
CTE**	41,042	55,971	64,561	73,770
Core Courses				
Social Sciences	18,794	15,796	18,215	23,539
Mathematics	19,349	22,546	20,261	21,930
Language Arts	13,900	12,626	16,888	14,583
Science	10,329	8,985	10,484	9,898
Foreign Language	4,765	5,144	4,832	5,048
Fine Arts	10,734	9,770	10,186	3,024
Physical Education	1,151	1,212	222	2,326
Health Education	5,683	1,697	1,268	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>125,747</b>	<b>133,747</b>	<b>146,917</b>	<b>154,117</b>

Source: Utah State Office of Education 2006b.

\* 2004-2005 data was not provided.

\*\* All CTE courses are combined. In the past CTE was termed Applied Technology Education.

<sup>1</sup> CTE courses include a wide range of subjects and are classed as a “group.” Core classes includes all the other subjects: English, mathematics, language arts, science, foreign language, fine arts, physical education, and health education.

In the 2005-2006 school year, career and technical education courses had the highest number of credits earned (80,874). The fewest credit hours were earned in Computer Literacy courses (102 credit hours). Students also were able to enroll in various Health, Movement, and Fitness classes such as rock climbing, bowling, archery, basketball, golf, hiking, power lifting, and aerobics for college credit. Table 3 outlines the credits earned by subject area in the 2005-2006 school year.

Table 3: Concurrent Enrollment Credits Earned by Subject Area 2005-2006

<b>Subject</b>		<b>2005-2006</b>
Career and Technical Ed (CTE)*		80,874
Core Courses		
	Mathematics	28,609
	Language Arts	26,038
	Social Studies	19,938
	Science	13,702
	Fine Arts	9,489
	Foreign Language	6,186
	Health, Movement, and Fitness**	2,704
	Financial Literacy	2,196
	Computer Literacy	102
<b>Total</b>		<b>189,838</b>

Source: Utah State Office of Education 2007a.

\* All CTE courses are combined.

\*\* This was previously Physical Education.

## Concerns about Concurrent Enrollment

### *Access: Do Concurrent Enrollment Programs Enroll a Broad Range of Students?*

Both scholars and policy makers are concerned about who has access to concurrent enrollment courses. Studies suggest a variety of factors impact who enrolls in courses, including the location of the high school, the cost, admissions requirements, and how much information is available to students.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Enrollment Data*

States, including Utah, have experienced significant growth in their concurrent enrollment programs over the past decade. Initially, Utah's program had approximately 11,000 students. By the 2005-2006 school year, 27,396 students were enrolled in concurrent courses throughout the state (Utah State Office of Education 2007a).

<sup>2</sup> There is no cost to high school students taking concurrent enrollment classes, but there may be a one-time admissions fee and other costs related to the course, such as lab fees, at a higher education institution (R277-716-6).

A national study indicates that high schools with high minority enrollment were the least likely to offer concurrent enrollment courses compared to schools with lower minority enrollment. Nationally, seventy-six percent of schools with a minority student population of less than six percent offer dual enrollment courses. Only fifty-eight percent of schools with a minority population of fifty percent or more offer concurrent enrollment courses (Waits, et. al. 2005). Table 4 indicates the population of concurrent students in Utah by ethnicity.

**Table 4: Concurrent Enrollment students by ethnicity (2006-2007)\***

	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Asian	Black	Hispanic or Latino	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	White	Unspecified	Total
College of Eastern Utah	33	5	0	13	2	452	0	505
Dixie State College	7	9	3	32	7	850	0	908
Salt Lake Community College	83	328	81	690	137	9,406	0	10,725
Snow College	10	2	0	21	2	866	0	901
Southern Utah University	1	7	2	16	0	486	0	512
University of Utah	1	7	0	7	4	105	0	124
Utah State University	31	148	31	266	11	6,240	2	6,727
Utah Valley State College	31	70	19	225	50	5,703	0	6,098
Weber State University	9	87	46	214	19	4,717	0	5,094
Total	206	663	182	1,484	232	28,825	2	31,594

\*Note: The total here is 31,594, it reflects the fact that a student may have attended more than one institution and/or was coded in more than one ethnic category.

Source: Utah System of Higher Education 2007.

### *Location*

A recent study indicates that schools located in cities were less likely to offer concurrent courses than schools located in either towns or urban fringe areas (Waits, et. al. 2005). In Utah, all public school districts participate in the program (Puzey 2006b). Seven charter schools also have students enrolled in concurrent classes: AMES, Itineris, Tuacahn, NUAMES, DaVinci, UCAS, and Success. All of Utah's public colleges and universities were involved in the program during the 2006-2007 school year: College of Eastern Utah, Dixie State College, Salt Lake Community College, Snow College, Southern Utah University, University of Utah, Utah State University, Utah Valley State College, and Weber State University. The University of Utah, however, only participates with the Academy for Math, Engineering and Science (AMES), a charter school in Salt Lake County.

In many areas of Utah, including rural areas, the state's "Ednet" system provides "technology delivered" or distance learning concurrent enrollment courses. This advanced network system broadcasts classes from "host" sites to many other sites simultaneously. For example, Utah State University broadcasts to ten different locations including high schools and applied technology colleges. It is an interactive experience, meaning that students can ask questions and so participate in classes as if in a real classroom. Course registration is handled by the individual institutions.

The Ednet system is a popular solution for people whose lifestyles or geographical locations make attending class on campus difficult. Utah Education Network (UEN) Distance Education consists of various systems and tools used to deliver distance education over various media. These include interactive video conferencing; UEN-TV, the UEN television station that delivers classes and professional development via broadcast to television; and "Vista," the online course management system for higher education that is housed and administered by UEN ([http://www.uen.org/distance\\_ed/](http://www.uen.org/distance_ed/)). During the 2005-2006 school year, 19.5% of concurrent enrollment credits were earned through distance education, either through EDNET or the internet (Grua 2007).

### *Financial costs*

Access to concurrent enrollment programs may also be restricted by income. For example, low income students may be unintentionally excluded from programs where tuition assistance or financial aid is unavailable. In ten states (Alabama, Arkansas, California, Hawaii, Iowa, Kansas, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and West Virginia) the students are required to pay tuition. Utah does not charge students tuition for concurrent courses, although students can be charged an initial admissions fee per institution (Utah Code 53A-15-101(6)(b)(iii)).

### *Admissions Requirements*

Admissions policies can also impact who enrolls in concurrent programs. "Admissions restrictions generally take two forms: 1) restricting the grade level of students eligible to participate and 2) setting academic requirements for program admissions" (U.S. Department of Education 2004, 18). Some states limit participation to juniors and seniors; other states require some level of academic proficiency, such as a 3.0 grade point average

(U.S. Department of Education 2004; U.S. Department of Education 2005). The admissions process in Utah is a joint decision - both the secondary and post-secondary institution partners set admission requirements. The State Board of Regents rule on concurrent enrollment states that “Local schools and the USHE credit-granting institution shall jointly establish the eligibility requirements. To predict a successful experience, these requirements may include, among others: junior or senior standing, sophomores by exception; a grade point average, ACT score, or a placement score which predicts success; supportive letters of recommendation; and approval of high school and college officials” (Utah Board of Regents Rule 165).

### *Information*

Lack of information about the availability and the requirements of concurrent enrollment programs can hinder participation as well. Eighteen states have mandatory provisions built into state policies that require high schools to inform students of the concurrent program and require the high school to accept the credits towards graduation. The mandatory provision also prohibits postsecondary institutions in these states from denying access to students based exclusively on the fact that the students are still enrolled in high school (U.S. Department of Education 2004; 2005). Utah’s concurrent program is not mandatory, as defined above.

Furthermore, targeting particular student populations can also impact who enrolls in programs. Some states target advanced students—those that are academically advanced or gifted. Other states target their programs towards students who have special academic or vocational needs, or offer to provide a technical education for students. Utah does not specify a target population for its concurrent programs.

### ***Quality: Are Concurrent Enrollment Programs Offering a College-level Experience?***

As noted in the U.S. Department of Education’s 2004 report “State Dual Enrollment Policies: Addressing Access and Quality,” many scholars and policy makers are concerned about instructor qualifications, the quality of courses, and state oversight (see Bailey and Karp 2003; Boswell 2001; Krueger 2006).

### *Faculty Qualifications*

“Twelve states have stipulations regarding instructors of dual credit courses, but the stipulations vary widely. For example, Georgia mandates that all instruction duties lie with the postsecondary institution, while Wyoming allows for any secondary teacher to teach a dual credit course” (U.S. Department of Education 2004, 25). Utah requires that concurrent enrollment courses are taught by college or university faculty or public school educators. Public school teachers must first be approved as adjunct faculty and supervised by a state institution of higher education (R277-713-7).

The Utah System of Higher Education and the Utah State Office of Education have outlined standards for adjunct faculty: “All concurrent enrollment faculty must meet the established criteria for adjunct status of the sponsoring department. A minimum of a

master's degree in the subject or related area will generally be required" (USHE/USOE). For example, concurrent instructors in the English department at Weber State University are required to have a Master's degree in English or a related area, and they must be familiar with English 1010 or English 2010. The Political Science department requires concurrent adjunct faculty to have "at least a Master's degree." The Math department requires a Master's degree in math or a related field (subject to the approval of the Chair of the Math department). The Criminal Justice department prefers that concurrent adjunct faculty have a Master's, but requires a Bachelor's in criminal justice or related area, as well as an interview with the department. Adjunct concurrent faculty in computer/electrical engineering technology must have "demonstrated background in the subject" (Weber State University Guidebook).

Concurrent enrollment faculty is also required to attend new adjunct faculty orientation as specified by the sponsoring institution of higher education. In addition, faculty must attend in-service training during the year as specified by the institution. This training includes curriculum design, assessment criteria, course philosophy, and administration requirements (USHE/USOE).

Adjunct faculty beginning their employment in the 2005-06 school year "who are not K-12 teachers and who have significant unsupervised access to K-12 students and instruct in the concurrent enrollment program defined under this rule shall complete a criminal background check consistent with Section 53A-3-410. The adjunct faculty employer shall have responsibility for determining the need for criminal background checks consistent with the law and for satisfying this requirement and shall maintain appropriate documentation" (R277-713-7).

### *Quality of Curriculum*

Course content is another area that has implications for the quality of concurrent programs. However, policies differ from state to state. For example, Florida limits the course content—meaning that the state limits the types of courses that may be offered. Other states, including Arizona, require that courses use a standardized curriculum, books and/or textbook. Some states require that the state education agency approve course syllabus, textbooks, and/or exams (U.S. Department of Education 2005).

Utah requires that "course content, procedures, and teaching materials in concurrent enrollment programs are approved by the appropriate department or program at an institution of higher education in order to ensure quality and comparability with courses offered on college and university campuses" (Utah State Code 53A-15-101 2 (b)).<sup>3</sup> For example, the English department states that Weber State University English 1010 and 2010 curriculum, assignments, and exams are to be used in concurrent courses. The Math department at Weber states that text books are dependent upon the Department Chair's approval. Exams in the Math department are based upon an agreement with the Chair.

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<sup>3</sup>Utah Board of Regents R165-2-2-1 and R165-2-2-4 also apply to quality issues.

### *Assessment of Educational Quality*

The State of Utah has instituted assessment tools to ensure students are receiving a quality, college-level education when enrolled in these programs. The measures include site visits by university departmental representatives and concurrent enrollment personnel at least once a year. Student surveys are also required. And “[every] five years, concurrent enrollment staff will conduct a study of the impact and effectiveness of the concurrent enrollment program. The evaluation should include college faculty, participating high school instructors, principals and guidance counselors.” Furthermore, “[every] five years, concurrent enrollment staff will conduct a follow-up study of concurrent enrollment participants who are currently enrolled or have been enrolled in a college or university in order to track their performance.” Other research will be done as necessary to ascertain the effectiveness of the program. (USHE/USOE).

In addition to quality control policies, states may also require financial reporting (U.S. Department of Education 2005). The U.S. Department of Education reported that Utah does not require financial reporting (an annual reporting of program finances) nor policy compliance reporting (where a program must provide evidence that they are complying with state dual enrollment requirements) (U.S. Department of Education 2004). However, USOE Rule 277-713-8 includes parameters on spending funds for concurrent enrollment. Furthermore, the USOE reports that each concurrent program must provide annual financial reports.

### **Summary**

The growing number of concurrent enrollment programs across the nation demonstrates the popularity of students earning college credits while in high school. Utah has certainly been part of the trend. Since the 1995-1996 school year, the number of students enrolling in Utah’s program has more than doubled. The number of credit hours achieved has also increased steadily over the years and it appears that students welcome the chance to get a “head start” on college.

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