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The Dual Enrollment Landscape in California:

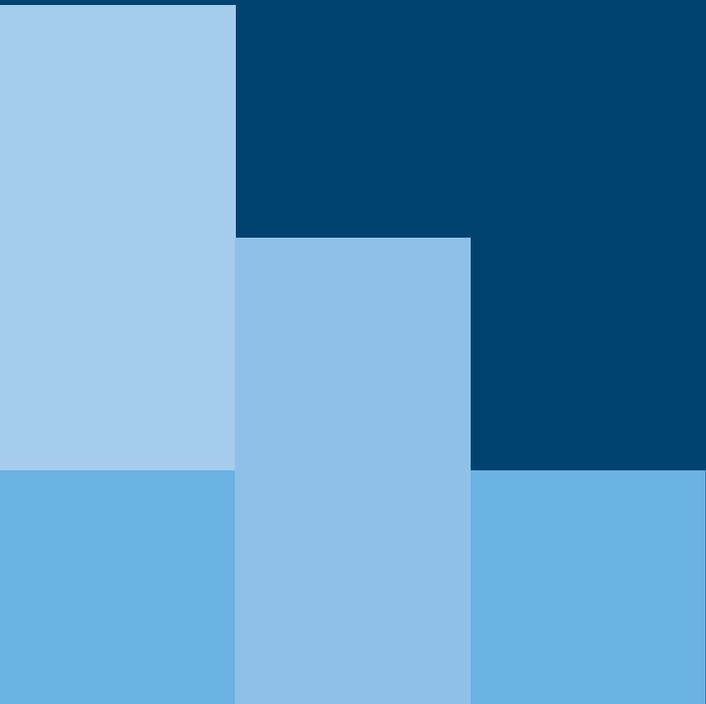
A CLP Working Paper

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— *Naomi Castro and Linda Collins*

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Executive Summary

Multiple studies have shown that students who participate in high-quality dual enrollment programs during high school are more likely to graduate, enter college, and persist in college to completion. Students who are most underrepresented in community colleges — young men of color, students from low-income families, and students who are the first in their families to attend college — often benefit the most (Cowan & Goldhaber, 2013; Karp et al., 2007; Rodriguez, Hughes, & Belfield, 2012; Speroni, 2011; Struhl & Vargas, 2012). Dual enrollment also provides an introduction to higher education for first-generation college students and their families. It offers a low- or no-cost way to earn credit and may help students obtain degrees faster. And it meets the goals of guided pathways, a national reform movement that provides a framework for achieving ambitious student completion and equity goals by redesigning the college experience from student’s perspective.

Despite all these advantages, California has not committed to dual enrollment as a strategy to encourage college completion. In fact, it lags national averages. California community colleges implementing dual enrollment encounter significant barriers. And navigating dual enrollment can be challenging for students, K-12 schools, and college staff and administrators.

California’s legislature and governor removed some barriers by adopting the College and Career Access Pathways Act, or AB 288, which took effect in 2016 and focuses on improving access to community college for underserved students. The California Career Pathways Trust, formed in 2014 and eventually funded with \$500 million, provided grants to motivate creation of career pathways, including dual enrollment, for students in kindergarten through community college. Another \$200 million-plus has been allocated in 2018-2019 under the Strong Workforce Initiative to create K-14 pathways and improve dual enrollment. And demand for dual enrollment has risen, thanks in part to its inclusion starting in 2015 as a measure of a school district’s success in preparing students for careers and college.

To learn more about the landscape for dual enrollment in California, and to develop recommendations for changes in state policy that would help more colleges, K-12 districts, and students reap the clear benefits of high-quality dual enrollment, Career Ladders Project consulted practitioners. With support from the College Futures Foundation, CLP interviewed practitioners and researchers at 48 of California’s 114 community colleges. The first section of this paper details our research goals and process. Challenges and opportunities emerged in five broad areas:

1. Collection and management of data about dual enrollment
2. Application and enrollment processes
3. Faculty, staff, and program capacity
4. Reaching underrepresented high school students
5. Integration of dual enrollment into both high school and college reform approaches

Section Two of this paper discusses our findings about the experiences of colleges across California in each of these areas and recommends policy and practice remedies.

The final section summarizes our recommendations for policies to ensure that successful strategies are implemented more consistently across California. Adopting them will enable colleges to overcome logistical hurdles and develop and implement dual enrollment programs tailored to their own communities. And colleges that have been struggling in this landscape will be able to look toward successful approaches across the state.

Highlight: Effective Approaches

Based on our structured interviews with 48 community colleges, we selected six for follow-up, including in-depth interviews or site visits. Five characteristics emerged as essential to the success of dual enrollment programs. Colleges said strong programs are:

- Intersegmental and aligned across educational systems
- Carefully structured — coherent, not random collections of courses
- Geared toward certificate, degree, and transfer pathways that give students an early start on choosing and completing a program of study
- Strengthened by student supports and work-based learning experiences
- Driven by strong partnerships among colleges, high schools, and other community institutions — and a commitment to strengthen these relationships over time

All the colleges emphasized that they don't see dual enrollment as a stand-alone effort on their campuses but as a part of larger student success strategies supported by their partners and the community.

Reedley College has developed a dual enrollment agriculture pathway in partnership with Wonderful Company, a large local agricultural employer. It includes work-based learning and embedded student supports, and it offers students a chance to earn an associate's degree before they graduate from high school.

Santa Monica College developed an approach of offering courses in high-interest disciplines two days a week, along with supplemental instruction two days a week, and a college success course on the last day to provide wrap-around student supports.

East Los Angeles College continued to support its dual enrollment partnerships even during the 2008 recession when many colleges downsized offerings. It also paired dual enrollment with noncredit adult courses to engage family and community members.

Bakersfield College, an early adopter of guided pathways, is working to integrate dual enrollment into that larger framework, providing early exploration into majors and careers. It served 6,000 students in 2016-2017 with a small dedicated dual enrollment staff.

Long Beach City College and **California State University Long Beach** jointly offer dual enrollment for students of Long Beach Unified School District. The three institutions coordinate outreach and course offerings to avoid duplication, enhancing options and reducing confusion for students.



Section One: Methodology

CLP conducted structured telephone interviews with practitioners and researchers at 48 California Community Colleges about their dual enrollment practices for the 2015-2016 academic year, just prior to AB 288 implementation. Our goals were:

To survey the landscape of dual enrollment across California just before the College and Career Access Pathways Act (known as CCAP, or AB 288) focused dual enrollment on serving “students who may not already be college bound or who are underrepresented in higher education” and removed some barriers;

To describe the challenges colleges face in implementing dual enrollment, and the conditions that support successful dual enrollment programs; and

To inform future policy at the state and local levels.

“Having that dual enrollment office has been phenomenal for my experience and for my students. ... It’s probably the best thing I can recommend for any college site.”

— Adelpa Lonzone, Program Coordinator, Reedley Middle College High School.

The interview instrument was vetted with the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO), several partner organizations, and experts in the field. We asked about:

- Dual enrollment offerings
- Staffing
- Funding
- College structure
- Partnership agreements
- Future plans
- Challenges
- Technical assistance needs

The CCCCCO asked all 114 California community colleges to participate, and CLP followed up with the 48 that expressed interest, a 42% response rate. Each of those 48 colleges participated in a telephone interview and completed a fillable grid describing their dual enrollment offerings. CLP researched several sites in further detail for insight into both

how dual enrollment programs enhance students’ college readiness and raise their expectation of attending college, and how colleges and K-12 school districts develop and nurture successful dual enrollment partnerships.



Section Two: Findings and Recommendations

We found challenges and opportunities in the following broad categories: data collection and management; application and enrollment; staff and program capacity; reaching underrepresented students; and integration of dual enrollment into high school and college reforms. We recommend policy solutions in each area.

1. Collection and management of data about dual enrollment

There are several sources of omissions and errors in state data on dual enrollment, and the system can't accurately track students over time to determine which programs and policies produce the best outcomes. One respondent said the Chancellor's Office's Management Information System (MIS) captures a "snapshot" and doesn't account for changes over the course of the school year.

OMISSIONS: MIS collects data on student enrollment in course sections for which colleges request state funding, but no centralized data is collected on the many courses designed for high school students that are funded by grants or by contracts where high schools provide funding. Before AB 288 took effect, colleges and high schools could not "close" dual enrollment courses or sections to the general public — even if they were held on a high school campus — except if they were funded privately or by contract. In fact, 35% of colleges that we surveyed reported offering sections for which they did not claim state funding; in total, 9,071 students were enrolled in 482 such sections.

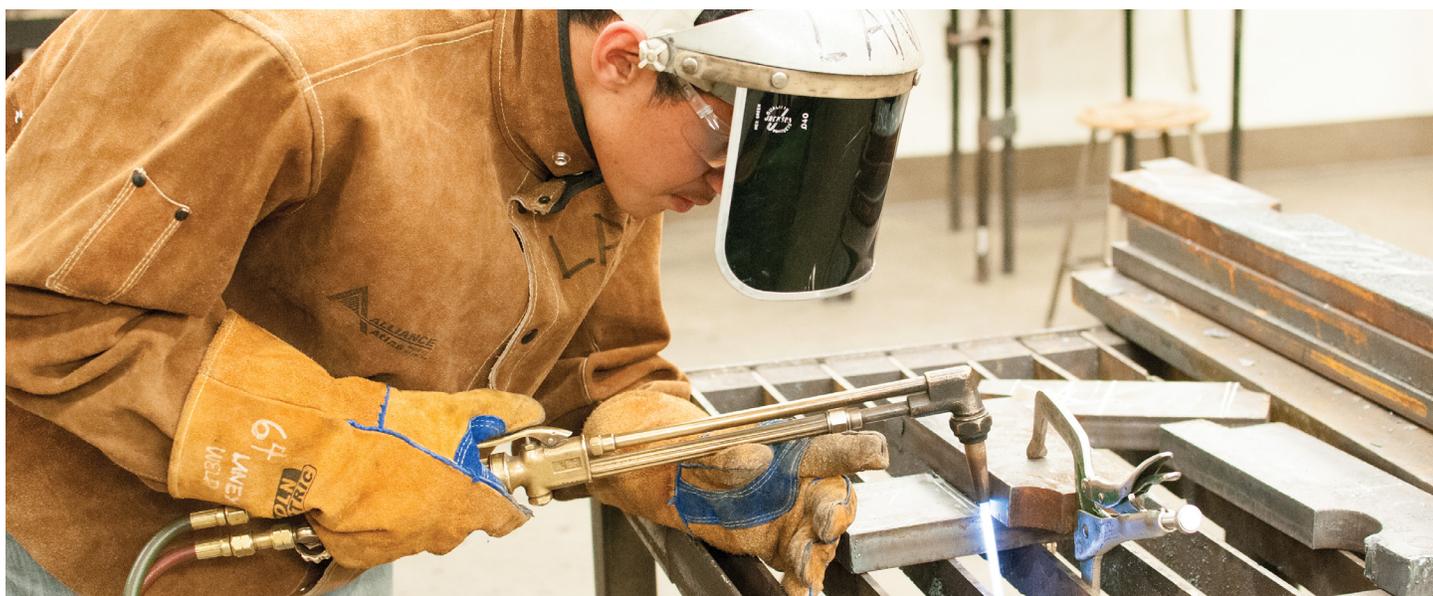
ERRORS: One-quarter of surveyed colleges said MIS numbers for 2015-2016 for their dual enrollment students were incorrect by over 10%, and 15% of respondents did not know or could not tell whether their MIS numbers were correct. Many inaccuracies may result from the labor-intensive enrollment

process. Often, just entering dual enrollment data takes so long that some students are not counted until after the deadline passes for apportionment to be calculated.

And procedures for enrolling and tracking dually enrolled high school students are not standardized. A single student may be counted multiple times in MIS if they enroll in multiple courses or multiple terms, for example. One college said it lacked a mechanism to change a student's status after high school graduation, indicating that many full-time college students continue to be tracked as dual enrollment students.

Policy Recommendations: Data Collection and Management

- Adopt systems to make reporting practices more uniform within and across colleges and improve data collection and accuracy, and provide technical support for college admissions and records offices.
- Colleges should consider converting contract- or grant-funded sections so they qualify for apportionment (this could provide financial gain for colleges and savings for high schools). For cases where contract education remain appropriate, colleges and the state need a mechanism to document dually enrolled students who are not reported in the MIS figures.



2. The enrollment process

Participation in dual enrollment depends on multiple signatures — from a guardian, the school principal, and sometimes a college dean — that are currently gathered on a paper form. This form contains sensitive information such as addresses and social security numbers, and colleges have no way to ensure its security other than enrolling students by hand. But this means class rosters often are not finalized until late in the term, which makes state census data inaccurate, and high school seniors may not be able to obtain transcripts in time for university applications.

“We’re saying ... [college] is open for everybody. This is for students whether they’re on a clear tech pathway, whether they’re planning to come to a community college, whether they see themselves as straight four-year admits. It’s a good solid place to say, ‘This is for everyone, it’s not just for your high-achieving students.’”

— Laura Cantu, Dean of Student Services, East Los Angeles College

3. Staff, faculty, and program capacity

More than three-quarters (77%) of colleges that participated in our research are interested in expanding dual enrollment, including 63% who want to include it in structured pathways. But many said they lacked the capacity among staff, faculty, or administrators, and they said their instructors often lacked preparation to teach high school students. Enrollment pressures have only increased as dual enrollment offerings became a measure of how well California high schools prepare their graduates for college and careers.

PROGRAM CAPACITY: Only 15% of respondents said their programs were run by staff specifically hired for the purpose, while 36% indicated their programs were run by existing personnel. A college that has seen significant growth credited strategic staffing at the programmatic level as a central factor, including assigning an administrator to oversee dual enrollment.

FACULTY CAPACITY: Finding instructors for dual enrollment sections is also an issue. Some high schools prefer using their own teachers, who are experienced in working with younger students but who are not necessarily qualified to teach college courses, and protocols at some colleges regarding seniority may prevent qualified but newer high school teachers from being assigned to those sections. Colleges also may be reluctant to shift course sections to a high school. Budgets

This bottleneck can hamper the growth of dual enrollment. With some programs already tripling in size from one year to the next, colleges need streamlined and automated enrollment processes. One college was using a spreadsheet to track students, teachers, and sites for as many as 58 sections.

Policy Recommendation: Enrollment Process

- Adopt a comprehensive, statewide solution to help automate and streamline enrollment and move away from requiring students to submit any documents in hard copy.

may require that stipended high school teachers provide instruction, rather than salaried college faculty. Collective bargaining agreements affect hiring decisions on both the high school and college sides. Compensation approaches also vary: Among colleges reporting using high school teachers as “adjunct college faculty,” 33% of teachers were paid a high school salary, 33% were paid a college salary, and 33% provided no data on this question. Independent of salary, 18% of teachers received an additional stipend.

INSTRUCTOR PREPARATION: Community college instructors are content-area specialists and are not required to have training in classroom methodology or in methods appropriate for engaging younger students: 31% of colleges identified a need for professional development for instructors.

Policy Recommendation: Staff, Faculty, and Program Capacity

- Prioritize policies to help colleges build staff capacity and coordination and offer relevant professional development (including for admissions and records, outreach, counseling, instruction and administrative responsibilities).

4. Underrepresented students

Most high school students who participate in dual enrollment are coming to the colleges independently, rather than enrolling in structured, cohort-style college courses through their high schools, and they are mainly taking general education courses. And the students who participate are disproportionately high-achieving and from higher-income families where parents have attended college. This suggests students who typically lack college knowledge are not being served.

INDEPENDENTLY: Colleges reported high school students enrolled in over 12,000 sections of general education courses, as compared with approximately 4,500 sections of Career and Technical Education courses, the next largest category. And 81% of respondents reported that the majority of high school students come to the college campus on their own.

EQUITY: Reshaping dual enrollment programs to serve students who are not already college bound is an explicit goal of AB 288, but colleges said they need help with this. One dual enrollment dean said it took tremendous effort to convince high school counselors to recruit students who were “not just the AP students.” One partnership created an outreach campaign to educate underserved communities as a whole about college by simultaneously offering dual enrollment and adult education courses on high school campuses.

Another college serving a low-income urban community said AB 288’s focus on underrepresented students has given them a platform to change the conversation about who is a college student: “We’re saying ... [college] is open for everybody. This is for students whether they’re on a clear tech pathway, whether they’re planning to come to a community college, whether they see themselves as straight four-year admits. It’s a good, solid place to say, ‘This is for everyone, it’s not just for your high-achieving students.’”

“When we look at it, we all know the benefits of dual enrollment from tuition to — I could name many. But one that is not measurable is confidence. Dual enrollment is the confidence-builder to be able to say I took a college class and I passed it.”

— Sergio Lemus, Transfer and Transitions Coordinator,
Reedley College



Dual enrollment, when designed as part of a student success strategy, can change the way institutions see students and communities, and it can help all students to see themselves as college material. An administrator at a rural college said only 15% of adults in his community hold a bachelor’s degree. After implementation of a pathway program with intensive student supports from both the high school and the college, students who participated began experiencing greater success. “This is changing how the college looks at our population, and we are bringing hope to students who have all the odds stacked against them.” Students previously were not going on to college, even if they had been successful in high school. Another college said, “Student success means a shorter time to completion. This is how you design for completion.... It is rarely an issue of budget. It’s an issue of campus culture.”

Policy Recommendations: Underrepresented Students

- Encourage partnerships to reach out and support underrepresented students and those who may not already be college bound with specifically designed programs and services, including by taking into account the needs of their families and communities.
- Help colleges identify, share, and implement successful strategies and approaches.

5. Approaches that integrate dual enrollment

Colleges feel confident they are complying with state regulations (only 25% identified this as an area of need), but they requested more information about and support for effective practices and approaches to dual enrollment (38%). They want to know how to integrate dual enrollment effectively into a college-wide strategy to help students complete degrees, certificates, and transfer requirements.

APPROACHES: Colleges said they would like to learn from evidence-based approaches. They would also appreciate tools such as templates for partnership agreements. “We’ve been through lots of workshops,” said one college. “While we appreciate the flexibility, sometimes it makes it a little harder to come up with something from scratch.”

INTEGRATION OPTIONS: As partnerships move toward more structured pathway approaches, they want help designing K-16 pathways in which dual enrollment complements high school work and accelerates students toward a certificate, a degree, and transfer to a four-year school. Colleges have indicated that they are moving away from “random acts of dual enrollment” and embracing more thoughtful design with a focus on pathways and integrated student supports. They specifically identified the need to better integrate student support services as an area in which they need professional development (50%).

Dual enrollment can be envisioned along a spectrum of integration, from random course sections to programs designed around pathways with support services to integration within a larger framework, such as Guided Pathways. Some colleges are thinking beyond particular career pathways and moving toward a more integrated college success agenda that in-

cludes dual enrollment. “Pathways and guided pathways are a great opportunity, especially for intersegmental pathways and dual enrollment,” one college told us. There is now opportunity for design that integrates dual enrollment into a broader vision and framework.

CHARACTERIZING STUDENT SUCCESS: California’s new community college funding formula appears to put contradictory pressures on dual enrollment. It isn’t yet clear what approaches or program designs the formula is incentivizing or what structures would support those approaches. For instance, the formula affirms dual enrollment by providing colleges 100% apportionment for dually enrolled high school students, but none of those students would “count” as low-income (for an additional funding stream) because the colleges gauge income by eligibility for financial aid — which no public high school students receive. In another example, a dual enrollment student who proceeds directly to a four-year program after graduating from high school is clearly succeeding, but their community college may not be able to count that as an accomplishment unless the student completes 12 college units prior to graduation. However, the new formula does potentially incentivize more robust and coherent pathway design if the college can count 12 units of dual enrollment prior to attending a university as a “transfer.”

Policy Recommendation: Approaches That Integrate Dual Enrollment

- Clarify and highlight a design framework supported by state policy that integrates dual enrollment in a vision for student success.



Section Three: Moving Forward

Our research demonstrates that colleges across California have developed innovative dual enrollment programs for every type of community and student. The most pressing question now in dual enrollment, given rapidly rising demand, is how to sustain and scale the most promising practices and approaches. There is an urgent need for clear and supportive policy at the state level. As outlined above, our recommendations fall into five categories.

1. **To address widespread errors and omissions in local and state dual enrollment data**, we recommend adopting a uniform mechanism for colleges to report data, including technical support for admissions and records offices, and encouraging colleges to convert contract- and grant-funded sections to dual enrollment where appropriate.
2. **To address the frustration experienced by many students, K-12 districts, and colleges** during the enrollment process, we recommend adopting a comprehensive statewide solution to help colleges automate and streamline enrollment and move away from requiring students to submit any documents in hard copy.
3. **To ensure there is staff, faculty, and program capacity for dual enrollment**, we recommend prioritizing policies to help colleges build capacity and coordination and offer relevant professional development.
4. **To improve services and supports for underrepresented students**, who are likely to benefit even more than others from participating in dual enrollment, we recommend encouraging partnerships to make student supports a focus and helping colleges to identify, share, and implement successful strategies to reach and support underrepresented students.
5. **And, to support the most effective approaches and improve program integration**, we recommend highlighting a design framework that integrates dual enrollment into a vision for student success.

California community college faculty, staff, and administrators are hard at work redesigning many aspects of their institutions using guided pathways as an overarching framework. Dual enrollment plays an integral role in this push and has received extensive state support. Dramatic reforms also are under way in placement and remediation — all of which underscores that school districts and colleges must face their challenges together and develop shared solutions. This is happening as colleges swap standardized tests for more textured and predictive measures of student achievement, like high school grades; colleges are both validating the work of high school faculty and engaging high schools as partners. Similarly, dual enrollment is validating the work of high school faculty through cross-system sharing and alignment, signaling that both K-12 districts and community colleges are responsible for local students' futures. And these partnerships and this coordination can build a college-going culture in the larger community and create a stream of better-prepared students — reducing the need for remediation and improving college completion rates. Because so much promising work is already under way, adopting these recommendations will help ensure that state policy has a similar multiplying effect.



“Student success means a shorter time to completion. It is rarely an issue of budget; it’s an issue of campus culture — everyone, from counselors to faculty to staff to administrators, asking each student they interact with, ‘What is your graduation date?’”

— Aaron McVean, Vice Chancellor of Educational Services and Planning, San Mateo Community College District

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The Career Ladders Project works with community colleges and their K12, university, community, workforce and employer partners to improve educational and career outcomes. We foster these improvements through research, policy change and strategic assistance to colleges and their partners.

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