



Massachusetts Board of Higher Education

STEM Accelerated College Enrollment

Background

A dual enrollment program provides high school students with the opportunity to take college-level courses for both high school and college credit.

There are many benefits of dual enrollment. For students who are traditionally underrepresented in higher education - students at-risk of dropping out of high school, first generation college students, low income students and minorities - dual enrollment programs inspire college aspiration and can ease the transition to college. Dual enrollment is also an effective strategy to challenge high-achieving students by allowing them to take rigorous coursework sometimes not readily available in high school. Credit earned can often apply to both a high school diploma and college degree. Dual enrollment – when made available at no additional cost to a student – saves time and money.

Dual enrollment was first established in Massachusetts at a system-level through the Education Reform Act of 1993. This successful program served over 12,000 students from 1994-2001 when it was eliminated as a cost-reduction initiative during the financial downturn of 2001-02. A few dual enrollment programs have continued in Massachusetts on a limited basis, with partnerships between individual colleges and local high schools.

Dual enrollment is being employed nationally as a means to increase student access to post-secondary education. As of 2005, dual enrollment was offered in no less than forty states.

Policy Details

The Board of Higher Education seeks to establish the STEM Accelerated College Enrollment Program (STEM ACEP) a targeted dual enrollment program aimed at boosting student interested in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) areas. STEM ACEP would support and enhance several other student proficiency and success initiatives currently underway at the BHE.

Since 2003, the BHE has administrated the STEM Pipeline Fund, which seeks to increase the number of Massachusetts

students who participate in programs that support careers in STEM. Regional networks established through the STEM Pipeline Fund could be a source of expertise and support in building regional program STEM ACEP collaborations.

Courses offered as part of STEM ACEP will expand the number and range of math course options available for students, especially for those whose high schools suffer from a shortage of certified math teachers. The program can also fit well with the expansion of Massachusetts College Online (MCO) as online delivery will increase the number of course offerings, provide additional flexibility to students' schedules, and extend the reach of dual enrollment courses throughout the state.

Strengthening the math requirement for college admission to include four years of math (including math in the senior year) is another BHE initiative. Students often enter college having not taken a math course in the senior year, which is associated with an increased probability of a student needing remediation. The STEM ACEP program could help by providing students and high schools with an additional resource to meet the requirement of a 4th year of math.

BHE Recommendation

The BHE proposes that \$2 million be made available to fund the STEM Accelerated College Enrollment Program. A majority of the funding would be provided to institutions through regional grants to cover program development and tuition and fees of participating students. The program would be administered through a program coordinator at the BHE.

Creating and funding a system dual enrollment program was cited in the *Task Force on Retention and Completion Rates at the Community Colleges*ⁱ as a key recommendation leading to increased student readiness and success.

ⁱ Final report from the Task Force on Retention and Completion Rates at the Community Colleges, accepted by the Board of Higher Education Dec 2006.