

State Approaches to Funding Dual Enrollment Programs

Chris Duncombe and Sharmila Mann

Dual enrollment programs — [widespread](#) across states and [popular](#) among students, families and policymakers — allow students to earn college credits while still in high school. [Existing research](#) provides significant evidence supporting the value of these programs in terms of building college aspirations, providing early college experiences, increasing college affordability, supporting college attendance and persistence, and bolstering the likelihood of college attainment.

By helping young people get an early start on postsecondary credentials, dual enrollment programs can also support the development of a strong state workforce and economy. Therefore, state leaders have a stake in providing financial support for dual enrollment programs. As [college costs rise](#), state-supported dual enrollment as a pathway to early attainment increases in importance for students, families and state leaders.

Additionally, while dual enrollment programs have [grown rapidly](#) in the past two decades, they have not done so [equitably](#). Students who are white, come from affluent households or have a multigenerational history of college attendance are significantly overrepresented among program participants. Conversely, students who are racially minoritized, have a cognitive or physical disability, or come from low-income households are significantly underrepresented. One prominent barrier to equitable access is the student cost of participation, which includes tuition, fees, books, supplies and transportation. States, districts and postsecondary institutions have sought to defray these costs to increase equitable access.



Dual enrollment funding models are one of the key determinants of equitable student access to dual enrollment programs.

Funding models for dual enrollment programs include four categories of costs — tuition, fees, books and supplies, and transportation — and four sources of funding — states, school districts, postsecondary institutions, and students and families.

State funding models for dual enrollment are highly complex. States offer multiple program options; within programs, costs are often covered by multiple sources.

Defining Dual Enrollment

The terms **dual enrollment**, **dual credit** and **concurrent enrollment** are often used interchangeably. However, some states have very specific definitions for these terms as applied to their programs. The term dual enrollment is used throughout this report to refer to any program that allows high school students to access college coursework.

However the funding of dual enrollment programs is highly complex. Most states offer students more than one dual enrollment program option. This year, Education Commission of the States [compiled](#) state dual enrollment policies and identified 86 distinct programs across 48 states. Each program is associated with multiple sources of funding that represent contributions from state, district and postsecondary entities as well as students and/or parents, guardians or family members (hereafter referred to collectively as student).

[Recent publications](#) have attempted to classify states by which entities — state, school district, postsecondary institution or student — carry the burden of funding program costs. Such classifications can be helpful, yet it is extremely challenging to classify states in this way, as individual state programs may differ widely from each other in terms of who foots the bill. Further, even when one party is identified as responsible for one area of cost, other parties may be subsidizing that cost or contributing in a way that is not captured in state policy.

This Special Report delves into the intricacies of dual enrollment program funding by using a case study approach to describe funding models employed in four states: **Alabama, North Carolina, Rhode Island** and **South Dakota**. These four states, distributed in terms of geography, size and urbanicity, were selected because each offers at least one dual enrollment program where the state covers part of the program cost. The case studies in this Special Report were developed using relevant state policy and guidance documents, as well as information gathered through in-depth interviews with leaders from state education agencies, state postsecondary agencies and state postsecondary systems. The interview questions, as well as a full list of participating agencies and systems, is provided in the [Appendix](#).

The analysis of dual enrollment programs in this report is limited to programs offered statewide and generally accessible to all high school students in the state (public, private and homeschool). It therefore excludes programs that can only be accessed through a specific type of school (e.g., early college high schools).



Alabama's Funding Models

Alabama offers [dual enrollment](#) opportunities for eligible high school students at public two-year and four-year postsecondary institutions through a program called Dual Enrollment for Dual Credit. The state defines Dual Enrollment for Dual Credit as college courses taken by high school students for both high school and college credit. This program is available to students who are attending public, private or religious schools or who receive home instruction. Courses may be offered online or at the high school or postsecondary institution and include both general academic and career and technical education (CTE) courses.

Who Pays for Dual Enrollment for Dual Credit?

The state and students are primarily responsible for covering the costs associated with participating in the Dual Enrollment for Dual Credit program. The state-funded Dual Enrollment Scholarship Program helps pay tuition, fees, and books and supplies for some dual credit courses at two-year Alabama Community College System (ACCS) institutions. Four-year institutions do not receive state scholarship funding. The two-year institutions determine the allocation of scholarship funds, and the scholarship may only cover a portion of program costs. Students are ultimately responsible for costs not covered by the scholarship program, including all costs for dual credit courses at four-year institutions, as the state does not require districts or postsecondary institutions to subsidize programs.

Students Receiving the Dual Enrollment Scholarship

	Tuition	Fees	Books/Supplies	Transportation
State	✓	✓	✓	
Student	✓	✓	✓	✓
Postsecondary Institution	✓ (Local decision)	✓ (Local decision)	✓ (Local decision)	✓ (Local decision)
School District	✓ (Local decision)	✓ (Local decision)	✓ (Local decision)	✓ (Local decision)

✓ **Always** contributes

✓ **Sometimes** contributes

☐ **Never** contributes

Students Not Receiving the Dual Enrollment Scholarship

	Tuition	Fees	Books/Supplies	Transportation
State				
Student	✓	✓	✓	✓
Postsecondary Institution	✓ (Local decision)	✓ (Local decision)	✓ (Local decision)	✓ (Local decision)
School District	✓ (Local decision)	✓ (Local decision)	✓ (Local decision)	✓ (Local decision)

✓ **Always** contributes

✓ **Sometimes** contributes

☐ **Never** contributes

State Funding

The Alabama Legislature annually appropriates funds from the state's Education Trust Fund to the ACCS for the Dual Enrollment Scholarship Program. In the 2022-23 fiscal year, the state appropriation from the Education Trust Fund amounted to [\\$26.2 million](#). The state also provides a [tax credit](#) for private donations to support dual enrollment scholarships.

ACCS distributes appropriated funds to system institutions based on institutional applications and a weighted funding formula. The formula is determined by a dual enrollment committee staffed by key departments within the system, including Student Success, Academic Affairs, CTE and Workforce Development. Among other factors, the formula includes: the unduplicated head count and full-time equivalent student count of both the institution as a whole and the dual enrollment portion of the program; the total number of CTE credit hours taken by previous dual enrollment scholarship recipients; and the institution's past use of dual enrollment funds.

For eligible courses, the Dual Enrollment Scholarship Program covers the cost of tuition, fees, books and supplies through direct payments to ACCS institutions. When initially [created in 2014](#), the scholarship exclusively covered CTE courses. However, program eligibility has expanded greatly over the years and now

includes science, technology, engineering and math courses as well as other academic courses. Course inclusion is determined by using data provided by the [Alabama Committee on Credentialing and Career Pathways](#) that shows how well a course prepares students to enter high-skill, high-wage or high-demand occupations.

Nonstate Funding

ACCS authorizes two-year postsecondary institutions to establish [Dual Enrollment for Dual Credit agreements](#) with local districts and other secondary entities, such as private schools, religious schools or home schools/private tutors. These local partnership agreements must declare who will be responsible for student transportation and detail how colleges plan to maximize state scholarship funds if used for textbooks or supplies. Though not required by the state or ACCS, these agreements may also include information on how the local district and/or postsecondary institution plan to subsidize student costs beyond the state scholarship program.

Pike County Schools provides an example of an Alabama district that chooses to subsidize dual enrollment programs. The district covers all student costs to earn associate degrees through [dual enrollment academies](#) offered in partnership with select postsecondary partner institutions. An example of a postsecondary institution providing subsidies beyond state funds is Coastal Alabama Community College, which [provides](#) a 50% discount on dual enrollment tuition to students from Baldwin County Schools, Gulf Shores City Schools and Orange Beach City Schools enrolling during the fall and spring terms.

Direct Student Support

Students are responsible for the cost of tuition, fees, books, supplies and transportation when these costs are not covered by the state's Dual Enrollment Scholarship Program. Students coordinate with their high school counselor to obtain information about the Dual Enrollment Scholarship Program and other opportunities for financial aid. Though not required to do so by the state, postsecondary institutions and local districts may specify in local partnership agreements that they will cover a portion of student expenses for the program.



North Carolina's Funding Models

North Carolina provides dual enrollment opportunities to eligible high school students at state public postsecondary institutions through its [Career and College Promise](#) program. CCP includes three dual enrollment opportunities: College Transfer Pathway, Career and Technical Education (CTE) Pathway and Cooperative Innovative High School (CIHS) programs.

The College Transfer Pathway is designed for students who wish to get an early start on a college transfer associate degree that leads to a bachelor's degree, while the CTE Pathway is designed for students who wish to begin a certificate or diploma that leads to an associate degree in an applied science program in a particular technical field or career area. Courses for these two pathways are offered through North Carolina Community College System ([NCCCS](#)) institutions and are taught by community college faculty or by high school instructors meeting community college faculty qualifications. These two pathways are available to students enrolled in public or private secondary schools as well as students who receive home instruction.

Cooperative and Innovative High School programs consist of self-contained public high schools located on community college or university campuses that offer admitted students the opportunity to work concurrently toward completion of both a high school diploma and an associate degree or transferable credits. These programs are established as partnerships between one high school and one state postsecondary institution. Participating institutions may be part of NCCCS, the University of North Carolina System or North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities.

CIHS programs [target](#) students who are at risk of dropping out of high school, are first-generation college students and/or who would benefit from accelerated learning opportunities, including students traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education. These schools offer both high school and college courses. College-level courses are taught by college faculty or by high school instructors who meet college faculty qualifications. Only students admitted to CIHS schools can access dual enrollment through these programs.

Who Pays for Career and College Promise?

North Carolina uses a collaborative funding model to support all three opportunities offered through its CCP program. Tuition is waived for students accessing college courses through the program. The state covers the cost of the tuition waiver, compensating participating postsecondary institutions by providing a full-time equivalency allocation for each program participant.

The state funds school districts by allocating Average Daily Membership funds through the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction for all students regardless of their CCP participation status. The costs for fees, books, supplies and transportation related to program participation are the responsibility of the student but may be defrayed wholly or in part by the school district. Most CIHS programs also have access to [additional supplemental funding](#) through the department of public instruction.

Funding for North Carolina’s Career and College Promise Program

	Tuition	Fees	Books/Supplies	Transportation
State	✓	/	/	/
Student	/	✓	✓	✓
Postsecondary Institution	/	✓ (Local decision)	/	/
School District	/	✓ (Local decision)	✓ (Local decision)	✓ (Local decision)

 **Always** contributes
  **Sometimes** contributes
  **Never** contributes

Although the state waives tuition for students participating in all three CCP opportunities, the remainder of this case study limits its detailed examination of program funding to the College Transfer Pathway and the CTE Pathway, as these two pathways are accessible to all high school students in the state. Access to CIHS programs is limited to students from targeted populations who are admitted to self-contained public CIHS schools.

State Funding

The state waives tuition costs for all students participating in the program. To compensate public postsecondary institutions for waiving tuition, North Carolina includes students participating in CCP when calculating the full-time equivalent student counts for the institution. It also requires program accountability through institutional legislative reporting, as established by the [Appropriations Act of 2011](#).

Student eligibility requirements for the program have been expanded legislatively on multiple occasions since it was established; the latest expansion occurred in

[2019](#). These expansions have [increased the size and scope](#) of the program. The appropriation amounts are included in the [state budget](#) allocations to postsecondary institutions; because appropriations are tied to student counts, program funding is designed to expand as program participation increases.

The state requires the North Carolina Community College System, the Department of Public Instruction, the University of North Carolina System and the North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities to submit an annual joint legislative report detailing a variety of expenses, including costs associated with delivering the CCP program. The program cost reporting was previously limited to the amount of tuition waivers and fee reduction; however, the [Appropriations Act of 2021](#) updated reporting requirements, specifying that reporting must now include information on all costs associated with the program.

Nonstate Funding

Although not required by the state, for courses offered through the College Transfer Pathway and the CTE Pathway, school districts and community colleges may contribute to students' non-tuition costs. School districts may choose to cover costs for student fees, books, supplies and transportation. Interviews with department of public instruction staff indicate that many school districts see it as their responsibility to cover student costs beyond tuition. Community colleges may also defray the cost of student fees; NCCCS' Career and College Promise reference manual, accessible through their [CCP website](#), encourages community colleges to reduce student costs in collaboration with school districts.

Direct Student Support

All eligible North Carolina students enrolled in public or private secondary schools as well as students who receive home instruction have tuition-free access to community college courses offered through NCCCS' College Transfer Pathway and CTE Pathway. Students are responsible for the cost of all fees, books and materials and transportation if these are not covered by the local school district or community college. Students are encouraged to coordinate with a school counselor to determine how costs are covered at their school.



Rhode Island's Funding Models

Rhode Island offers its high school students the opportunity to engage in college coursework through two separate state programs: Dual Enrollment and Concurrent Enrollment. [State regulations](#) define dual enrollment as college courses taught on college campuses and concurrent enrollment as college courses taught on high school campuses.

The state's Dual Enrollment program allows high school students to enroll in postsecondary courses at public or private, two- or four-year postsecondary institutions to earn both high school and postsecondary credit. Courses are taught on a college campus by college faculty and are available to students enrolled in public or private secondary schools as well as students who receive home instruction. Dual Enrollment includes career and technical education courses.

In contrast, the state's Concurrent Enrollment program is offered on high school campuses through partnerships with public two- and four-year postsecondary institutions. Courses are taught by high school teachers who meets standards approved by the postsecondary institution. Postsecondary institutions are encouraged by the state to obtain National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships accreditation for their Concurrent Enrollment programs.

Who Pays for Dual Enrollment?

Rhode Island employs different funding models for its Dual Enrollment program based on whether the postsecondary institution offering the course is public or private. When Dual Enrollment is offered through a public postsecondary institution, the state funds tuition and fees up to eight credits per semester per student. Tuition and fees for enrollment beyond eight credits per semester is funded by the local district up to a capped amount. When the program is offered through the All Course Network at a private postsecondary institution, the state covers tuition and fees for up to [two credit-bearing courses](#) per semester. The state may negotiate reduced tuition rates that private institutions subsidize.

For public school students, the school district covers the costs of books and supplies for Dual Enrollment through public institutions; the state covers those costs for Dual Enrollment through private institutions. As a result, public school students are responsible only for the cost of transportation. In contrast, private school and homeschooled students participating in Dual Enrollment are responsible for the costs of tuition, fees, books, supplies and transportation.

Dual Enrollment Offered Through Public Postsecondary Institutions

	Tuition	Fees	Books/Supplies	Transportation
State*	✓ (Up to 8 credits)	✓ (Up to 8 credits)	/	/
Student (Public HS)	/	/	/	✓
Postsecondary Institution	/	/	/	/
School District	✓ (Beyond 8 credits)	✓ (Beyond 8 credits)	✓	/

*State funding flows through the office of the postsecondary commissioner.

Dual Enrollment Offered Through Private Postsecondary Institutions

	Tuition	Fees	Books/Supplies	Transportation
State**	✓	✓	✓	/
Student (Public HS)	/	/	/	✓
Postsecondary Institution	✓	✓	/	/
School District	/	/	/	/

**State funding flows through the department of education.

✓ **Always** contributes

✓ **Sometimes** contributes

□ **Never** contributes

State Funding

The state subsidizes Dual Enrollment program courses offered through public and private, two- and four-year postsecondary institutions but uses different mechanisms to subsidize public institutions versus private institutions.

For public postsecondary institutions, the governor and state legislators approve a line-item appropriation to the Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner. The state appropriated [\\$2.3 million](#) for dual and concurrent enrollment in the 2022-23 fiscal year. This appropriation covers expenses for both Dual Enrollment at public postsecondary institutions and Concurrent Enrollment programs at high schools. This annual appropriation is not allocated from the state's general funds; instead, the state draws from a dedicated CollegeBound Fund and other reserves to support the program.

The office of the postsecondary commissioner allocates the appropriated state funds to public postsecondary institutions based on memorandum-of-understanding agreements with each institution. To receive funds, the institution must submit an annual plan to the office that details the names of partner high schools, the types of courses offered and the number of participating students. The office takes program costs, program outcomes and other factors into account when allocating funds.

To subsidize Dual Enrollment courses offered at private postsecondary institutions, the state appropriates general funds and permanent school funds to the Rhode Island Department of Education to support the [All Course Network](#). In the 2022-23 fiscal year, the state appropriated \$150,000 from the general fund and \$300,000 from the permanent school fund to the department of education for the program. Dual Enrollment is one of five types of services offered through the program, which also includes advanced placement courses, school-based enrichment, work-based learning and career credentials. According to department of education staff, Dual Enrollment accounts for 15% of total enrollment in the program.

To determine how All Course Network funds will be distributed, the department of education issues a request for proposals each year to course providers, which include private postsecondary institutions, community-based organizations, school districts and municipalities. The department reviews all proposals and uses a set of business rules based on student demand and student performance to determine which course providers they will fund. The agency negotiates reduced tuition and fee rates with these providers. The department's allocations cover the negotiated tuition and fee amounts as well as all costs for books and supplies for courses from approved providers.

Nonstate Funding

When Dual Enrollment is provided through a public postsecondary institution, school districts are responsible for the cost of books and supplies. State funds cover tuition and fees for students up to eight credits per semester; however, students may also enroll full time. Full-time students are limited to attending two-year institutions unless they receive a waiver from the state. For full-time students, [state regulations](#) require the school district to support the cost of tuition and fees beyond eight credits per semester. The amount of this support is based on: the postsecondary institution's tuition and mandatory fee rates (not exceeding 100% of the cost of enrollment at the postsecondary institution) and is capped at 50% of the "core instructional per pupil amount of state and local education aid" as determined by the department of education.

When Dual Enrollment is provided through a private postsecondary institution, All Course Network funds are used to cover the cost of tuition, fees, books and supplies. For the past two years, these funds have been drawn from both state and federal funding sources. Federal funding for the program is drawn from Rhode Island’s allocation of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funds, as well as from a specific competitive allocation of ESSER funds to the department of education known as [ReThink Rhode Island](#). The combined allocation of state and federal funds to support all five of the All Course Network programs amounted to \$1.8 million in the 2022-23 fiscal year. About one quarter of those funds (\$500,000) were used to support Dual Enrollment.

Direct Student Support

State regulations require that students who come from low-income backgrounds not be denied access to Dual Enrollment based on their inability to pay the cost of tuition and fees. The cost of books and supplies are covered by either the state or the school district, depending on the type of institution providing the course (public or private). The cost of transportation is the responsibility of the student.

Who Pays for Concurrent Enrollment?

State funding for the Concurrent Enrollment program is similar to the Dual Enrollment program in that state funds pay for tuition and fees for courses. However, for Concurrent Enrollment, these costs are covered at a reduced rate because participating postsecondary institutions subsidize program costs. School districts cover costs for any books and supplies associated with the course. Because Concurrent Enrollment is offered on the high school campus, there are no transportation costs associated with the program.

Funding for Rhode Island’s Concurrent Enrollment Program

	Tuition	Fees	Books/Supplies	Transportation
State***	✓	✓	/	N/A
Student	/	/	/	N/A
Postsecondary Institution	✓	✓	/	N/A
School District	/	/	✓	N/A

***State funding flows through the office of the postsecondary commissioner.

✓ **Always** contributes

✓ **Sometimes** contributes

☐ **Never** contributes

State Funding

The state funds Concurrent Enrollment courses through a line-item appropriation to the Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner. The state appropriated [\\$2.3 million](#) in the 2022-23 fiscal year to cover expenses for both the Dual Enrollment program offered at public postsecondary institutions and the Concurrent Enrollment program offered at high schools. This annual appropriation is not allocated from the state's general funds; instead, the state draws from a dedicated CollegeBound Fund and other reserves to support the program.

The office of the postsecondary commissioner allocates state funds to public postsecondary institutions based on memorandum of understanding agreements with each postsecondary institution. As part of the memorandum of understanding, the postsecondary institution specifies the separate amounts that will be used to support the Concurrent Enrollment program and the Dual Enrollment program.

Nonstate Funding

Each year, Concurrent Enrollment course costs are established by participating public postsecondary institutions and approved by the state's board of education. For courses provided through the Concurrent Enrollment program, postsecondary institutions subsidize the difference between the reduced rate of tuition and fees paid by the state and the normal tuition and fee rate. Institutions also provide administrative support, as well as faculty mentoring and oversight of the local school district where the Concurrent Enrollment course is offered. The school district covers the cost of books and supplies and pays the salary of the course instructor at the high school.

Direct Student Support

State regulations require that students who come from low-income backgrounds not be denied access to Concurrent Enrollment based on their inability to pay the cost of tuition and fees. The cost of books and supplies are covered by either the state or the school district, depending on the type of institution providing the course (public or private). Since the program is offered on the high school campus, there are no transportation costs.



South Dakota's Funding Models

South Dakota provides [dual enrollment](#) opportunities for its high school students through two separate programs: Dual Credit and Concurrent Enrollment. The state defines dual credit as college courses offered through postsecondary institutions, and concurrent enrollment as college courses offered through high schools. The Dual Credit program is funded by the state, offered through public postsecondary institutions and taught by postsecondary faculty; the Concurrent Enrollment program is not funded by the state, offered through high schools and taught by qualified high school instructors.

In the state's Dual Credit program, courses are offered through South Dakota's [10 public postsecondary institutions](#), including six South Dakota Board of Regents institutions and four South Dakota technical colleges. Courses must be taught by postsecondary faculty; they may be offered on campus, but the majority are offered online. Postsecondary institutions may also opt for in-district delivery, where individual sections of a course are taught by a postsecondary faculty member on the high school campus. The program is available to high school juniors and seniors who meet program eligibility requirements and are either enrolled in public, private or tribal schools or are receiving home instruction.

In the state's Concurrent Enrollment program, postsecondary institutions develop and grant credit for courses offered, but courses are taught by qualified high school faculty on high school campuses. All South Dakota postsecondary institutions are eligible to participate; however, institutions wishing to provide courses through its Concurrent Enrollment program must use National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships standards to manage their programs. In addition, they must commit to actively engaging an institutional faculty member in the discipline of the course as a mentor for the high school teacher providing instruction. The program is available to high school juniors and seniors who meet program eligibility requirements and are either enrolled in public, private or tribal schools or are receiving home instruction.

Who Pays for Dual Credit?

The state, students and postsecondary institutions are primarily responsible for covering the costs associated with participating in the Dual Credit program. The state covers two-thirds of a negotiated [reduced tuition amount](#) charged for all courses offered through the Dual Credit program. Students are expected to cover the remaining one-third of the reduced tuition rate, as well as any costs for

books, supplies and, when necessary, transportation. School districts may cover a portion of the student’s costs, though this is not required by the state.

Postsecondary institutions may not charge additional fees for Dual Credit program courses beyond the reduced tuition amount. Institutions contribute to program costs by subsidizing the difference between the reduced tuition amount and their standard tuition rate as well as any fees they would otherwise charge.

Funding for South Dakota’s Dual Credit Program

	Tuition	Fees	Books/Supplies	Transportation
State	✓	/	/	/
Student	✓	/	✓	✓
Postsecondary Institution	✓	✓	/	/
School District	✓ (Local decision)	/	✓ (Local decision)	✓ (Local decision)

✓ **Always** contributes

✓ **Sometimes** contributes

☐ **Never** contributes

State Funding

In 2014, the South Dakota Legislature [passed a law](#) limiting tuition for Dual Credit program courses to 43% of the board of regents’ undergraduate tuition rate; the reduced rate currently amounts to \$145 per credit. The law also set up an annual legislative appropriation of state funds (as a line item in the state budget) to cover two-thirds of that cost, or \$96.67 per credit hour. The 2019-20 fiscal year state appropriation for the program amounted to [\\$4.3 million](#). State funds are sent to the South Dakota Department of Education, which distributes funds to eligible postsecondary institutions based on institutional billing and department verification of institutional costs. The department sends an annual request to the Legislature for an appropriation amount that estimates the costs of the program for the following year.

Nonstate Funding

South Dakota’s postsecondary institutions participating in Dual Credit contribute to program costs by subsidizing the amount of tuition not covered by the reduced tuition amount as well as the cost of any fees normally charged for those courses. In terms of tuition subsidy, compared to the \$145 per-credit reduced tuition charged

for Dual Credit courses, the [standard tuition](#) rate for courses offered through South Dakota technical colleges is approximately \$200 per credit; courses offered through board of regents institutions have a standard tuition rate of approximately \$300 per credit. Institutions wishing to receive state tuition funds for providing courses through in-district delivery must develop a partnership agreement with the associated school district and have a [memorandum of understanding](#) on file with the department of education.

While students are ultimately responsible for covering any costs of participation in the Dual Credit program beyond what is covered by the state, districts may support a portion of these costs through their own state allocation, local charitable funding or private scholarships. The type and amount of support provided by the district, as well as which costs are covered, are determined locally and not tracked by the department of education.

Direct Student Support

Students are billed by the postsecondary institution for one-third of the reduced tuition amount (\$48.33 per credit) for courses offered through the Dual Credit program. Students are also responsible for the full cost of books and supplies, which department of education staff estimated to be approximately \$25 to \$150 per class, as well as transportation costs when a course is not offered online. Student costs may be partially defrayed locally by school districts, though these local arrangements are neither required by the state nor tracked at the state level. District memorandums of understanding with the state, which are required for any district wishing to participate in the Dual Credit program, do specify that the high school will provide supervision, mentorship and support services related to the program for all eligible students.

Who Pays for Concurrent Enrollment?

Students and postsecondary institutions are responsible for covering costs associated with the Concurrent Enrollment program. State [guidance](#) indicates that students are responsible for the cost of tuition, books and supplies. Since courses are offered on the high school campus, there are no transportation costs associated with the program.

Postsecondary institutions may not charge additional fees for Concurrent Enrollment courses beyond the reduced tuition amount; institutions contribute to program costs by subsidizing any fees they would otherwise charge for the course. For some Concurrent Enrollment courses offered through board of regents institutions, tuition is limited to an [externally supported tuition rate](#).

For these courses, the external support is provided by the institution, which subsidizes the difference between the reduced tuition amount and its standard tuition rate.

Funding for South Dakota’s Concurrent Credit Program

	Tuition	Fees	Books/Supplies	Transportation
State	/	/	/	N/A
Student	✓	/	✓	N/A
Postsecondary Institution	✓	✓	/	N/A
School District	✓ (Local decision)	/	✓ (Local decision)	N/A

✓ **Always** contributes

✓ **Sometimes** contributes

☐ **Never** contributes

State Funding

South Dakota does not provide state funding for the Concurrent Enrollment program.

Nonstate Funding

Postsecondary institutions and districts develop partnership agreements to specify which services and/or costs will be covered by which party. Districts support program costs by paying the salaries of high school faculty who teach the courses offered through the program. Postsecondary institutions may be more willing to externally support its tuition rate for Concurrent Enrollment courses, which are taught by high school instructors, since this arrangement removes faculty salary costs from the postsecondary partner.

Direct Student Support

Students are responsible for the cost of tuition, books and supplies for courses offered through the Concurrent Enrollment program. (No fees may be charged.) Student tuition costs are limited to \$40 per credit hour if the course is offered through a board of regents institution and subject to the [externally supported tuition rate](#). Since courses are offered on the high school campus, there are no transportation costs associated with the program. Student costs may be partially defrayed by school districts as detailed in specific district-to-postsecondary institution partnership agreements, which are not tracked at the state level.

Questions for Policymaker Consideration

Dual enrollment funding mechanisms are complex and multifaceted. As state policymakers seek to implement changes to streamline funding, increase program equity and provide consistent support to local partnerships, they may find it helpful to consider the following questions.



Should States Help Cover the Costs of Dual Enrollment Programs?

In deciding whether to dedicate state funds, state leaders may respond as follows:

- Determine whether dual enrollment participation advances state policy goals for degree and credential attainment and workforce preparation.
- Establish performance goals and charge a body with regularly monitoring performance to ensure funds are achieving desired goals.



What Are the State's Dual Enrollment Spending Priorities?

States have choices in terms of the types of dual enrollment programs to support and where these courses are offered, based on state priorities for access and attainment.

- State funds can be directed by delivery mode, choosing to support classes provided at the high school, postsecondary campus or virtually.
- The state can choose to direct support through institution or school type, funding courses provided by two-year or four-year, public or private postsecondary institutions, or through students attending public or private high schools or who are homeschooled.



How Can States Structure Tuition and Fee Support?

State leaders have many choices in how they allocate funds for tuition and fees.

- If dual enrollment is a priority for the state, state leaders can make dual enrollment free for all students by waiving tuition and fees, and appropriating necessary funds.

- If resources are scarce, state leaders can choose to direct allocations by funding scholarships for select students based on financial need or covering tuition for select dual enrollment courses based on state policy goals.
- State leaders can choose to structure appropriations to support future program growth.



How Do Postsecondary Institutions and Districts Contribute to Costs?

There are several ways that states can require or encourage local partnerships to help cover program costs.

- States can require or encourage postsecondary institutions and districts to reduce tuition, cover fees, pay for books and supplies, and arrange for necessary transportation.
- If the state chooses to rely on voluntary contributions from postsecondary and district partners, students may have inequitable access based on the wealth of individual school districts or postsecondary institutions.
- States can track local contributions by requiring that partnership agreements and program data are shared with the state.



What Actions Can States Take to Assist Students With Books, Supplies and Transportation?

Students and families continue to play a role in covering dual enrollment costs.

- Even in states where tuition and fees are waived, course materials, transportation and meals can serve as barriers to attendance for students.
- State leaders can help alleviate these costs by ensuring virtual options are available to students, appropriating funds to cover some or all of these costs, and using guidance to encourage postsecondary institutions and districts to cover costs.

Design Considerations for Dual Enrollment Funding

While an examination of dual enrollment funding models in four states is far from comprehensive, it does illuminate certain trends in funding design. These trends elevate common issues across categories of student-facing costs (tuition, fees, books and supplies, transportation) and sources of funding (state, postsecondary, district, student). By critically examining these issues, policymakers can develop a more finely tuned sense of the constraints and tensions inherent to dual enrollment funding models generally, which can support their efforts to develop more effective funding models for these programs in the future.

How Does Funding Align With Program Costs?

Examining program costs by category reveals common funding considerations across programs that can inform the development of an effective dual enrollment funding model.

Tuition. While tuition is often addressed as a single cost in funding models, the tuition category covers a complex range of expenditures, including faculty salaries, operations and facilities. This complexity is inherent to tuition-based funding models for dual enrollment programs. In addition, many state funding models defray tuition costs at a negotiated reduced rate, which requires postsecondary institutions to subsidize a portion of costs even when the state pays. Finally, when state tuition funds are allocated only to postsecondary institutions, but some or all program courses are offered on high school campuses and/or taught by high school faculty, districts also subsidize tuition costs for dual enrollment programs.

Fees. To be eligible to receive state funds supporting dual enrollment programs, postsecondary institutions are often asked to waive all course fees beyond tuition. From a student perspective, this makes a certain amount of sense; the high school students participating in these programs are not generally participating in the on-campus services that those fees are meant to support. From an institutional funding perspective, however, institutions using course-based revenue models are effectively subsidizing a part of their operational costs when they agree to waive course fees, which can serve as a disincentive for institutional program participation.

Books and Supplies. Although a few dual enrollment programs have, through policy or precedent, dedicated state funding to cover the cost of books and supplies, more frequently the student is responsible for these costs. The cost of books and supplies is certainly lower than the cost of tuition but, with the [average cost](#) of a college textbook currently landing above \$100, it can still be a significant barrier to participation. School districts may support a portion of these costs, and some programs use policy or guidance to set this as an expectation of the district partner. However, whether districts provide financial support for books and supplies is often left as a local decision that is not tracked at the state level.

Transportation. Transportation costs of dual enrollment programs — generally associated with the student’s travel to and from the campus of the postsecondary institution offering courses — is often left to students. To help alleviate this cost, states have sought to provide dual enrollment options that can be accessed online or through the high school campus, which removes the need to arrange transportation. In addition, when courses are offered on nearby postsecondary campuses, districts may provide transportation for participating students, usually through additional bus routes. Whether districts support student transportation costs largely remains a local decision not tracked by the state.

What Are the Tradeoffs Inherent to Each Funding Source?

Building an effective dual enrollment funding model requires careful consideration of the benefits and tradeoffs associated with reliance on each of these sources.

State. States can signal the value of dual enrollment programs through the allocation of funds. State subsidies can flow to all responsible parties to support equitable student access and create incentives for participation across education sectors. Yet state funds are limited and may not be guaranteed over time; dual enrollment is one of many priorities that must be addressed through a state’s education budget. In addition, access to state funds may require concessions in the form of subsidies from K-12 and/or postsecondary institutions.

Postsecondary. By subsidizing part of the cost of tuition and fees, postsecondary institutions demonstrate commitment to dual enrollment programs and support the growth of what can be, especially for community colleges, a [significant portion](#) of their student enrollment. In addition, investing in early attainment can build future student enrollment. However, if state support is low and program enrollment is high, the amount of subsidy required can serve as a disincentive for institutions to expand their participation.

District. School districts often feel mission-driven to support their students however they can. For dual enrollment programs, even when not required by state policy or guidance, districts often choose to provide a variety of supports to students including subsidizing costs, providing transportation, and delivering mentoring and advising services. Unfortunately, local dollars are limited, and program priorities may shift over time. Most importantly, districts with the fewest resources often have the largest lift in terms of supporting equitable access for their students.

Student. Relying on the student to cover the costs of dual enrollment programs widens equity gaps in access. The costs of tuition, books and supplies, as well as the logistics of arranging off-campus transportation, are most likely to be prohibitive to students who have historically been least served by programs. It is always possible that certain highly accelerated students may need to access opportunities that are not available through existing subsidized programs; states may use guidance to indicate that alternate arrangements are allowable for these exceptions.

Are Funding Models Designed to Support Future Program Growth?

Some states allocate appropriations for dual enrollment as a line-item categorical grant that exists outside of their core funding structures for K-12 districts and postsecondary institutions. Since the funding amounts for these grants are

set annually or biannually in the state budgeting process, allocations may be driven more by the availability of funds in a particular year than by the level of student participation in the programs. If the line-item is not adjusted regularly for inflation and student participation, this model weakens state support as programs experience increased enrollment, pushing more of the financial burden for growing programs onto local districts, postsecondary institutions and/or the student.

North Carolina's Career and College Promise program offers an example of an alternate funding model that is more responsive to program participation levels than line-item categorical grants. The state allocates program funds by incorporating dual enrollment students in the full-time equivalency student counts for participating postsecondary institutions. Instead of appropriating a set amount, the state funds institutions on a per-student basis through their general allocation. As a result, funding is responsive to student participation levels rather than subject to budgetary discretion. One drawback to this approach is that the year-to-year variability in allocation amounts can translate to less funding transparency for the program. To address this concern, North Carolina has recently [passed legislation](#) requiring additional reporting for program expenditures, bolstering the accountability that goes hand in hand with the flexibility of their funding model.

Do Funding Models Account for Local Contributions?

To fund dual enrollment services, some states encourage school districts or postsecondary institutions to defray some of the costs that would otherwise come to the student. While this guidance could help remove participation barriers for students — especially if coupled with state financial support — states do not all collect data on which districts and institutions are choosing to subsidize student costs or what services they are subsidizing. This reduces transparency about who ultimately bears the financial burden for those services. States can instead choose to make it a priority to collect and report on this information, which could inform decision makers on whether and where to allocate additional state investments.

Final Thoughts

Dual enrollment has demonstrated benefits for students. The growth of these programs over the past two decades have made them widely available throughout the country. Yet disparities in access persist, and students who are racially minoritized, have cognitive and/or physical disabilities, or come from low-income households continue to be significantly underrepresented. Existing dual enrollment funding models may have exacerbated some of these disparities, as students and families continue to play a large role in covering program expenses.

As state leaders work to design dual enrollment programs that eliminate rather than reinforce barriers, they have a variety of options for structuring supportive funding models. Dual enrollment is a collaborative program with many actors, which can make funding challenging and complex. However, leaders can leverage this aspect to develop cost-sharing arrangements that combine legislative allocations from a variety of state-level sources (general funds, line-item allocations, specialized grants) with contributions from postsecondary institutions and school districts to distribute costs among stakeholders. Such collaborative work across sectors and agencies can significantly reduce the cost burden for students, which in turn supports state postsecondary attainment and develops a stronger state workforce.

Appendix

Interview Protocol

1. State Funding

- a) What are the sources of state funding for dual enrollment?
- b) How are the state funding amounts determined (by formula or line-item appropriation)?
- c) Do districts/postsecondary institutions receive state funding for dual enrollment?
 - i) How are funds allocated?
 - ii) Who is involved in decision-making?

2. Nonstate Funding

- a) What other (nonstate) sources of district/postsecondary funding are available for dual enrollment (federal, local, reserves)?
 - i) How are funds allocated?
 - ii) Who is involved in decision-making?
- b) How is state funding braided with other (nonstate) sources of district/postsecondary funding for dual enrollment?

3. Direct Student Support

- a) What are the student costs (tuition, fees, books, transportation) associated with participating in the dual enrollment program?
- b) What resources are available to support dual enrollment costs for students?
 - i) How do students access those resources?
 - ii) Are funds provided up front or as a reimbursement?

Participating Agencies and Systems

Alabama

- Alabama State Department of Education.
- Alabama Commission on Higher Education.
- Alabama Community College System.

North Carolina

- North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.
- North Carolina Community College System.
- The University of North Carolina System.

Rhode Island

- Rhode Island Department of Education.
- Rhode Island Office of Postsecondary Commissioner.

South Dakota

- South Dakota Department of Education.
- South Dakota Board of Regents.

About the Authors

Chris Duncombe



Chris focuses on K-12 school finance as a senior policy analyst at Education Commission of the States. Chris has 10 years of experience working on fiscal policy at the state and local level with a focus on school funding, and his previous research in Virginia informed state policymakers in their design of equity-based school funding. Chris believes in the power of diverse, well-resourced learning environments and the key role school finance plays in setting the stage for student success. Contact Chris at cduncombe@ecs.org.

Sharmila Mann



As principal, Sharmila provides leadership on the development and execution of Education Commission of the States' strategic policy initiatives and fosters internal and external relationships. Sharmila brings more than 15 years of education policy experience to her role, including 10 years at the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association engaging with state and federal policymakers, funders and national associations in pursuit of policy to smooth transitions between education sectors. Sharmila holds a bachelor's degree in biology from Cornell University and a master's and doctorate in human genetics from the University of Michigan. Contact Sharmila at smann@ecs.org.