

Dual Enrollment Landscape in Montana: Preliminary Overview of Policy Issues

Caveat: In a landscape with few policy parameters, the purpose of this overview document is to highlight areas where parameters for dual enrollment in Montana may be needed. The cumulative effect of such “highlighting” may imply a censure of a particular campus or model. Nothing could be farther from the intent of the College!Now Project Leadership who have compiled this information. Having engaged with the campuses on this subject through extended interviews and follow-up communications, the College!Now Project Leadership emphasizes that our overall impression is of Montana’s higher education campuses reaching out in collaborative, respectful ways to K-12 school districts throughout the state – and most importantly, reaching out to talented high school students to provide an opportunity that can keep them academically engaged and save them time and expense as they pursue a college degree.

What is missing from this landscape is the coherent approach that would result from some basic guidelines supporting quality, affordability, and equity of access in dual enrollment across the state. We serve neither students and their parents nor school districts optimally in the absence of these guidelines.

Data

Document: The attached matrix outlines current practice in dual enrollment in Montana, based on interviews and follow-up communications with the campuses. Five models were explored. The matrix is worth reviewing before – and while -- assimilating this overview. Of particular value are the campuses’ own perspectives of the “pluses and minuses” of each model, based on their experiences. The issues identified below are system-level concerns gleaned from the analysis of the data document and informed by dual enrollment literature.

Summary of

Enrollments: The table below provides a comparative view of the enrollments, as reported by the campuses, for each model in Montana’s current dual enrollment landscape.

CAMPUS	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	TOTAL
MSU	0	0	0	0	0	0
MSU-Billings	7	0	61	25	0	93
MSU-Great Falls	70	34	8	92	0	204
MSU-Northern	16	5	3	0	0	24
UM	215	0	0	0	<i>Discont.</i>	215
UM – MT Tech	154	30	11	10	0	205
UM-Helena	293	0	44	0	0	337
UM-Western	2	0	0	?	0	2
Dawson CC	12	0	?	0	0	12
Flathead Valley CC	36	32	281	?	0	349
Miles CC	199	0	0	3	0	202
TOTAL	1004	101	408	130	0	1643

Note: Enrollment numbers are headcounts provided by each campus.

Summary notes about the table may be helpful:

- Several campuses with low dual enrollments – e.g., MSU-Northern and UM-Western – have just begun emphasizing dual enrollment.
- The focus of most campuses is on the concurrent enrollment model (Model 1).

- Several campuses have niched their programs in a particular dual enrollment model, with a dominant campus indicated by the red numbers in the table:
 - UM – Helena, Montana Tech, UM COT, and Miles CC have focused on the concurrent enrollment model (Model #1), but UM-Helena’s enrollments, at least for AY2008-2009, are significantly higher than other campuses’.
 - FVCC has explored several models, but has been extremely successful in bringing high school students to the campus, blending these students into their existing student population (Model #3)
 - MSU-Great Falls is also engaged in several models, but has been particularly successful in bringing dual enrollment opportunities online to Montana school districts and their students, particularly in rural settings.

Overall Policy Issues (Not Model-Specific)

Disparities and variances among campuses and gaps in the data illustrated by the matrix suggest the following as areas where policy parameters would be helpful:

- Minimum qualifications of faculty
- Student eligibility for and placement in dual enrollment courses
- Clear rationale and consistent practices for establishing tuition and fees
- Clear rationale and consistent practices for reporting and funding FTE
- Data codes for dual enrollment that facilitate quality-tracking over time
- Pricing that reflects true costs of each model
- Clear expectations for the calculation of ANB and FTE
- Providing dual enrollment opportunities for home-schooled and private school students
- Niche areas not to be duplicated

Model-Specific Policy Issues

1. Model #1 (Concurrent Enrollment). In the concurrent enrollment model, the college employs qualified high school faculty as adjunct faculty. The high school faculty teach the college course as part of their high school assignment to a class comprised entirely of high school students. The primary advantages to the student are access, convenience, academic engagement, and an environment and teacher with which/whom high school students are familiar. Below are the policy issues in Montana associated with this model. Many of these issues have been addressed by the National Alliance for Concurrent Enrollment Programs (NACEP), particularly its accreditation practices.

- Consistent practice and rationale for tuition, fees, and the claiming of FTE
- Consistent practice and rationale for compensation of faculty
- Consistent and clearly communicated minimum qualifications for faculty
- Competition with/lack of differentiation from AP/Tech Prep classes
- Meaningful supervision and evaluation of faculty
 - Consistent collection of student evaluations
 - Formal evaluation process for faculty by the college
 - Connection between faculty and the campus, particularly campus faculty within the discipline
- Maintaining college-level expectations in a high school environment (extended absences due to extracurricular activities, parent involvement, pace of course, support services, etc.)

- Intentional processes ensuring comparable college-level outcomes
2. Model #2 (College Faculty Delivering the Course to a Class of High School Students Only, Either on Campus or at the High School). This model is seldom used in Montana, in contrast to other states with larger populations. The primary advantage to the student is the access to a college faculty right in their high school, or the ability to go to the college after the school day to take a college course. The primary public advantages are the good will created by having a college presence at the high school and the integrating of college faculty into the high school culture. Policy issues with this model left unaddressed in Montana include:
 - Maintaining college-level expectations in a high school environment (extended absences due to extracurricular activities, parent involvement, pace of course, support services, etc.)
 - Orientation of college faculty to school district expectations/high school environment
 3. Model #3 (High School Students Enroll in College Course on College Campus). This model is the second-most prevalent form of dual enrollment in Montana, mainly because it has been the model of emphasis for Flathead Valley Community College for some time. The primary advantage to the student is the experience of truly being “a college student,” with all the amenities, stimulation, diversity, and support services of a college campus. The dual enrollment literature suggests that this is the optimal model, but the vast area and sparse population of Montana make Model #3 logistically difficult, if not impossible, on the east side of the Continental Divide. The system-level concerns raised by this model have less to do with policy than with logistics:
 - Students’ ability to commute (transportation, proximity to a college campus)
 - Meshing high school schedules and calendars with college schedules and timelines for registration, final week, spring break, etc.
 - Ensuring that dual-credit faculty are appropriately licensed
 - Acclimating high school students and their parents to the college environment
 - Ensuring that adult students are not displaced by high school students
 4. Model #4 (Blending High School Students into Online/Video College Courses). Providing dual enrollment opportunities online has been a major emphasis of MSU-Great Falls and, to a lesser degree, MSU-Billings; otherwise, it is not prevalent in Montana. Even less prevalent (perhaps non-existent) is the use of interactive video for dual enrollment purposes. The primary advantage to the student of Model #4, especially the student distant from a college campus, is access to dual enrollment opportunities. A secondary advantage is the opportunity to experience learning in an asynchronous environment, the learning modality of the future. Issues with this model are also more logistical – i.e., they require more in the way of procedures than in policy:
 - Orienting the student to the discipline of online learning
 - Quality of broadband/technological infrastructure
 - Providing student support services both at the high school and at the college
 5. Model #5 (Distance Learning Online or OnSkype (etc.) for Combined Classes of High School Students). This model does not exist in Montana. The Confucius Institute of UM provided a taste of this modality in 2008-2009. UM concluded it is a more appropriate fit for the Montana Virtual Academy than the dual enrollment landscape in Montana.