



**MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM**  
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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**Dual Enrollment Program Update**

**March 2016**

The Montana University System has a dual enrollment program that in many ways is the envy of other states, and for good reason. Our system and our state has recognized the value in the program and prioritized it. We have built tactically, and consistently made smart, sometimes bold decisions, to do so. All this has set us up for success. We have seen success in terms of program quality, growth, systemic alignment, and most importantly, in successful outcomes for students.

**Enrollment**

Montana high school students continue to engage in dual enrollment in record numbers. Although we are preliminary enrollment numbers for spring indicate 12.5% growth spring to spring (Figure 1). Thus, we are poised to exceed last year's enrollment. For the first time we have more than 2000 students enrolled per semester. These numbers are a testament to the hard work of a large number of campus staff in a variety of offices across the state and, in particular, to the dual enrollment coordinators who are at the vanguard of the initiative.

In a rural state like Montana, it is important to stay focused on building equitable access across the state. Montana students should have the same opportunities for high-quality accelerated credit regardless of where they live. The work of our colleges, their faculty, and dual enrollment coordinators over the past year has combined with the impact of the Credit-4-Credit program to increase on-site dual enrollment in Montana high schools. From fall 2014 to fall 2015 we saw an 8% increase in dual enrollment taught in Montana high schools ("dual credit" on Figure 1). This means that more students than ever before have access to dual enrollment courses at their home high school, making better options and access a reality.

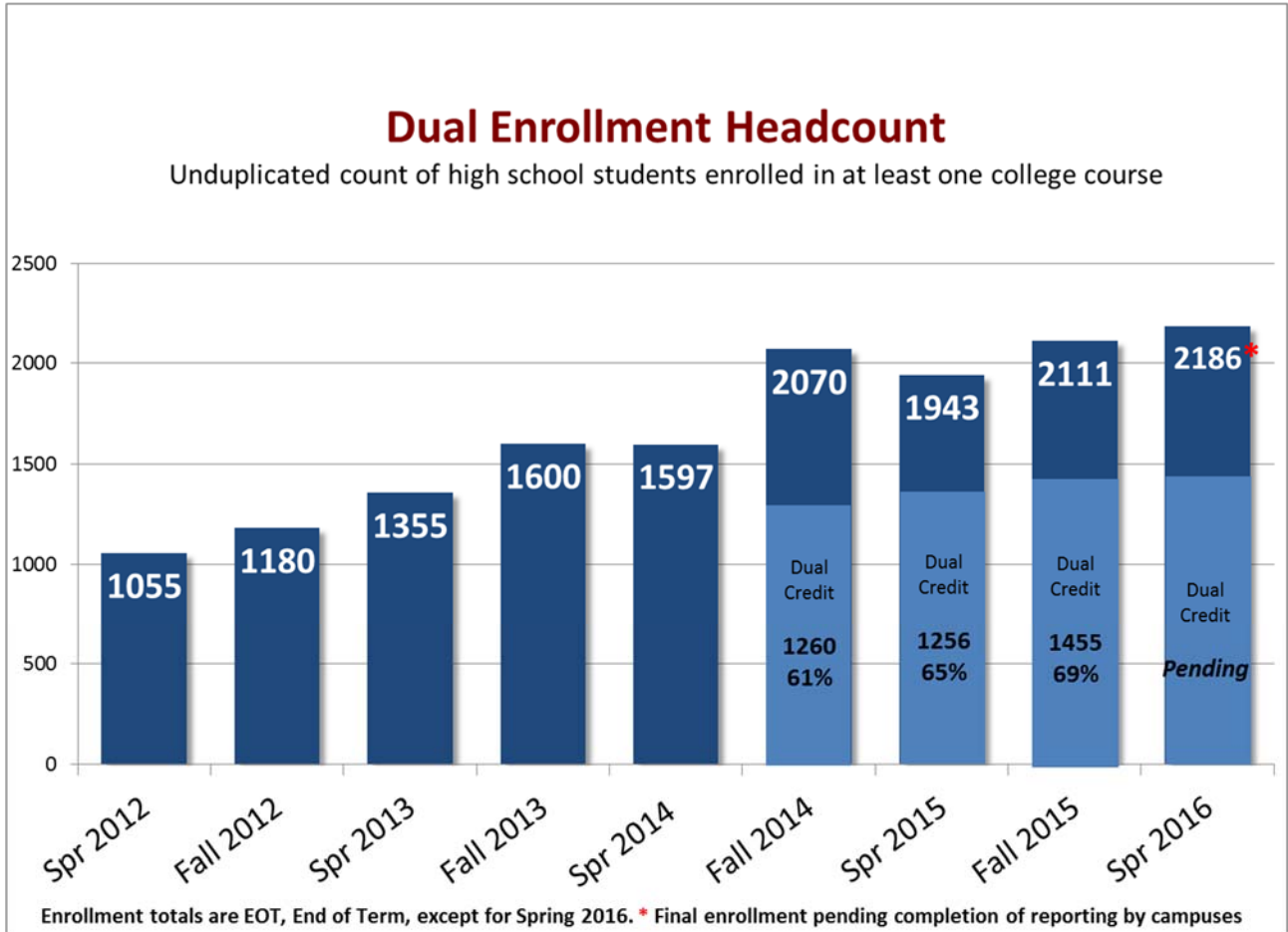


Figure 1: Unduplicated student headcount spring semester 2012 to spring 2016. Data from Deputy Commissioner Tyler Trevor.

### Credit-4-Credit

The Dual Credit Incentive Program, with its centerpiece the Credit-4-Credit (C4C) reward, was launched May 2014. The program has positively impacted the lives of hundreds, if not thousands, of teachers and students throughout Montana. As of fall semester 2015, the program issued 458 C4C's to 310 teachers, an average of 103 teachers a semester. These teachers earned a combined 1449 credits of free tuition to use themselves or give to someone else. Since the start of the program, about a third of the C4C's issued have been redeemed. The majority of the redeemed C4C's were used by someone other than the teacher who earned them (spouses, friends, children, or students). Summer semester, a time when teachers traditionally seek out continuing education options, was a clear exception to this trend. During summer semester 2015, C4C instructor redemptions accounted for 75% of the C4C's used.

Whether discussing the program in Montana or nationally, the Credit-4-Credit program is popular. It is regarded as an innovative way to reward teachers, address teacher credentialing, and encourage investment in higher education. Spring semester 2016 is the fourth and final semester for which Credit-4-Credit rewards will be issued to qualifying dual enrollment instructors at Montana high schools. Recipients have until June 1, 2017 to redeem their C4C's.

We asked recipients to share their C4C stories with our office. Contacted via email a handful of respondents from all corners of the state and all sizes of schools shared their comments. Although not a scientific or comprehensive sample, they were enthusiastic and vocal. Hearing from the teachers themselves provides the type of insight that numbers lack.

*My daughter recently began an accelerated post-baccalaureate nursing program... As a dual-enrollment teacher, I was elated when I found out about the Credit-4-Credit program because I knew I'd give all of my credits to her. I've shared my credits with her each of the past 3 semesters, which has saved us a bunch of money. We are just thrilled with the C4C program. Credit 4 Credit is a tremendous incentive for dual-enrollment teachers.*

*My wife and I both teach dual credit classes. We were able to donate some of our credits to three deserving seniors to help them with college, as well as, take graduate courses this coming summer at MSU. We appreciate the opportunity this program has given us and our students.*

*I am a dual credit instructor and I was able to pass my credits to my son. This was of a particular benefit because he transferred from a South Dakota school to a Montana school this year and he has to take 21 [additional] credits due to transfer. The credits will help immensely because of the extra cost of his heavy credit load. He may not have returned to school at all this fall if not for the possibility of completing his degree in one year at his new school and having the monetary help of the C4C's to make up for credits lost in transfer. So these credits helped a discouraged but competent student decide to complete his degree rather than continue to work at a respectable job that could have become a career.*

*I have not yet used my credits but am planning on giving them to a graduating senior this year. He is a well-deserving kid and will benefit greatly from these credits...He is a hard working kid and allowing him to use these credits may give him the opportunity to work part-time during his first year of college rather than full-time. I think it is a great idea!*

*My son, a freshman in college, has benefited greatly from the program. Not only was he able to earn a total of 10 college credit hours at a small Class B Montana high school, he took all of his required college math courses while in high school. In addition to this significant academic head-start, he also received a significant financial boost when I donated my Credit-4-Credit coupons to him.*

*[... my husband will use at least 6 of my credits to get his MT teaching license this spring. He had a license in another state over 5 years ago and needs to have two recent classes to become licensed here in MT. If he doesn't end up using all the credits that I will have earned by the end of this year, then I will use some...[At our high school] we have gone from no dual credit math classes to College Algebra and Pre-calculus last year, to College Algebra/Pre-calculus and Pre-calculus/Calculus this year. Thanks to the dual credit opportunity, seven of our seniors will graduate with 11 college credits in math alone!...]*

*I just wanted to write you a quick note to let you know that I have donated my 7-credit voucher to a student who graduated from high school last year. She will redeem them this coming spring semester... She is a very bright and motivated student that too often flew under the radar when it came to getting scholarships and grants. I knew her parents could use the help in sending her to the university. She cried when I told her of the program...and told her I was giving her my credit vouchers.*

## **Growth since C4C**

We are seeing shifts in the system's dual enrollment program that indicate an impact of the of the Credit-4-Credit program. Comparing fall 2014 data to that of fall 2015 we found gains in instructors, enrollment, courses offered, number of sections offered, and participating high schools. We anticipate that the spring 2016, and post-C4C data, will give us more insight into the specific impact of C4C; however, preliminarily C4C appears to have added 30 new dual enrollment teachers, 48 new courses, and ten new high schools system wide since it began<sup>1</sup>. Of the 48 courses added, 28 were in core academic areas and 20 were in more career-technical content. The balance between General Education and career-technical courses bodes well for education, students, and Montana as a whole. Offering a wide range of options provides the career insight that is craved by students. It also cultivates and prepares a varied and diverse workforce to address the labor gaps, existing and projected, in our state.

## **Pathways into College and Career**

The increased offerings and options could not have happened without the diligent work of dual enrollment and Big Sky Pathway coordinators. They've done an impressive job of connecting with high schools. Growth in high quality dual enrollment options is happening in all size schools and across the state. In the past year our office has made a concerted effort to encourage and support growth in career-technical dual enrollment content. Our colleges have answered the charge to develop workforce oriented pathways for students and great examples abound.

- Lodge Grass and Cut Bank, both new to dual enrollment, are offering dual credit welding as the result of an FVCC summer welding course for teachers.
  - FVCC and MSUN are partnering with Lincoln County Schools (Troy, Libby, Eureka) to explore college credit options in health science, manufacturing, computer science, transportation, business, and automotive technology in the Lincoln County Technical Education Center, in development.
  - City College added five new courses spring semester 2015, and will add at least five more in the fall. Several of these courses feature new and enhanced partnerships with the Billings Career Center.
  - Gallatin College has extended their Intro to Interior Design course into Great Falls School District and Billings Career Center's high school house building projects.
  - Beaverhead County High School in Dillion has increased the number of courses in their school threefold in one year, and now has two colleges offering dual enrollment on-site (UM Western and Highlands). UM Western has also extended dual credit options in early childhood education to Great Falls and Lewistown students.
  - Great Falls College plans to roll out an intensive cohort model IT program for dual enrollment within the year. The online nature of the bulk of the program may open it to students across the state.
- Dawson Community College has more than tripled enrollment in one year and reached out in their region to expand offerings in a variety of content areas.

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<sup>1</sup> Preliminary data assessment may not account for teacher migration, change in semester a course is offered, courses offered on a rotational basis, or other confounding factors.

## **What's Next: Growing a 1000 Students a Year**

Dual enrollment has nearly doubled since spring semester 2012. While we have accomplished much in the past three years, there is much work that remains to be done to ensure that all Montana students have access to high quality dual enrollment. Governor Bullock, Commissioner Christian, and Superintendent Juneau have committed to an ambitious dual enrollment goal:

***Increase dual enrollment in the Montana University System by 1000 students annually over the next three years.***

**This level of growth is an aggressive goal; however, we feel that the time is right for embracing such a goal.**

- Our System is in a period of growth, initiated by invested leadership at all levels: at the Board of Regents, in the Office of the Commissioner, and at our two and four-year campuses. Not to mention at the Governor's Office, in the Legislature, and at the Office of Public Instruction.
- Our campuses across the state have staff dedicated to dual enrollment programs, and these staff communicate, coordinate, and have worked over the past two years to align best practices.
- The innovative Credit-4-Credit program and temporary waiver option helped us make solid progress in an area that is one of the largest impediments to school district participation. These programs are the envy of other states.
- We have an OCHE staff member dedicated to dual enrollment (one who is now recognized as a national leader in this realm of education). Additionally, several OCHE programs and staff overlap and support dual enrollment and its student success agenda.
- We have increased connection and collaboration with Montana secondary educators and administrators and thereby increased knowledge of the program. These connections continue to grow in quality and depth with our partnerships with OPI.
- We are poised to dramatically increase CTE and supporting General Education dual enrollment in the system by reorienting the Big Sky Pathways program.

**Additional efforts will help us to reach our goal.**

- By working with our campuses to increase the availability of summer dual enrollment courses we have the potential to greatly increase annual options for students.
- By working with universities to tap into Title II grants for the development of teacher graduate course work, we could be creating content and paying teachers tuition so that they can get the graduate courses they need to teach dual enrollment.
- By better engaging with OPI's connections with educators and administrators, through MASS, and collaborating on projects through OPI's Teacher Learning Hub and Learning Opportunities Portal we could build connected programs that link teachers and campuses around the focus of dual enrollment.

Our desire is to pursue and produce growth in high-quality dual enrollment so that this valuable program benefits more Montana students. We believe this proposal is both bold and aggressive. Yet we are committed to working together across the State to roll up our sleeves and do the hard work ahead to take student opportunity to the next level. We will do so with the same priorities, good decisions, and strategies that have served us well in the past. By using our existing work, the momentum it has created, and incorporating the additional recommended efforts, we can greatly increase access to postsecondary opportunities for students in the state of Montana.