

Compliance and Compassion: Dual Enrollment and Admissions & Records

Dual enrollment can help increase college access, completion, and transfer rates, particularly for students from communities that have been historically under-represented in college. Many community colleges in California are expanding equitable dual enrollment opportunities, and their Admissions and Records departments (A&R) play an essential role in providing an open door to college for dual enrollment students. To understand how dual enrollment coordinators and A&R can work together to support an equitable enrollment process for students, Career Ladders Project convened a small group of California community college A&R leaders in spring 2023. This brief summarizes the perspectives and experiences they shared.

Managing Compliance

One of A&R's primary roles is to ensure compliance with law and regulations for student enrollment, which is directly tied to college funding. Falling short in this area can result in substantial consequences including financial penalties and negative impacts on accreditation or the college's ability to grant financial aid. Colleges also need to be particularly careful with "special admits," the legal category that includes high school students in dual enrollment in California. Auditors frequently inspect special admit enrollment during annual audits because they are subject to strict regulations.

Partnering with A&R to Remove Barriers

To expand dual enrollment opportunities equitably, many colleges are removing barriers faced by students. A&R can be a key partner in this work by helping determine the boundaries for changing policies and practices. While some local policies can be changed, some are subject to legal or regulatory requirements.

For example, drop deadlines are set by the academic calendar and governed by Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations; they can't be changed at the local level. But if legal requirements are changed at the state level, they can lead to further local policy shifts. Several years ago, AB30 legislation reduced the application burden for College and Career Access Pathways (CCAP) dual enrollment by requiring the student to document parent/guardian approval and a recommendation from their high school just once for the duration of their CCAP participation. Some colleges now choose to treat this requirement the same for all dually-enrolled high school students, regardless of CCAP or non-CCAP participation. (Note: As of July 2023, [pending Title 5 revisions](#) would make this one-time requirement for parental permission consistent statewide for all dual enrollment.¹)

¹ [Title 5 revisions](#) considered at the July 2023 Board of Governors meeting clarify that, once provided, parental permission for CCAP and non-CCAP dual enrollment applies to all subsequent enrollments unless revoked by the parent.

Effectively partnering with A&R can also help shine a light on flawed practices rooted in outdated requirements or mistaken assumptions. These are practices that aren't actually required, but are assumed to be grounded in law or regulation simply because they've been around for a long time. One common example is the mistaken assumption that students need to have a minimum GPA to participate in dual enrollment. In fact, students cannot be excluded from participation in dual enrollment in California community colleges based on GPA.²

Colleges are Expanding Dual Enrollment Access

A&R leaders from Bakersfield College, Cuyamaca College, Hartnell College, and Los Rios Community College District shared some of what their institutions have done to remove barriers and make the dual enrollment process more streamlined and student-centered:

Bakersfield College implemented dualenroll.com, an online platform, to track and manage the enrollment process every step of the way—from high school to student, to parent or guardian, to the college. The transition from paper forms took time and effort, but the system is easier for students and saves time for A&R staff, enabling them to handle the college's 12,000 dual enrollment students.

Cuyamaca College implemented student self-registration for dual enrollment. Previously, they used a manual process with paper forms. Now CCAP students register themselves for courses, which has been a game-changer that has helped alleviate bottlenecks and reduce processing time.

Hartnell College used a team approach to complete a successful transition from using paper forms to electronic forms with digital signatures. Their small A&R department worked closely with the dual enrollment team, the IT department, and college leadership to put the new, efficient system in place.

A Wish List for Dual Enrollment

A&R leaders from Bakersfield College, Cuyamaca College, Hartnell College, and Los Rios Community College District described what they'd like to see for dual enrollment policy and practice:

- CCCApply would be streamlined by restricting it to the basics needed for high school students.
- Enrollment fees would be waived automatically for all high school students, including non-CCAP students.
- Parents would understand that FERPA applies differently to dual enrollment students' college records. Unlike high schools, colleges cannot grant parents immediate access to their student's college record.
- Everyone would encourage equitable participation and avoid gatekeeping mindsets about restricting dual enrollment to students who are perceived as "college bound."
- Non-CCAP and CCAP students would be subject to the same regulations with regard to unit limits, and enrollment fees, reducing confusion and the need to differentiate among them in the enrollment process.

² Colleges can use GPA to inform placement for math or English classes. However, the use of GPA must be consistent with how it is used for adult college students. See Clarification on page 3 of [Dual Enrollment: Moving to an Electronic Form](#).

Los Rios Community College District took a holistic approach to reimagine their admission process for dual enrollment students. They started by asking: “What would it look like if we started from scratch by doing only what Education Code specifies?” At the end of their redesign journey, they had removed numerous barriers (e.g., age- and grade-level guidelines, GPA considerations), and expanded the pool of students who could participate in dual enrollment across the district’s four colleges.

Working Together to Build a More Equitable Process

Expanding equitable access to dual enrollment is a team effort that involves departments across the college campus and external partners including high schools, K-12 districts, and community organizations. Here are some ways that A&R leaders suggest dual enrollment teams can work more effectively with them:

Build a deeper understanding of the enrollment process and compliance requirements.

Compared with adult student enrollment, supporting high school students to enroll involves a substantial amount of work for the A&R department, with more rules and required documentation. Gaining a deeper understanding of those requirements and processes will help the dual enrollment team work collaboratively with A&R to problem solve, develop improvements, and grow equitable access to dual enrollment.

Develop clear and open communication with internal and external partners. Clear communication about expectations, needs, and timelines will help partners understand how they can work together toward the goal of equitable support for dual enrollment students. Some tips from A&R leaders: Build a timeline with key deadlines to share with high school partners. Be aware of deadlines and give A&R advance notice if issues come up.

Work collaboratively to identify errors and develop solutions. There may be common issues that can be addressed proactively by the dual enrollment team. For example, one college noticed that many applications included errors with an incorrect term or residency. The dual enrollment team then worked with A&R to develop a process where they identified those errors and worked with the students to correct them beforehand. This solution saved time for A&R, and it helped the dual enrollment team understand more about the overall process.

Use data to inform decision-making. Examining relevant data can help check assumptions when redesigning policies and processes. One example: In determining the minimum age for dual enrollment³, one college was concerned that 14-year-olds might not be capable of taking college courses. But, after the institutional research director provided data showing that dually enrolled 14-year-olds succeeded at high rates in college courses, the team decided not to impose that barrier.

Listen to students, their families, and the high school partners that advocate for them. When developing changes or new processes, it’s essential to understand how they’ll be experienced by students, families, and high school partners. In one example, a college A&R department implemented an electronic enrollment form, but soon realized that many parents weren’t able to access it easily or lacked the right software version, so they quickly pivoted and made changes.

³ Colleges may restrict enrollment based on age or grade level (Ed Code [Section 76002](#)).