

# Getting Started: Designing Dual Enrollment Pathways for Equitable Completion

This tool assists partnerships in designing equitable pathways that integrate dual enrollment, creating seamless transitions from high school to college. By embedding dual enrollment within structured pathways, partnerships enhance student engagement, provide early exposure to college coursework, and support academic and career readiness. This checklist of key steps and guiding questions will help you get started.

## Assess Your Starting Point

The first step focuses on information gathering and data analysis. You might try creating a storyboard or a visual representation of this starting point to support a dialogue among partners.

- Identify Students Furthest From Opportunity.** Review your student data to identify the student population(s) that are underserved or underrepresented in college access. Student populations furthest from opportunity can be identified by comparing the high school demographics and the community college demographics. Are there populations underrepresented in community college? Are there populations underrepresented in dual enrollment classes? Where there are fewer students enrolled in community college versus high school, there may be an access gap.
- Identify Populations Impacted by High Expulsion, High Absences, and Lower Graduation Rates.** Are there current efforts to re-engage these students through dual enrollment? How are these students currently supported to re-engage in high school, college, and career planning?
- Examine Current Pathways.** What are the current pathways that exist at the high school or community college? Do you want to expand on any of them? Is there something missing? Do you want to build a new pathway? Do the high school pathways align with the community college pathways? Are you ensuring students are not tracked into either career education/CTE or transfer based on their race, ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status?

- **Identify High Wage and High Growth Regional Sectors for Potential Pathways.** What are high wage and high growth career fields in your region that the community college has developed pathways around? Are there further training opportunities in the region or local area that lead to high wage jobs or careers?
- **Assess Current Instructor Capacity.** Who will teach the classes? Can high school teachers teach community college courses? Will the high school allow college instructors to come on the campus during the school day? Are community college faculty interested in teaching at high schools? Are there high school teachers who meet minimum qualifications to teach college courses? Is there an opportunity for high school teachers to share pedagogical strategies with college faculty?
- **Determine Employer Engagement.** Do you have employers that might be interested in offering work-based learning opportunities such as field trips, guest presentations, project ideas, job shadowing, pre-apprenticeship programs, internships, or direct work experience?
- **Review Current Partnership Agreements.** Identify existing agreements or partnerships with K-12, colleges, and community based organizations that support intersegmental alignment and cooperation. Assess your partnerships and all existing agreements. Are there agreements that you can build upon to add or strengthen dual enrollment? Are there agreements that need to be modified?

## Partnership Example

In the fall and winter of 2019-20, Hartnell College hosted a series of three convenings— focused on the agriculture, health, and education sectors—to support the college’s vision for improving students’ employment opportunities. The convenings brought together students, instructors, counselors, and external partners—including employers, K-12 districts, CSU Monterey Bay, the Monterey Bay Workforce Development Board, and guests from other colleges. These gatherings, which included student and employer panels and dynamic group discussions, revealed diverse perspectives on the current state of work-based learning at the college, strengths and challenges of these current offerings, and opportunities to respond more effectively to the needs of students and employers. Participants learned about industry trends and hiring practices, and they heard moving student stories about work-related experiences that had proved meaningful and beneficial to their future employment. The implementation plan, **Better Careers at Hartnell College**, describes Hartnell’s existing assets as a starting point and proposes a system of employment-focused support. The report concludes with a proposed staffing plan, timeline, and work plan to guide creation of this college-to-career model. ([Better Careers at Hartnell College: Creating a System to Connect College to Career](#), Career Ladders Project, 2020)

## Plan a Course of Action with Your Partners

This section can support partnerships to begin planning dual enrollment pathways that best meet the needs of the community.

- **Establish a Design Team.** Develop a workgroup or design team that includes key dual enrollment roles. These could include community college faculty, deans, Vice Presidents, high school instructors, Assistant Superintendent or Director over curriculum, high school counselors, community college counselors, Strong Workforce Program (SWP) pathway coordinator, a current or former dual enrollment student, and others specific to your partnership. As you are putting together your team, consider the following questions:
  - Who needs to be at the table to make decisions about which pathways to work on and to begin mapping out courses?
  - Who needs to be at the table to ensure the partnership is designing for equitable outcomes?
  - How will the team ensure they are keeping students at the center of the decision making? In other words, how are they prioritizing students' needs and student success in making design decisions?
  
- **Map Pathways.** Begin by reviewing the data and information you found in the previous step, *Assess Your Starting Point*. Use the questions below to begin conversations with your partners about aligning the high school and community college pathways.
  - Can the general education course sequences for the high school partners provide a guide for what year and semester to offer dual enrollment courses, especially when students earn both high school and college general education credit?
  - What pathway is the most viable option based on regional workforce needs, college pathways available, student interest, and instructor availability?
  - What core competencies are needed in the pathway courses and what courses support students to gain those skills?
  - What course sequence does the community college discipline faculty recommend for students to complete the degree or certificate?
  - Are courses offered on a schedule that will allow a student to complete the degree or certificate in a reasonable timeframe?

### Quick Tip

Consider prerequisites in designing the course sequencing.

- Are there work-based learning opportunities embedded in the program? Are there age requirements for those experiences? How can those experiences support student retention and completion of the pathway?
  - Consider support and interventions for students in dual enrollment. How will you ensure that they are successful and supported? Do you have an early alert mechanism that can support students? Do you have tutoring support that dual enrollment students will be able to take advantage of?
- **Assess Facilities, Equipment, and Materials Needs.** Does the pathway program you have decided to develop have specific facilities and equipment needs? Are there specific materials that students will need as part of the program? How can the partnership ensure those needs are met?
- **Plan Class Schedule.** Determining when the classes will be offered to students can be one of the more challenging and technical aspects of planning dual enrollment pathways. Start by level setting with your design team to make sure everyone has a shared understanding of how scheduling works for high schools and community colleges. Discuss the benefits and challenges of offering dual enrollment within the school day. What dual enrollment schedule will best meet the needs of students furthest from the opportunity to attend college?
- **Make a Plan to Identify, Onboard, and Support Instructors.** Successful dual enrollment pathways have instructors who want to teach dual enrollment classes and are supported by both the high school and community college. Discuss which high school teachers or community college faculty may be ready and available to teach dual enrollment classes. Do you have instructors who share the demographics of the students served? Where do you have gaps for instructors in your pathway courses? Make a plan to recruit and train faculty to fill those gaps.

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