

Recommendations and Policy Options: The Costs of Virginia's Dual Enrollment Program

JLARC staff typically make recommendations to address findings during reviews. Staff also sometimes propose policy options rather than recommendations. The three most common reasons staff propose policy options rather than recommendations are: (1) the action proposed is a policy judgment best made by the General Assembly or other elected officials, (2) the evidence indicates that addressing a report finding is not necessarily required, but doing so could be beneficial, or (3) there are multiple ways in which a report finding could be addressed and there is insufficient evidence of a single best way to address the finding.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Virginia Department of Education should work in consultation with the Virginia Community College System to draft and issue a superintendent's memo (i) outlining the types of alternative credentials and/or expertise that may be considered acceptable by the community colleges' accrediting body for qualifying high school teachers to teach dual enrollment courses; and (ii) clarifying that, on a case-by-case basis, divisions with teachers who may have sufficient alternative qualifications should work with their community college to determine whether these teachers can teach dual enrollment and document their credentials accordingly. (Chapter 2)

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Virginia Community College System, through its existing Memorandum of Understanding process for dual enrollment programs, should require community colleges to annually review school divisions' dual enrollment course offerings and provide recommendations to divisions on how they can increase the number or types of Passport and Uniform Certificate of General Studies courses they offer. (Chapter 2)

RECOMMENDATION 3

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the Appropriation Act that requires school divisions to provide dual enrollment courses to economically disadvantaged students at no cost by requiring community colleges and school divisions to waive dual enrollment tuition and fee charges for economically disadvantaged students for courses taught on Virginia public high school campuses. (Chapter 3)

RECOMMENDATION 4

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language and funding in the Appropriation Act to pay for expenses associated with taking dual enrollment courses, excluding tuition and fees, that are incurred by economically disadvantaged students, including the cost of textbooks and other supplies, and directing the Virginia Department of Education to distribute such funds based on the proportion of economically disadvantaged students participating in dual enrollment in each school division. (Chapter 3)

RECOMMENDATION 5

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the Appropriation Act prohibiting community colleges and school divisions from charging tuition or fees for non-career and technical education dual enrollment courses taught on Virginia public high school campuses as long as their dual enrollment expenses are covered by general fund appropriations. (Chapter 4)

RECOMMENDATION 6

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the Appropriation Act under Item 212, Educational and General Programs for the Virginia Community College System, which specifies the amount appropriated for non-career and technical education dual enrollment courses taught on Virginia public high school campuses that is based on community colleges' costs to operate these dual enrollment programs. (Chapter 4)

RECOMMENDATION 7

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the Appropriation Act directing the State Board for Community Colleges to develop and implement a process for distributing state general funds to community colleges for their dual enrollment programs based on the dual enrollment program expenses reported by the colleges. (Chapter 4)

RECOMMENDATION 8

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the Appropriation Act directing community colleges to document and track the amounts and sources of revenues and expenses related to their dual enrollment programs, and report this data by September 1 every two years, starting in 2024 to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia and the Virginia Community College System. (Chapter 4)

RECOMMENDATION 9

The General Assembly may wish to consider amending § 23.1-203 of the Code of Virginia to assign to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia responsibility for overseeing the state's dual enrollment program, including, but not limited to, (i) overseeing financial reporting by community colleges on their dual enrollment programs; (ii) tracking the extent to which state general fund appropriations continue to sufficiently cover community colleges' dual enrollment expenses; (iii) providing assistance to colleges and school divisions to maximize Passport and Uniform Certificate of General Studies courses offered; (iv) coordinating initiatives to increase the number of dual enrollment teachers across the state; and (v) evaluating the extent to which dual enrollment credits are accepted by Virginia's higher education institutions and recommending improvements and strategies for maximizing dual enrollment course transferability. (Chapter 4)

Policy Options to Consider

POLICY OPTION 1

The General Assembly could appropriate funding to the Virginia Department of Education to provide annual bonuses to high school teachers statewide who teach dual enrollment courses. (Chapter 2)

POLICY OPTION 2

The General Assembly could appropriate funding to the Virginia Community College System to pay college faculty to teach dual enrollment courses at selected high schools that lack a sufficient number of credentialed teachers in their geographic area. (Chapter 2)

POLICY OPTION 3

The General Assembly could include language and funding in the Appropriation Act to provide an additional \$6.2 million to the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) as an adjustment to VCCS's base budget, and direct VCCS to allocate these funds to each community college to replace the revenue colleges would have received in dual enrollment tuition and fees. (Chapter 4)

POLICY OPTION 4

The General Assembly could include language and funding in the Appropriation Act to establish and provide funds for a grant program that would provide funds to school divisions that demonstrate a need for financial assistance to maintain a high quality, well-staffed dual enrollment program. (Chapter 4)

POLICY OPTION 5

The General Assembly could continue to use its current methodology for determining the amount to appropriate to the Virginia Community College System for colleges' Educational and General Programs if it designates a specific amount for dual enrollment under Item 212 of the Appropriation Act. (Chapter 4)
