



September 1, 2020

The Honorable Chris Turner  
Chair – House Committee on Higher Education  
Texas Capitol E2.106

Chairman Turner,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Committee's request for information regarding Interim Charge #1. Our responses are below. Please contact Kevin Crusier with any questions or concerns.

**Interim Charge 1:**

Study the prevalence of online courses and degrees in higher education. Examine how institutions providing online courses and programs are accredited, particularly courses and programs originating from states other than Texas. Evaluate how students whose courses and degrees are primarily online perform in terms of persistence and degree completion versus students who take courses in traditional classroom settings. Study labor market outcomes for students with primarily online courses and degrees versus more traditional programs.

**HB 1638 (85R)**, which relates to statewide goals for dual credit programs. Review best practices for providing opportunities to high school students to earn college credit while ensuring that courses taken reflect authentic, college-level rigor.

1. What challenges have institutions faced with dual credit prior to and as a result of the pandemic?

2. How have institutions addressed these challenges?

3. What changes, if any, are needed to ensure that students have opportunities to earn college credit which fulfills the criteria outlined above?

- **Challenges of dual credit:** Quality of instruction and delivery: Properly administered dual credit programs require the active engagement of college/university faculty with ISD curriculum leaders and teachers to ensure that all high school and college student learning outcomes are addressed. This heightened level of professional collaboration among IHE and external entities (school districts) is essential but often goes unrecognized or compensated. Effective management and delivery of dual credit programs requires the training and commitment of professional staff and considerable internal coordination of service functions (advisors, admissions, registrar, bursar, etc.) Efforts to maintain low cost options for students seeking dual credit opportunities lead to competitive pricing, but unless supported by already scarce institutional resources, competitive pricing may

result in diminished service. Institutions committed to the delivery of high quality dual enrollment programming that results in positive outcomes for students should be recognized and supported.

- **Accumulation of excess hours:** Recent TEA changes that reward ISD's for the (CCMR) readiness of their students have resulted in an increase of the number of dual credit courses requested by partner ISD's. Such Incentive-producing regulations should be modified to continue to reward high schools for achieving college readiness of their students; while limiting enrollment in superfluous dual credit courses. Texas Woman's University works with district superintendents and counselors to clarify core requirements and to counsel students and their parents when they seek to enroll in a course the student may not need to satisfy core requirements.
- **Impact of the pandemic on dual credit programs:** The most significant impact of the pandemic has been the need to coordinate with ISD partners utilizing multiple scheduling and instructional options. As school districts struggled to identify when and how they would teach high school students, the University worked with them to identify multiple options. The TWU dual credit program utilizes an imbedded teacher model, employing appropriately credentialed high school teachers as adjunct faculty. During spring and summer 2020, TWU provided professional development to all dual credit adjunct faculty to ensure quality delivery of on-line instruction.

**SB 25**, which relates to measures to facilitate the transfer, academic progress, and timely graduation of students in public higher education. Monitor the process by which the Higher Education Coordinating Board adopts rules via negotiated rulemaking. Monitor the progress of institutions developing recommended course sequences and the progress of the feasibility study to implement statewide meta majors.

1. In what ways can data collection and sharing between THECB and TEA improve and assist institutions with college credit transferability?

2. What role can school counselors and advisors play in the success of transferable credits? Are there ways in which the state can utilize their expertise and student relationships more effectively?

- **Data sharing:** Effective and efficient data sharing begins with the student's transcript. A student's accomplishments are of value only if the receiving institution can locate, interpret and apply the official record of those achievements. High school transcripts vary widely in format and inclusiveness. Some will include test scores (PSAT, SAT, TSIA, etc.) while many do not. Similar inconsistencies are found among community college transcripts. Most will "tag" courses used to complete core requirements; others do not. Some will post that the student has been designated by the institution to be core complete; most do not. Such inconsistencies lead to delays in application of credit and frustration and confusion on the part of the student.



- **School counselors:** The success of the P-16 continuum rests on the shoulders of those in positions to guide students' decisions at critical junctures of the student's educational journey. High school and community college counselors and advisors are central to the success of students in transition; and central to advisors' success is the training they receive. Perhaps obvious, but worth stating, is that the training of personnel working at the intersection of two systems (K-12 and higher education; or Community college and 4-year institutions) must be a joint effort. TEA and THECB worked collaboratively several years ago to support counselor and advisor trainings, bringing together representatives of the Educational Service Centers, school districts, community colleges and 4-year institutions to share ideas, expertise and resources. These efforts were fruitful but that collaboration unfortunately ended some time ago. Renewed collaboration between THECB and TEA may generate similar successes in the future.