



March 11, 2024

To Whom It May Concern:

As representatives of the Heartland Faculty Association (HFA) and the Heartland Adjunct Faculty Association (HAFAs), collectively representing 240 dedicated faculty members at Heartland Community College in Normal, Illinois, we write with grave concern regarding proposed amendments to the Dual Credit Quality Act (HB5020), introduced by Rep. Diane Blair-Sherlock on 2/8/2024.

We firmly believe that students should be able to access high quality courses taught by qualified educators. While we acknowledge the goal of expanding access to dual credit programs, we harbor reservations about the proposed amendments. While these proposed changes seek to address access and teacher shortages, they undermine the ability of the college to ensure course and instructor quality, rigor, and student success. Evidence indicates that the large majority of dual credit students are already high achieving and college-bound; thus, arguments suggesting that dual credit accessibility leads to higher college matriculation is flawed. Thus, the proposed solutions will not likely have an impact on the identified problems and may further exacerbate the issue.

The proposed amendments contain several provisions that raise significant red flags for us:

1. **Faculty Qualification Concerns.** Ensuring uniformity between the college's own hiring criteria and the dual credit teaching criteria is crucial to guarantee that students are sufficiently equipped to successfully navigate the demands of college-level coursework, which is one of the touted benefits of the Act. Limiting instructor standards to those outlined in the Dual Credit Instructor Endorsement Framework by considering "two thousand hours [of] previous years of teaching experience" [approximately 1-1.5 years of full-time high school teaching] as the equivalent of a master's degree for college teaching purposes undermines community colleges' autonomy to maintain college-level teaching standards. This proposal creates a discrepancy whereby high school dual credit teachers have lower qualifications than faculty at the community colleges themselves and could create issues with course transferability to four-year institutions. We do not believe that the best approach for handling the teacher shortage is to eliminate qualification standards.
2. **Increased School District Authority.** Granting school districts extensive authority over class enrollment, grading procedures, and instructor workload threatens the consistency and rigor of dual credit courses, undermining established standards necessary for college-level coursework, especially those related to college-established assessments and outcomes.
3. **"School Shopping."** Allowing school districts to seek alternative providers without community college approval risks compromising educational quality and fostering a



“race to the bottom” in standards, detrimental to students and the integrity of higher education.

4. **Faculty Employment and Union Impact.** Lowering dual credit teacher qualifications will exacerbate the employment decline among college faculty. Our own local report, “2024 Report on Dual Credit at Heartland Community College,” highlights concerning trends in faculty employment, particularly in subjects like English, Math, and History. Over the past 5 years, the number of dual credit teachers in our district increased by 35%, while the number of full-time faculty decreased by 8% and part-time by 7.5%. Most notably, this decrease was largely driven by a 14% reduction in full-time English faculty and an astounding 47% reduction in part-time English faculty.

In advocating for an alternative approach, we strongly recommend the following:

1. **Increase Funding for Underserved Schools.** Adequate funding for underserved schools is essential to attract and retain qualified teachers, helping to ensure the quality of dual credit instruction. Additionally, earmarking funds specifically for dual credit programs can help alleviate financial burdens on participating institutions and facilitate the expansion of course offerings.
2. **Support Teacher Development.** While providing professional development support and resources is crucial, it’s equally important to incentivize teachers to pursue additional qualifications. Offering financial incentives, scholarships, course release, and/or grants for teachers in underserved schools to obtain advanced degrees or certifications can significantly enhance their ability to meet college-level standards and elevate the overall quality of instruction.
3. **Provide Program Delivery Flexibility.** Existing dual credit legislation may inadvertently contribute to enrollment declines at local community colleges by favoring high school-based instruction over on-campus enrollment. Policy makers should consider revising the Act to provide greater flexibility in program delivery models, allowing colleges to offer more courses on campus and attract students to the college environment. Additionally, providing options for different teaching modalities, such as remote teaching, hybrid, or online formats, can benefit urban districts and expand access to dual credit courses. Establishing a statewide committee or task force to explore these options and develop best practices for implementation would be instrumental in meeting the diverse needs of students and educators across the state. These revisions would not only benefit colleges but also provide students with a more diverse and immersive college experience, thus allowing students to see themselves as college students and further increase college matriculation rates.
4. **Increase College Autonomy.** Revisions to the law should grant colleges more autonomy in assigning its own instructors to dual credit courses. Currently, the law permits this only if the high school lacks a qualified teacher and *requests one* from the college. However,



colleges should have the discretion to deploy their faculty resources optimally, sending available instructors to high schools. This flexibility would not only balance faculty workload but also enhance program efficiency and consistency, and directly address the teacher shortage. Having college faculty teach these courses ensures better alignment with college standards and curriculum, and provides students with a more authentic college experience, enhancing their readiness for higher education. To offset costs associated with college community instruction expenses, additional state funding should be allocated.

It is in students' best interest that we pursue a collaborative approach to address the challenges faced by dual credit programs. We urge you to reconsider the proposed amendments and engage in meaningful dialogue with stakeholders to explore alternative solutions that prioritize educational quality, student success, and equitable access to dual credit programs.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. We are available to discuss our concerns in more detail at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sharon Migotsky".

Sharon Migotsky President,  
Heartland Faculty Association

Local 6038 IFT-AFT, AFL-CIO

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ashli Anda".

Ashli Anda, President,  
Heartland Adjunct Faculty Association

Local 6077 IFT-AFT, AFL-CIO