

ICCFA thoughts on HB5020
(March 2024)

HB5020 may be well-intentioned, but it has some serious consequences to it that need to be addressed.

Faculty have often expressed concerns about the push for dual credit; the push forward often seems to be supported for the wrong reasons. Oversight of dual credit continues to be a real issue. Below you will find concerns about material consequences of the bill. After that, you will see concerns with the seven stated purposes of the bill.

We agree that dual credit should be one tool in the toolbox of Illinois education, to be applied where useful and well supported.

Dual credit should be a response to a real need for students who may have “outgrown” high school intellectually and who are capable—through maturity, curiosity, recommendations by at least 2 faculty—to be ready to take college classes and to measure up to the expectation and rigor of those classes.

These classes should be fully taken as college classes with a mix of college and high school students with high school students who are deemed college ready, at least intellectually and in terms of the maturity to handle the demands of the course and the over-18 course content that some courses need to address.

We also believe that dual credit can, well used, be a good tool for educators and students alike. However, it was never intended—should never have been intended—to fast-track students to get them through college faster, or to earn college credit while maintaining high school curriculum and expectations.

The misuse and lack of oversight in dual credit does a disservice to all of the students and faculty and undermines the credibility of any of the schools or accrediting institutions involved who might wish to lower standards rather than maintain them. We are making it more difficult for students to be college ready.

The bill also posits a set of values concerning the purpose of education, undermining the training and purview of community college faculty.

In saying that we need to improve education and the transition between high school and college, HB5020 presents that transition as a single thing and discounts issues further addressed below. In this iteration, HB5020 serves only as a symbolic policy as written without regard to the material consequences of symbolic gestures. After all, who doesn't want improved education at all levels? Nonetheless, there are consequences to symbolic gestures, and it does not seem that this bill addresses any of the materials costs and need for resources that it would take to meet what the bills would demand of institutions and faculty.

The bill puts additional pressures on the governing boards, community colleges, and high schools. It undermines, rather than helps, initiatives already started to address concerns surrounding dual credit, and it does not seem to address the inherent inequities within the current structure of dual credit.

If the bill is to be meant as something more than a gesture, it needs to address the following at a minimum:

- What resources are being diverted, undermined, supported, created to address the issues that will arrive in the wake of this bill should it be passed? Has there, for example, been money set aside to train high school teachers to better meet college standards. Has there been time/money set aside to foster mentoring programs or to have observations done by both college and high school faculty attending each other courses (for example).

The follow are questions from different people that ICCFA board surveyed: If the bill wants more collaboration between college and high school faculty

Are faculty from college and high school adding this to their duties for free or does their job now get restructured and reviewed to have the time to put towards building these collaborations during their workday?

Do all contracts with unions need to be renegotiated? If high school faculty are teaching college courses for a college, are they part of that faculty and their bargaining unit or do we now have to consider two-tiered unions?

What evidence/data is there that dual credit helps in the transition to college. I believe it must be there, but I only ever hear the problems with dual credit. I don't hear stories or have any evidence that dual credit smooths transitions to college or college level learning.

Beyond this point in our response, only the purposes of the bill are addresses, otherwise this communication, already too long, would be far longer. Heartland Community College has shared their documents and their responses to the bill as well; they are more succinct and direct in their work. They address specific parts of the bill beyond the purpose:

In response to the bill that was sent on 3.28 by Diane Blair-Sherlock to ICCFA and Heartland Community College. Here is the purpose of the bill. ICCFA comments follow each of the stated purposes which are also more fully addressed in the bill, but also by HCC's documents.

Sec. 10. Purpose. The purpose of this Act is to accomplish all of the following:

- (1) To reduce college costs.

To reduce college costs in general or for the students?

OER has been developing for years now. Online delivery modes take up less physical space; with fewer people on campus, other costs are already removed as well as buildings are less trafficked, resources less used, less printing takes place since work can be posted in learning management systems.

On a larger scale, and if we want to reduce college costs, shouldn't the state legislature be considering the reality free community colleges in Illinois? Some Illinois community colleges have begun doing this already so there is precedent and there are studies on how effective these schools have been in keeping student costs down.

- (2) To speed time to degree completion.

College is not a race: The speed of an education should never replace mastery of topics and the learning of study and analytical skills. At all levels of schooling and all ages socialization to new institutions is key. These skills are built in layers with increasing complicated ideas and situations confronting students as they move further into their studies. The advantage to rushing students might benefit employers but does not necessarily benefit the students in terms of maturity, workforce readiness, or college readiness.

If we are going to keep students in high school and call them college students while not attending college, this will hamper their smooth transition and their necessary socialization at a higher ed institution.

- (3) To improve the curriculum for high school students and the alignment of the curriculum with college and workplace expectations.

Isn't improving the curriculum at a high school the decision of the Superintendent, the high school faculty, and high school needs?

What particularly has been found to be wanting? Does the evidence go beyond anecdotal?

In the bill, an area addressed by HCC is that of school shopping when a high school doesn't get what it wants. In this bill, high schools can ask for a particular course to be taught but we believe that curriculum at the college should be fully the purview of the community college faculty. The bill, as worded, gives the impression that college faculty no longer have a say in what curriculum they create for their departments. While willing to concede that may not be the intention of the bill, it could well be a consequence of it.

- (4) To facilitate the transition between high school and college.

If students get to demand the courses they want, go somewhere else if they can't get what they want from their local community colleges, are they driving a curriculum more than those fully trained in fields of study.

If students are not actually in college classrooms or not being taught by someone who has college level expectations, how does this prepare them for college or facilitate a transition?

How did students transition before dual credit?

Another part of the bill says that students should get the equivalent weight to dual credit courses as to AP and Honors classes. AP courses have a rigorous assessment mechanism and a fully detailed curriculum that is vetted by outside reviewers. Without demanding and ensuring the rigor of dual credit programs through faculty qualifications and a college curriculum process, college readiness and a smooth transitions are undermined and the courses cease to be at the same level as AP courses.

- (5) To enhance communication and collaboration between high schools and colleges that leads to the establishment of thriving local partnerships which seek to expand student opportunity.

There are several initiatives that do this already and they vary by district.

If high schools are allowed to shop wherever they want to get the course they want, collaboration is not fostered.

Purposes 6 and 7 are taken together here:

- (6) To offer opportunities for improving degree attainment for underserved student populations.
(7) To increase equitable access to high quality programs, provide meaningful educational opportunities that support student success, and ensure dual credit is utilized as a strategic tool for closing opportunity gaps

It seems that in approaching dual credit through this bill, we are building on an already existing pattern of inequity?

A study from IWERC (Illinois Workforce & Education Research Collaborative)

<https://omsdpiprod.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/2023.11-Dual-Credit-in-Illinois.pdf>

studied patterns of dual credit from 2018 to 2022 and found that

1. From SY18 to SY22, participation increased overall and among all underrepresented racial/ethnic subgroups as well as students with IEPs, English learners (ELs), and low-income students. Participation was highest and increased the most among White and Asian students, resulting in widened statewide

participation gaps.

2. When comparing between districts, participation was higher and increased more at districts serving more White students and fewer students with IEPs, ELs, and low-income students. Districts with the highest participation rates tended to be located in towns and rural locales.

3. When comparing within districts, participation was highest among Asian and White students, and it increased most rapidly among Asian, American Indian/Alaska Native, Latino, and EL students. Participation increased more slowly among other racial/ethnic subgroups and among students with IEPs and low-income students.

IL HB5020 appears to be taking a one-dimensional approach to learning. In taking a limited approach the bill disrupts high stakes learning for want of a speedier education; in 2024 we might all agree that the purpose of education is not to establish the degree to which one can be exploited by the economy and employers. Rather, it is to ensure that students are ready to meet a demanding and constantly changing work force. From the start, the bill notes its purpose is to create opportunities for underserved populations but IWERC's study also noted that "While Illinois has progressed at expanding DC participation, these improvements have not been experienced evenly. This study shows that the nature of work needed to address these disparities must be multidimensional.