

April 2, 2024

To Members of the Illinois House Higher Education Committee:

As representative of John A. Logan College Full-Time Faculty Union, I write with serious concern regarding the proposed amendments to the Dual Credit Quality Act via HB5020, introduced by Representative Diane Blair-Sherlock on February 8, 2024, and Amendment 001 filed on April 2, 2024.

We understand the Dual Credit Quality Act has been a staple for Illinois since 2010 to make higher education more affordable and accessible. The intent is certainly positive. Yet over time, the law has been amended to lower the qualifications for high school teachers to begin instructing dual credit courses in their own schools, and it is less likely now to reach students in need – the original target.

Currently (and through January 1, 2025), these high school teachers need at least a master's degree in any discipline, plus just nine (9) graduate hours in the discipline to be taught – AND an action plan in place to earn up to at least eighteen (18) graduate hours in that discipline to *start* teaching transfer education courses. For CTE dual credit courses, the high school teachers must be fully licensed CTE instructors, *only halfway* through meeting the College's requirements for faculty in the discipline to be taught, AND an action plan to complete said requirements. *Please keep in mind, our College would not hire a full-time faculty member or an adjunct member under these conditions.*

The Dual Credit Quality Act also creates Partnership Agreements with our area high schools to implement dual credit. The College has control over course rigor, common syllabi, and where appropriate, common exam usage. If the high school does not comply, they will not be allowed to have their qualified teachers deliver dual credit programming. *This local control is paramount to ensuring rigor in our courses.*

HB5020 is proposing the following changes to the Dual Credit Act that we find detrimental:

- **The creation of a committee to establish the Dual Credit Instructor Framework for Priority Career Pathway Courses which may consider previous years of teaching experience as the equivalent of master's level course for college teaching purposes.**

Within HB5020, there is no clear understanding or definition of what "Priority Career Pathway Courses" means. It could mean just CTE courses, it could mean any course needed for CTE degrees, or it could mean all courses - including those for Transfer degrees. You may feel that no serious person would infer that this could reach transfer education, but on April 23, 2023, one of our faculty members was invited to present our concerns about The Dual Credit Quality Act to the Illinois General Assembly Higher Education Working Group. One state

senator said that he saw no reason high school teachers with only a bachelor's degree shouldn't be able to teach dual credit classes. So, here we are less than one year later with HB5020.

This portion of HB5020 weakens community colleges' autonomy to maintain college-level teaching standards. We object to the creation of a committee where high school district representatives will have power to decide what dual credit courses are offered and/or the qualifications to teach such courses.

HB5020 creates a discrepancy whereby high school dual credit teachers have MUCH lower qualifications than faculty at the community colleges themselves and could create issues with course transferability to four-year institutions. It further undermines the expertise gained by taking higher education courses, beyond a bachelor's degree – especially for transfer education courses in disciplines such as Education, Social Work, Political Science, Sociology, English, and Biological Sciences. Where is the quality of a dual credit course that is not taught by a highly educated expert in the field/discipline?

Our full-time and adjunct faculty have already suffered greatly due to Dual Credit rules. The Dual Credit Quality Act pits high school instructors and college faculty against each other. Legislators have taken our work and moved it the high school teachers.

- For Spring semester of 2024, we have 64 dual credit sections. Only 22 of these are taught by full-time or adjunct faculty from JALC. This means 66% of our Spring semester dual credit offerings are taught by high school teachers.*
- This semester (SP '24), 47% of our Education classes are taught by high school teachers. Our full-time faculty member is retiring in August 2025 due to the shrinking number of non-dual credit sections.*
- For English 102, 52% of our classes are taught by high school teachers. In another metric, 60% of JALC English 102 students are taught by high school teachers. We are certain we have similar numbers in Fall for English 101.*
- For Math 108, 40% of our classes are taught by high school teachers.*
- Just last week, two schools asked to add Social Work dual credit offerings in their high schools, taught by high school teachers.*
- Reporting from the JALC 2023 Dual Credit Data Report created by our Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research, numbers on matriculation show a steady decline in the percentage of dual credit students who come to JALC after high school. In 2018, 41% of the students matriculated to JALC. In 2022, the number was down to 31%. As of Fall 2023, the number was down to 27%.*

The changes within HB5020 will only exacerbate the level of Dual Credit classes taught by high school teachers. Lowering dual credit teacher qualifications even further will decimate employment among college faculty and threaten the relevance of the community college system in Illinois. If every high school teacher is so easily qualified to teach college level courses, there is no need for a community college at all.

- Another change within HB5020 increases high school district authority by granting these school districts extensive decision-making over class enrollment, grading procedures, and instructor workload.

This change would damage established standards necessary for college level courses. Our campus has a strong assessment strategy in place for ensuring student learning and success. HB5020 could also threaten consistency in content delivery and rigor of dual credit course.

- Yet another part of HB5020 introduces the concept of “School Shopping.” If a high school district is not happy with expectations set by its district community college, it can seek to have programs established through other colleges or universities.

Again, HB5020 will diminish accountability for high school districts and pressure JALC to lower expectations to prevent them from finding another Dual Credit provider – even out of state, we fear.

In conclusion, we are under no illusion that the concept of Dual Credit is going away. However, we cannot stay silent about the changes proposed by HB5020 and the forthcoming Amendment 001. We oppose any legislation that allows high school teachers who are less qualified than their higher education counterparts to teach Dual Credit courses. We also oppose centralization of decision making regarding these qualifications and course offerings, as well as giving high school districts a “race to the bottom” opportunity via “School Shopping” and other provisions. The word “quality” is right in the name of the original legislation of the Dual Credit Quality Act. We urge you to keep that top of mind moving forward.

I am available for further discussion regarding our concerns.



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