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## **New Research Shows College Graduation Rates for Dual Enrollment Students Vary Widely by State—and by Income**

*Massive Growth in High School Students Enrolled in College Classes Creates Opportunity for Cost Savings and Gains in College Achievement*

**New York, September 27, 2017** — The number of high school students taking community college classes has increased dramatically over the last 15 years as students and their families have seized on the potential of “dual enrollment” to give students a jump-start on college and save money by finishing college faster. Numerous studies to date have shown that dual enrollment students are more likely to graduate high school, go on to college, and complete college degrees than other students.

A [new study](#) from the [Community College Research Center](#) (CCRC) at Teachers College, Columbia University and the [National Student Clearinghouse Research Center](#) is the first to look state by state at how many high school students are taking community college classes and how they do when they move on to college.

“Dual enrollment has exploded in recent years. Over a million students are taking college courses through community colleges nationally. Studies suggest that taking college courses in high school can increase the chances that both advantaged and disadvantaged students go to college and earn a degree,” said Davis Jenkins, a senior research scholar at CCRC and an author of the report. “But many colleges and states don’t have a good handle on how many dual enrollment students go on to college and how many complete. This report provides the first breakdown of community college dual enrollment student outcomes by state.”

Read the report at [ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/what-happens-community-college-dual-enrollment-students.html](http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/what-happens-community-college-dual-enrollment-students.html) and explore an infographic with state-by-state results.

The study found that 88 percent of community college dual enrollment students continued in college after high school, and most earned a degree or transferred within six years. What type of college former dual enrollment students attended and how many completed a college credential varied greatly by state. And many states showed big disparities in degree completion rates between lower and higher income students.

The study—[\*What Happens to Students Who Take Community College “Dual Enrollment” Courses in High School?\*](#) by John Fink, Davis Jenkins, and Takeshi Yanagiura—looked at more than 200,000 high school students who took a community college class in fall 2010 and tracked them for six years, through summer 2016. (About a quarter of high school dual enrollment students nationally take classes at a four-year college. They were not included in this study.) Among the major findings:

- Nationally, 15 percent of new community college students in fall 2010 were high school dual enrollment students, ranging from 1 percent in Georgia to 34 percent in Kentucky. (The number has likely grown since then.)
- Nearly two thirds of community college dual enrollment students nationally were from low- or middle-income families—about the same proportion as students who start in a community college after high school.
- Among former dual enrollment students who started at a community college after high school, 46 percent earned a college credential within five years. The percentage ranged from 28 percent in West Virginia to 64 percent in Florida.
- In 13 states, there were gaps of 10 percentage points or more in completion rates between lower and higher income former dual enrollment students who first enrolled in a community college after high school.
- Sixty-four percent of former community college dual enrollment students who first enrolled in a four-year college after high school completed a degree within five years. The completion rates ranged from 34 percent in Nevada to 75 percent in Florida.
- Most states had achievement gaps between lower and higher income former dual enrollment students who entered a four-year college after high school.

Taking college courses in high school has the potential to help students make progress toward a college degree more efficiently. *What Happens to Students Who Take Community College “Dual Enrollment” Courses in High School?* shows that among former community college dual enrollment students who went on to a community college, 46 percent completed a college

credential (certificate, associate degree, or bachelor's degree) within five years of high school. Other research using similar data has found that only 39 percent of students who started community college after high school earned any college degree within *six* years. Among students who started at a four-year college, 64 percent of former community college dual enrollment students completed a college credential within five years. Other research has found the same degree completion rate among students entering four-year institutions nationally after high school, but within *six* years.

Despite the potential benefits, the CCRC research raises important questions about why dual enrollment students in some states do substantially better in college than those in others and why there are large achievement gaps between different income groups in some states. College and state leaders should investigate ways to better align dual enrollment offerings with college degree requirements to ensure that college courses taken in high school count toward degrees. Gaps in achievement among dual enrollment students by income must also be investigated and addressed.

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*The [Community College Research Center](#) (CCRC), Teachers College, Columbia University, conducts research on the major issues affecting community colleges in the United States and contributes to the development of practice and policy that expands access to higher education and promotes success for all students.*

*The [National Student Clearinghouse® Research Center™](#) is the research arm of the National Student Clearinghouse. The Research Center works with higher education institutions, states, districts, high schools, and educational organizations to better inform practitioners and policymakers about student educational pathways. Through accurate longitudinal data outcomes reporting, the Research Center enables better educational policy decisions leading to improved student outcomes.*