



**Dual Enrollment as an Interorganizational Field:
Defining and Redefining Organizational Boundaries
Between High School and College**

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Abstract

Dual enrollment (DE), in which students earn college credit during high school, is shifting the higher education landscape, particularly at community colleges, where DE students now represent one fifth of enrollees. To facilitate DE, actors from a partner high school and college must navigate decisions for staffing courses, supporting students, and investing resources. Drawing on organizational theory and data from 81 interviews and site visits at three community colleges and their partner high schools, we examine how school and college actors maintain and span boundaries between their organizations and make decisions about resources—broadly speaking—to support DE students and courses. Improving the practical and theoretical understanding of how DE partnerships operate—including how actors from partnering organizations work together to sustain their DE programming—offers insights for theory regarding how interorganizational fields operate and illuminates practical evidence to support this growing segment of higher education.

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1. Introduction

Dual enrollment (DE) (also referred to as “dual credit”), in which students earn college credits during high school (HS), has expanded rapidly in the past two decades. DE students represent the fastest-growing student population in higher education, particularly at community colleges—broad access, public two-year colleges—where they now represent one fifth of enrollees (Fink, 2024). To facilitate DE, actors from partnering high schools and colleges must navigate decisions for staffing courses, supporting students, and investing resources, yet the organization of DE and “how DE works” across partner institutions remains largely unexamined (Ryu et al., 2024).

Organizational contexts and structures shape how students experience schooling (Barr & Dreeben, 1983). Most students gain access to DE courses through K-12 and college partnerships, whereby students select college courses from available offerings through their HS and a local college (College Board, 2017). This à la carte approach to DE stands in contrast to early college high school (ECHS) programs, which are immersive and provide coherent college course sequences and student support services (Edmunds et al., 2020). Quasi-experimental and meta-analytic evidence confirms positive effects on college-going and completion among all DE participants, not just those in ECHSs (see An & Taylor, 2019; Schaller et al., 2025). DE course offerings and course structures vary greatly across—and within—partnerships (Velasco et al., 2024), and DE partnerships require considerable investment to create and sustain (Knight et al., 2026).

Drawing on field theory and organizational literature on “boundary spanners”—actors who operate across partner organizations (e.g., Bourdieu, 1977; Williams, 2002)—this paper analyzes data from interviews with 81 DE-related personnel at three Texas community colleges (CCs) and their partner HSs. We examine how HS and college actors understand their roles, maintain and span boundaries between their organizations, and make decisions about resources—broadly speaking—to support DE students and courses. Improving the theoretical and practical understanding of how DE partnerships operate—including how actors from partnering organizations work together to sustain their DE programming—offers insights for theory regarding how interorganizational fields operate and illuminates practical evidence to support this growing segment of higher education.

We ask two interrelated research questions (RQs):

1. What roles do high school and community college administrators, support staff, and instructors play in DE programming and support?
2. How do DE actors span, maintain, and redefine organizational boundaries by enacting rules, processes, and practices in the interorganizational field?

Our first RQ focuses on the roles of different types of actors and how they contribute to the interorganizational field of DE. Our second RQ focuses on how actors negotiate organizational boundaries and rules to support and sustain the DE interorganizational field. In what follows, we first describe extant evidence on the roles of K-12 and postsecondary actors in DE partnerships. We then explain our conceptual framework and the methods for our analysis, including site selection and sample recruitment. Finally, we present results and conclude with a discussion of the implications of this study for theory and practice.

2. The Organization of Dual Enrollment and DE Partnerships

DE design and implementation rest in the hands of various administrators, support staff, and instructors at both partner institutions. Actors from K-12 and postsecondary institutions each have specific roles and responsibilities within their own organizations. Institutionalizing the DE interorganizational field requires that DE actors reenvision or expand their roles and remake the boundaries between the HS and college (Colyvas & Powell, 2006). To guide our inquiry into each of these roles, we describe the state of evidence about those roles, including where they overlap and diverge across analogous positions in partner organizations, along with existing research on college partnerships.

2.1 The Roles and Responsibilities of Actors in the DE Interorganizational Field

Administrators. K-12 and college administrators play crucial roles in establishing and sustaining DE partnerships. In most state contexts, school district and college administrators build memoranda of understanding (MOUs) between their partner organizations to outline DE courses, academic supports, and how they will be funded (Pierce, 2017). At the district level, leaders, including superintendents and district coordinators, are often charged with negotiating agreements (MOUs) with partner

colleges, managing finances and data, and aligning course offerings to minimize redundancies while expanding access to underserved students (Cassidy et al., 2020; Fink et al., 2023). They also play a strategic role by recruiting or incentivizing teachers to become credentialed DE instructors, promoting policies that place DE on equal footing with other advanced courses, and fostering districtwide college-going culture (Martinez et al., 2018). HS principals operate at the campus level, where they liaise with various stakeholders, negotiate with college partners, facilitate data sharing and advisory meetings, and determine modalities for DE course delivery (Duncheon & DeMatthews, 2023). Effective administrators envision the strategic use of resources and integrate DE programming into their school's pathways while ensuring compliance with agreements (Duncheon & DeMatthews, 2023; Martinez et al., 2018).

College administrators include upper administrators like presidents and vice presidents, who play similar strategic roles as their school district peers. Mid-level college administrators, such as deans, program directors, and coordinators, often bridge secondary and postsecondary partnerships and oversee day-to-day operations of DE programs like scheduling courses, supporting HS students' transition into DE, and ensuring communication with HS personnel (Cassidy et al., 2020). Mid-level administrators often manage DE instructor recruitment, professional development, and retention; monitor instructional quality; and develop incentives for HS teachers who serve as DE faculty (Fink et al., 2023). Operational success of DE programs often hinges on the work of mid-level college administrators due to their roles in the strategic direction and operations of DE programming.

Advising staff. DE partnerships often rely on advising staff at both the HS and college to ensure that students receive guidance to fulfill academic requirements at both organizations. HS counselors (from here forward, we refer to HS advising staff as "counselors") serve as the HS's primary gatekeepers and support for DE, where they focus on DE access and student readiness (Stich et al., 2024). Counselors' work includes recruitment and outreach to students and families; evaluating students' college readiness, including through standardized testing; managing communication and related paperwork that connects students and families with college partners; and advising on logistics such as course registration and scheduling (Martinez et al., 2018; Moreno, 2024, Witkowsky &

Clayton, 2020). Their broad portfolios often include support for academics, socioemotional development, crisis intervention, and postsecondary planning (Moreno, 2024). At ECHSs with clear DE course sequences, counselors may also offer specialized guidance focused on college degree planning, balancing HS and college requirements, and college policies like financial aid and credit accumulation (Moreno, 2024). HS counselors hold considerable power over how students learn about DE course sequences and their alignment with HS pathways; in Georgia, for example, counselors used professional discretion to “gloss over” policy information that would enable students to substitute college-level courses for HS graduation requirements (Stich et al., 2024, p. 83). Counselors’ multifaceted role positions them as critical facilitators of DE.

College advisors, along with the mid-level coordinators that oversee them, often connect DE efforts at secondary and postsecondary institutions. They often also advise DE students on course registration, attend HS planning meetings to align DE course offerings with college degree requirements, and work with faculty to monitor DE student performance (Fink et al., 2023; Moreno, 2024). They may affirm course selection guidance provided by their HS counselor counterparts; however, they primarily guide students about college expectations and requirements, which may differentiate their recommendations from HS counselors’ (Witkowsky & Clayton, 2020). Therefore, the boundaries between HS and college advising staff represent an area where we most anticipate iterative processes and negotiations to institutionalize rules and practices in the interorganizational field (Colyvas & Powell, 2006; Kislov, 2014). Combined, counselors and advisors play a central role in ensuring DE structures and supports address students’ academic and career goals.

DE instructors. DE instructors are qualified instructors with appropriate credentials to teach college-level coursework, though they may teach at and be primarily employed by either the CC or HS (Knight et al., 2026; Ryu et al., 2024). Regardless of which institution is their primary employer, DE instructors must simultaneously adhere to college and district policies, as well as standards for teaching, curriculum, and grading (Duncheon & Relles, 2020). This dual accountability creates tension when DE instructors face misalignment between HS and college curricula, teaching methods, and grading guidelines, though DE instructors embedded in ECHSs are less likely to experience this

imbalance given the school's dual purpose (Duncheon & Relles, 2020). Beyond compliance and instruction, instructors' responsibilities also include administrative tasks to capture student performance (Fink et al., 2023). Because they must navigate both organizations' rules and procedures, DE instructors sit at the crux of the interorganizational field to serve DE students.

2.2 Understanding High School and College Organizational Partnerships

Because they rely on numerous institutional actors with their own self-interests and competing demands, organizational partnerships between HSs and colleges are complex and difficult to initiate and maintain (Mokher & Jacobson, 2021). Cross-sector communication poses a challenge when DE actors lack common social ties, leading to incongruity between intended DE course goals and actual course structures (Mokher & Jacobson, 2021). For example, when DE instructors receive contradictory information from their K-12 and college partners, it can undermine DE course implementation and rigor (Duncheon & Relles, 2020). In Texas, the context of our inquiry, the state mandates that K-12 students have opportunities to enroll in college-level coursework, but school districts have flexibility over which courses to offer, who to partner with, and how to staff them (Ryu et al., 2024).

DE partnerships require shared resources, often dictated through formal agreements about how to cover tuition and other student costs (Atchison et al., 2021; Knight et al., 2026). In Texas, and most other contexts, MOUs establish each entity's fiscal responsibilities, along with other logistics like which courses will be offered and who will teach them (Pierce, 2017; Texas Education Code §28.009, 2023). Depending on the course structures and modalities, each organization must make investments, including for personnel, technology, transportation, and other academic supports (Knight et al., 2026). Although there is substantial variation across DE partnerships, several CCs in Texas waive tuition for DE students and rely on their own faculty as DE instructors. In those partnerships, the CCs bear the brunt of DE costs (Knight et al., 2026).

Cross-organization partnerships require intentionality; they are often initiated by a "champion" who cultivates institutional buy-in through a strong vision, clear communication of goals, and ongoing maintenance (Amey, 2010). To meet student and HS needs, some colleges designate DE-specific staff to smooth communication with HS

partners (Helfgot, 2001). Specialized staff operate across partner organizations—a role explicitly designed for “boundary spanning” (e.g., Bourdieu, 1977; Weerts & Sandmann, 2010). Personnel who facilitate information sharing and move freely across partner organizations build trust and communication (Kislov et al., 2017; Williams, 2002). Boundary spanners serve to identify gaps, solve problems, and address specific needs of interorganizational clientele (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010), but organizational actors must also balance the rules and priorities of their primary organizations, as we elaborate below.

3. Conceptual Framework

We draw on field theory and organizational literature on boundary spanning to examine how organizational actors work together to implement and maintain DE structures. Field theory presumes that society is composed of relatively distinct social fields with their own rules, norms, and organizational positions held by actors based on interpersonal relations and shared goals (Levi Martin, 2003). Some sociologists leverage the field as a means to examine contestation (e.g., DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Fligstein & McAdam, 2011). However, when organizations serve similar purposes and address the same clientele, actors within distinct organizations may instead interact to make communal decisions (Levi Martin, 2003). A DE partnership constitutes an *interorganizational field* because HS and college partners combine resources—e.g., staff, facilities, and economic capital—to enable high schoolers to earn college credit.

Despite the potential for mutual benefit, actors from the primary organizations still must negotiate the boundaries of the primary organizations to determine interorganizational rules and practices. To offer theoretical grounding for how interorganizational fields operate, we draw from the organizational literature on institutionalization (e.g., Colyvas & Powell, 2006) and boundary spanning (e.g., Bourdieu, 1977; Weerts & Sandmann, 2010). Interorganizational fields represent collaborations across organizational boundaries; boundary spanners are actors who occupy the space between—processing and transmitting information across two organizations (Williams, 2002). DE instructors and program staff “relate practices in one field to practices in another,” sitting at the organizational intersections to translate

perspectives and coordinate transactions that otherwise would remain separate (Kislov, 2014; Kislov et al., 2017, p. 1423).

DE actors must coordinate people, activities, and ideas, creating practices that cross, reify, or redraw their primary organizations' boundaries as they work to legitimize and sustain—or *institutionalize*—the interorganizational field (Colyvas & Powell, 2006; Kislov, 2014). At times, they *maintain* their primary organization's boundaries to protect its interests (Bourdieu, 2005; Kislov et al., 2017); at other times, they *redefine* organizational boundaries by establishing new rules and processes distinct from those of their primary organization. Using qualitative data, we argue that through processes of boundary spanning, boundary maintenance, and boundary redefinition, DE actors establish and sustain the DE interorganizational field.

4. Methods

To understand the DE interorganizational field and how actors operate within it, we conducted qualitative interviews with personnel in high-performing DE partnerships in Texas, studying the roles of pivotal actors and how they interact across and within organizations. In fall 2022, we visited three CCs and five partnering HSs, interviewing 81 personnel. We analyzed interview transcripts using Dedoose qualitative software, qualitative matrices, and analytic memos.

4.1 Site Selection and Sample Recruitment

To understand DE partnerships as interorganizational fields, we needed partnerships with a consistent history of serving DE students. In Texas, which serves 12% of all students in the U.S., 95% of DE is offered through partnerships between CCs and public HSs (Ryu et al., 2024). To identify focal HS-CC partnerships, we used purposive sampling based on descriptive statistics and screening interviews. The selected sites included three colleges and their HS partners¹: (1) Hortensia College and W. Wolff High School (WWHS); (2) Sherman College and two partners—Guadalupe HS (GHS) and Matthews Technical HS (MTHS); (3) Ruiz College and two partners—Prairie HS and Texian HS. Table 1 includes descriptive statistics for the high schools and colleges.

¹ Throughout the paper, we use pseudonyms for all institutions and all individual participants.

In Appendix A, we further describe site selection and institutions and their partnership contexts. Because we selected high-performing, established DE partnerships that serve populations historically underrepresented in DE, the sites are not representative of all DE partnerships. However, they offer a unique opportunity to understand how DE actors interact across otherwise distinct organizations to sustain their DE partnership.

Table 1. Description of Institutions

Name	Interviews (<i>N</i>)		Institutional Characteristics					
	Staff	Student	Enrollment Size	Location Type ^a	% Low-Income	% White	% Hispanic	% Black
<i>Partnership 1:</i>	30	10						
Hortensia College	17	0	11,900	Midsize city	60	15	70	15
W. Wolff HS	13	10	3,500	Large suburb	85	5	65	30
<i>Partnership 2:</i>	29	11						
Sherman College	17	0	7,800	Small city	55	30	50	15
Guadalupe HS	10	6	2,200	Fringe rural	70	15	60	20
Matthews Technical HS	2	5	500	Small city	75	20	70	10
<i>Partnership 3:</i>	22	17						
Ruiz College	12	0	6,300	Distant town	60	60	15	15
Prairie HS	5	10	200	Remote rural	80	40	35	15
Texian HS	5	7	500	Remote town	80	15	55	25
<i>Total</i>	81	38						

Note. We use pseudonyms for college and high school names. We obtained locality, enrollment size, and demographic data from 2022-23 federal and state sources, including NCES, Texas Higher Education Almanac, Texas’s Public Education Information Management System, and the Texas Academic Performance Report. To maintain institutional anonymity, we round enrollment counts to the nearest 100 and demographic percentages to the nearest 5.

^a Location type captures urbanicity: “Town” and “fringe” align with more rural institutions due to low population and distance from metropolitan areas, “suburban” and “midsize city” align with suburban institutions (midsize cities are smaller in population than suburban areas but geographically closer to an urban core), and “large city” aligns with urban areas.

We used purposive sampling to recruit personnel involved in various aspects of DE, including: (1) envisioning and maintaining DE partnerships (upper administrators); (2) making DE programmatic decisions (upper and mid-level administrators); (3) advising students on DE course selection and college pathways (DE program coordinators, HS counselors, college advisors), and (4) designing and teaching DE courses (DE faculty). Before the site visit, we asked the primary contact at each college, who helped to arrange our visit and interview schedule, for referrals to colleagues involved in DE. At each institution, we aimed to interview as many DE-relevant staff as possible, speaking to 12–17 per college and 2–13 per school (e.g., two at MTHS, a small

technical school; 13 at WWHS, a large HS). We conducted interviews with 81 personnel across the partnerships, including: 10 HS upper administrators (e.g., superintendent, principal), 12 HS mid-level administrators (e.g., academy leads, program coordinators), five HS counselors, 10 CC upper administrators (e.g., president, vice president of student success), 18 CC mid-level administrators (e.g., DE directors, coordinators), 10 CC advisors, and 16 DE instructors (6 at the HS, 10 at the CC). Table A1 in Appendix A describes the participants, including pseudonym, institution, and organizational role.

4.2 Data Collection

We conducted 30–60-minute semistructured interviews in person, which we recorded and transcribed. The site visits and interviews were conducted by a research team of four to five researchers for each visit, where we rotated interview facilitators and notetakers. Participants with the same role at their institution were often interviewed together (two to three participants) while those with unique roles were interviewed separately, for a total of 46 interviews. We also conducted six focus group interviews (one per school, except for WWHS, where we held two) with 38 DE students, from which we triangulated and corroborated findings about the roles of DE personnel.

Our semistructured interview protocols included questions about actors' role responsibilities, including how DE personnel collaborate across and within their institutions and how actors' roles intersect to address DE student and program needs. For example, we asked both HS and college partners, "How do you let families know about dual enrollment opportunities? Who is responsible for this?" with follow-up probes to better understand the collaborative and distinct roles related to recruiting DE students. To understand how individual actors delineate between their responsibilities and those of others, we asked "What are the roles and responsibilities of the HS/CC staff you work with?" "How does that differ from your responsibilities?" and "How do you communicate about expectations across different roles?" We followed up with clarifying questions, including to understand discrepancies across participants. We used separate interview protocols for different institutional roles (see Appendix B), customizing for specific responsibilities (i.e., asking a DE instructor about teaching, advisors about advising, etc.).

We also collected and reviewed institutional documents about DE course offerings, major pathways, and support services. To understand institutional contexts and resources, our site visits included a tour of HS and CC facilities, including tutoring and advising centers, career and technical education (CTE) classrooms, and DE staff offices. After each site visit, the research team collaborated to fill out a site visit report capturing main takeaways related to the DE partnership's recruitment, advising, instruction, and the alignment between HS and college pathways and services. We used the site report and documents to further distill and triangulate our understandings of the partnership.

4.3 Data Analysis

We performed initial coding in Dedoose, a qualitative software program, which we used to break interview transcripts into excerpts for further analysis. We first aimed to delineate roles at each organizational partner, assigning initial codes to excerpts based on content about HS actors (Role-HS) and CC actors (Role-CC) and assigning descriptive flags for each participant to note the type of position they held (e.g., administrator, advisor/counselor, DE instructor).

After preliminary coding to produce sets of excerpts relevant to roles at each organization, we used a qualitative matrix (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to sort excerpts into specific columns by organization and role type. Using our conceptual framework, we sought to understand how DE personnel described not only their roles but also shared responsibilities and implementation duties across the partnership. The matrix enabled the team to further break down interview data and synthesize findings across DE personnel, role types, and CC-HS partnerships. The matrix included one row per participant, capturing their pseudonym, title, institution, broad organizational role (i.e., HS admin, CC admin, HS counselor, CC advisor, DE instructor), and how they described their responsibilities and responsibilities of other roles. The process enabled us to explicitly capture and analyze actors' role responsibilities, including shared responsibilities and division of labor for DE implementation—all essential to understanding boundary spanning, maintenance, and redefinition in an interorganizational field.

During both initial coding and matrix entry, each of five research team members was assigned an equal number of transcripts. In the matrix, each team member entered relevant evidence (quotes) from excerpts, along with interpretations, into the qualitative

matrix. After the initial matrix entry, each participant's information was reviewed and edited by two research team members to ensure multiple perspectives in the analytic process. The research team met weekly to calibrate coding, address questions, discuss emerging themes, and resolve disagreements.

4.4 Analytic Memos

After completing each participant's matrix entry, we created analytic memos to address RQs. For RQ1, each research team member was assigned one role/personnel category (e.g., CC administrators, CC advisors, DE faculty) from the matrix. The assigned researcher reviewed all entries for that role in the matrix, analyzing them for emerging themes and patterns. We also examined how each role functioned within each specific DE partnership to consider similarities and differences across the partnerships. The memos helped us understand individual roles and their relationship to other actors embedded within the interorganizational field.

Next, we created an analytic memo to address RQ2, examining whether and how actors span and maintain boundaries across partner organizations. This memo captured themes regarding how actors communicate and make decisions throughout various stages in DE recruitment, students' course enrollment, and assessment and support processes, including how they resolve misaligned goals, adjust expectations, and create new rules and procedures to operate across distinct systems. The concept of boundary redefinition emerged from analysis but is supported by research on institutionalization (Colyvas & Powell, 2006).

5. Results

Our results reveal the varied role responsibilities held by organizational actors working in DE partnerships and how they enact rules and practices to support and sustain the interorganizational field. First, we describe the responsibilities held by actors across their organizational roles. Then, we examine rules and practices actors enact—with a focus on the domains of DE program design, advising, and academic monitoring—and how they span, maintain, and redefine organizational boundaries to meet program and organizational needs.

5.1 DE Roles and Responsibilities

Upper administrators. Upper-level K-12 district and school leaders, including superintendents and principals, prioritize DE programming by securing resources and funding to expand DE access and maintain offerings. Logan, Prairie Independent School District's [ISD's] superintendent, "put [DE tuition] in the budget to make it as accessible as possible." He used "freed-up emergency funds" in the short term, "but now [must] figure out a way to budget again going forward." Embedding DE programs into the budget allowed him to offer DE access to all students at no cost. Across the state, DE partnerships vary in how the two organizations share the costs of DE (Knight et al., 2026). In school districts like Prairie and Guadalupe, both "pay for these [DE] classes, pay for the tests, textbooks, and devices" as a means of "putting your money where your mouth is," Fatima, director of college and career readiness at Guadalupe HS, said. This set of financial decisions and priorities "comes all the way to the top." To sustain these decisions over time, superintendents and principals champion the DE partnership with other stakeholders. Scott, principal of WWHS, described himself as a "pioneer" of STEM DE, one of WWHS's "highlighted programs." He used data from its partner, Hortensia College, for two things: to improve ("What are we missing? How can we meet student needs?") and to "share that feedback with the [school] board so they continue to support us." By leveraging data insights at school board meetings, Scott illustrated to the board how DE could meet community needs and what other resources were necessary.

Similar to K-12 upper administrators, college administrators—presidents and vice presidents—influence DE partnerships based on the extent to which they make DE a strategic priority and build connections with their partner HSs. Terry, a dean at Hortensia College, described how his president constantly worked with ISDs to get feedback on how to improve DE programming. Logan at Prairie ISD confirmed: "[Ruiz College's president] visits all of the schools in the county multiple times throughout the year and then invites us over there.... They ask for our input: 'What can we do better? How can we communicate better?'" The outreach from college administrators to K-12 personnel built trust, bolstering faith among ISD partners that they benefit from the collaboration.

Mid-level administrators. Mid-level administrators play a central role in DE implementation. Although they typically have no direct interaction with students, they

often supervise student-facing staff. At HSs, middle managers include academy principals, program coordinators, and directors of counseling. They serve as a hub for all DE activities. Emily, director of college and career readiness at GHS, said: “I regularly support all of the college-and-career centers in the district and their counselors, and pretty much pick up wherever I need to with dual credit.” DE directors and coordinators “build relationships with college partners so they understand that our kids want to be successful,” explained Wanda, director of counseling at WWHS. She added: “And we’ll show up on campus if we have to.” They cultivate and maintain relationships with college personnel, serving as essential intermediaries for student-facing DE staff, including DE instructors. Rhonda, a math professor at Ruiz College, explained, “Most of the high schools that I teach at, I have a single contact person. It may be their counselor; it may be what they call their dual credit coordinator.” When seeking insights on a DE student, she called her primary contact at Texian HS, Diane, a DE coordinator and counselor. At rural schools, many staff “wear more than one hat,” Diane explained. She described herself as the “liaison between [Texian HS] and [Ruiz College], as far as dual credit is concerned.” HS mid-level administrators often managed the logistical work of DE programming while directly addressing the needs of DE students and faculty.

Similar to their HS corollaries, CC mid-level administrators encompass positions like DE directors, DE coordinators, and college advising supervisors. They coordinate nearly all facets of DE programming at the college, though typically by managing the staff who directly oversee activities ranging from enrollment and scheduling to staffing, grading, and communication—stepping in to handle those processes themselves when necessary. Tricia, DE director at Ruiz College, summarized her role as overseeing “partnerships, relationships, mechanics of the whole enrollment process, and supervision of our coordinators.” Geraldine, DE coordinator at Hortensia College, rattled off her responsibilities:

Grades come to me as a coordinator; we disseminate that to the HSs. Any early alerts from faculty; that also gets sent to the HSs’ counselors. We also do the scheduling of the classes, making sure that the pathways line up with HS credits and college credits. Then the pathway to complete their degree and the scheduling of classes, working with faculty, making sure that we have the correct number of

classes, spaces in classes, faculty to teach the courses, working with department chairs and deans to get that set up each semester.

Tricia and Geraldine, as DE-specific mid-level administrators, are integrated in every aspect of DE implementation, serving as a hub and the “liaison representative” between DE-related HS and CC staff (Rebecca, shared DE advisor, Sherman). Within the college, they also handle cross-departmental communication, including “collaborating a lot with admissions and testing, financial aid ... also, just the day-to-day operations, making sure that the team has their direction and guidance” (Geraldine). DE directors and coordinators serve central roles in coordinating across diverse organizational units.

Student-facing support staff. HS counselors and CC advisors serve as the primary face of DE programming to many students and their families. For prospective DE students, they share information about DE opportunities and registration. For students who enroll, they provide guidance on course selection and sequences, with differentiated responsibilities across the HS and college.

HS counselors handle DE recruitment and student onboarding (often collaboratively with college advisors), academic advising, and cross-institutional information sharing. Some counselors’ responsibilities intersected with “everything pertaining to students and dual credit” (Whitney, counselor, WWHS), whereas others saw their DE role as frontloaded: “I deal a lot with the dual credit testing, [and] coordinating of classes with the students” (Willow, counselor, Prairie HS). HS counselors often address college-readiness standards (testing) and course schedules but are limited in how much support they provide students about college pathways and degree planning. Florence, a counselor at Texian HS, acknowledged when it came to college degree planning, “I don’t have much [bandwidth]. I just go in and check on students, that’s it.” At the CCs, advisors described their role as “a lot of behind-the-scenes enrollment stuff for part of the year and then the other half [is] advising with students” (Matt, DE advisor, Sherman College). Daniela, an advisor at Hortensia, explained, “I spend a lot of time doing registration, behind-the-scenes work, processing admissions documents,” though she also annually performed “career assessments” with their ECHS students to further guide their college and career pathways. The extent of DE student advising offered by the

college appeared to be shaped by the structure of the DE program and the advising capacities of both institutions. For example, at Ruiz College, a DE advisor “checks [on all DE students] every week to pull up their grades” (Uma, DE director). If issues arise, such as incomplete assignments, the DE advisor “contacts the counselor” to “come up with a plan” for student support (Uma). We elaborate on how counselors and advisors negotiate their overlapping DE responsibilities in the section on spanning, maintaining, and redefining organizational boundaries.

Some DE partnerships (e.g., Sherman College and GHS; Sherman and MTHS) maintain shared DE advisors—staff who operate in a hybrid role. Shared DE advisors are co-employed by the district and college to serve DE students. Jackson, a shared DE advisor, said his role included “going out to the physical high school, [with] several advising days planned per week” to ensure a presence on both campuses. According to Jessica, the school district’s superintendent, the district and college split the cost of the shared advisors to ensure some staff understood both organizations’ “infrastructures” to “execute DE across both.” The role functions similarly to that of college advisors, with some added pre-DE responsibilities traditionally carried out by HS counselors, such as testing to determine student eligibility for DE.

DE instructors. DE instructors provide college-level instruction to HS students enrolled in DE courses. The DE instructors we spoke to taught DE under varied structures and contexts, including: being completely embedded at the HS and teaching on a regular HS schedule; commuting to the HS to teach DE 2–3 days a week; working at the college with courses composed of both DE and post-HS students; teaching distinct DE sections at the CC; and teaching online DE, typically asynchronously. Those primarily employed by and entirely housed at the HS are referred to as “embedded” DE instructors, but all instructors typically received at least some training and professional development from the CC, through which the course was accredited.

No matter the location, DE instructors described their responsibility to “keep the integrity of the class” (Jasmine, DE instructor, GHS) while adhering to rules for both institutions. When teaching high schoolers, “ensuring the rigor and making sure that [students] are getting a quality college class” was sometimes challenging (Dylan, department chair, Hortensia). Hillary, a DE instructor at Sherman College, explained:

“You want to keep that strict and college-level rigor, but then, at the same time, on my end, I’m working with 14-year-olds.” DE instructors also acknowledged the logistical challenges of adhering to the rules of both organizations. When teaching at GHS, Hillary had a DE student with disability accommodations filed with the school, but, as a Sherman College instructor, she had to explain, “I cannot use your high school paperwork. These are two different entities.” DE coursework fulfills the requirements of both organizations, which means the instructor must follow rules and procedures at both.

5.2 Negotiating Organizational Boundaries

In this section, we focus on the interactions of DE actors as they negotiate and manage organizational boundaries. Across all sites, actors engaged in sustained boundary management work, tasked with developing shared practices, navigating bureaucratic systems, and building interpersonal trust to support the DE partnership. Through boundary spanning, the DE interorganizational field takes shape as an overlapping entity between two otherwise distinct organizations. At the same time, actors acknowledge the need to maintain, sharpen, and renegotiate boundaries to address student and institutional needs, where boundary maintenance and redefinition were often driven by competing organizational priorities.

We focus on four domains where actors negotiated organizational boundaries: (1) DE course offerings, (2) course staffing, (3) student advising and recruitment, and (4) academic monitoring and intervention. Within each, we describe how actors manage organizational boundaries to establish DE interorganizational rules and practices. Table 2 provides definitions of boundary management approaches, followed by exemplar practices, DE domain, and institutional priorities.

Table 2. Boundary Management Across Dual Enrollment Domains

Boundary Management Approach	DE Domain	Institutional Priority and Constraints	Partnership Practice
Boundary maintenance: Actors preserve original rules and practices of the primary organization, typically to protect its own priorities and interests	DE Course Offerings	HS prioritizes that DE courses count toward graduation and attendance requirements	DE courses and pathways align with state HS requirements—HS avoids those that do not
	DE Staffing	HS maintains power over hiring and offering DE courses in person on HS campus	HSs hire qualified DE instructors as regular teaching staff (embedded DE instructors)
	DE Staffing	CC emphasizes academic norms/standards of college and compliance with accreditation standards	College requires that dean and department chairs oversee DE faculty, rather than HS administrators
	Student Advising	Both institutions prioritize content expertise, where CC advisors are most prepared to advise on how DE courses count toward post-HS degree plans	HS counselors rely on CC advisors to guide students on college degrees and credit application
	Academic Monitoring & Intervention	CC must maintain FERPA compliance	DE instructors at college pass information about failing students to other CC personnel, who convey to HS counselors
Boundary spanning: Relate practices from one field to another, primarily (but not exclusively) performed by actors that occupy the space between the two organizations	DE Staffing	HS prioritizes DE courses at HS to tailor to own needs; CC needs additional qualified instructors to meet DE demand	Embedded DE instructors at HS offer courses attuned to specific needs of DE students and aligned with HS schedule
	DE Staffing	HS seeks to monitor student behavior and engagement in online DE in lieu of face-to-face instructors	Assign DE facilitators to online DE classrooms
	Student Advising	Both institutions prioritize DE courses meeting their orgs' degree requirements	Overlap in DE-advising responsibilities across orgs, incl. course selection, when using both HS and CC personnel
	Student Advising	Both orgs: Avoid overlapping advising responsibilities and redundancy while still meeting degree requirements	Shared DE advisors housed at, paid for, and trained by both orgs
Boundary redefinition: Establish new rules and processes distinct from those of their primary institution; includes shifting responsibilities between organizations	DE Staffing	CC seeks to maintain quality of existing DE courses, avoid stretching limited resources (qualified instructors)	CC maintains distinct qualified DE instructors across HS partners, even within same CC
	Student Advising	Both orgs: Prioritize meeting student needs while minimizing redundant efforts	Delineate between DE eligibility (HS counselors) and applications once college-ready (CC advisors)
	Academic Monitoring & Intervention	Both orgs seek to ensure student success, but CC must maintain FERPA compliance; HS staff cannot monitor student performance in college-level course without CC	CC advisors monitor DE student performance and inform DE coordinators and HS counselors for intervention

5.3 DE Course Offerings

Boundaries between DE partners are tested during their joint decision-making over course offerings, a central element of DE program design. The DE courses offered shape what the DE program looks like—and subsequent pathways it opens—for students. Administrators at CCs and HSs described a careful negotiation to meet the needs of each organizational partner in the determination of DE pathways. School districts sought to maintain influence over high school degree plans, and colleges sought to preserve higher education standards.

In determining DE course offerings, HS administrators asserted school district needs, prioritizing state HS graduation and attendance requirements (both tied to funding), while cooperating with college accreditation requirements. Carol, vice superintendent of instruction at WWISD, helped develop the districts' original DE partnership agreements—referred to as “blueprints”—and acknowledged the districts' push to center HS state requirements in continued negotiations over DE course offerings. She said:

I'm going to bring us back to our blueprints. It's part of the expectation, the design of the program at a bigger level. Before we even start all of these things, the college works in collaboration with the district to determine these HS degree plans.

Although the program design (“blueprint”) was developed collaboratively, the resulting HS degree plans incorporated DE into student pathways to ensure all courses counted toward HS graduation requirements. Joshua, superintendent of Guadalupe ISD, explained their focus: “It's really about the pathways... you don't want to advise a kid into a course that they don't need.” Here, Joshua emphasized student “need” for courses based on HS—not college—degree requirements. Although keen to integrate school and community needs with students' aspirations for college credit, HS administrators sought to ensure DE courses were “truly dual credit” to avoid students “being loosey-goosey with just as many dual credit classes as they want” (Heather, principal, GHS). Thus, HS administrators drew a hard line that college-level courses in the partnership needed to count toward HS diplomas.

CC administrators accepted this boundary maintenance by HS administrators but acknowledged how doing so sometimes sacrificed their own standards and priorities.

Mary, vice president of student success at Sherman College, said:

Oftentimes when we work with different ISD partners, the ISD is driving what they want or what their priorities are: who they want to teach or don't want to teach, when they want to be omitted from teaching, or for their students to be required to take Learning Frameworks or not.... I kind of wish we would put our foot down at times to say, "College is rigorous, college is important, and, no, this is the way we're going to do it."

The college was constrained by the HS's boundary maintenance. Mary worried that adhering to state HS requirements forced the college to redefine internal policies—like removing Learning Frameworks, a student success course required for first-time students, as a DE requirement. Vivian, the president of Sherman College, described diverging visions of DE pathways as a "source of contention" between partners. The HS "limits [students'] focus, saying 'You pick one of these seven,' when we have many more pathways at the college. And they want to stay away from anything that doesn't give them dual credit." She explained:

Sometimes students might say "I want this pathway." [The pathway] still allows the student to graduate with their HS diploma, but we need to put them in a concurrent class, which is college credit only. The HS, the ISDs, have a hissy fit about it: "No, they wouldn't get the points or dual credit." They would get the points for the student completing a college degree, but they're not getting their attendance points.

In this case, the HS maintains its boundaries to protect its funding, where student attendance is part of the K-12 funding formula. The college, on the other hand, is incentivized to offer various course sequences to students in hopes of attracting them after high school. The partner organizations hold conflicting priorities. Because the CCs rely heavily on DE enrollment, they adjust to the HS's boundary maintenance.

5.4 Course Staffing

DE course offerings are inherently tied to teaching assignments because college-level coursework must be taught by instructors with appropriate subject knowledge and credentials. In Texas, instructors for college-level academic courses must hold a baccalaureate plus 18 graduate credits (SACSCOC, 2018). The scarcity of “qualified DE instructors” (those with appropriate credentials) shaped dynamics within and between DE partnerships. Terri, an administrator at Hortensia College, explained:

[The HS] would survey all their instructors to see who had a master's degree and what was that master's degree in. So then I would sit down with this spreadsheet and go through: “Okay, I bet we can get this one qualified here, and this one qualified here.” So it was really working with that HS to ensure they [had coverage].... Now, they like to poach each other, so I had one of my liaisons call me the other day and say, “Hey, we’re opening our dual credit English position. Can you give me the names of the English instructors at the other school?” I’m like, “I can’t do that for you.”

In this case, to meet the demand for DE courses at one HS, Terri protected the pool of qualified instructors within that partnership from reallocation into an overlapping DE interorganizational field (being “poached” by a different HS partner of the same college). CC middle managers play a balancing act to concurrently serve multiple partner HSs. Terri illuminated how, as DE expands, multiple overlapping DE interorganizational fields create a complex network of actors. Given the volume of HS partners and the scarcity of qualified instructors to offer DE courses, Terri redefined boundaries within her own organization to ensure Hortensia College could sustain DE programming at one HS by keeping instructor pools separate across partner HSs.

Maintaining a pool of qualified DE instructors led some school districts to emphasize graduate credentials in teacher hiring, though this was more feasible at non-rural schools with proximity to postsecondary institutions. Of the 16 DE instructors we interviewed, about a third ($N = 6$) were embedded at a HS (employed as HS teachers to teach DE). Raquel, an academy principal at GHS, explained: “Students are more successful when there’s someone in the classroom with them. So we intentionally hired teachers with master’s degrees. We vet them through [Sherman] so that they would be in

the classroom to enable that interaction face-to-face.” By hiring DE instructors directly, GHS sought to retain control over staffing and address the school’s preference for in-person instruction—maintaining their organizational boundaries around hiring.

Embedded DE instructors complete training and credentialing checks through the CC. However, their primary affiliation is the HS, which shapes their institutional expectations. Jasmine, an embedded instructor at GHS, explained that she understood that DE students “are in high school and not just taking my DE class.” She elaborated: “They’ve got seven other AP and DE classes throughout the day. And they work and they’re in extracurricular stuff. Sometimes, college instructors don’t get that. You have to extend some grace to these kids.” By hiring embedded instructors, the HS also enables college-level instruction by educators attuned to their environment and schedules. Diane at Texian HS explained how embedded instructors “take care of those kiddos” by “talking to them about the credit side of it” and “help[ing] with any struggles they may be having.” She attributed her school’s DE success to embedded instructors keeping a close pulse on student progress.

Personnel across all three CCs explained that it was not always feasible to attract qualified instructors to teach DE on site, either through embedded or commuting instructors. All HSs in our sample offered some online DE courses. Rural HSs (e.g., Prairie and Texian) relied primarily on online instruction. However, they expressed concern over online DE—particularly asynchronous instruction, where students sat in an HS classroom taking self-paced DE courses online. Administrators at GHS and Prairie HS determined that “there needed to be someone in the classroom, interfacing with students, ensuring they remain on task, understanding the instructions on Blackboard” (Maribel, DE facilitator, GHS). Both assigned HS staff as “DE facilitators” to “serve as a liaison between the students and the instructor” (Maribel). DE facilitators are “sometimes a paraprofessional position, sometimes a professional position,” (Fatima, director of college & career readiness, GHS), and sometimes a “retired teacher” (Jessica, superintendent, GHS). They “monitor students” (Jessica), “troubleshoot” technological challenges (Maribel), “remind [students] of deadlines” (DE student, GHS), and assist those “failing or struggling in the course” (DE student, GHS). Maribel described her approach: “At the beginning of each semester, I reach out to all the instructors, saying:

‘I’m right here, real time with your students. Reach out to me if you have something that you would like to relay.’” Through communication with the online instructor, the DE-facilitator spans the boundary between the two organizations.

CC administrators, given that DE courses are accredited through the college, seek to maintain organizational boundaries related to DE instruction quality. At Ruiz College, all DE faculty must report to their dean about courses. Uma, dean of DE, said: “It’s important that a dean oversee the faculty. That’s the college’s stance on faculty supervision, that it be a dean or higher who oversees faculty.” Paisley, an embedded instructor of nursing at Prairie HS, confirmed: “So, I have my dean that is over the dual program, [Uma]. That’s usually who I communicate with, and she does my performance appraisals, comes to the school, and does it here.” Because DE faculty “follow the college’s syllabus and their rules” and DE courses are accredited at the college, colleges are responsible for course quality (Paisley). For that reason, colleges must “be more in that driver’s seat” on instruction and content—they maintain organizational boundaries related to supervising and evaluating DE instructors (Mary, vice principal, Sherman College).

5.5 Student Advising

Given their close proximity to students, HS counselors work to balance their role with that of CC advisors—from meeting eligibility and registration requirements, to guidance on course selection and college pathways. Once a student initiates their interest, HS counselors support their entry into DE, tagging in college advisors as necessary. At Texian HS, initiating DE participation requires parents to “sign off” to ensure that students and families are committed to the rigor of DE (Diane, Texian HS). Tasks that engage parents about DE mostly fall in the jurisdiction of HS counselors, who also coordinate logistics of college-readiness testing—both preliminary steps for DE eligibility. At WWHS, counselors hosted a bridge camp where students “start the application for [Hortensia College] ... then we’ll move on to the testing part” (Jamila, counselor, WWHS). By leveraging HS resources like “boot camps to help kids learn strategies to do better on these tests,” counselors enable students to meet eligibility standards (Willow, counselor, Prairie HS). Once students meet college-readiness standards, CC advisors provide support on applications:

We go there to help them do the ApplyTexas application. This is an entire night.... This is parents and students. The HS has a hundred laptops. And so, we individually help each student apply for our program. (Alexandra, advisor, Hortensia College)

The sequential nature of role responsibilities at the juncture between eligibility requirements and program application illustrates boundary redefinition, wherein counselors and advisors implement practices to ensure the needs of students and their families are met, while avoiding redundant responsibilities. They delineate between test prep to meet college-readiness standards (primarily managed by HS counselors) and, from there, applications (primarily managed by college advisors).

Although HS counselors and CC advisors avoid redundant responsibilities during initial eligibility and application, redundancy occurs when supporting course registration and selection. The interorganizational nature of DE courses means that HS counselors, who directly interact with students, often have responsibilities that span organizational boundaries, such as coordinating course schedules with college staff. The lead counselor at WWHS, Whitney, explained: “I communicate back and forth with the DE office and advisors” at Hortensia. She elaborated that she handled “everything pertaining to the students and dual credit,” and that “we schedule [students’ courses], we talk to them about grades.” HS counselors’ boundary-spanning role of DE course advising ensured students were informed about selecting courses and meeting DE requirements. HS administrators preferred that HS counselors guide DE course selection; Josephine, an academy principal at GHS, explained that counselors work with students “on what their endorsement pathways look like so [they know] what dual credit classes meet that need.” This way, counselors align DE coursetaking with HS pathways and requirements. At the same time, supporting DE requires additional labor. Zoey, an administrator at WWISD, described DE advising as “double work” because counselors guide “hundreds of kids” to meet HS graduation requirements. But DE adds complexity to the workload: “Oh, by the way, 97 of them need to go to [Hortensia College] too,” which requires meeting additional requirements. This responsibility reflects the boundary-spanning—and sometimes inefficient—nature of DE advising, in which

counselors work with students to align HS graduation requirements and CC course pathways.

Given their overlapping responsibilities, boundaries between the roles of counselors and advisors blur despite distinct institutional expertise. Matt, an advisor at Sherman College) said:

In an ideal world, I would always want to meet with my students with the HS advisor there just so we can cover both sides of it at once. Sometimes they might ask you something about the HS that I may not specifically know. And then sometimes they'll ask something to the counselor about [Sherman] that they may not know. So having both of us there is really a benefit. But it's a matter of how much time we have available for that.

Matt acknowledges that neither the counselor nor the advisor operates with complete information to support DE students. HS counselors, for example, often rely on CC advisors for college planning and degree tracking. Alexandra, an advisor at Hortensia College, explained, "We'll give [counselors] access to the degree plans, or to the pathway, so they can see for themselves what path the student is on. But they lean completely on us." Daniela, another Hortensia advisor, clarified that counselors "see students' degree plans" and "see the grade that the student made in the class so that they can deal with the HS transcript," but cannot map students' progress on the CC degree plan. Students who do not meet with a CC advisor may miss out on crucial information about how DE credits apply toward subsequent college degrees.

HS counselors typically refer students to CC advisors for complex questions around college degree planning and credit applicability, maintaining boundaries around college planning and degree pathways as the domain of CC advisors. Willow, a counselor at Prairie HS, shared:

The advisor at [Ruiz] ... individually sits down with DE kids and helps them plan classes, tells them what class would correlate with that degree, or transfer to another college. She steered some kids away from things I might not have known about because I don't know what's compatible at that college.

Although HS counselors offer guidance in DE course alignment with HS requirements, they “often call [advisors] on the phone for advice” about postsecondary degree plans (Alexandra, advisor, Hortensia). Although high school counselors know “that there is a plan beyond high school,” they turn to the college advisor to “make sure that class will transfer to where [the student’s] going to and is on that pathway” (Paige, principal, Prairie HS). CC degree and transfer pathways often fell outside of counselors’ institutional knowledge.

The back-and-forth between advising staff at partner organizations can be inefficient and also leaves considerable room for error in messages as staff pass information across organizations. Sherman College took a different approach, creating shared DE advisors for its partnerships with GHS and MTHS. The shared role essentially institutionalizes boundary spanning, enabling DE students to receive guidance from an interorganizational representative. Blake, an administrator at Sherman (and previous DE advisor there), described the benefits:

When I was a DE advisor, we would pop in to register for classes, then “Great. We’ll see you next semester when we do the paperwork again.” Hiring staff that work for both the HS and CC who can be on site multiple days throughout the week provided students a lot more opportunity to check in. I think it’s similar to having credentialed faculty that teach at the HS. We see much greater use of student hours, office hours by the advisors and faculty because they’re on site much more. And I think that makes a big difference.

Blake emphasized that under the prior model, DE advisors from the college spent less time with DE students, whereas the shared DE advisor model increased students’ access to advisors. The comparison of shared DE advisors to embedded DE instructors suggests a belief that designated DE staff better meet student needs. Samantha, principal of MTHS, explained, “We have had a lot of support, DE-wise, having a shared partner that’s here as campus liaison for [Sherman] College.... She [Rebecca] works very closely with our college and career counselor” to learn HS requirements. With a shared DE advisor, Samantha felt the HS could “check all the boxes” for students to “get HS requirements as well as college requirements.”

5.6 Monitoring Student Progress and Academic Support

A remaining set of responsibilities for DE student success is monitoring student progress and intervening to offer support as necessary. Limited time and staffing at the college, combined with complexities related to sharing student information, often required redefining organizational boundaries to monitor and support DE students' academic success. Matt, an advisor at Sherman, ran regular grade checks for all DE students and shared that information with the HS counselor: "I'm limited in terms of my time. So, whoever I don't meet with, it is then the HS counselor who is reaching out for that specifically" to ensure students receive necessary academic guidance. Geraldine, DE coordinator at Hortensia, described advisors' monitoring of student performance as "crucial to supporting students," along with their role in relaying information to HS counselors. She explained: "If the counselors aren't aware of how the students are doing or [that] the student is having attendance issues or behavioral issues, then they can't support the student on their end." Advisors and counselors delineate their responsibilities across different phases of academic monitoring. The CC advisor is responsible for initial monitoring, but passes the information to the HS staff if they do not have the capacity for one-on-one guidance or if students require additional support.

In the case of struggling DE students, CC staff—including advisors and instructors—typically communicate with a HS counselor or designated liaison. Because DE courses are college courses, students are covered by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and instructors cannot directly share information about students with their guardians, unlike HS teachers or counselors. Therefore, DE instructors must resolve issues with students themselves or connect with DE support staff at the HS. Justine, vice president of academic affairs at Ruiz College, explained: "It's a real tight line that they're walking because really they can't reach out to the parents, which is hard for parents too." For that reason, DE instructors must maintain organizational boundaries in compliance with FERPA policy. Instructors must pass on responsibilities for intervention to other DE-related staff, like their DE coordinator or advisor, who work to redefine boundaries and share insights with the HS counselor, as outlined above. Like some other processes in the DE interorganizational field, this requires some inefficiency and leaves room for error, should messages not get relayed.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

DE students are the fastest-growing college population, but enabling HS students to take dually applicable college-level coursework requires substantial organizational investment. Growing evidence illustrates the effectiveness of DE for college entrance and degree attainment (An & Taylor, 2019), but there is minimal evidence about how HS and college personnel create conditions and facilitate processes necessary for fruitful DE partnerships. Drawing on the theories of interorganizational fields and boundary spanning (e.g., Bourdieu, 1977; Levi Martin, 2003; Weerts & Sandmann, 2010), we used data from interviews and site visits at three Texas CCs and their partner HSs to illustrate how HS and CC personnel build and sustain DE interorganizational fields. We examined how DE actors at partnering organizations understand their role responsibilities, maintain and span boundaries between partnering institutions, and make decisions about resources to support DE students and courses.

We found that actors at HS and CC partners span, maintain, and redefine organizational boundaries to address the needs of DE students and to maintain institutional priorities. Institutionalizing the DE interorganizational field—legitimizing and supporting the partnership—requires that some DE actors expand or reenvision their roles while others redefine boundaries between the HS and CC (Colyvas & Powell, 2006). At times, organizational actors must maintain boundaries, preserving rules and practices of the primary organization to comply with policies and protect funding streams. At other times, actors span and redefine organizational boundaries to meet the needs of and further establish the DE program, legitimizing the DE interorganizational field.

Upper administrators create a vision and secure investments for DE partnerships, providing symbolic and financial support. They also designate specific mid-level administrators to build bridges between partner institutions. Designated—and sometimes shared—DE personnel require financial investment, often by both partners. Mid-level administrators (e.g., DE coordinators and directors), many of whom are hired or reassigned to directly serve the interorganizational field, balance and align the primary organizations' goals, expectations, policies, and timelines, acting as the interorganizational field's connective tissue. They collaborate with others to design

frameworks and planning structures that coordinate the delivery of DE courses and advising, embodying formalized boundary-spanning roles (Helfgot, 2001; Weerts & Sandmann, 2010). Mid-level administrators like DE coordinators serve as essential intermediaries between the two organizations, translating practices and conveying imperatives.

Because a DE course counts toward both HS and CC credit, HS counselors and CC advisors often work across organizations to ensure that DE students receive guidance to meet HS and CC degree requirements. From an organizational standpoint, this is inefficient but necessary to maintain interests specific to each organization. The school district has degree requirements for students that must be met to ensure they earn a HS diploma; the college has degree requirements necessary for associate degrees or university transfer pathways. Institutional priorities and financial viability ultimately require boundary maintenance and can result in duplicative work to support the interorganizational field's clientele—the DE students. Much of the ongoing quantitative research on DE focuses on efficiency toward a degree, examining whether DE diminishes time to a baccalaureate or which DE courses do not apply toward a degree (e.g., An & Taylor, 2019; Schudde et al., 2026). By studying interorganizational actors—those that operate within and across the HS and college—we illustrate that the DE partnership requires substantial inefficiency to fulfill the needs and goals of each organization. Our findings about the “double work”—as described by Zoey—that HS counselors perform to manage DE requirements amplify prior evidence from DE instructors who similarly felt “caught between two systems” at ECHSs (Duncheon & Relles, 2020).

DE-specific personnel, like shared DE advisors and embedded DE instructors, improve efficiency by spanning the boundaries of organizational partners. They directly support students and teach at partner HSs, meeting DE students' needs on their HS campus. Although prior research acknowledges that these shared institutional roles exist (e.g., Duncheon & Relles, 2020; Fink et al., 2023), our results illuminate how institutional priorities incentivize shared positions and the role they play in the organizational structure of DE programs. Shared DE staff can overcome challenges inherent to interorganizational fields through their knowledge of both organizations and focus on DE rules and processes. DE-specific staff further institutionalize the DE

interorganizational field by establishing pooled staff and resources (Colyvas & Powell, 2006).

Our findings also reveal that boundary redefinition practices protect resources necessary to sustaining and institutionalizing the DE interorganizational field. At times, CC actors work to establish boundaries within their college between their own partner HSs to protect qualified instructors, who tend to be valuable commodities for building and sustaining DE. Without qualified instructors who can travel to HSs or operate as embedded instructors, many DE partnerships rely on online DE courses, which often require staffing the HS classroom with a facilitator. Staffing online DE requires financial and human capital from both the HS and CC, which promotes efficiency in college access and degree attainment among students, but impedes efficiency among personnel.

6.1 Implications for DE Policy and Practice

Offering college coursework during HS requires a substantial investment of resources. Although 48 states now have statewide DE policies, few states directly fund DE programming, leaving HS and college partners to foot the bill (Jamieson et al., 2022). The “dual” nature of dual credit means that DE students and personnel navigate multiple systems, regulations, and rules to comply and meet the needs of both institutions. The back-and-forth communication across organizations requires dedicated staff, including DE coordinators—at a bare minimum—or even specific DE advisors and instructors. These human resources come at a considerable cost, and, according to many administrators, are essential to student success in DE (Fink et al., 2025). To improve student access to DE, HS and college partners need adequate funding to staff the programs according to their needs. As states pass additional policies toward DE expansion, it is necessary that they offer financial support, rather than unfunded mandates.

At the organizational level, our findings illustrate that DE partnerships use a variety of approaches to overcome the challenges of working across two institutions. Partnerships seeking to improve communication may benefit from establishing a designated liaison or point of contact who facilitates communication among DE staff within and across partner organizations. It is also essential that organizational partners build strong communication to maintain a clear sense of which actors hold specific

responsibilities. This goes beyond initial negotiations from MOUs, as our findings on the overlap between HS and CC advising responsibilities demonstrate that sometimes staff at each organization assume the other organization is tending to student needs.

As institutional demand for DE rises, partners may benefit from shared human resources, like shared advisors, to improve communication for personnel and advising for students. Shared staff who primarily focus on DE may also alleviate the burden on general counselors (or advisors), who otherwise carry a full caseload of traditional students. At rural HSs, designated DE facilitators may enable the HS to support online DE in partnerships too distant for students to travel to the college campus. Although we could not explicitly address it in this study, we anticipate that assigning DE facilitators with knowledge of course content would best meet student needs (akin to a tutor, rather than a proctor), though more research into the role and its efficacy is necessary.

6.2 Implications for Research

Given the complexity of DE partnerships and the differences across contexts, we encourage additional research in other settings. The partnerships in our sample had higher-than-average postsecondary outcomes and disproportionately offered academic DE, although some programs offered CTE dual credit. We anticipate that partnerships focused on CTE may have additional pressures and priorities (e.g., workforce outcomes, industry-based standards) and different requirements in terms of shared personnel, since faculty in workforce-specific programs at CCs often are not required to have the same educational credentials. Future inquiry should also examine classroom-level differences in instruction among embedded instructors and college instructors, given differences in DE-student outcomes across instructors' institutional affiliation (see Ryu et al., 2024). Although embedded instructors improve DE organizational processes and efficacy, they may contribute to different classroom experiences and outcomes for students.

The extent to which DE partnerships offer insights for interorganizational fields in other contexts is unclear, but we anticipate that the additional investment necessary to serve overlapping clientele is likely to apply outside of DE. Although organizations may serve similar purposes and clients (Levi Martin, 2003), those with distinct organizational systems and compliance standards may face competing priorities that complicate collective decisions (e.g., differing accountability and funding systems for HSs and CCs),

even when both organizations stand to benefit from the partnership. One contribution of our findings is that boundary spanning is not the only boundary management approach that organizational actors leverage with their counterparts. When faced with institutional imperatives, such as meeting standards or policy requirements essential to funding or accreditation, actors maintained their primary organization's boundaries, or, at times, redefined boundaries between the two organizations by establishing new rules and processes to share or shift responsibilities.

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Appendix A. Description of Colleges and Schools

To identify focal HS-CC partnerships, we used purposive sampling based on descriptive statistics obtained from administrative data and screening interviews. Given our interest in the function and organization of DE partnerships, we were interested in well-established partnerships, so we could observe and understand how they interacted across organizational boundaries. We first used statewide administrative data from Texas to produce a partnership-level data set, and then created measures of DE access (e.g., HS DE participation rate, representativeness of DE participants compared with HS population) and success (e.g., DE course completion rates, subsequent college enrollment, college persistence) for each HS-CC partner (any combination with DE students, where the same institution could have multiple partners). We used overall and subgroup DE-access and success metrics (with an eye on access and success among subgroups underrepresented in DE, such as Black, Hispanic, and low-income students) to create an ordered list of HS-CC partnership performance. We identified the top seven CCs and their HS partners (which all had similar average scores, but some variation across different metrics), and conducted screening interviews to understand partnership dynamics and history.

We selected three partnerships that were well established (e.g., they had signed MOUs; described intentionality for DE partnership). Given Texas's size and diversity, we also sought to capture variation in geographic locale. Below, we describe the three focal CCs and five partner HSs in our sample. Table A1, below, describes participants.

Table A1. Description of Personnel Participants

Name	Institution	Organizational Role	Broad Institutional Title	Gender
Terri	Hortensia College	CC Mid-Level Admin	Dean of Student Development	Female
Catherine	Hortensia College	CC Mid-Level Admin	DE Director	Female
Geraldine	Hortensia College	CC Mid-Level Admin	DE Coordinator	Female
Oliver	Hortensia College	CC Admin	Provost	Male
Zia	Hortensia College	CC Admin	Vice Chancellor of Student Services	Female
Samuel	Hortensia College	CC Mid-Level Admin	Liberal Arts Dean	Male
Dylan	Hortensia College	CC Mid-Level Admin	Department Chair, Industrial Technology	Male
Mitchell	Hortensia College	DE Faculty	DE Instructor	Male
Alexandra	Hortensia College	CC Advisor	Advisor	Female

Name	Institution	Organizational Role	Broad Institutional Title	Gender
Daniela	Hortensia College	CC Advisor	Advisor	Female
Ursula	Hortensia College	DE Faculty	English Professor / DE Instructor	Female
Abby	Hortensia College	DE Faculty	Cosmetology Professor / DE Instructor	Female
Kelly	Hortensia College	CC Admin	Vice President of Compliance	Female
Joshua	Hortensia College	CC Mid-level Admin	Compliance Officer	Male
Saul	Hortensia College	CC Mid-Level Admin	Emergency Management Coordinator	Male
Michael	Hortensia College	CC Mid-Level Admin	Dean of Student Success	Male
Ariel	Hortensia College	CC Mid-Level Admin	Dean of Student Support Services	Female
Scott	W. Wolff High School	HS Admin	Principal	Male
Brenda	W. Wolff High School	HS Mid-Level Admin	Academy Principal	Female
Monica	W. Wolff High School	HS Mid-Level Admin	Academy Principal	Female
Carol	W. Wolff ISD	HS Admin	Vice Superintendent of Instruction	Female
Harriet	W. Wolff High School	HS Mid-Level Admin	Academy Principal	Male
Whitney	W. Wolff High School	HS Counselor	Public Service Academy Counselor	Female
Ariana	W. Wolff High School	HS Counselor	ECHS Counselor	Female
Jamila	W. Wolff High School	HS Admin	STEM Academy Counselor	Female
Stephanie	W. Wolff High School	DE Faculty	Embedded DE Instructor, Cosmetology	Female
Cheryl	W. Wolff High School	DE Faculty	Embedded DE Instructor, Criminal Justice	Female
Wanda	W. Wolff High School	HS Mid-Level Admin	Director of Counseling	Female
Tonya	W. Wolff High School	HS Mid-Level Admin	CTE Director	Female
Zoey	W. Wolff ISD	HS Admin	Director of Pathways	Female
Sarah	Sherman College	CC Mid-Level Admin	Director Dual Credit	Female
Victoria	Sherman College	CC Admin	President	Female
Monique	Sherman College	CC Admin	Vice President, Partnerships	Female
Blake	Sherman College	CC Admin	Associate VP, Student Services	Male
Hector	Sherman College	CC Admin	Associate VP, Academic Affairs	Male
Sonya	Sherman College	CC Advisor	Shared DE Advisor	Female
Jackson	Sherman College	CC Advisor	Shared DE Advisor	Male
Rebecca	Sherman College & MTHS	CC Advisor	Shared DE Advisor	Female
Matt	Sherman College	CC Advisor	DE Advisor	Male
Wendall	Sherman College	CC Admin	Provost	Male
Audrey	Sherman College	CC Mid-Level Admin	Director, Recruitment	Female
Cameron	Sherman College	CC Mid-Level Admin	Assistant Director, DE	Female
Mary	Sherman College	CC Admin	Vice President, Student Success	Female
Will	Sherman College	DE Faculty	Speech Professor / DE Instructor	Male
Hillary	Sherman College	DE Faculty	Education Professor / DE Instructor	Female
Laurie	Sherman College	CC Mid-level Admin	Director, Pathways	Female
Tessa	Sherman College	CC Mid-Level Admin	Instructional Designer and Program Coordinator	Female
Heather	Guadalupe High School	HS Admin	Principal	Female

Name	Institution	Organizational Role	Broad Institutional Title	Gender
Hope	Guadalupe High School	HS Mid-Level Admin	Business Academy Principal	Female
Jessica	Guadalupe High School	HS Admin	Superintendent	Female
Fatima	Guadalupe High School	HS Mid-Level Admin	Director of College & Career Readiness	Female
Raquel	Guadalupe High School	HS Mid-Level Admin	Academy Principal	Female
Emily	Guadalupe High School	HS Mid-Level Admin	Coordinator of College & Career Readiness	Female
Josephine	Guadalupe High School	HS Mid-Level Admin	Academy Principal	Female
Jasmine	Guadalupe High School	DE Faculty	Embedded DE Instructor, Business	Female
Nikki	Guadalupe High School	DE Faculty	Embedded DE Instructor, English	Female
Maribel	Guadalupe High School	DE Faculty	DE Facilitator	Female
Samantha	Matthews Technical High School	HS Admin	Principal	Female
Cassius	Matthews Technical High School	HS Mid-Level Admin	Vice Principal	Male
Tricia	Ruiz College	CC Mid-Level Admin	DE Director	Female
Uma	Ruiz College	CC Mid-Level Admin	Dean of DE	Female
Betty	Ruiz College	CC Mid-Level Advisor	Director of Support Services	Female
Jacqueline	Ruiz College	CC Advisor	DE Coordinator and Counselor	Female
Willa	Ruiz College	CC Mid-Level Admin	Director of Institutional Research	Female
Rhonda	Ruiz College	DE Faculty	Math Professor / Department Head	Female
Maisy	Ruiz College	DE Faculty	Psychology Professor / Department Head	Female
James	Ruiz College	DE Faculty	English Professor / DE Instructor	Male
Justine	Ruiz College	CC Admin	Vice President of Academic Affairs	Female
Ramona	Ruiz College	CC Advisor	Advisor	Female
Renee	Ruiz College	CC Advisor	Advisor / DE instructor (online DE, sociology)	Female
Melody	Ruiz College	CC Advisor	DE Advisor	Female
Paul	Prairie High School	HS Admin	Principal	Male
Willow	Prairie High School	HS Counselor	Counselor	Female
Logan	Prairie Independent School District	HS Admin	Superintendent	Male
Addison	Prairie High School	HS Mid-Level Admin	Coordinator, GEAR UP	Female
Paisley	Prairie High School	DE Faculty	Embedded DE Instructor, Nursing	Female
Gabriel	Texian High School	HS Admin	HS Principal	Male
Serena	Texian High School	DE Faculty	Embedded DE Instructor, US History & Economics	Female
Marybeth	Texian High School	DE Faculty	English Professor / DE Instructor	Female
Diane	Texian High School	HS Counselor & Mid-Level Admin	Counselor & DE Coordinator	Female
Florence	Texian High School	HS Counselor	Counselor	Female

Hortensia College

Hortensia College serves a large metropolitan area and is the largest college in our study with almost 12,000 students enrolled. The college has multiple campuses and one online campus. We visited the north campus, which was initially built in the 1970s and houses specific offices for DE staff and DE student advising. As of fall 2022, DE students comprised 21% of the college’s enrollment. Administrators at the college emphasized DE as an institutional priority: “We’re constantly working with [our school districts] to get feedback” about billing, registration, and “are revamping all of our memoranda of understanding agreements” with partners (Terri, dean of student success; Zia, vice chancellor, student services).

The college primarily offers advanced DE courses on the college campus. At W. Wolff High School campus, one of the HS partners we visited, the introductory DE courses are offered onsite to 9th and 10th graders, along with three technical programs (cosmetology, criminal justice, and welding) that serve students from grades 9–12 due to specific facilities available at the HS. Those DE courses at WWHS are still largely taught by Hortensia faculty. According to Samuel, dean of liberal arts, when DE is taught at the high school, the college prefers to send its “full-timers” (full-time faculty) to teach the courses as “a commitment to excellence” and to “make sure that [DE] is successful.” The college also leverages its strong institutional research team to create dashboards on student performance, which both high school and college partners can access.

Hortensia’s dual credit coordinator attends events at partner high schools for recruitment and orientation. Within their first 15 DE credits, all DE students at Hortensia meet with an advisor to look over the degree plans and pathways. By the time they accrue 15 credits, DE students are required to have a degree plan on file with the college. The DE advisors at Hortensia primarily serve DE students in early college high schools (ECHSs), along with DE students in specific Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. They have limited interactions with academic DE students, who rely more on their high schools’ counselors. Across DE partnerships, Hortensia College’s DE advisors serve about 400 students in their caseload.

The personnel we interviewed at the college and W. Wolff High School described their community as racially diverse, low-income, and “blue-collar.” As shown in Table 1,

about 70% of Hortensia College students identify as Hispanic, 15% identify as White, and 15% as Black. Over half of first-time-in-college (FTIC) students at the college (60%) received a Pell Grant. The college offered several services to support low-income students, including food pantries, emergency aid, and free and low-cost textbook access. CC staff also connect students with local housing organizations; all these services are offered through student support services.

W. Wolff High School

W. Wolff High School (WWHS) is a Title I, public high school in a large suburban area north of a large city. In its entirety, the district serves about 11,000 students, with 3,500 students enrolled at WWHS. The school recently had a \$286 million bond approved to improve high school facilities (gyms and CTE facilities). They are the only high school in their district with CTE facilities and DE programs beyond academic DE. WWHS primarily offers DE through its partnership with Hortensia College.

The school uses an academy model in which students are grouped into specific pathways offered by the school (Armstrong et al., 2003). Within these academies, several include a handful of DE courses, while the ECHS academy heavily incorporates academic DE courses once students reach their junior year of high school. However, some academies do not include any DE coursework. Sixty-five percent of students identified as Hispanic, 30% as Black, and 5% as White. The school primarily serves students from low-income families, with approximately 85% identified by the state as economically disadvantaged. Recognizing student financial constraints as barriers to DE access, the school offers wraparound services to DE students through discounted tuition and books, a book lending library, and bus transportation to and from the college.

College personnel at Hortensia perceived the school as having a commitment to postsecondary plans for its students, along with strong ties to industry partners to provide input on workforce programs. Samuel, dean of liberal Arts at Hortensia College, explained: “What sets them apart is the support structure that they give [students].” The district provides DE students with academic preparation through the AVID programs in middle school and in high school to help students meet college readiness standards necessary to take academic DE coursework. Students in the ECHS academy take

academic prep courses in 9th and 10th grade, followed by core coursework that meets both high school and college requirements on the college campus in 11th and 12th grade. In some of the technical programs, including welding, cosmetology, and culinary arts, courses are offered on the high school campus; in others (e.g., automotive technology, automation), students may take some courses at the high school and others on Hortensia's campus during their senior year.

Sherman College

Sherman College's main campus is located 30 miles west of a large metropolitan area, and it also operates learning centers with limited course offerings in surrounding towns. Sherman primarily delivers DE at partner high schools, where courses are taught by qualified high school instructors (embedded teachers, approved and supervised by the college) or online (typically asynchronously to fit the high school schedule). The college also offers some DE courses taught by full-time faculty on its main campus. As of fall 2022, DE students represented approximately 36% of the college's enrollment.

The college serves a racially diverse population, aligned with the local regional demographics. As shown in Table 1, about 50% of students identify as Hispanic, while 30% identify as White and 15% as Black. Over half of FTIC students (55%) received a Pell Grant. Because most partner high schools serve predominantly low-income communities, DE recruitment efforts were implicitly designed with these populations in mind.

The college offers a variety of degrees and credentials within academic and CTE fields. Sherman's website presented program information by career pathways while also listing individual programs alphabetically. During our site visit, Sherman College leadership described ongoing efforts to move toward clearer pathway maps. Consistent with state policy, all DE students were required to meet with a DE-specific advisor at the college once they earned 15 credit hours. Advising for DE students was largely provided through jointly funded, shared advisors embedded at partner high schools (including Guadalupe Memorial and Matthews Technical High School). The shared DE advisors—funded by both institutions—track students' progress on high school and college requirements. Blake, an administrator overseeing student services, said the college saw

the need to invest in “hiring staff that work both the high school and the college who can be on site multiple days throughout the week.” He argued that the shared advisor, through more face-to-face contact and their sole focus on DE, can better reach and support DE students. DE students who matriculate to Sherman College after high school transition to general advisors at the college.

Guadalupe High School

Guadalupe High School is a Title I, public comprehensive high school located in a large suburban district outside of a sprawling metropolitan area. GHS serves approximately 2,200 students. The school uses an academy model, organizing students into pathway-based academies within the comprehensive high school setting. These academies include Early College High School (ECHS)-aligned models and other career academies with embedded academic and CTE dual credit, alongside a population of students enrolled in more traditional high school programming. Guadalupe is one of its district’s flagship sites for DE implementation, particularly its Business Academy, and serves as a model for district-wide scaling of ECHS and P-TECH approaches.

GHS primarily serves low-income and racially minoritized families. Approximately 60% of students identify as Hispanic, about 20% as Black, and roughly 15% as White. About 70% of its students qualify for free- and reduced-price lunch or other government support.

Based on college and district partners’ perspectives, the school community demonstrates a strong commitment to postsecondary pathways for students and engages employer partners to provide input on workforce-aligned programs, particularly through its academy advisory structures. GHS and Sherman College collaboratively fund a set of shared DE advisors to ensure smooth communication across the partnering organizations. Jessica, the high school’s superintendent, explained:

The best thing that we did is we went into a partnership with [Sherman] College and created shared advisors. So we pay half of their salary. But, that way [the shared advisors] are training our people and our people are training [the shared advisors], and the square hole gets a little bit more rounded edges that way.

The shared advisor, an investment for both organizations, helps to offset some of the communication challenges across the two organizations. Jessica explained that the DE shared advisors typically had prior experience in advising at the college, which prepared them to provide professional development about college pathways to the high school advisors. At the same time, the shared advisor also received support from the high school counselors on how to best provide guidance to and recruit high school students for dual credit.

The district provides academic preparation for DE participation through AVID and related college-readiness supports beginning in middle school and continuing into high school. At GHS, ninth graders are required to take AVID, which supports students' transition into high school and builds early college awareness. During ninth and 10th grade, students focus on academic preparation and meeting the state's college-readiness requirements; in 11th and 12th grades, students may increasingly enroll in major-relevant DE coursework embedded within academies. For some CTE academies, students complete most coursework at the high school, with select advanced or specialized courses taken through Sherman College (or supported through online DE with in-person facilitators at the HS). The school and district provide wraparound support to enable participation among low-income students, including assistance with technology for online coursework, access to tutoring, and coordination of transportation and logistics for any required off-campus experiences.

Matthews Technical High School

Matthews Technical High School (MTHS) is a Title I, public high school that offers specific career CTE pathways. It serves approximately 500 students. The school was designed in partnership with Sherman College as a schoolwide Pathways-to-Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) model, such that every student is enrolled in a CTE academy with embedded DE opportunities. Matthews Tech, which is in the same district as GHS, functions as the district's hub for CTE-focused DE and early postsecondary credentialing.

Unlike the other schools we visited, MTHS is organized entirely around career academies and does not maintain a large, traditional, or comprehensive high-school track.

All students are placed into career-specific academies (e.g., welding, process technology, cosmetology, health, and other technical fields), many of which embed academic and CTE DE coursework aligned with Sherman College programs. MTHS primarily serves low-income and racially minoritized students drawn from the district's zoned comprehensive high schools. College and district partners described the school community as strongly oriented toward postsecondary and workforce pathways, with employer advisory groups playing a meaningful role in CTE program design, aligning with industry standards and local labor market needs.

The district supports students' academic preparation for dual credit participation through AVID in middle and comprehensive high schools prior to students enrolling at Matthews Tech, as well as through targeted preparation for college-readiness in English and math. At MTHS, DE courses are taught by college-approved high school instructors, with some specialized or academic courses offered through Sherman College either in person or online. Matthews Tech provides structured, on-site support for students taking asynchronous online DE courses through trained facilitators who assist with navigating college learning platforms, communication with instructors, and troubleshooting barriers to participation. The district and college also provide wraparound support to enable access for low-income students, including access to tutoring, technology support, and coordination of transportation and scheduling for off-campus learning experiences.

Ruiz College

Ruiz College has four campuses that serve five counties, many of which are rural. The campus we visited is about 70 miles outside of a large metropolitan area. Given that the college serves an expansive geographic area, it offers DE both through face-to-face courses on high school campuses and through online education, but rarely teaches DE students on the college campus due to transportation challenges. As of fall 2022, DE students comprised almost 40% of the college's enrollment.

The college's student body is socioeconomically diverse, but less racially diverse than many other colleges in the state. About 60% of FTIC students at Ruiz received Pell Grants. Participants across the college and its two high school partners frequently described members of the community as low-income and in some cases—especially with

respect to the community served by Texian High School HS—as “blue-collar.” As shown in Table 1, about 60% of students identify as White, while 15% identify as Hispanic and 15% as Black.

The college offered a variety of degrees and credentials within academic and CTE fields. Their website presented program information by “Career Track,” as well as alphabetically by program name. All DE students are required to meet with a DE-specific advisor at the college once they earn 15 credit hours, and all DE students must select an AA or AS degree plan. The vice president of academic affairs, Justine, noted that the Ruiz administration had worked extensively with high school partners to build “a more tailored” option for dual credit:

It has changed over the last few years. When I first got here, there was a tremendous push at the high school level for students to graduate from high school with their associate’s degree.... They’ve backed off of that a little bit. It took a lot of conversations. But what we saw happening was really because funding and accountability were really different for the high schools and the colleges. So a lot of the high schools then were just trying to, almost all the students would be on a general studies degree. And then they were really wanting, really pushing for us to align our curriculum and the classes that the students were taking for college credit with the high school side. So what we might have, frequently what we had is people graduating from high school, they’d get their associate degree two weeks before then, but they might have four English classes in there. Well, nobody except an English major needs four English classes.

The college pushed for greater clarity in student goals and alignment of DE pathways with varied college degrees rather than a general associate degree, noting that, otherwise, “it wasn’t beneficial to students, particularly when they went on to transfer.” Improving alignment between student goals and their course sequences required Ruiz College to hire additional advisors to support DE.

Even with additional advising staff, the caseloads of the DE advisors we spoke with were high. Melody, the advisor who primarily served students in the two focal high schools, Prairie HS and Texian HS, carried a caseload of 600-700 students. DE students who matriculated to the college after graduating high school then transferred to a general

advisor at the college (who have smaller caseloads of about 300-400 students), at which point they could change their degree plans. Our interactions with general advisors (Renee and Ramona) suggested that they had very little interaction with the DE coordinators and typically interacted with DE students when they transitioned into the college after graduating high school.

Prairie High School

Prairie High School is a Title I, traditional public high school in a rural area. The district, in its entirety, serves just over 600 students from the surrounding area, with just under 200 students enrolled at the high school. The school has a 12:1 student-teacher ratio. The small town where the high school is located has around 1,500 residents and relies heavily on agriculture as its primary industry. The high school employs many alumni, including the principal, who described those historical ties as further evidence that the school staff is “fully invested in the community” (Paul, principal). The larger community is supportive of the district and school: The district used a \$17M bond to pay for a new high school building that opened in fall 2020.

The school serves a largely low-income population, with about 80% identified as economically disadvantaged. Forty percent of Prairie HS students identified as White, 35% as Hispanic, and 15% as Black. The principal emphasized DE as a means to encourage students to go to college, worrying that students who “stick around” their small town after high school “don’t get good career opportunities” (Paul). The district paid the tuition for students to take DE courses, which the superintendent said aligned with the philosophy that the school “won’t let economics be a hindrance” to participation (Logan, superintendent). According to the superintendent, he and the school board amended the district budget to cover the cost of DE tuition for any eligible student and made a commitment to continue to do so: “We’ll just figure out a way to budget again going forward, because it has paid dividends. And I don’t want our students to not have the same opportunities as other students because of income.”

The district participates in GEAR UP, which offers wraparound support for all students, including academic support for students in DE. Because of its rural location and distance from Ruiz College, pretty much all DE courses offered at Prairie HS are online,

which means students have very little in-person interaction with college personnel. The GEAR UP coordinator and other personnel at the high school lamented that they could only offer online DE courses, explaining that Ruiz faculty wouldn't make the long commute to deliver courses in person because the high school didn't offer enough DE to make this investment worthwhile. At the same time, the school lacked instructors with appropriate credentials to teach DE courses. The high school counselor, Diane, served as a liaison between Ruiz College and students and noted that she often met with the DE advisor from the college to discuss student needs.

Texian High School

Texian High School is a Title I, traditional public high school in a small town. The high school is the only high school in a school district that also includes one elementary school (preK–grade 2), one intermediate school (grades 3–5), and one middle school (grades 6–8). The entire school district serves about 1,800 students, with the high school serving approximately 500 students. Because the district includes only one school for each age group, staff and students described a tight-knit community where students know each other well because they have gone to school together for years.

Unlike Prairie High School, Texian HS is housed in a noticeably dated building, built in the 1970s. The principal explained that they tried to pass a bond to upgrade their facilities (like the one that passed at Prairie HS and at another partnership's high school, W. Wolff High School), but it did not pass. Personnel we spoke to typically referred to their students as coming from "blue-collar" and "low-income" families. About 55% of the students at the high school identified as Hispanic, 25% as Black, and 15% as White (see Table 1).

The school board of the Texian school district is very supportive of DE and sees CTE as a "huge aspect of the community because not many students are going onto four-year universities immediately" (Gabriel, principal, Texian HS). He also noted that the school previously offered a mix of AP and DE courses, but stopped offering AP because students often did not perform well on the AP exam. During our site visits, we found that most of Texian's DE courses were offered online or with qualified instructors who were

embedded at the high school (i.e., they were primarily employed by the high school, like Samantha and Marybeth, who participated in interviews).

Appendix B. Interview Protocols

This document contains all the data collection protocols, from which stakeholders were asked questions specific to their role.

B.1 List of Protocols Used for Different Stakeholder Groups

Group: College & School Leaders/Leaders of Student Success Initiatives

- Presidents
- Superintendents/other district leadership
- Principals
- Leaders of student success initiatives like Guided Pathways

Group: College & School Administrators Supporting DE Programs

- Provosts/VPs
- Other senior executives
- Directors
- Deans
- In high schools, this may be a school counselor or assistant principal who is responsible for the dual credit program

Group: College Directors/Coordinators of Dual Enrollment Programs

- DE directors/DE coordinators (they may use either title)

Group: College & School Dual Enrollment Instructors

- DE instructors/faculty members (either title may be used)

Group: College & School Advising and Counseling Staff

- Directors of advising or counseling
- College advisors or success coaches
- High school counselors

Group: College & School Institutional Researchers

- Directors of institutional research/institutional research and effectiveness
- Other research staff members

Group: High School Dual Enrollment Students

B.2 Background & Informed Consent Process for College & School Employees

Before the interview begins and you start the recording:

- Allow the participant to read and sign the informed consent form.
- Collect the signed consent form.

If they have agreed to participate, read the following statement:

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview. Our names are _____ and _____. Our purpose is to gain an in-depth understanding of the work that your college/school/district has been doing related to dual enrollment/credit, and especially how you have worked to advance equity in participation and outcomes.

We are talking with leaders from schools and colleges in two states, all selected because their partnerships had stronger outcomes (e.g., course success rates, rates of college matriculation) for students of color and low-income students in dual enrollment. We will also conduct some student focus groups. Your voice is important in all of this, and we appreciate the time you're taking to talk with us. We will probably spend about an hour with you today.

To assure your confidentiality, you will not be identified by name in any reports or documents without your permission. If we do mention your school by name, we will allow your leaders to review what we write about you before we publish.

The information gathered in this research will primarily be used to create practitioner-facing webinars and tools designed to be used by college and school leaders who want to advance equity in their dual credit/enrollment offerings.

We will be taking notes and would also like to audio record our conversation in order to keep track of what we discussed here today. Recording the conversation is optional but allows us to focus on what is being said and to fill in information if we miss something in our notes. These recordings will be used only by the researchers. They will not be shared with others. Any recordings or transcriptions made from them will be kept on password-protected computers in locked offices. It is OK to record?

- Indicate YES or NO.

Do you have any questions before we begin? [Do you/Does everyone] consent to this process?

B.3 Data Collection Protocol Questions

General Questions for All College & School Employees

1. What is your title? Could you please give us an overview of your job responsibilities?
 - a. How long have you been at this school/college/district?
 - b. *[If not addressed]* What is your role in relation to dual enrollment?

Group: College & School Leaders & Leaders of Student Success Initiatives

To be used when speaking with:

- Presidents
- Superintendents/other district leadership
- Principals
- Leaders of student success initiatives like Guided Pathways

Note: Ask for examples of good practices.

Priority questions for college presidents & K-12 leaders

- What is your vision and goals for dual enrollment, and what have been your strategies to enact this vision?

- Please provide an estimate of the enrollment numbers/trends for the various dual enrollment programs you offer (i.e., ECHS, CTE, à la carte DE)

Regarding efforts to broaden access to dual enrollment:

- What strategies have been effective, particularly for Black, Latino, and low-income students?
- What are the major challenges in your work and barriers for students?
- What are the associated costs, and what are your incentives for expanding access?

Regarding efforts to implement dual enrollment as an on-ramp to postsecondary pathways/college programs:

- What strategies have been effective, particularly for Black, Latino, and low-income students?
- What are the major challenges in your work and barriers for students?
- What are the associated costs, and what are your incentives for building on-ramps?

Regarding your working relationships and partnerships with K-12 schools and districts:

- What has been effective in building and sustaining strong partnerships?
- What are the major challenges to building and sustaining strong partnerships?
- What are the associated costs, and how have you aligned incentives with your K-12/college partners?

Additional Questions for Probing Further on Above Topics

Overview of Dual Enrollment Program

We would like to start by getting an overview of the dual credit/enrollment program in your college/school/district and generally learning how the various colleges, high schools, and districts work together to offer dual credit/enrollment.

1. Can you tell us a little about your school/college/district (prompt: what it is known for, main programs, students/communities served)
2. What is the history of dual credit at your school/college/district?
3. Please describe the relationship between K-12 and the college in your dual enrollment program.
 - a. What goes well and what is challenging?
 - b. How often do you meet to discuss dual enrollment? Who is involved and what is discussed?
4. What forms of dual credit and other college-credit earning opportunities do you offer (prompt: dual enrollment, AP, IB, early college, tech prep, etc.)?
5. Can you talk about what is going well and what has been a challenge in your dual enrollment program? (President)
6. Do you have any particular goals for your dual enrollment program in the next 3–5 years? (President)
 - a. Are there any goals related to equity (prompt: targets for different groups)?

Connection to Student Success Initiatives

7. (Addressed to CC partner) How is your approach to DC informed by or connected to other student success initiatives at your college? (President)

- a. Dual credit course taking aligned to college programs
- b. Supported exploration of college programs and careers (program/career exploration events and activities, networking with peers, faculty, professionals)
- c. Advisement of DC students (program maps, pathways, degree planning tools)
- d. Education planning with DC students
- e. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion work

8. (Addressed to K-12 partner) How does the approach to DC relate to broader success initiatives at your high school? [Prompt if district rep on call: How does this align with district-level initiatives?]

9. Can you provide any specific examples as to how you use DE/DC to help students begin to explore, gain momentum in specific programs or career pathways?

Partnership (Supports for Underrepresented Students)

We've discussed the relationship between K-12 and the PS secondary sectors to offer dual credit/enrollment. Now, we would like to focus on a specific partnership with *[identified high school/college]*.

10. We found that you have strong outcomes for students from *[identified high school/college]*. Can you tell us more about how you partner with *[HS or college name]*?

a. Is there anything unique about this partnership in comparison to other high schools/colleges that you partner with?

11. What do you think might account for the strong outcomes in this partnership, particularly among Black, Hispanic, and low-income students? In general, with this and/or other high schools, have you intentionally taken steps to increase college access and success by underrepresented students?

- a. How do you reach out to let students and families know about DC opportunities? *[If not addressed]* Is there anything different about outreach to underrepresented students and families?
 - b. Have you or your HS partners taken steps to help students meet DC eligibility requirements?
 - c. Do you or your HS partners provide advising supports to DC students that might improve college-going and success for underserved students?
 - d. How do you ensure high-quality instruction in dual credit courses?
 - e. How do you monitor who is gaining access to DC opportunities and who succeeds? Do you have any data systems in place for this purpose?
12. What are the main barriers to equitable participation in dual enrollment (prompt: money, transportation, student preparation, student interest) and how has your school/college/district sought to address them?
13. What are the main barriers to equitable success in dual enrollment, and how has your school/college/district sought to address them?

Policy Incentives/Disincentives and Costs

14. Who pays for students to take dual credit in your district/school/college? How is the cost shared by the student, district, and/or college partner?
15. What costs are involved in expanding access to dual credit by underserved students?
 - a. How is your organization impacted by these additional costs?
 - b. How have you worked with stakeholders to cover the additional costs associated with expansion of dual credit and to minimize the impact?
 - c. What state policy incentives have effectively expanded access to dual credit? How do they impact equity? Are there unintended consequences?
16. What are ways to create “win-wins” between K-12 and college partners on dual enrollment?

Metrics

17. What data does your college/school collect on dual enrollment? What metrics do you track?
 - a. Are the student data disaggregated by race or income?
18. Who sees the data and how is it used? Has the data been recently used to identify gaps in quality or access? Please explain.
19. Is data shared between high school and college? In what form and in what contexts? Can you provide specific examples?
20. Do you have access to data on dual enrollment students who have graduated?
 - a. If so, what are their outcomes?
 - b. If so, did their dual enrollment courses typically transfer?

Wrap-Up Question

21. Based on your experience, what is one piece of advice or one recommendation you would make to dual enrollment practitioners to support Black, Hispanic, low-income, and other underrepresented students to access and succeed in dual enrollment?

Group: College & School Administrators Supporting DE Programs

To be used when speaking with:

- *Provosts/VPs*
- *Other senior executives*
- *Directors*
- *Deans*
- *In high schools, this may be a school counselor or assistant principal who is responsible for the dual credit program*

Note: Ask for examples of good practices.

Questions

Partnership (Roles & Staffing)

1. We found that you have strong outcomes for students from [identified high school/college]. How do you partner with [HS or college name]?

- a. Is there anything unique about this partnership in comparison to other high schools/colleges that you partner with?
- b. Who do you work with at the high school and how do you delineate your role and their role in supporting DE students?
 - i. What are the roles and responsibilities of the HS staff that you work with? How does that differ from your responsibilities?
 - ii. How do you communicate about expectations across those different roles?

Partnership (Supports for Underrepresented Students)

- 2. What do you think might account for the strong outcomes in this partnership, particularly among Black, Hispanic, and low-income students?
 - a. In general, with this and/or other high schools, have you intentionally taken steps to increase college access and success for underrepresented students? *[Note: If participants begin to talk about more than one high school partnership, make sure to ask which partnership they are referring to if it becomes unclear.]*
 - b. How do you reach out to let students and families know about DC opportunities?
 - i. Who is responsible for this?
 - ii. *[If not addressed]* Is there anything different about outreach to underrepresented students and families?
 - c. Have you or your HS partners taken steps to help students meet DC eligibility requirements?
 - i. Who is responsible for this?
 - ii. *[If not addressed]* Is there anything different about outreach to underrepresented students and families?
- 3. How do you support dual enrollment students academically?
 - a. Do you or your HS partners provide DC advising supports for underserved students (Black, Hispanic students; students from low-income families; first-gen college students) in order to improve college-going and success?
 - i. Who is responsible for this?
 - b. How do you ensure high-quality instruction in dual credit courses?
 - i. Who is responsible for this?

Metrics

- 4. Please provide an estimate of the enrollment numbers/trends for the various dual enrollment programs you offer (i.e., ECHS, CTE, à la carte DE)
- 5. What data does your college/school collect on dual enrollment? What metrics do you track?
 - a. How do you monitor who is gaining access to DC opportunities and who succeeds? Do you have any data systems in place for this purpose?
 - b. Are the student data disaggregated by race or income?
 - c. Who sees the data and how is it used? Has the data been recently used to identify gaps in quality or access? Please explain.

- i. Is data shared between high school and college? In what form and what contexts? Can you provide specific examples?
- d. Do you have access to data on dual enrollment students who have graduated?
 - i. If so, what are their outcomes?
 - ii. If so, did their dual enrollment courses typically transfer?

Wrap-Up Question

6. Based on your experience, what is one piece of advice or one recommendation you would make to dual enrollment practitioners to support Black, Hispanic, low-income, and other underrepresented students to access and succeed in dual enrollment?

Group: College Directors/Coordinators of Dual Enrollment Programs

To be used when speaking with:

- DE directors/DE coordinators (they may use either title)

Note: Ask for examples of good practices.

Questions

Partnership (Roles & Staffing)

1. We found that you have strong outcomes for students from [identified high school/college]. Can you tell us more about how you partner with [HS or college name]?
 - a. Is there anything unique about this partnership in comparison to other high schools/colleges that you partner with?
 - b. Who are the key stakeholders participating on the college and HS/district sides to offer this DE/DC program? How do these stakeholders communicate to ensure that policies and expectations are clear for students and families?
 - c. What do you see as your role in facilitating the DE/DC program with respect to the others involved?
 - d. Who do you work with at the [high school/college] and how do you delineate your role and their role in supporting DE students?
 - i. What are the role responsibilities of the HS/CC staff that you work with? How does that differ from your responsibilities?
 - ii. How do you communicate about expectations across those different roles?
 - e. Can you talk about what is going well and what has been a challenge in this dual enrollment partnership?

Partnership (Supports for Underrepresented Students)

2. What do you think might account for the strong outcomes in this partnership, particularly among Black, Hispanic, and low-income students?
 - a. In general, with this and/or other high schools, have you intentionally taken steps to increase college access and success by underrepresented students? [Note: If participants begin to talk about more than one high school

partnership, make sure to ask which partnership they are referring to if it becomes unclear.]

- b. How do you reach out to let students and families know about DC opportunities?
 - i. Who is responsible for this?
 - ii. *[If not addressed]* Is there anything different about outreach to underrepresented students and families?
- c. Have you or your HS partners taken steps to help students meet DC eligibility requirements?
 - i. Who is responsible for this?
 - ii. *[If not addressed]* Is there anything different about outreach to underrepresented students and families?
- 3. Do you or your HS partners provide advising supports to DC students that might improve college-going and success for underserved students?
- 4. How do you ensure high-quality instruction in dual credit courses?
 - a. How do you monitor who is gaining access to DC opportunities and who succeeds? Do you have any data systems in place for this purpose?
- 5. How do you support dual enrollment students academically? In other ways?
 - a. Who is responsible for this?
 - b. Do you or your HS partners provide DC advising supports for underserved students (Black, Hispanic students; students from low-income families; first-gen college students) in order to improve college-going and success?
 - i. Who is responsible for this?
 - c. How do you ensure high-quality instruction in dual credit courses?
 - i. Who is responsible for this?
 - d. How do you monitor who is gaining access to DC opportunities and who succeeds? Do you have any data systems in place for this purpose?

Connection to Student Success Initiatives

- 6. (Addressed to CC partner) How is your approach to DC informed by or connected to other student success initiatives at your college?
 - a. Dual credit course taking aligned to college programs
 - b. Supported exploration of college programs and careers (program/career exploration events and activities, networking with peers, faculty, professionals)
 - c. Advisement of DC students (program maps, pathways, degree planning tools)
 - d. Education planning with DC students
 - e. DEI work
- 7. Can you provide any specific examples as to how you use DE/DC to help students begin to explore or gain momentum in specific programs or career pathways?
- 8. Do you have any particular goals for your dual enrollment program in the next 3–5 years?
 - a. Are there any goals related to equity (prompt: targets for different groups)?

Metrics

9. Please provide an estimate of the enrollment numbers/trends for the various dual enrollment programs you offer (i.e., ECHS, CTE, à la carte DE)
10. Are you aware of dual enrollment participation rates—and any variation—by race or income?
 - a. If so, what is the cause of any differences in participation?
11. What do students/families pay for dual enrollment?
 - a. If they pay, is financial assistance available? How do they get it?
12. What data does your college/school collect on dual enrollment? What metrics do you track?
 - a. Are the student data disaggregated by race or income?
13. Who sees the data and how is it used? Has the data been recently used to identify gaps in quality or access? Please explain.
14. Is data shared between high school and college? In what form and in what contexts? Can you provide specific examples?
15. Do you have access to data on dual enrollment students who have graduated?
 - a. If so, what are their outcomes?
 - b. If so, did their dual enrollment courses typically transfer?

Wrap-Up Question

16. Based on your experience, what is one piece of advice or one recommendation you would make to dual enrollment practitioners to support Black, Hispanic, low-income, and other underrepresented students to access and succeed in dual enrollment?

Group: College & High School Dual Enrollment Instructors

To be used when speaking with:

- DE instructors/faculty members (either term may be used)

Note: Ask for examples of good practices.

Questions

Credentialing & Professional Development

1. What dual enrollment courses do you teach? How were you selected to become a dual enrollment instructor?
2. Who teaches dual enrollment courses and how are they selected? Is training provided?
 - a. Does any professional development focus on improving the classroom experience for traditionally underserved students?

Instruction & Classroom Experience

3. How do you ensure that dual enrollment courses are equal in quality to other college courses?
 - a. Is there a process for reviewing curricula and/or observing instructors?
 - b. Is there data collected and used to help maintain program quality?

4. Are any special efforts made to ensure that instruction is engaging and relevant generally? For traditionally underrepresented students?
5. **Guided Pathways Question** Do the courses you teach provide dual enrollment students with information about college degrees and credentials and careers?
 - a. *[If not addressed]* Do dual enrollment students have opportunities outside the classroom to explore and learn about college programs and careers?
6. What do you think is most important for helping students to have a “college experience” in dual credit/enrollment?

Partnership

We found that you have strong outcomes for students from *[identified high school/college]*.

7. Who do you work with at the *[high school/college]* and how do you delineate your role and their role in supporting DE students?
 - a. What are the role responsibilities of the HS/CC staff that you work with? How does that differ from your responsibilities?
 - b. How do you communicate about expectations across those different roles?
8. From your perspective, what do you think might contribute to the strong outcomes we observed for underrepresented students from *[school/college]*?

Wrap-Up Question

9. Based on your experience, what is one piece of advice or one recommendation you would make to dual enrollment practitioners to support Black, Hispanic, low-income, and other underrepresented students to access and succeed in dual enrollment?

Group: College & High School Advising and Counseling Staff

To be used when speaking with:

- *Directors of advising or counseling*
- *College advisors or success coaches*
- *High school counselors*

Note: Ask for examples of good practices.

Questions

Advising Model & Approach

1. What advising do dual enrollment students get? Is it required?
 - a. Who provides it? What is the division of labor between high school and college advisors or counselors?
 - b. How much communication is there between school counselors and college advisors about the performance of individual students? About college program requirements or other broader issues?
2. What is the approach/philosophy to counseling/advising students?
 - a. **Guided Pathways Question** Are dual enrollment students advised on their course selection based on program maps, pathways, and/or other degree planning tools?

- b. Are they advised on course selection based on their career or college major interests?

Supports for Students

3. How do you support dual enrollment students academically? In other ways?
 - a. Who is responsible for this?
4. How do you know if students are struggling in their dual enrollment courses and what is typically done to help them?
5. Are there particular efforts made to support underrepresented dual enrollment students?
6. Are there courses that students can take in high school that prepare them well for participation in dual enrollment? Do they cover particular kinds of knowledge and skills needed for success in college?
7. Are special efforts made to help students feel like they belong in college?

Partnership

We found that you have strong outcomes for students from *[identified high school/college]*.

8. Who do you work with at the *[high school/college]* and how do you delineate your role and their role in supporting DE students?
 - a. What are the role responsibilities of the HS/CC staff that you work with? How does that differ from your responsibilities?
 - b. How do you communicate about expectations across those different roles?
9. From your perspective, what do you think might contribute to the strong outcomes we observed for underrepresented students from *[school/college]*?

Wrap-Up Question

10. Based on your experience, what is one piece of advice or one recommendation you would make to dual enrollment practitioners to support Black, Hispanic, low-income, and other underrepresented students to access and succeed in dual enrollment?

Group: College & High School Institutional Researchers

To be used when speaking with:

- *Directors of institutional research/institutional research and effectiveness*
- *Other research staff members*

Note: Ask for examples of good practices.

Dual Enrollment Data Practices

1. What data do you keep about dual enrollment students at your *[school/college]*?
2. Do you disaggregate these data by student demographic characteristics? If so, what variables do you examine?
3. How are these data used? Are they regularly reviewed? Who uses these data?
 - a. Who do you communicate with about results?
4. How are these data shared with the *[school/college]*?

5. Can you give an example of how data on the DE/DC program has been used to support changes and improvements?
6. What sorts of requests do you typically receive for data on DE/DC programs?

Wrap-Up Question

7. Based on your experience, what is one piece of advice or one recommendation you would make to dual enrollment practitioners for how they could use data to support Black, Hispanic, low-income, and other underrepresented students to access and succeed in dual enrollment?

Thank you for offering your perspectives and giving us your time!

Group: High School Dual Enrollment Students

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview. Our names are _____ and are _____. Our purpose is to gain an in-depth understanding of the work that your school has been doing related to dual enrollment, and especially how they have worked to advance equity in participation and outcomes.

Your school and college were selected as a partnership that has been successful in promoting dual enrollment equity so we are especially interested in learning from you. The student voice is important in all of this, and we appreciate the time you're taking to talk with us. We will probably spend about an hour with you today.

The information gathered in this research will primarily be used to create information and recommendations for college and school leaders who want to advance equity in their dual enrollment offerings. To assure your confidentiality, you will not be identified by name in any reports or documents.

We will be taking notes and would also like to audio record our conversation in order to keep track of what we discussed here today. Recording the conversation is optional but allows us to focus on what is being said and to fill in information if we miss something in our notes. These recordings will be used only by the researchers. They will not be shared with others. Any recordings or transcriptions made from them will be kept on password-protected computers in locked offices.

(Go through and explain assent form)

Do you have any questions before we begin? Does everyone consent to this process?

Questions

Icebreaker

1. Going around the group, can you tell us your name, grade level, and something you like to do outside of school?

Dual Enrollment Courses

2. Can you each tell me about what dual enrollment courses you are taking and how well you like them?
 - a. Where do you take your courses (*prompt: college, high school, online*)?

Outreach, Recruitment & Eligibility

3. How did you first hear about dual enrollment at your school?
4. How did you decide whether to participate in DE/DC? What factors did you weigh in making that decision?
5. What did you have to do to become eligible to take dual enrollment courses?
 - a. Did you receive help with applying for dual enrollment?

Advising & Educational Planning

6. **Guided Pathways Question** How did you decide what dual enrollment courses to take? Who helped you make the decision?
 - a. Do you work with an advisor or anyone else from the college related to your dual enrollment courses?
7. **Guided Pathways Question** What are your plans after high school?
 - a. Whether you are planning to continue college or work after graduating high school, are you currently taking courses to complete a degree or credential at [college]?
 - b. *[Priority]* Do you have an educational plan that lists the courses you need to take, and when you will take them?
 - i. *[If yes]* Do you like having a plan? Why?
 - ii. *[If no]* What do you think about having a plan? Do you like that idea?

Academic & Nonacademic Supports/Experience

8. Generally speaking, how do your dual enrollment courses compare to your high school courses? (*prompt: difficulty, pace, type of teaching, assignments, expectations*)
9. If you have a hard assignment in your dual enrollment courses, where can you get help?
10. If you need help with other things, where can you get help?
11. (*For students taking dual enrollment courses at the high school or online*) Do you ever spend time on the college campus? What do you do there?
 - a. Do you communicate with anyone from the college? What about? What do those typical interactions look like?

Wrap-Up Question

12. What is a good thing about being a dual enrollment student at [college]? What is one thing that you dislike about being a dual enrollment student at [college]?

Thank you for participating in this focus group!