



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

Developing a Successful Dual Enrollment Program

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Harford Community College has been working with dually enrolled business students for eight years. We have employed a variety of practices to help students succeed and have identified some that work well and challenges that students still face. For the purpose of this article, the term “dually enrolled” (DE) students will include students who are taking college classes while in high school who may or may not need the class to graduate.

The dual enrollment model used for our business classes involves community college faculty teaching high school students online. The students enroll at their local high school for an equivalent business class and enroll at the college for their college course. High school students are on a block schedule and meet for ninety minutes, two or three times per week. During these assigned blocks, students have access to computers and are given time to work on their college course. High school business instructors are present and are able to answer technical questions. The high school instructors do not teach the DE students; their role is akin to a facilitator or mentor.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, this model converted seamlessly to remote learning, since there was already an expectation in place that the college course would be completed online. For students who did not have internet access or computers at home, the county provided the necessary items.

What Works

There have been several strategies and practices employed that appear to help students succeed, which is defined as students having achieved a grade of “C” or better in the college class.

- We travel to the high school two to three times per semester to meet with students face-to-face. We do not necessarily teach during this time, but review the course syllabus, discuss the course projects, and invite local businesses to make presentations to the students.
- Students appear to be more comfortable reaching out to us once they have met us in person.

Note: During COVID-19, these meetings took place synchronously via Microsoft Teams or an equivalent technology.

- Support from the high school business instructors has been extremely important to student success. We have noted that in the high schools where the business instructor has followed up with students, sent out reminders, and acted as a sounding board for students, students tend to be more engaged and successful.
- One business instructor uses an app to send out reminder text messages to their students.
- This same instructor hangs the syllabus on the classroom bulletin board.
- The instructors are also able to reach out to parents and guidance counselors when there is a concern about a student’s progress.
- One instructor has been known to assist students on a Sunday afternoon prior to an 11:59 p.m. project deadline.

Student Struggles and Possible Solutions

1. Checking Their College Email

Solution: Post all announcements and information on the Learning Management System (LMS) and send an email when the LMS is updated. Encourage students to download the LMS app to their phones so they receive all posts.

2. Completing Assignments and Exams in a Timely Manner

Solution: Make sure all late policies are clearly stated in the course syllabus, in the LMS, and discussed during class meetings. When students submit work late, make them aware of where these policies are located and hold them accountable. These are college courses!

3. Effectively Using Citations

Solution: Have the high school media specialist meet with students early in the semester to discuss plagiarism and the importance of citations. Ask the specialist to discuss APA formatting and provide tools students can use to prepare citations. If the high school media specialist is not able to meet with students, invite one of the librarians from the community college to meet with students.

4. Development of LMS Skills

Solution: Harford Community College’s eLearning department has developed a training module for Blackboard basics. By requiring students to complete these modules, their knowledge of the LMS is strengthened and they are enabled to navigate the class website with ease.

5. *Affordability of Tuition and Books*

Solution: In order to ease the cost of tuition and books for the families of high school students, students can apply to receive a tuition discount under Maryland Senate Bill 740. Once the students are approved by Harford County Public Schools and verification forms are received by Harford Community College, the college waives 25 percent of the tuition for the first four courses taken in an academic year.

High school students are responsible for purchasing their own textbooks. However, we have worked with textbook publishers to enact Inclusive Access. Inclusive Access reduces the cost of textbooks and incorporates their cost into students' college fees. Upon registration, students receive immediate online access to their textbooks and the publishers' online learning platform. Inclusive access has also been established for all Harford Community College students taking business classes.

Some students who received grants to cover tuition still had to cover the cost of their textbooks. We applied to the HCC Foundation to assist these students with the cost of textbooks. We also partnered with a local credit union to provide a five-year grant to cover some of these costs. These grants do not solve the problem long-term, but will allow us time to establish a more permanent solution.

6. *Orientation Access to High School Students*

Solution: The admissions department of Harford Community College developed a virtual orientation specifically for DE high school students. Attendance for the first session maxed out, so a second virtual orientation session was added. Along with the standard orientation information, students were able to participate in a Q&A session with college professors and administrative staff.

Conclusion

The dual enrollment initiative has grown significantly at Harford Community College. It will be important to continually monitor student success, retention, and completion to further develop and improve the program. Our intention is to share our findings with others so that we can work together to afford students the best opportunity for early access to college.

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