Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

# *Dual Enrollment Course Costs Pilot*

## 1. Purpose:

As evidenced in multiple reports and studies and through analysis of Washington state data, the inequities in dual credit participation between students from low-income families and those classified as middle or high-income are abundantly clear.

The Dual Credit Fee Subsidy Pilot was introduced through a proviso in the 2022 legislative budget. It earmarked $500,000 to be distributed to three community or technical colleges at a rate of $1,000 per FRPL-eligible full-time equivalent (FTE) Running Start or CiHS student.

## 2. Description of services provided:

Funding awarded to the colleges was intended to subsidize out-of-pocket costs to eligible students for:

- Any student-voted fees, technology fees, course fees, laboratory fees, or other fees required for enrollment, up to 17 credits per quarter, which were not waived by the institution of higher education under Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 28A.600.310.
- Textbooks and other course materials required by the institution of higher education.
- Previously waived college fees or transportation costs for eligible students who qualify for FRPL and are enrolled in CiHS or Running Start courses, only after using funding to cover the bulleted expenses above.

## 3. Criteria for receiving services and/or grants:

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) partnered with the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to identify three community and technical colleges to pilot the Dual Credit Fee Subsidy program. Skagit Valley College (SVC), South Puget Sound Community College (SPSCC), and Yakima Valley College (YVC) were selected to participate based upon the following criteria:

- Location diversity: One community college must be located east of the crest of the Cascade Mountains, and another must be located in a county with a population between 115,000–150,000. County population was verified by using the MRSC Washington County Profiles webpage.
- Demonstration of strong and established dual credit partnerships with interested local high schools.

- Commitment to increasing access and participation in Running Start and CiHS programs among students who have been historically underrepresented and qualify as low-income.
- Evaluation of current Running Start and CiHS enrollment, including the percentage of students that qualify for free and reduced-price lunch (FRPL).
- Past performance in collaborative OSPI/SBCTC pilot programs, familiarity with OSPI's iGrants application process, and experience with OSPI reimbursement and reporting practices.

OSPI and SBCTC outlined student eligibility, specific out-of-pocket costs the pilot intended to subsidize, and how available funds were to be prioritized. Using data from the colleges and SBCTC, OSPI developed a formula to account for each college's total Running Start and CiHS enrollment, and the proportion of low-income students in those programs. This data determined the total amount of funding available to each college. With SBCTC's support, OSPI allocated $143,602 to YVC, $216,250 to SPSCC, and $140,148 to SVC for distribution to eligible students through a reimbursement process.

### Beneficiaries in the 2022–23 School Year:

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of School Districts: | Unknown |
| Number of Schools: | Unknown |
| Number of Students: | 549 |
| Number of Educators: | N/A |
| Other: | 3 Colleges |

## 4. Are federal or other funds contingent on state funding?

☒ No

## 5. State funding history:

| Fiscal Year | Amount Funded | Actual Expenditures |
|---|---|---|
| 2023 | $500,000 | $192,871 |

## 6. Number of beneficiaries (e.g., school districts, schools, students, educators, other) history:

| Fiscal Year | Number of Colleges |
|---|---|
| 2023 | 3 |

## 7. Programmatic changes since inception (if any):

As this was the first year of this proviso, there were no changes.

## 8. Program evaluation or evaluation of major findings:

Despite implementing this pilot with as much latitude for using the funds within stated parameters, all three colleges indicated they had more funds than needed to cover out-of-pocket expenses for eligible students. Following feedback indicating a willingness to return and/or redistribute their funding, OSPI received an update on each college's plan and prospects for utilizing the available funds. Ultimately, the colleges utilized the funding for the following purposes:

- **South Puget Sound Community College:** SPSCC utilized $50,365 of their award for 152 CiHS students and 119 Running Start Students. 53% of those supported with this funding were students of color. 25% of all CiHS students were subsidized compared to just 5% of Running Start students, highlighting the impact of existing fee waivers for Running Start and prompting SPSCC to note, "Having a uniform fee waiver policy for both dual credit programs brought consistency to our programs and allowed more flexibility for students." At $42,900, the vast majority of SPSCC's expenses went towards CiHS course fees, while $4,967 was claimed for textbooks and $2,498 for Running Start fees. The college had initially intended to utilize more pilot funding to expand their book voucher and loan program, but learned they had a United Way grant to cover that expense.
- **Skagit Valley College:** SVC reported using $3,901 of their award for 10 Running Start students. They reported (but did not claim) expenses of $3,316 in course fees, $170 in technology fees, and $423 in student-voted fees, so these amounts are not reflected in the "Actual Expenditures". ESSER funding and school district support addressed most of their dual credit fee gaps. SVC was developing a plan to further subsidize CiHS costs, but the existing reduced fee structure for low-income students ($21 per credit) and staff turnover and capacity impacted their ability to pursue these plans. They expressed a need for summer support due to summer quarter Running Start but recognized the pilot funding would not extend beyond June 30, 2023.
- **Yakima Valley College:** YVC expended $142,506, utilizing their Financial Aid process to issue refunds for fees, materials, textbooks, and transportation to 268 eligible Running Start students. 86% of them were students of color. Working with their Financial Aid office and utilizing the fee waiver information on the Running Start Enrollment Verification Form (RSEVF), YVC established an application for reimbursement and made direct payments to students for eligible expenses.

OSPI, SBCTC, and the pilot colleges support all efforts to remove course fees and other out-of-pocket expenses to students in dual credit programs and appreciate the legislature's investment in this pilot program. Since Running Start fees were already waived for FRPL-eligible students, and other state and federal funding and non-profit supported programs were available to support them, the colleges were challenged to expend the funds in the time allowed.

## 9. Major challenges faced by the program:

- **Existing Financial Support:** Most low-income Running Start students were already well supported with fee waivers, existing textbook loan programs, open educational resources (OER), and public transportation vouchers. The colleges speculated that the students who needed more financial support were those who were not FRPL-eligible or otherwise considered "low-income," but were still struggling to make ends meet. As SBCTC noted, "The biggest challenge for SPSCC and our students was the limitation of only being able to use these funds for fee waiver-based students." Additionally, eligible students from the many districts receiving subsidies for CiHS course fees via OSPI already had state funds covering the cost of their CiHS course.
- **Fund Distribution Process:** The college staff don't normally access grant funds through OSPI, so they understandably lacked familiarity with iGrants and OSPI's reimbursement processes. Technical barriers to gaining access to iGrants also had to be reconciled, and delayed implementation. System challenges in claiming reimbursement also occurred, causing some claims to be made manually due to confusion around the iGrants system and budget coding.
- **Timing Constraints:** After session ended in late April, OSPI and SBCTC needed to simultaneously develop outreach, guidance, and implementation processes for the pilot and summer Running Start. Neither the high schools nor colleges had adequate time to market the pilot program and establish systems to implement it. SVC wrote, "Managing dual enrollment programs requires bridging two educational systems and requires staff to understand two sets of policies and structures to implement programs…The number of funding programs combined with a staff shortage to manage the reporting requirements for each project has made it challenging to fully expend these funds and monitor the impact on student outcomes."

## 10. Future opportunities:

As reflected in each college's year-end report, the following recommendations should be considered for future iterations of this program:

- **Two-Year Timeline:** More time is needed to implement and administer an effective pilot program. Providing direct support to students entails student outreach and the development of guidance for staff across two systems, and related materials, applications, and payment processes. A two-year pilot would have allowed more time for ensuring student, staff and family understanding of the opportunity, grant development, program implementation, and the ability to evaluate and change practices as challenges arose to utilize the funding effectively.
- **Receiving Agency:** OSPI and the K–12 system are not designed to provide direct payments to institutions of higher education, much less directly to students. The SBCTC is better equipped to ensure the funding can be directed expediently to participating colleges and used for the appropriate purposes through their existing payment and reporting practices.
- **Flexibility of Funding:** Colleges have variable fee structures, different methods and thresholds for waiving them, and existing programs for reducing costs for textbooks and materials. None of the pilot colleges need $1,000 per eligible FTE. The colleges advocated for a more flexible approach to funding institutional needs (e.g., textbook loan programs, open-educational resources, instructional and classroom support, technology upgrades, etc.) and the autonomy to invest it in programs and services currently supported with student fees, which differ from college to college. According to SVC, "Support funding for dual credit students is often restricted to covering tuition and fees and does not reflect the actual cost of attending college. Future pilots could analyze the relationships between funding out-of-pocket costs to students, the preferred modality of instruction, and subsequent college enrollment."
- **Expanded Eligibility:** Each college remarked on the need to support students who were on the cusp of FRPL-eligibility, as FRPL-eligible students were already well-served by waiver, subsidy, and financial aid programs. As SPSCC explained, "Having more flexibility for the colleges to control more how these funds are used within the Running Start and CiHS program outside of restricting it to fee waiver identified students only would mean better matching of the funds for those students who really do need assistance beyond the programs the college already has in place."
- **Distribution Methods:** YVC's approach to partnering with Financial Aid and providing direct reimbursement to students was the most effective method of expending the funds. This approach allowed students to submit receipts for out-of-pocket expenses, including transportation. The other colleges did not seem to have the time nor capacity to establish such partnerships or processes and sought to administer the funding exclusively through their dual credit program offices, which likely limited their ability to market and administer the subsidies.

## 11. Statutory and/or budget language:

(a) $500,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2023 is provided solely for the office to administer a pilot program to subsidize eligible dual or concurrent enrollment course costs for students who qualify for FRPL and are participating in dual enrollment courses offered by one of three community colleges designated by the office and the state board of community and technical colleges. Eligible dual enrollment course programs include the running start and college in the high school programs. One of the community colleges must be located in a county with a population greater than 125,000 but less than 150,000.

(b) The office must subsidize the course costs by transmitting to each of the three institutions of higher education $1,000 per full-time equivalent student during the 2022-23 academic year. For eligible students who qualify for FRPL and are enrolled in running start courses, the pilot program must subsidize:

(i) Any student-voted fees, technology fees, course fees, laboratory fees, or other fees required for enrollment, up to 17 credits per quarter, that were not waived by the institution of higher education under RCW 28A.600.310; and

(ii) Textbooks and other course materials required by the institution of higher education.

(c) Any funds remaining after the office subsidizes the costs included in (b) of this subsection may be used to subsidize waived fees or transportation costs for eligible students who qualify for FRPL and are enrolled in running start courses.

(d) The office must submit a preliminary report to the legislature by June 30, 2023, on the results of the pilot program. It is the intent of the legislature to provide funding for a final report due to the legislature by August 31, 2023.

## 12. Other relevant information:

N/A

## 13. Schools/districts receiving assistance:

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## 14. Program Contact Information:

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