



University of  
Pittsburgh

Institute  
of Politics

## **Request for Proposal: Testing Promising Practices to Expand Access to and Equity in Existing Dual Enrollment Programs in Southwestern Pennsylvania**

### **Background information**

The University of Pittsburgh Institute of Politics delivers timely information about the major issues affecting our region to elected officials and community leaders—and the public whom they serve—and provides a non-partisan forum where diverse viewpoints are shared, synthesized, and applied to the goal of promoting an improved quality of life, government efficiency, and economic vitality in Western Pennsylvania. For more than 30 years, the Institute has engaged and convened key regional and state decision makers through its stakeholder committees, developed policy research publications, and held local and regional forums on critical issues facing the region. Through its dedicated work, the Institute has produced innovative policy solutions to Western Pennsylvania’s pressing problems through informed and facilitated discussion among decisionmakers at the local, regional, and state levels.

For more information about the Institute’s work, please visit [iop.pitt.edu](http://iop.pitt.edu).

### **IOP Task Force on Equity in Dual Enrollment and Pre-apprenticeship Programs**

This research study on promising practices is aligned with the values and principles expressed through the work of the Institute’s Task Force on Equity in Dual Enrollment and Pre-apprenticeship Programs. The task force released its final report with policy recommendations to advance programming at the state level in December 2022. The report, *Pathways to Opportunity: Expanding and Aligning College and Career Readiness Programs in Pennsylvania*, can be viewed [here](#).

### **Description of Problem**

The lack of a statewide vision and statewide support for dual enrollment programming over the past decade and more has resulted in the development of myriad programs in schools across Pennsylvania because of the independent action of those schools and postsecondary institutions. The resulting program structure serves students inequitably, leaving large portions of the population without access to any college in high school opportunities. Data from the past decade shows that growth in access has only occurred in higher social economic status students and white students, while enrollment in such programs among other racial and ethnic groups and lower socioeconomic students has remained stagnant or declined. The IOP Task Force on Equity in Dual Enrollment and Pre-apprenticeship Programs developed 11 recommendations for

state action to increase access to and equity in programming; however, the Commonwealth would benefit from having additional information on how certain interventions work at the school level.

### **Project Description**

This research study is designed to recognize, promote, and facilitate the development of best practices in dual enrollment programming in the southwestern Pennsylvania region for the purpose of increasing access to this programming for students who are currently underrepresented. Schools with existing dual enrollment programs are invited to apply for a \$40,000 grant to support the strategic expansion of their program to include previously underrepresented students. In return for the financial support, the expansion practices put into place will be assessed by a researcher over the course of one school year, to determine how the practices affected student participation and success. For the purposes of this project, schools can operate a model in which college courses are offered within the high school taught by a certified high school teacher, and/or a model in which students leave the high school campus to attend college courses.

The goal of this project is to collect data related to the successful development of dual enrollment programming in Pennsylvania. The data will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of specific program elements in advancing equity in dual enrollment programming and in facilitating college and career readiness among students. The project report generated using the data from the selected school districts will support the development of district-level and state-level policies to support effective, equitable dual enrollment practices statewide. The research component of this project will follow all guidelines for ethical human subjects research and will have oversight from the University of Pittsburgh Institutional Review Board.<sup>1</sup>

### **Data**

In order to participate in this project, schools must be willing to provide the researcher/consultant with access to the following data:<sup>2</sup>

#### **Student participation**

- De-identified student level data for **all** 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students from the 2018-2019 school year through the 2023-2024 school year. Data points for students must include:
  - Academic year
  - Grade level

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<sup>1</sup> This project may also be sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, in which case their IRB will also have oversight.

<sup>2</sup> Any anticipated challenges with regard to data collection must be disclosed in the application. These challenges will not disqualify a school from participating; additional follow-up may be needed to determine whether sufficient technical support can be provided to the district to support an appropriate level of data sharing. The Pennsylvania Department of Education may be providing PIMS data for the selected schools in support of this project.

- Race/ethnicity
- Socio-economic status as measured by FRPL eligibility
- Student home zip code
- Disability status
- ELL status
- Annual cumulative weighted GPA
- Number of honors-level/AP courses (or school equivalent) enrolled in the academic year
- Number of dual enrollment courses enrolled in the academic year
- Course title for dual enrollment courses (list both the college and high school course titles if available)
- Dual enrollment credits earned
- Course grade in dual enrollment courses (list both the college and high school grades if available)

**Program quality/components**

- Dual enrollment courses offered during each academic year from 2018-2019 school year to 2023-2024 school year, including the following:
  - Description of course
  - Postsecondary institution partner
  - Whether or not the course is part of a pathway/program of study
  - Course selection process and criteria
  - How dual enrollment course is publicized to students and caregivers
  - Number of “seats” available
  - Course completion rate
  - Average GPA and median GPA of students enrolled
- Description, capacity, and use of supports provided, such as:
  - Tutoring
  - Auxiliary courses (time management, study skills, research writing, etc.)
  - Additional activities connected with the program (field trips, alumni events, etc.)
- School resources to offer dual enrollment:
  - Educator hours
  - Space
  - Technology
  - Funding (tuition, transportation, books, etc.)
    - Amounts
    - Sources
    - Types (school district, parent/family, business, postsecondary partner, grantmaking entity)

In addition, the district must provide approval for the researcher to gather data from students, caregivers, and educators about the dual enrollment programming. This may include the following:

**Student experiences collected through surveys, focus groups, and/or interviews:**

- Intentions post-high school prior to entering the program
- Intentions post-high school after completing the program
- Perceptions of the dual enrollment program including purpose, intended beneficiaries, rigor, cost, time investment, and value
- Barriers the students experienced during the program
- Level of engagement with coursework
- Changes in student attitudes/beliefs including sense of belonging and self-efficacy with regard to college/post-secondary training

**Educator experiences collected through surveys, focus groups and/or interviews:**

- Internal
  - Ease of teaching/administering the course
  - Barriers encountered
  - Enablers for course success
  - Additional supports that would be useful for students/teachers in the future
  - How to attract and best serve underrepresented students
  - What is needed to sustain effective dual enrollment programming
- External
  - Value of relationship with post-secondary institution
  - Whether provided course materials meet expectations
  - Experience with training (if provided)
  - Level of difficulty in setting up program
  - Level of difficulty in meeting teacher credentialing expectations of the postsecondary institution

**School and district leader perspectives collected through interviews**

- Purpose and goals of dual enrollment related to district vision and priorities
- Perceived value of dual enrollment
- Barriers and enablers to effective dual enrollment programming in the district
- Sustainability of dual enrollment

**Timeline**

Proposals will be accepted from Friday, **June 2, 2023** until Friday, **June 23, 2023**. Candidates will be notified by Friday, **June 30, 2023** whether or not their proposal has been accepted.

Selected applicants will be expected to use the funds provided to implement their proposed strategy for expanding access to dual enrollment programming over the course of the 2023-2024 school year.

Research will conclude in late 2024 with a final report to be issued by December of 2024.

### **Eligibility Criteria**

This program will be open to any public-school entity that serves grades 9-12 within the following counties in Southwestern Pennsylvania:

- Allegheny
- Fayette
- Greene
- Washington
- Westmoreland

Up to three schools will be selected – one each from an urban, rural, and suburban location (as identified by U.S. Census or some federal/state designation). Schools must already operate a model dual enrollment program. Schools should be able to demonstrate success through criteria listed below that will be evaluated by the Selection Committee. Applicants should express a desire to expand their school's current offerings to a) be more inclusive of students who have previously not had access to dual enrollment courses and/or b) develop plans of study aligned with student interests and current workforce needs.

### **How to Apply**

Interested applicants should submit the [online proposal application](#), which will request the following information:

- Participation rates for dual enrollment over the past three years, including demographic information where available
- List of postsecondary institution partners and courses currently offered through each institution
- Information regarding entrance requirements for students
- List of educators at the school who currently serve as dual enrollment instructors and anticipated capacity for expansion of qualified instructors
- Information regarding navigational supports for students currently offered
- Any other descriptive information about the school's dual enrollment programming
- District capacity and commitment to provide access to the listed student and course data and access for the researcher to collect student and educator data during the program year.