



EEDW HED PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

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“Life and Dual-Credit is a Mountain to be Conquered!”

High school students are a growing and significant student population in higher education, particularly in community colleges, and the trend of starting college early is here to stay. There is much work to be done to ensure equitable access for diverse student groups in terms of outreach, advising, mapped or easily understood college and career pathways, and making courses available at the college campus, in high schools, and online. Relationship building over time and ongoing communication within K–12 and college partnerships are crucial to implementing strategies that will facilitate students’ success. Ultimately, Annie believes that education is a pathway to a good life, and all the longitudinal research and data still show that it’s a pathway out of poverty. In an ever-changing world, learning is essential. No one can take your education

away from you, and for her journey, it's been valuable that each higher level of formal education has taken her to a new continent (from Europe to Asia to Africa).

Annie's heart for high school students is in her DNA. The son of an Italian immigrant, her grandfather was a high school teacher for 20 years before serving for 20 more years as Director of Vocational Education for the Racine Unified School District. He has received various outstanding educator awards and is in the Southeast Wisconsin Educators Hall of Fame. Annie's mother worked at Wisconsin Lutheran High School so that she could attend tuition-free and has great memories of chaperoning high school students in New York City. She has hiked, biked, backpacked, rafted, camped, cooked, climbed, and sailed with high school students in some pretty special places, from the Canadian Rockies to the Pacific Northwest, for three-week outdoor adventure trips. enough to know that they are tremendously capable when supported. Annie is especially proud of the **Dual-Credit Student Ambassadors** that she has worked with over the past few years. She is amazed at how they've managed to balance high school classes and events, college classes, work, sports, activities, responsibilities, and other commitments. She envies their energy!

Yet, high school students could be considered one of our most vulnerable student populations in higher education because many are first-generation college students who lack navigational supports as they're adjusting to the college environment. High school students across our state have faced various educational challenges, such as surviving a pandemic, so they arrive at the doorstep of higher education and may be shortchanged by their K-12 experience to be fully equipped for college coursework.

We are fortunate to be living in the Information Age, where technology is progressing fast and having a significant impact on our daily lives. There's no denying that our economy is driven by

changes in information technology. Education needs to pick up the pace to produce graduates with the skills that are needed now, or to at least equip them with the mindset and courage to learn and lead alongside developing technologies. Extending equity into the digital workforce involves preparing young learners from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented populations to pursue careers in IT. It was meaningful to see my student employee in the Dual Credit Office graduate with a degree in digital media, then another degree in IT, and in her final month at San Juan College, inspire middle school students to pursue IT by sharing her experiences in a video shoot sponsored by this project. The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. We have to change that.

New Mexico Dual Credit Partnerships is a state chapter of the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP). NACEP members include secondary and postsecondary educators who come together through advocacy, research, and professional development to advance equitable access to quality college courses for high school students (www.nacep.org). Right now, to prepare for our first NMDCP meeting on March 1 at the NMHEAR conference, In Annie's reading of the College in High School Alliance's recent publication, *The Next Phase of Dual Enrollment Policy: A Vision for the Field*, and the Dual Enrollment Research Fund's 10 Urgent Research Questions.

We have an opportunity in New Mexico to work together to eliminate access gaps for participation and success in dual credit across our state. We need to have a policy system and funding in place with an intentional design to ensure that high school students are completing meaningful and relevant college course experiences. We need to ensure that dual credit is contributing to career readiness and increased educational attainment in our state.

We can leverage dual credit to close postsecondary access and attainment gaps and to improve the efficacy of transitions into college and careers for all students.

NMDCP can serve as a convening organization for our state to set a clear vision for the role of Dual Credit in our state's education system that is informed by data and the unique contexts within our local regions. We can then design and implement policy strategies to meet that vision. For example, we may decide that our strategies involve prioritizing access among students with limited access to college courses; supporting students through high-quality college and career advising; strengthening partnerships among high schools, HEIs, and employers; and increasing the number of teachers credentialed to teach Dual Credit.

We need a better understanding of how Dual Credit partners can design their programs to serve the widest population of students possible. We need more information sharing across New Mexico to describe how to build and implement an effective Dual Credit program. We need to design our programs so that students who wouldn't traditionally qualify can succeed. But as her work continues, she has so many questions... How are Dual Credit programs staffed at the K-12 and college levels across our state, and how does that impact student outcomes and experiences? How can we take existing research on program design to make positive changes in institutional policy and practice on a large scale?

On a personal note, she is always interested in expanding and diversifying the discourse on what kinds of support students need to succeed, both from high schools and postsecondary institutions. Her forthcoming dissertation research will center on the voices and experiences of dual credit students within our state.