

## **Title: The Growing Challenge of Dual Credit/Enrollment**

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Eric Tenbus earned his PhD in History at Florida State University in 2001 and teaches British and Middle Eastern history at the University of Central Missouri. He currently is in his sixth year as Department Chair. He contributed to a panel on the topic of dual credit at the American Historical Association annual meeting in January 2016 and helped the AHA craft a dual credit policy statement.

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### **Theme:**

Issues and Trends in Higher Education

### **Presentation Type:**

Best Practice Presentation (45 minutes)

### **Target Audience:**

All department chairs, although it could prove more useful to new chairs who don't have much experience with or knowledge of dual credit/enrollment.

### **Learning Objectives:**

- To familiarize chairs with dual credit as a phenomenon and the challenges it brings, from its public popularity to the institutional political pressures
- To share strategies on how to recognize potential problems, take control of the program, and maintain academic excellence in programs that by their very nature are created to allow students to circumvent your department's General Education courses.

**Abstract:**

Face the dual credit challenge by taking back control of the program and strengthening it to ensure high academic standards. This presentation will explain the dual credit phenomenon and offer practical advice in countering it, navigating the political landmines, and making it work better for your department.

**Keywords:**

Dual, Credit, Challenge, Gen Ed, Politics

**Session Description:**

The Challenges of Dual Credit/Enrollment:

Dual credit courses have grown increasingly popular to parents and politicians due to the inflationary costs of higher education. In the early years of dual credit or dual enrollment, advanced students were given the option to take a course at a local college, especially if they had by-passed the academic challenges in their high school curricula. When district superintendents realized the potential loss of credit hours, they began lobbying legislatures to allow the “lower cost” high schools to offer those courses. Now, the actual enrollment of high schoolers in on-campus college courses is the exception while the rule has become the tenth, eleventh, or twelfth grade courses in high school providing the college credit.

As the political and financial popularity of dual credit/dual enrollment programs in universities and colleges increases, departments that are heavily invested in General Education programs face a growing threat. We have qualified faculty ready and willing to teach introductory courses but fewer students because so many of them have earned those credits concurrently in high school. Thus, incoming students can often bypass certain General Education courses in History, English, Composition, and Political Science, potentially leaving department chairs with an increasing number of empty seats, wondering how to explain enrollment drops to his or her Dean. Furthermore, because these students enter into the General Education sequence at different stages and may be harder to track, they make it more difficult to assess General Education courses and programs.

Oversight of the program has also been a challenge. As each state can control its dual credit system, there is a tremendous amount of inconsistency across the country, even with accreditation standards in place. Some states like Texas and Connecticut have ensured that dual credit programs are designed to uphold high academic standards; others like Indiana, Minnesota, and Missouri have sometimes allowed the low hanging fruit of cheaper and faster college to overshadow high standards and/or appropriate oversight. And when chairs, who often oversee the program for the department, attempt to take back some control over the program, there can be upper-administrative pushback because of the anticipated revenue, as well as the false perception of dual credit leading to increased enrollment yield.

Since new chairs may not even know what dual credit is or may only vaguely know how it works, this discussion will address the challenges as seen by chairs of both a History Department and an English Department at a regional comprehensive public university. We envision a portion of the presentation to be a solicitation of similar dual credit challenges from audience members. And, finally, we will share recommendations on how to navigate the dual credit landscape so as to ensure academic quality.