



# Increasing Dual Enrollment Access and Success

MICHIGAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE ASSOCIATION  
DUAL ENROLLMENT WORK GROUP

Updated July 2024





**Public Policy Associates** is a public policy research, development, and evaluation firm headquartered in Lansing, Michigan. We serve clients in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors at the national, state, and local levels by conducting research, analysis, and evaluation that supports informed strategic decision-making.

**Prepared for**



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# Introduction

The Michigan Community College Association (MCCA) contracted with Public Policy Associates (PPA) to facilitate a Dual Enrollment Work Group in 2024. The first phase of this three-year policy project was envisioned to provide policy recommendations to better maximize dual enrollment opportunities for high school students in Michigan.

MCCA's Work Group is part of a larger policy and practice initiative supported in coordination with the Detroit Drives Degrees Community College Collaborative (D3C3), a regional initiative, hosted by the Detroit Regional Chamber, which supports the community college system in Southeast Michigan, and is funded by the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation and the Ballmer Group.

The Work Group met five times from February to June 2024. This document summarizes key policy recommendations that were developed collaboratively and discussed over the past five months. A list of Work Group contributors is included in Appendix A.

MCCA serves as a thought partner on policy priorities, acts as a key conduit between community colleges and policymakers in Lansing, and engages in policy discussions on all issues related to higher education. This includes policy discussions on increasing access to dual enrollment – an effective strategy to give all students, and especially the most marginalized students, the opportunity to earn college credits in high school.

The first activity related to this work included commissioning a landscape scan of the challenges and opportunities of dual enrollment access in Michigan and across the nation (Fink, 2024). John Fink, senior research associate and program lead at the Community College Research Center, Teachers College – Columbia University, completed the scan. Fink is a research expert on effective dual enrollment policies, funding, and practices.

Fink's landscape scan included descriptions of dual enrollment funding models, comprising approaches to make funding more equitable, costs to community colleges, ways to make dual enrollment more financially sustainable, incentives for dual enrollment, and best practices informed by research and evaluation for improving access and success. The full report from the Community College Research Center is included in Appendix B (Fink, 2024).



# Key Facts

Nationally, dual enrollment accounts for nearly one out of five community college students – the rate was 14% in 2021 for Michigan (Fink, 2023). Postsecondary credit programs help high school students, particularly low-income students, students of color, and first-generation students, access, persist in, and complete college (Fink & Jenkins, 2023).

Earning postsecondary credit while in high school provides a multitude of advantages for students, including stronger high school grades and completion and higher college enrollment, credit accumulation, and degree completion. Additionally, early credit taking potentially reduces time to completion and reduces costs to students (Fink & Jenkins, 2023).

In Michigan, every high school student is legally entitled to participate in a dual enrollment program that meets certain eligibility criteria – taking college-level courses through an institution of higher education while still in high school. Dual enrollment is guaranteed under two statutes in Michigan: the [Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act \(1996 PA 160\)](#) and the [Career and Technical Preparation Act \(2000 PA 258\)](#).

In Michigan, during the 2022-23 school year, only 31,106 students, approximately 7%, participated in this postsecondary credit-taking option. Despite this low take-up rate, based on the most recent data available, the program has been quite successful – with 77.1% of dual enrollment (DE) students in Michigan enrolling at a postsecondary institution within a year of graduating from high school as compared to just 55.8% of non-DE students (MI School Data, n.d.).

Achieving Michigan’s goal of getting 60% of Michigan’s workforce to attain learning beyond high school by 2030 requires a range of solutions. *Increasing the percentage of students attempting and earning postsecondary credit while in high school is one crucial step.*

The recommendations included in this document are intended to better maximize dual enrollment opportunities for students, parents, school districts, and institutions of higher education.



# Recommendations

The following is a summary of recommendations for policy changes made by the Dual Enrollment Work Group convened by the Michigan Community College Association.

## FUNDING<sup>1</sup>

### How should funding be addressed?

- Funding currently comes from a school district's *state aid foundation grant*, with districts only being obligated to cover an amount per course equal to the prorated percentage of the statewide pupil-weighted average foundation allowance.

**Priorities:** (1) Removing the cost of dual enrollment (DE) from a school district's foundation allowance; (2) Allowing school districts to retain their current foundation allowance; and (3) Creating a restricted revenue source to ensure sustainability over time.

**Recommendation:** Explore other means of funding dual enrollment opportunities for students, such as: (a) creating a *Designated Categorical Grant*, or (b) funding dual enrollment through the *Postsecondary Scholarship Fund*.<sup>2</sup>

## QUALIFYING SCORES

### How can more students be encouraged to participate?

- Despite being guaranteed at the state level, only 7% of students participate.
- MDE encourages, but the law does not require, multiple sources of information.
- MDE supports that student eligibility for enrollment should be informed by student performance on assessments listed on a state matrix document: *Minimum Dual Enrollment Qualifying Scores* (e.g., MME, ACT, SAT).

**Priorities:** (1) Broadening eligibility requirements and providing multiple entry points beyond standardized testing and not only academic measures; (2) Encouraging or incentivizing dual enrollment – getting more students to take advantage of the opportunity; and (3) Expanding access to raise awareness of the benefits of DE for more students, especially underrepresented students.

**Recommendation:** Student eligibility requirements for initial enrollment in dual enrollment courses *must not solely rely on* test scores. Multiple methods *must be used* to determine eligibility, such as teacher or advisor nomination, student portfolios, or GPA.

<sup>1</sup> Further exploration and understanding of funding streams, enrollment trends, and existing factors within higher education will be necessary to ensure future funding provides all students equitable access to dual enrollment opportunities.

<sup>2</sup> In this case, consider that funding would be provided directly to institutions of higher education for dual enrollment instead of through school districts.



## COURSE LIMITS

### Are the current course limits a barrier to participation?

- Students can take up to 10 courses under the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act.
- Only a memo of understanding is needed between the school district and postsecondary institution to go beyond the 10 courses.

**Priority:** Increasing access to dual enrollment courses.

**Consideration:** If DE take-up increases, the State should consider a credit cap based on available funding.

**Recommendation:** Require the reporting of (a) the number of courses taken by students; and (b) the number of students who *meet* and *exceed* the *maximum* number of courses disaggregated by poverty, race/ethnicity, and gender at the state level.

## COMMUNICATIONS

### Should the State have more specific requirements regarding parent and student communication about eligibility?

- School districts are legally required to provide all students with general information about postsecondary enrollment opportunities.
- MDE’s Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) document states, *“To the extent possible, districts shall provide counseling services to each eligible pupil and his or her parent or guardian to the benefits, risks, and possible consequences of enrolling in a postsecondary course.”*

**Priorities:** (1) Improving communication of dual enrollment opportunities; and (2) Creating multiple contact points throughout a student’s career, not just one letter at one point in time – potentially moving to annual contacts tied to Educational Development Plan (EDP) revisions.

**Recommendations:** (1) Require *annual* information be shared (such as costs, waived fees, course offerings, criteria to participate, and program options) with all students and parents in multiple languages; (2) Provide a uniform template eligibility letter<sup>3</sup> with the required information included; (3) Shift the language in guidance to emphasize the *benefits* of dual enrollment and to *encourage* participation; (4) Provide additional training to dual enrollment coordinators, counselors, and principals on the benefits of dual enrollment and how dual enrollment increases access and equity; and (5) Provide a customizable toolkit for local implementation.

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<sup>3</sup> The State could allow for varied forms of communication, such as on a school’s website, other written communication, student assemblies, or parent information nights and tied to student EDPs – bringing alignment with a student’s college and career goals and pathways.



## REPAYMENT OF EXPENSES

### Is there a better way to make this more equitable?

- Currently, a student who does not receive credit for a course (**fails or does not complete**) is required to repay the school district any funds that were expended for the course.<sup>4</sup>
- Districts *may* impose sanctions.

**Priority:** Increasing access to dual enrollment courses.

**Consideration:** Creating an advising protocol or intervention between the institution and high school counseling regarding milestones and checkpoints to minimize student failure before the point of no return. (e.g., reporting of chronic absences, low scores, or lack of engagement in required activities).

**Recommendation:** Eliminate the requirement for students to repay a school district for failing or not completing a course.

## SUMMER ENROLLMENT

### Should summer enrollment be expanded?

- PA 160 of 1996 was amended during the 2019-20 school year to clarify that this was an option. The revised language allows for a course that in part or whole occurs during the summer following the academic school year.
- Currently, the law allows for, *but does not require*, a course(s) to be taken over the summer.

**Priority:** Increasing access to dual enrollment courses.

**Consideration:** If the cost of this change increases, the State could consider retaining a cap on summer credit taking based on available funding.

**Recommendations:** (1) Require courses that occur during the summer to be eligible under the Act(s); and (2) Allow districts flexibility to determine full-time equivalency and provide waivers for students who may graduate before course taking occurs.

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<sup>4</sup> The family is responsible for all class costs if a student fails or drops out of a dual enrollment course. According to MDE, 96% currently pass, but this threat can deter students from enrolling in the course.



## ELIGIBLE CHARGES

### Should eligible charges be expanded?

- The Act requires tuition payment, mandatory course fees – including technology fees, materials fees – including textbooks, and registration or late fees.
- Transportation, parking, and technology (computers, internet access, etc.) are not currently covered.

**Priorities:** (1) Increasing access to dual enrollment courses; and (2) Supporting, sharing, and expanding wraparound support for students.

**Recommendation:** Expand the eligible charges under the Act to include *all direct costs to the course*, including, but not limited to, parking fees, other transportation costs, and technology.<sup>5</sup>

## REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

### Are more data needed to inform decision-making?

- Currently, districts are required to report on the following (among others):
  - Total dollars expended
  - Number of students
  - Percentage of district's enrollment
  - Number of courses
- Not reported:
  - Price per credit hour
  - Number of outreach or advising contacts
  - Modality (delivery of course)

**Priority:** Improving data for transparency, reporting, decision-making, compliance, and equity.

**Consideration:** The State collects demographic information but does not publicly report disaggregated data for dual enrollment.

**Recommendations:** (1) Additional reporting requirements should be explored with a goal toward increasing equity, such as requiring the *public reporting on MI School Data* of demographic information – including poverty, race/ethnicity, and gender – aggregated at the state level;<sup>6</sup> (2) Investigate the collection of data at the point of intake or invoicing, including the cost per credit hour, the total cost of the course, and what the student paid; and (3) Require the flagging of modalities (e.g., location, whether the class was in person or virtual, and whether the course was concurrently offered).

<sup>5</sup> If there were an increase in cost associated with this change, the State could consider limits based on available funding.

<sup>6</sup> The State could support program improvement efforts with regular reporting back to institutions and high schools on access to DE, top courses taken, and success in DE and other postsecondary enrollments.



## ALIGNMENT

### State Government

- Within MDE, two different offices oversee dual enrollment, and responsibility is split between EMC/CTE<sup>7</sup> and AP/IB/Concurrent and DE.<sup>8</sup>

**Priority:** Alignment of governance, accountability, and compliance within state government.

**Recommendations:** (1) Ensure alignment of postsecondary initiatives (including dual enrollment credit taking) within state government; and (2) Explore the role that MiLEAP's *Office of Higher Education* should play in dual enrollment and other forms of postsecondary credit taking if dual enrollment is funded through the *Postsecondary Scholarship Fund* instead of its current model.

## STATE-ALIGNED PRIORITIES

### What role should dual enrollment play in the Growing Michigan Together Council's (GMTC) recommendations, specifically related to the Michigan Education Guarantee (MEG)?

- The GMTC recommended the following:
  - Creating a framework to oversee dual enrollment pathways.
  - Studying policies across the systems to better support attainment goals (e.g., dual enrollment and transfer policies).
  - A model that provided funding for up to two years of postsecondary education to reach the MEG standard.

**Priority:** Aligning dual enrollment policy and practice changes to other state-level recommendations.

**Consideration:** Another priority related to this might be alignment with statewide workforce development goals – this could help better integrate postsecondary CTE into secondary CTE programs of study via CTE dual enrollment courses.

**Recommendation:** Any changes made regarding dual enrollment should align with other statewide efforts (e.g., community college guarantee, MEG standard, Michigan Statewide Workforce Plan).

<sup>7</sup> The *Office of Career and Technical Education* within MDE's Division of Educator Excellence, Career and Technical Education, Special Education, and Administrative Law.

<sup>8</sup> The *Office of Educational Supports* within MDE's Division of Assessment, School Improvement, and Systems Support.



## INCREASING STUDENT SUCCESS

### Questions

- Can Michigan set a robust goal for students to attempt and earn credit for postsecondary credit taking?
- How can Michigan increase accessibility to dual enrollment while increasing students' success in earning postsecondary credit and completing requirements while still in high school?

**Priorities:** (1) Creating a statewide vision for increasing access and equity; and (2) Increasing access to dual enrollment courses.

**Recommendations:** (1) Set a statewide vision and goal for completing postsecondary coursework while in high school, *such as attempting the equivalence of 15 credits before graduating high school*;<sup>9</sup> (2) Investigate rewarding and incentivizing high schools for students completing programs of study (such as courses that are part of the Michigan Transfer Agreement) while in high school; and (3) Work toward better transferability of courses passed across institutions.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Consider requiring courses to be part of an onramp to degree or certificate programs, so that students are not simply attempting random credits.

<sup>10</sup> In creating a vision and goals that promote success, care must be taken to ensure equity for diverse populations of students, including, but not limited to, those receiving special education services, English Language Learners, non-readers, and students who may be uninterested in attending higher education.



# References

- Fink, J. (2023). *What Happened to Community College Enrollment During the First Years of the Pandemic? It Depends on the Students' Age*. CCRC Mixed Methods Blog.  
<https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/easyblog/what-happened-to-community-college-enrollment-depends-students-age.html>
- Fink, J. (2024, January). *Challenges and opportunities: Dual enrollment and college access in Michigan*. Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University. See Appendix B.
- Fink, J., & Jenkins, D. (2023). *Rethinking dual enrollment as an equitable on-ramp to a career-path college degree program after high school*. Columbia University, Teachers College, Community College Research Center.  
<https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/revamping-dual-enrollment-equitable-college-degree-paths.html>
- MI School Data. (n.d.). *College opportunities for high school students*.  
<https://www.mischooldata.org/dual-enrollment/>.



# Appendix A



# Contributors

*We thank the following individuals who attended the Dual Enrollment Work Group meetings from February 2024 to June 2024.\**

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Dr. Venessa Keesler	President and CEO	Launch Michigan
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Dan Quisenberry	President	Michigan Association of Public School Academies
Bob Kefgen	Associate Director of Government Relations	Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals
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Jamie Jacobs	Deputy Director	Michigan College Access Network
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Kristin Carey Li	Director of College Strategy	Oakland Community College
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*\*Participation does not equal endorsement*



# Appendix B

# Challenges and Opportunities: Dual Enrollment & College Access in Michigan

**John Fink**

Community College Research Center  
Teachers College – Columbia University

January 2024

# Challenge: College Access Low and Declining

# High school graduates are questioning the value of college, many are *opting out*

**EAB report surveyed 20,000+ high school students and how the pandemic has influenced their college-going behaviors.**

- 22% of HS graduates are opting out of college due to not feeling 'mentally ready' for college
- 73% of HS counselors report the pandemic has moderately weakened their students academic academic preparation
- **Students top concerns:**
  1. Concerns of affordability (COA & student debt)
  2. Questioning the value of a college education
  3. Not feeling mentally or academically prepared

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/admissions/2023/06/12/why-students-opt-out-college>

● May 22, 2023

## The Students Who Aren't Coming

Survey of high school seniors suggests problems ahead for institutions that enroll Black and Latino students and men. This could be a hard year for community colleges.

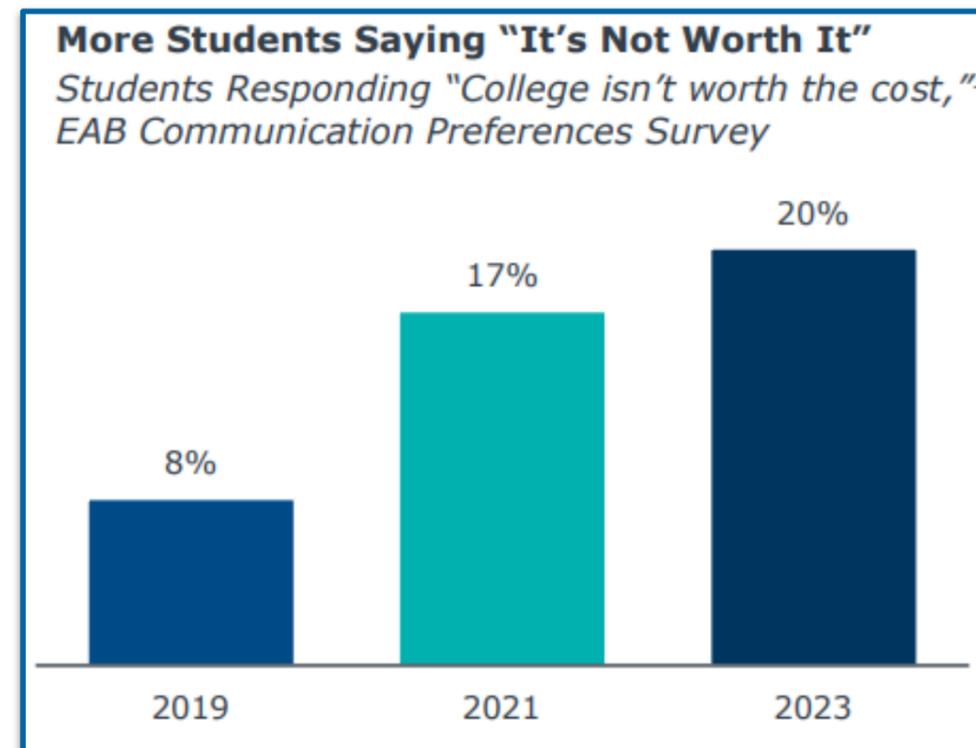
By [Scott Jaschik](#)

● June 12, 2023

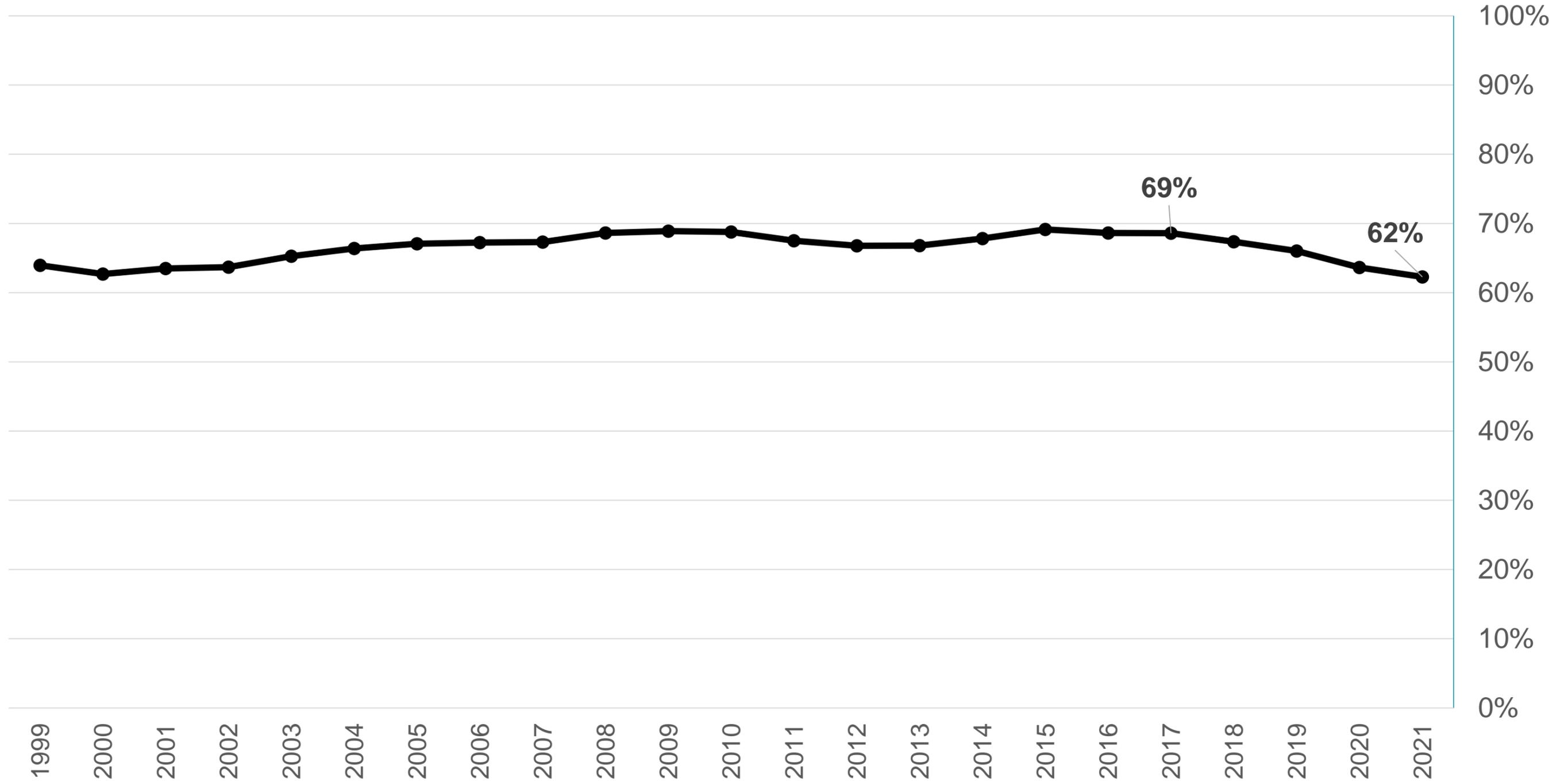
## Why Students Opt Not to Enroll

Students in a new survey cite concerns about academic preparation, mental health and affordability. Many say college isn't worth it.

By [Scott Jaschik](#)

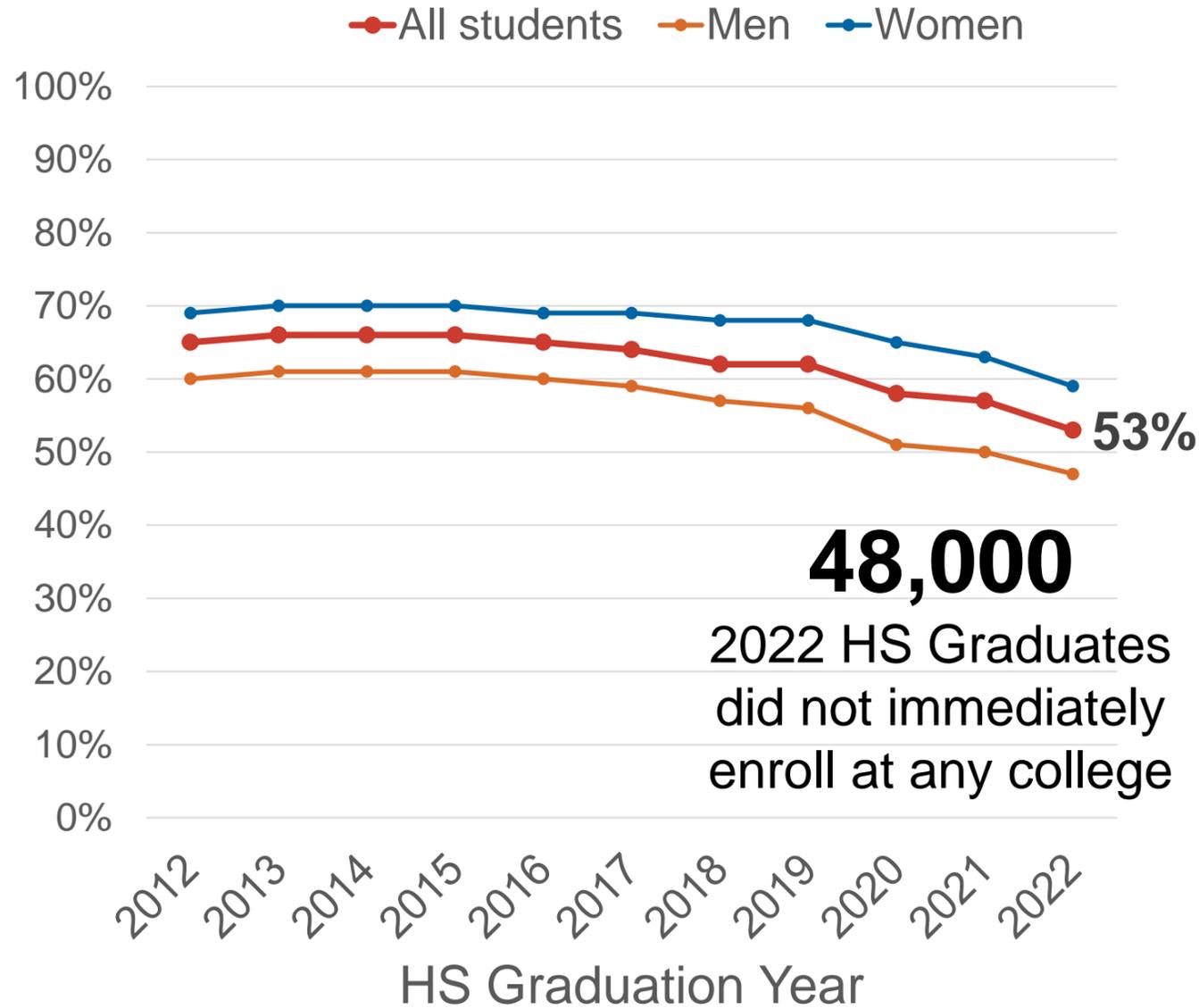


# Nationally 1 in 3 Recent HS Graduates Do Not Immediately Enroll in College

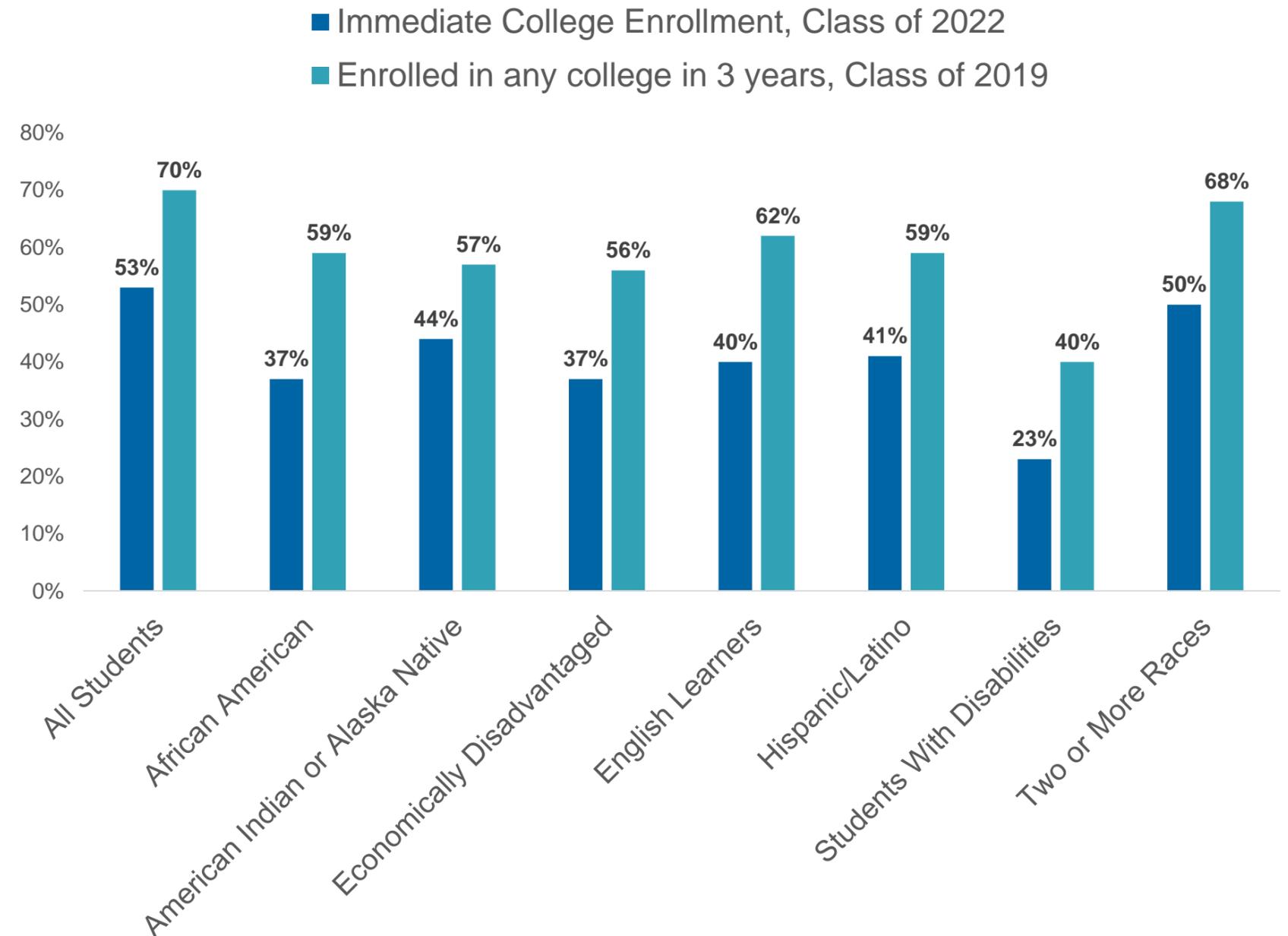


# Only about half of Michigan HS Graduates Immediately Enroll in College

Percent of Michigan HS Graduates who Enrolled at Any College within 6 months



Gaps in College Access by Subgroup



# Declines in College-Going Outpace Declines in HS Class Size

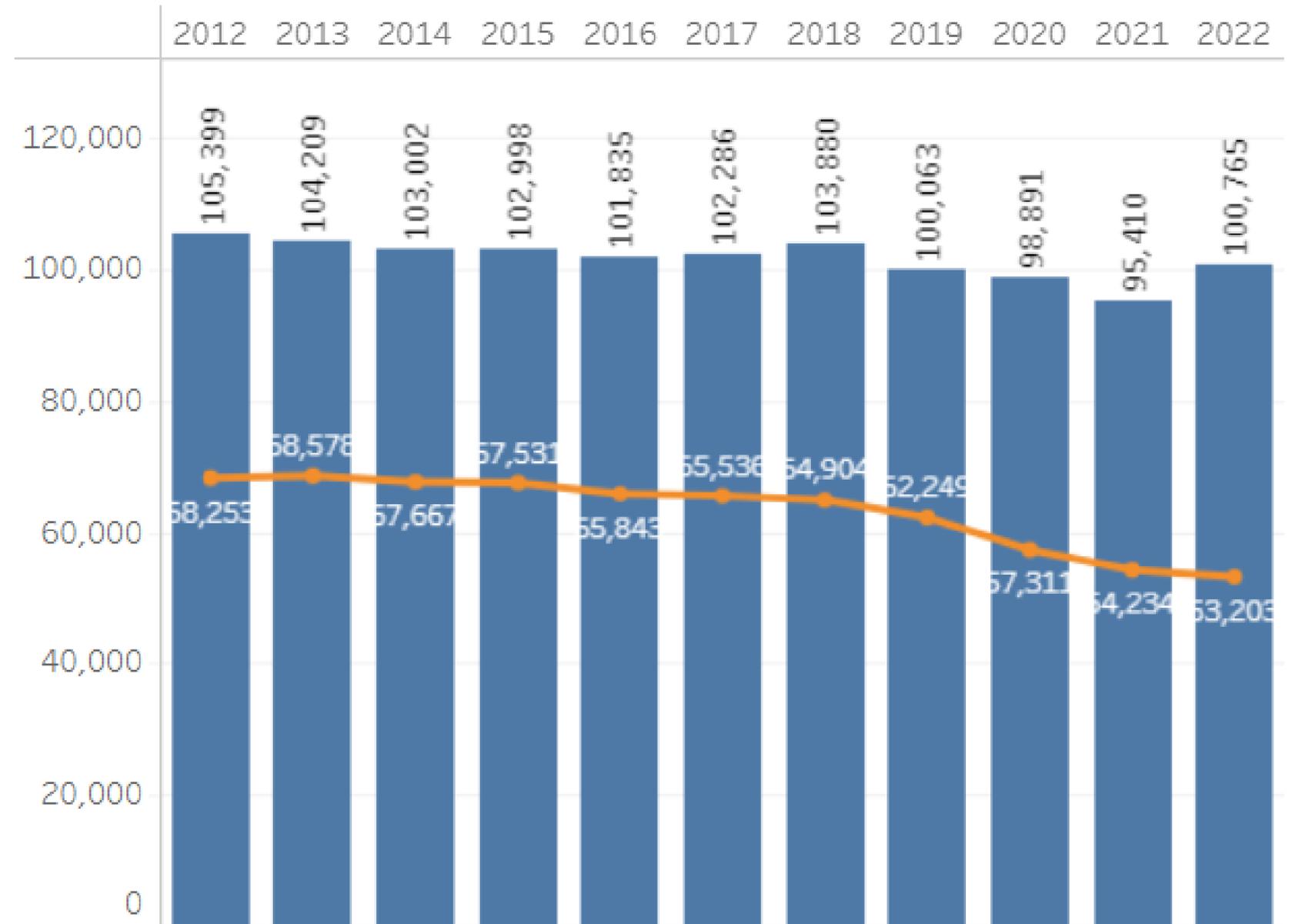
Statewide HS Graduates

■ Total HS Graduates  
 ■ Enrolled in College

Max decline in HS Graduation Size:  
**10k students (2012 to 2021)**

Max decline in HS Graduates Immediately Enrolling at any College:  
**15k students (2013 to 2022)**

All Students (Gender: All)



# Challenge: Declining College Enrollments

# Community College enrollments were plummeting even before the pandemic

## Undergraduate Enrollment Trends by Sector

IPEDS Data, 1996-2021



Sector (CCRC Definition)

- Community colleges
- Public four-years
- Private not-for-profit four-years
- Private for-profits
- Other public two-years, less-tha...
- Other private not-for-profits

Select a State/Territory

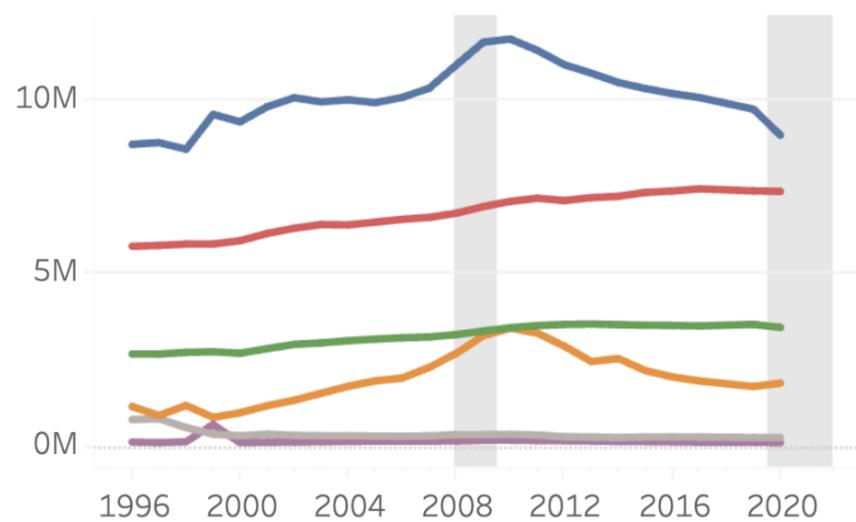
(All) ▼

Select an Institution

(All) ▼

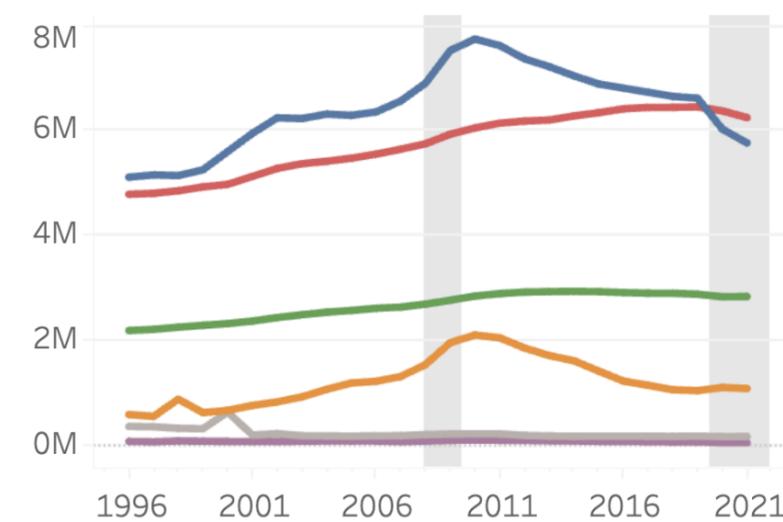
### Academic Year Headcount

12-month unduplicated undergraduates



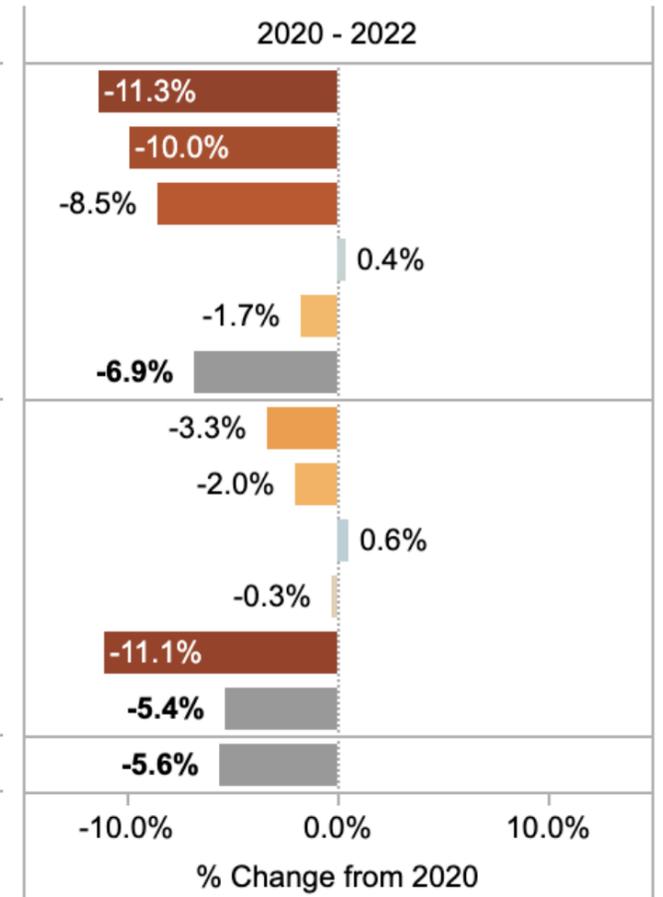
### Fall Enrollments

All undergraduates



850k fewer students enrolled at CCs during the pandemic, and transfer enrollment declines were in the double-digits nationally

Transfer	Public Four-Year
	Private Nonprofit Four-Year
	Private For-Profit Four-Year
	Primarily Online
	Community College
<b>Total</b>	
Non-Transfer	Public Four-Year
	Private Nonprofit Four-Year
	Private For-Profit Four-Year
	Primarily Online
	Community College
<b>Total</b>	
<b>Grand Total</b>	



# In Michigan, Fewer Students are enrolling at Two and Four-Year Institutions

## Undergraduate Enrollment Trends by Sector

*IPEDS Data, 1996-2021*

Sector (CCRC Definition)

- Community colleges
- Public four-years
- Private not-for-profit four-years
- Private for-profits
- Other public two-years, less-tha...
- Other private not-for-profits



Select a State/Territory

Michigan

Select an Institution

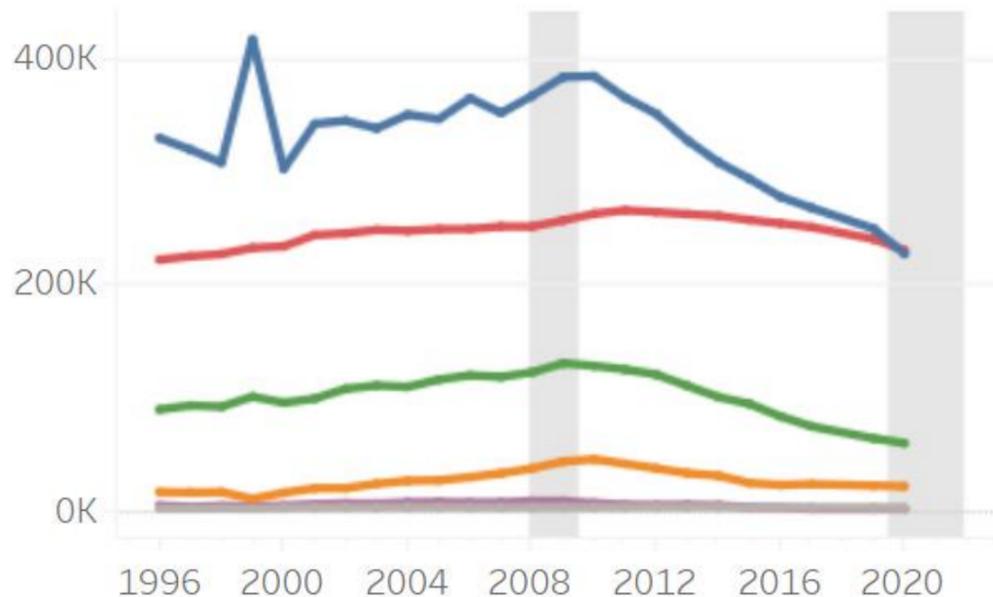
(All)

## Michigan Trends by Age:

1. Older adults steeply dropping until reconnect
2. Steady loses of recent HS graduates at CCs
3. Upward trend of high school student enrollment at CCs

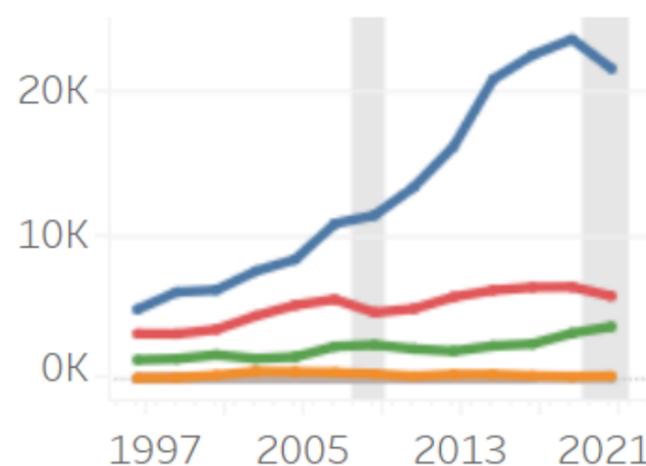
### Academic Year Headcount

*12-month unduplicated undergraduates*

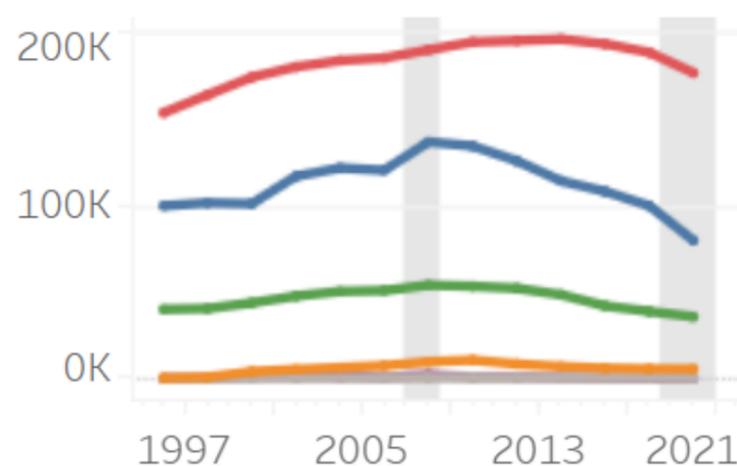


### Fall Enrollments

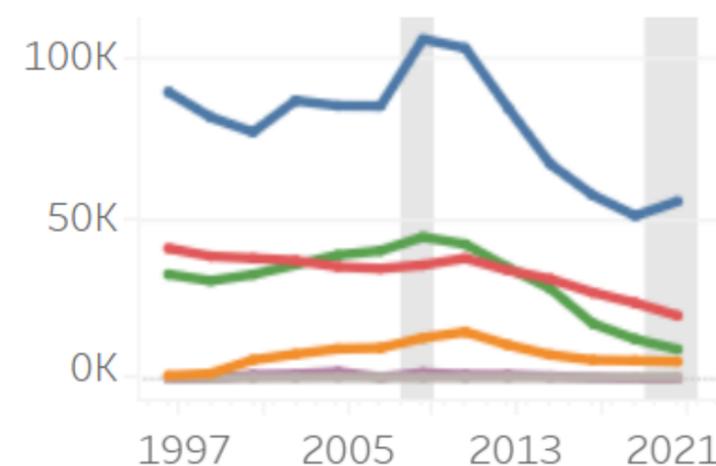
#### Age: Under 18



#### Age 18-24



#### Age 25+



# In Michigan, Fewer Students are enrolling at Two and Four-Year Institutions

## Fall Undergraduate Enrollments

Detail for student race/ethnicity

### Sector (CCRC Definition)

- Community colleges
- Public four-years
- Private not-for-profit four-years
- Private for-profits
- Other public two-years, less-than-two-years
- Other private not-for-profits

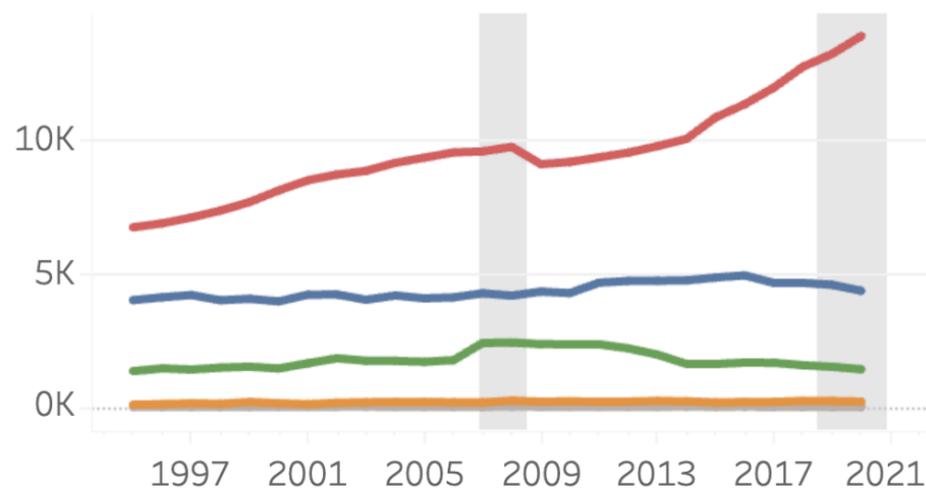
Select a State/Territory

Michigan

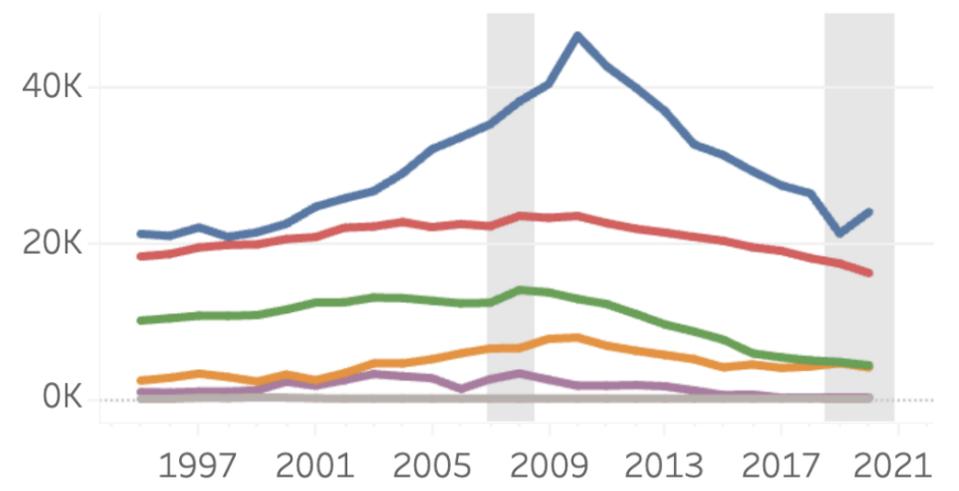
Select an Institution

(All)

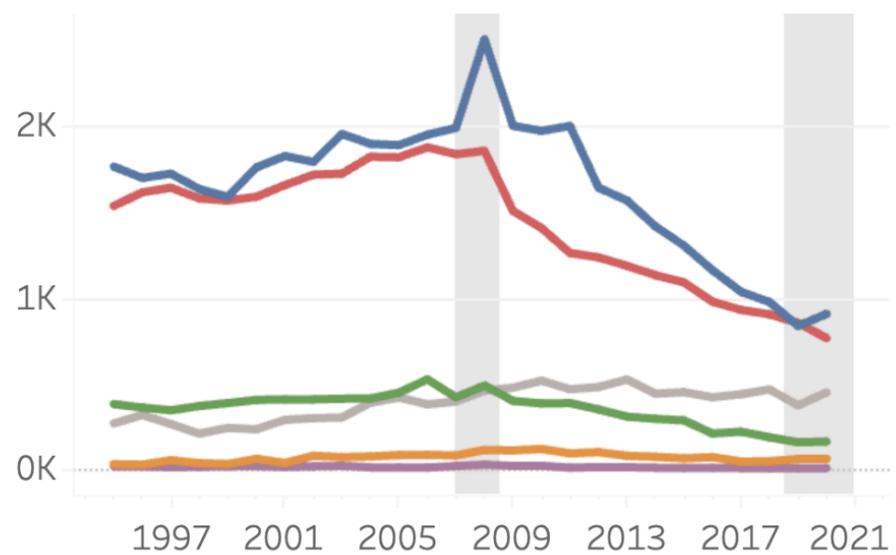
Race/Ethnicity: Asian



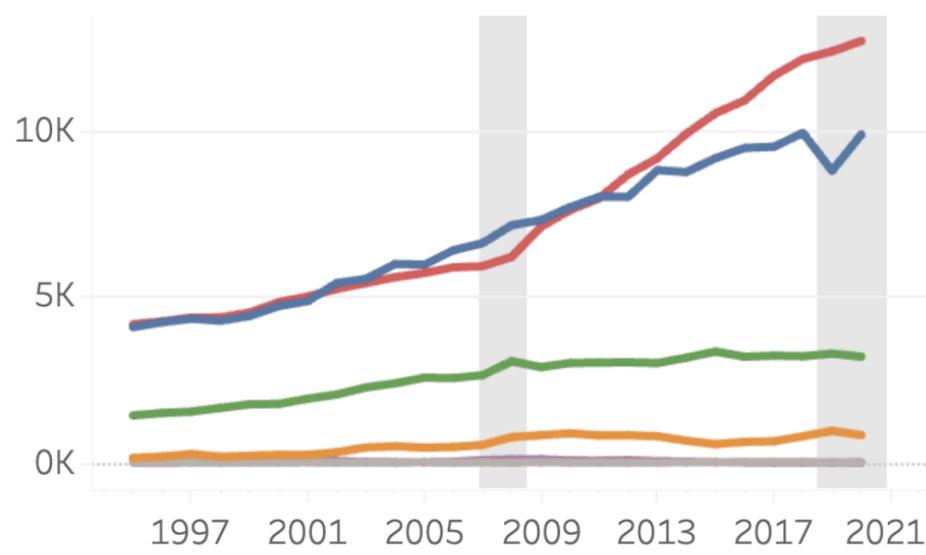
Race/Ethnicity: Black



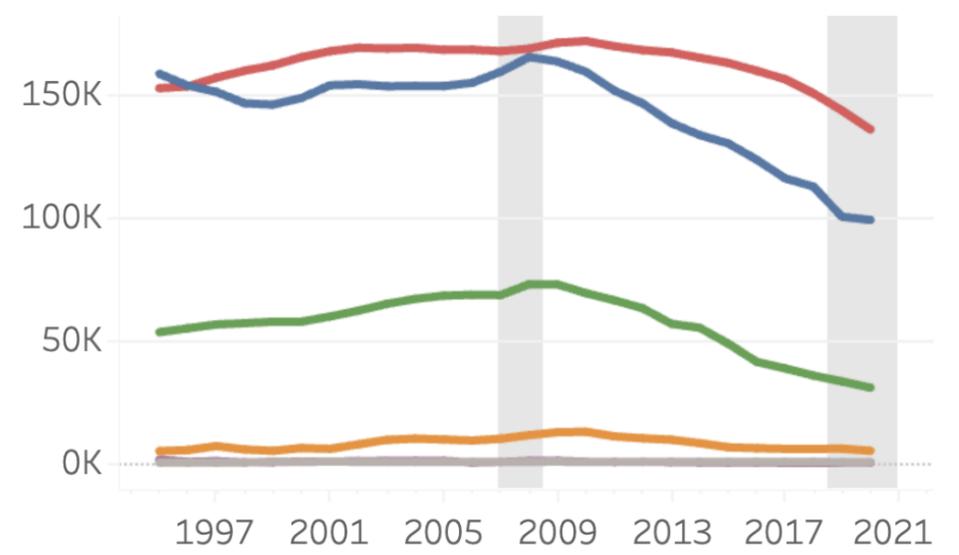
Race/Ethnicity: American Indian or Alaska Native



Race/Ethnicity: Hispanic



Race/Ethnicity: White

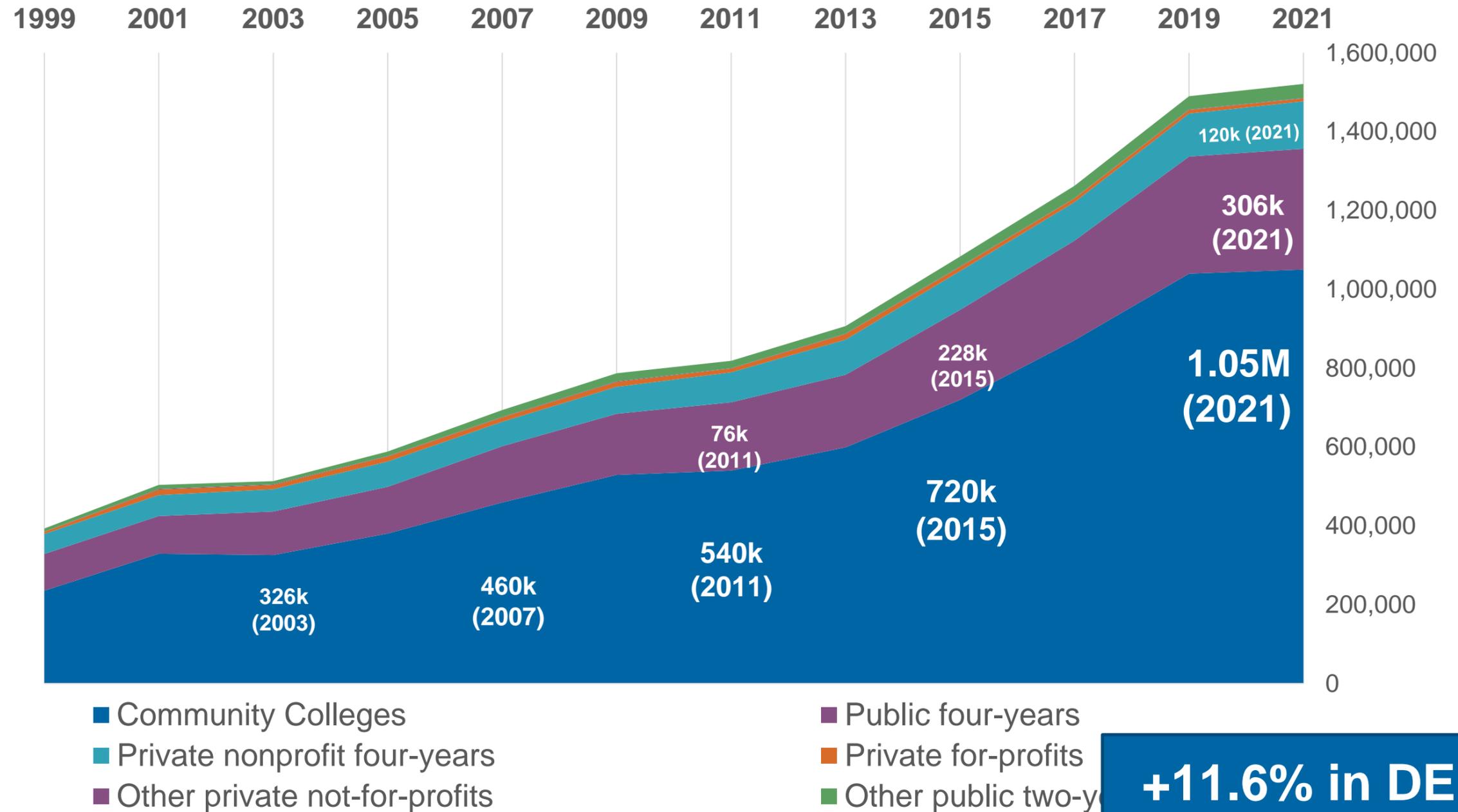


# Opportunity: Dual Enrollment Growing

# Growth of Dual Enrollment 1999-2021

IPEDES Fall Enrollments

*Fall Undergraduate Enrollments among Students Aged 17 or Younger*



**+11.6% in DE 2021-2023 (NSC)**

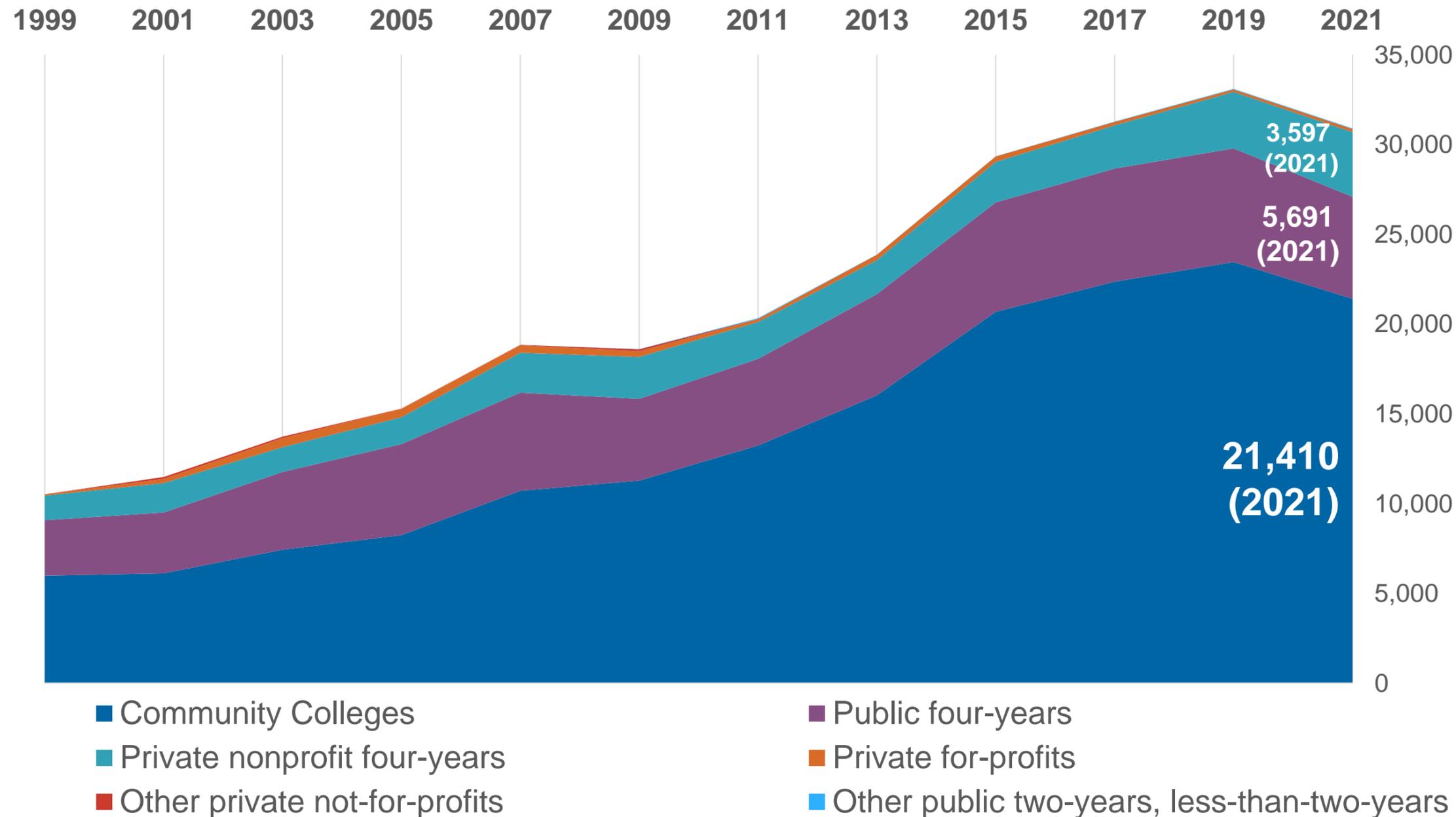
## Expansion of Dual Enrollment Concentrated at Community Colleges

# Michigan Dual Enrollment

## 1999-2021

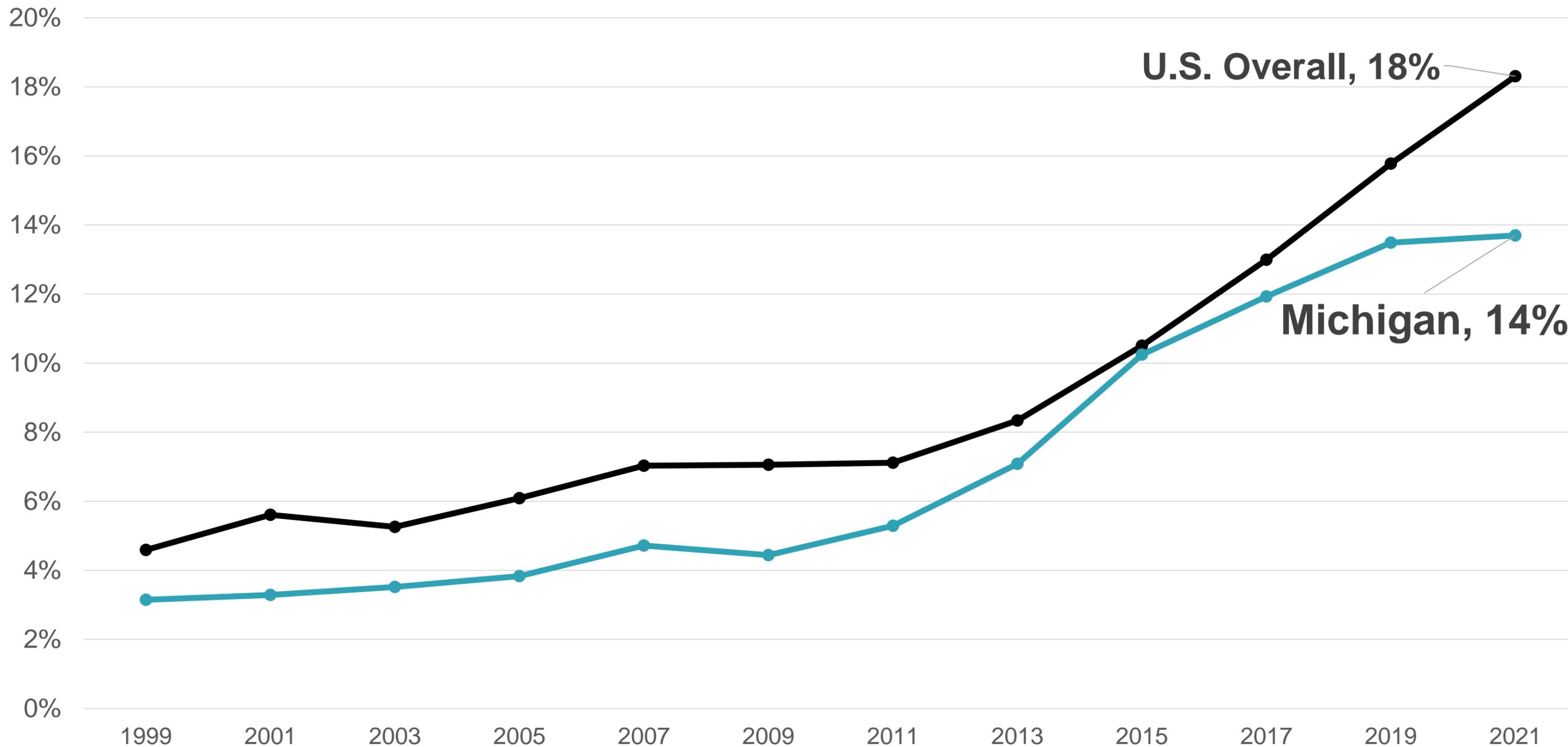
IPEDS Fall Enrollments

*Fall Undergraduate Enrollments among Students Aged 17 or Younger*



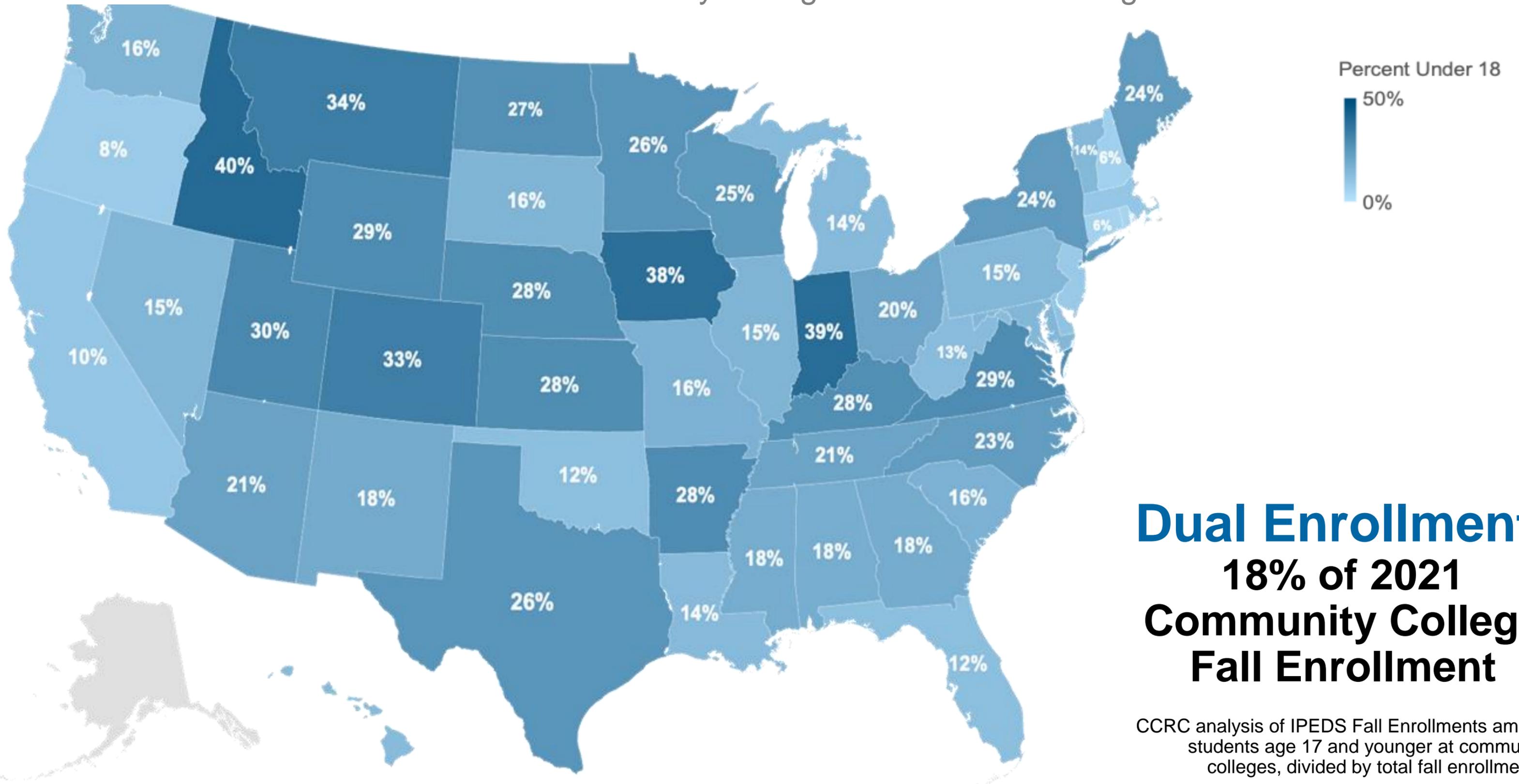
**70 percent of Michigan Dual Enrollment hosted by Community Colleges**

# Dual Enrollment: 14% of Michigan CC Enrollment in Fall 2021



CCRC analysis of IPEDS Fall Enrollments among students age 17 and younger at community colleges, divided by total fall enrollments.

Percent of 2021 Fall Community College Enrollment from High School Dual Enrollment



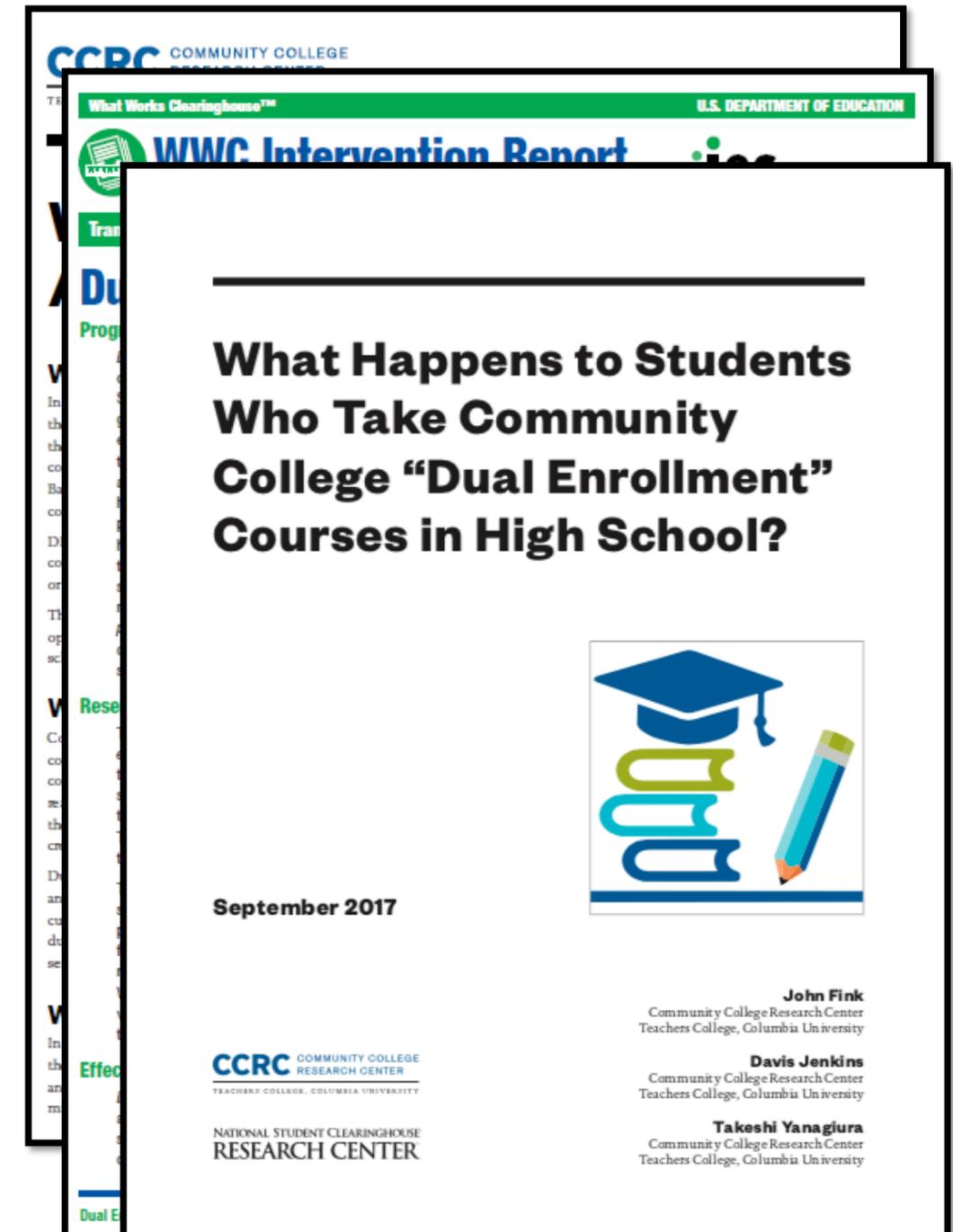
**Dual Enrollment:  
18% of 2021  
Community College  
Fall Enrollment**

CCRC analysis of IPEDS Fall Enrollments among students age 17 and younger at community colleges, divided by total fall enrollments.

# Opportunity: Dual Enrollment is an Onramp to College

# Findings on the Effects of HS Dual Enrollment

- Accumulation of descriptive and quasi-experimental evidence for dual enrollment, stronger experimental evidence on effects of ECHS
- *WWC Report*: Positive effects of taking college courses in HS include stronger HS grades, more HS completion, more college enrollment, more credit accumulation, more degree completion.
- Substantial state and institutional variation in post-HS college outcomes among former DE students



# Recent Quasi-Experimental Studies Highlight Potential of Dual Enrollment for Increasing College Access and Success

- ✓ DE can benefit students who are falling behind in HS (Lee & Villarreal, 2022)
- ✓ DE increases college applications and acceptances, particularly among Black students (Liu et al., 2022)
- ✓ Dual Enrollment Math boosts Black & Hispanic student entrance and persistence in STEM (Minaya, 2021)

JOURNAL OF EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS PLACED AT RISK (JESPAR)  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10824669.2022.2100994>

**Should Students Falling Behind Benefit from Dual Enrollment Courses?**

Han Bum Lee<sup>a</sup> and Michael U. Vaught<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Urban Education Institute, University of Texas at Dallas; <sup>b</sup>Center for Research in Education, Policy Studies, and Leadership, University of Texas at Dallas

**ABSTRACT**  
 This study examined the effect of dual enrollment (DE) on the enrollment and degree completion of students who attend high school and college simultaneously. We employed a propensity score matching design to control for selection bias arising from DE participation. The results show that students who participated in DE programs had a higher likelihood of enrolling in college within four and eight years of high school by 20 percentage points, respectively, compared to those who did not take DE courses. This evidence contributed to a reduction in educational attainment for students who did not participate in DE programs. On the other hand, students who were enrolled in DE programs but were not enrolled in college during the same period showed no significant effects on college degree attainment. These findings stress the need for high school districts to provide underserved students with a successful transition into college.

Dual enrollment (DE) programs, which allow high school students to simultaneously earn high school and college credits, have become increasingly popular. Proponents of the programs claim that DE increases students' confidence in their ability to complete college and provides exposure to academic and career courses, particularly in high-demand fields of interest; (i) it makes college more familiar (Karp, 2010); (ii) it increases the likelihood of earning a college degree by earning college credits while in high school (Hughes, Jeong, & Bailey, 2007); and (iii) it increases the likelihood that students will be successful in college (Attewell, Heil, & Reisel, 2012).

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CCRC COMMUNITY COLLEGE RESEARCH CENTER  
TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

**Can Dual Enrollment Algebra Reduce Racial/Ethnic Gaps in Early STEM Outcomes? Evidence from Florida**

Summary Research Report

Veronica Minaya

February 2021

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Funding for this research was provided by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The findings and conclusions contained within are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect positions or policies of the foundation.

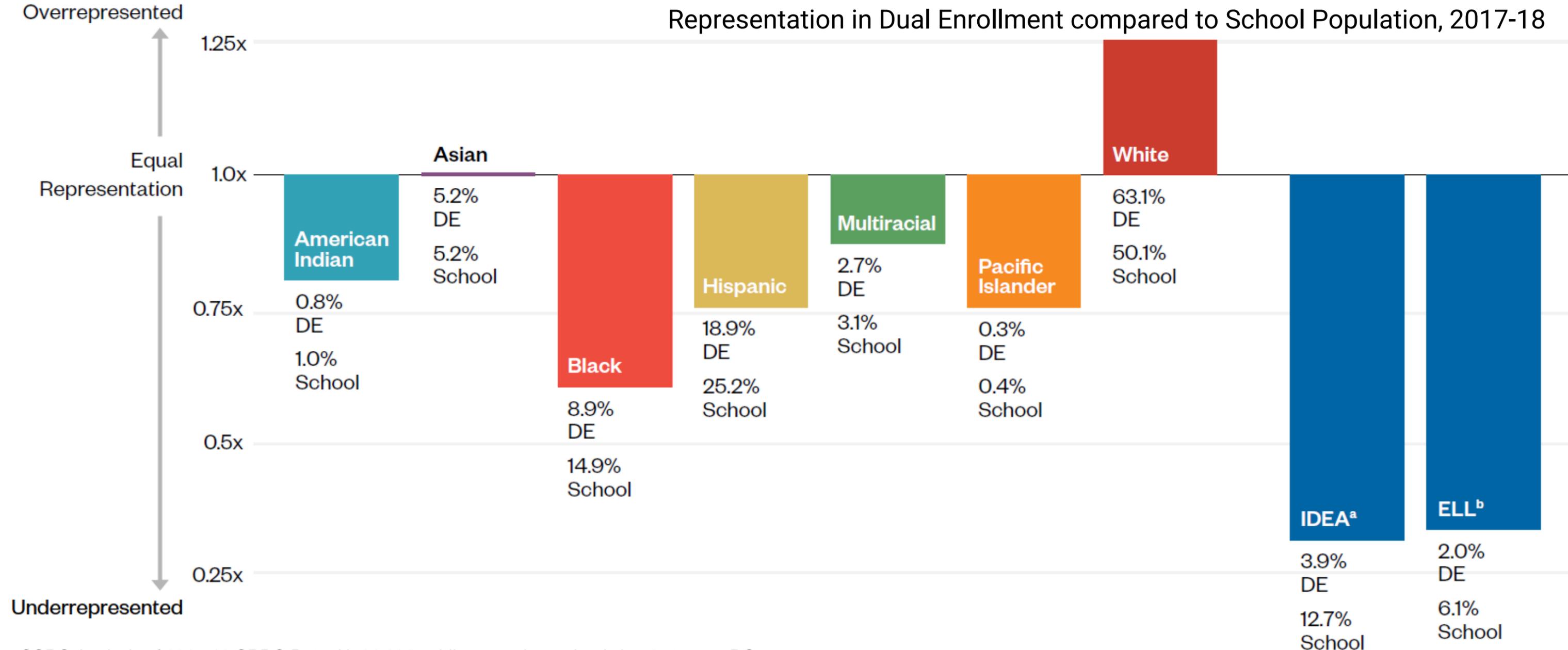
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# Challenge: Access to Dual Enrollment Uneven

# Access to Dual Enrollment Uneven Nationally

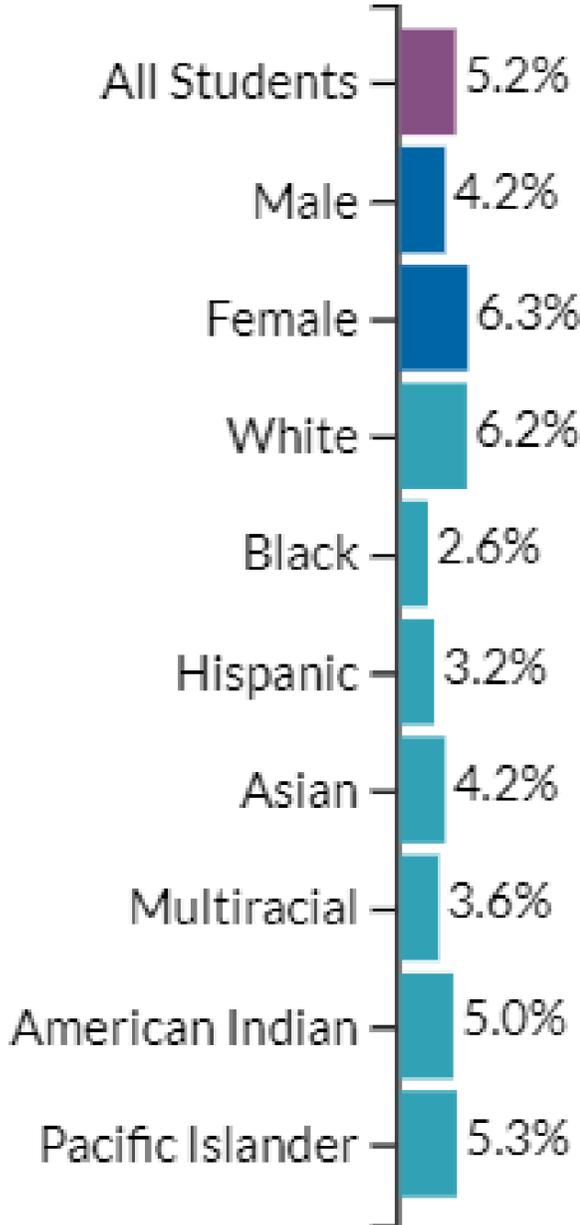
Underrepresented in DE: Native, Black, Hispanic, Multiracial, Pacific Islander, Students with Disabilities, and English Learners



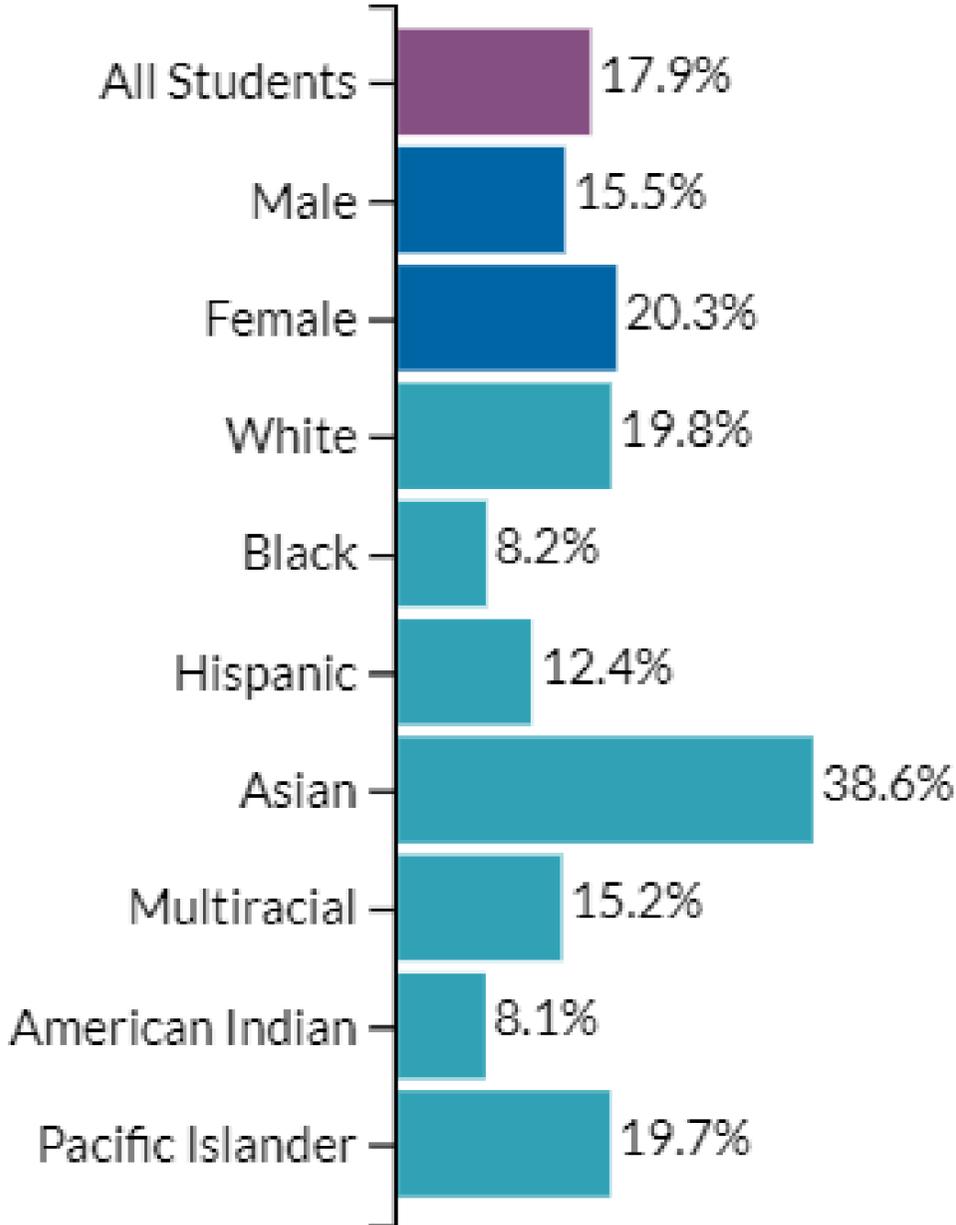
CCRC Analysis of 2017-18 CRDC Data, N=21,936 public secondary schools in 50 states + DC.  
<https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/revamping-dual-enrollment-equitable-college-degree-paths.html>

# Access to Dual Enrollment Uneven in Michigan

### Participation in DE by Student Group *Michigan*



### Participation in AP by Student Group *Michigan*



# Major Barriers to Dual Enrollment Participation

1. **Policies:** Lack of funding, instructor qualifications, student eligibility
2. **Practices:** Lack of outreach, advising, supports
3. **Mindsets:** Beliefs that dual enrollment is only for “advanced” students



## Research Priorities for Advancing Equitable Dual Enrollment Policy and Practice

AUTHORS

JULY 2022

Jason L. Taylor, Taryn Ozuna Allen, Brian P. An, Christine Denecker, Julie A. Edmunds, John Fink, Matt S. Giani, Michelle Hodara, Xiaodan Hu, Barbara F. Tobolowsky, Willie Chen

# Funding Models and Incentive Alignment to Improve Dual Enrollment

**John Fink**

Community College Research Center  
Teachers College – Columbia University

January 2024

# How is Dual Enrollment Funded?

**CCRC** COMMUNITY COLLEGE RESEARCH CENTER  
TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

**How Can Community Colleges Afford to Offer Dual Enrollment College Courses to High School Students at a Discount?**

Clive Belfield  
Davis Jenkins  
John Fink

February 2023

**CCRC Working Paper No. 130**

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We are grateful to the practitioner experts in Florida, Ohio, and Texas who educated us on the economics of dual enrollment in their colleges and states. Thomas Brock and Nikki Edgecombe provided helpful comments on earlier drafts. Funding for this research was provided by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The findings and conclusions contained within are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect positions or policies of the foundation.

Belfield, C., Jenkins, D., & Fink, J. (2023). *How can community colleges afford to offer dual enrollment college courses to high school students at a discount?* (CCRC Working Paper No. 130). Columbia University, Teachers College, Community College Research Center. <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/community-colleges-afford-dual-enrollment-discount.html>

## FUNDING FOR EQUITY:

Designing State Dual Enrollment Funding Models to Close Equity Gaps

JENNIFER ZINTH | ZINTH CONSULTING, LLC | OCTOBER 2019



Zinth, J. (2019). *Funding for equity: Designing state dual enrollment funding models to close equity gaps*. College in High School Alliance. <https://collegeinhighschool.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/FundingForEquity-SinglePage-WithCover.pdf>

# Dual Enrollment Funding Overview

## Potential Funding Sources

### State Funding

- 1) Community College enrollment-based formula funding
- 2) Community College performance-based funding
- 3) Additional per student funding for dual enrollment students

### Local Funding

- 4) Local property tax measures (paid to community college) (varies by locality)
- 5) Local philanthropy or scholarship funds (e.g., Promise programs) (varies by locality)

### LEAs

- 6) District tuition/fee subsidies (paid to community college)

### Post-secondary

- 7) Colleges charge low or no tuition/fees for DE courses, absorb cost to offer DE

### Student/Family

- 8) Remaining balance for tuition, fees, books, transportation not covered by other sources

## Potential Funding Models

### Student Pays No Tuition

1. State Pays
2. State & District Pay
3. District Pays

Equitable Access Funding Models

### Student Pays Reduced Tuition

4. Costs split between state, district, and student

### What Students Pay Varies

5. Local decision

# Equitable Access Funding Models: State Pays



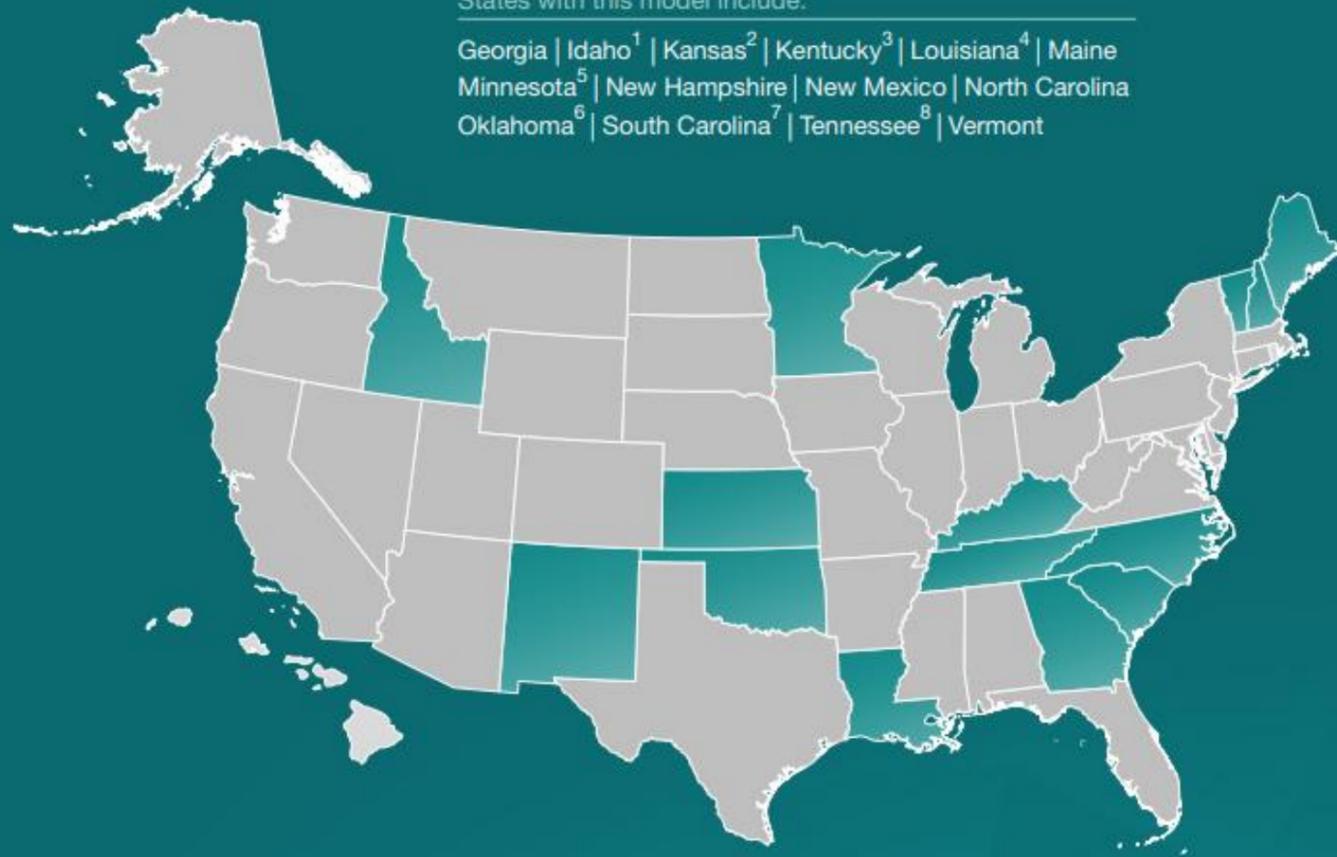
## STUDENT PAYS NO TUITION

### STATE PAYS

Under this funding approach, the state, usually through an appropriation, covers dual enrollment tuition regardless of student family income. Students enrolled in courses covered by the state program do not pay tuition; postsecondary institutions may not receive the same tuition amounts per course as they would receive for a regularly matriculated student. States that use this approach may cover all courses in which eligible secondary students enroll, or may limit the payment of tuition costs to a limited number or type of courses (i.e., career/technical), or to courses taken by students in limited grade levels.

States with this model include:

Georgia<sup>1</sup> | Idaho<sup>1</sup> | Kansas<sup>2</sup> | Kentucky<sup>3</sup> | Louisiana<sup>4</sup> | Maine  
Minnesota<sup>5</sup> | New Hampshire | New Mexico | North Carolina  
Oklahoma<sup>6</sup> | South Carolina<sup>7</sup> | Tennessee<sup>8</sup> | Vermont



## EQUITY RATIONALE FOR THE MODEL

- Equal financial access to dual enrollment courses regardless of family income

## POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

### BENEFITS:

- Students don't pay
- Ideally this approach equally incentivizes participation for all students and all school districts regardless of student demographics, high school location, etc.
- Treating all eligible students in the same way simplifies enrollment tracking for reimbursement or payment of tuition for participating students (as opposed to tracking a subgroup of students based on underrepresented status). This approach can also simplify data sharing between state and education entities.
- Not requiring demonstration of need reduces student stigma and decreases the amount and type of paperwork required from students and parents for participation. Both issues factor into student engagement in these programs.

### CHALLENGES:

- State reimbursement to institutions is often at rates lower than the tuition revenue a regularly matriculated student would generate. This can disincentivize a higher education institution's participation.
- In isolation from other supporting policy to ensure program access and engagement, this approach can exacerbate equity gaps by increasing the ease with which affluent students from college-educated families can take advantage of dual enrollment programs.
- Policymakers and program staff may face challenging conversations centering on why an affluent student and low socioeconomic student receive the same benefit/opportunity.
- Sustaining policymaker buy-in may pose a challenge, particularly as costs increase with increased student participation, and new policymakers enter office.



# Equitable Access Funding Models: State & District Pay



## STUDENT PAYS NO TUITION

### COMBINATION OF STATE AND DISTRICT PAY

Under this model, state policy either defines the respective portion of tuition that the state and district will pay or requires that districts make initial tuition payments to the postsecondary partner, but provides an appropriation or provides a supplemental weight in the school funding formula for dual enrollment participation.

#### States with this model include:

Iowa<sup>9</sup> | Minnesota<sup>10</sup> | Rhode Island | Washington<sup>11</sup> | Wisconsin<sup>12</sup>



## EQUITY RATIONALE FOR THE MODEL

- Equity of student access to dual enrollment courses, regardless of family income, with less strain on state coffers

## POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

### BENEFITS:

- Students don't pay
- Ideally, this approach equally incentivizes participation for all students and all school districts, regardless of student demographics, high school location, etc.

### CHALLENGES:

- District and/or institution may not receive same funding level as they would receive for traditional high school or postsecondary student
- Sustaining both state and local leader buy-in may pose a challenge, particularly as costs increase with increased student participation and policymaker turnover occurs.

# Equitable Access Funding Models: District Pays



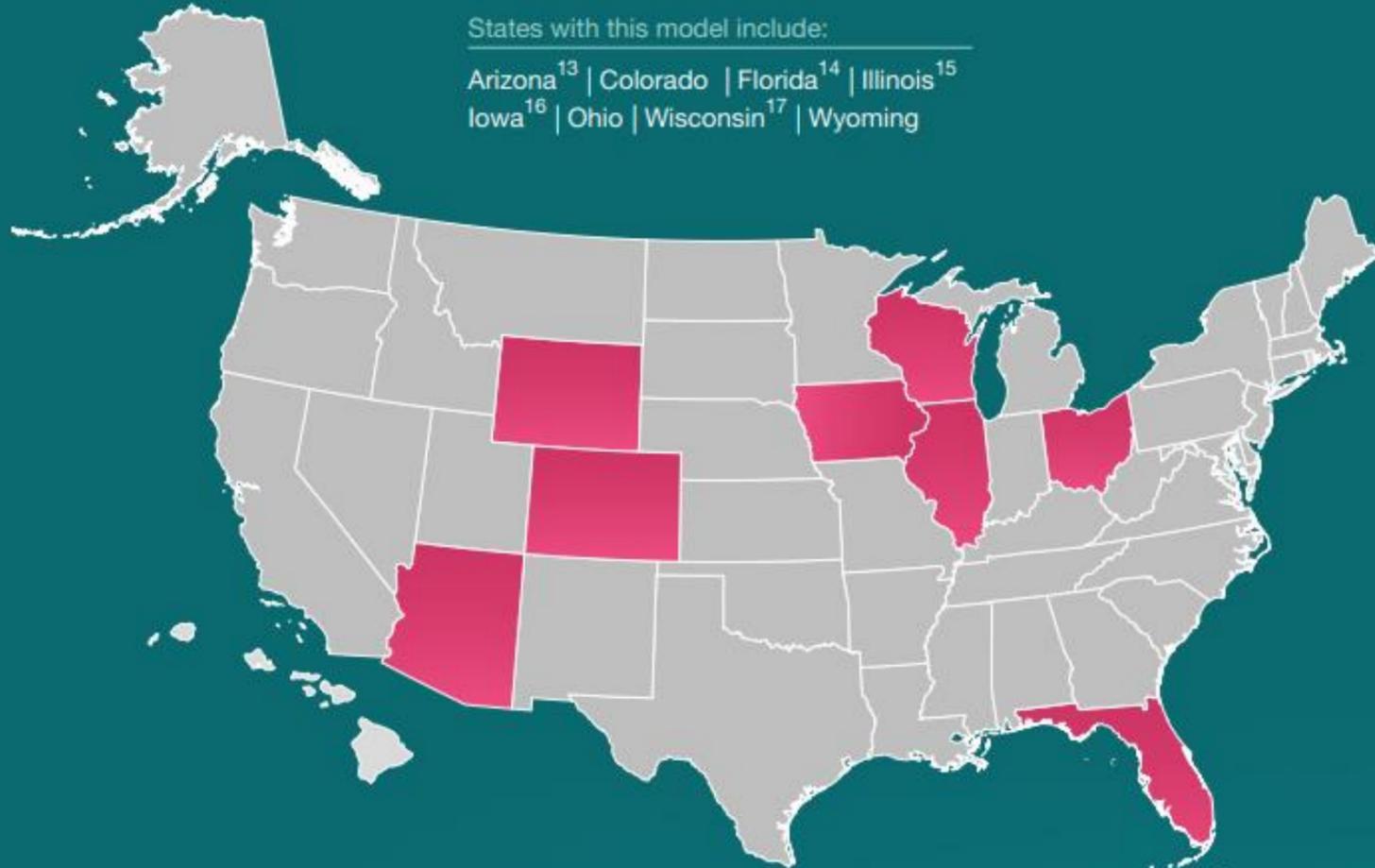
## STUDENT PAYS NO TUITION

### DISTRICT PAYS

Under this model, state policy requires district revenues (i.e., per-pupil funds, funds generated by average daily membership, etc.) to cover tuition expenses. Students may be charged fees but are generally not charged tuition.

States with this model include:

Arizona<sup>13</sup> | Colorado | Florida<sup>14</sup> | Illinois<sup>15</sup>  
Iowa<sup>16</sup> | Ohio | Wisconsin<sup>17</sup> | Wyoming



## EQUITY RATIONALE FOR THE MODEL

- Funds district would already pay for educating student now applied to dual enrollment tuition
- K-12 funding less susceptible to fluctuations than public higher education funding
- May be perceived by some policymakers as politically “easier” than other funding models

## POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

### BENEFITS:

- Students don't pay

### CHALLENGES:

- Adding programing that draws from already strained district resources can be unpopular.
- This approach can disproportionately stress under-resourced districts.
- Placing tuition burden entirely on districts may:
  - Generate ill-will towards the program among some local decisionmakers
  - Force local leaders to make tough decisions to meet program demand among students and parents

# Student-Paying Funding Models: Shared Costs



## STUDENT PAYS REDUCED TUITION

### COSTS SPLIT BETWEEN STATE AND STUDENT OR DISTRICT AND STUDENT

Under this model, state policy directs the state or district to cover some but not all tuition expenses. Students are expected to pay the portion of tuition not handled by the state or district. This model does not include programs under which the state or district covers dual enrollment tuition only for low-income students.

States with the State/Student split model include:

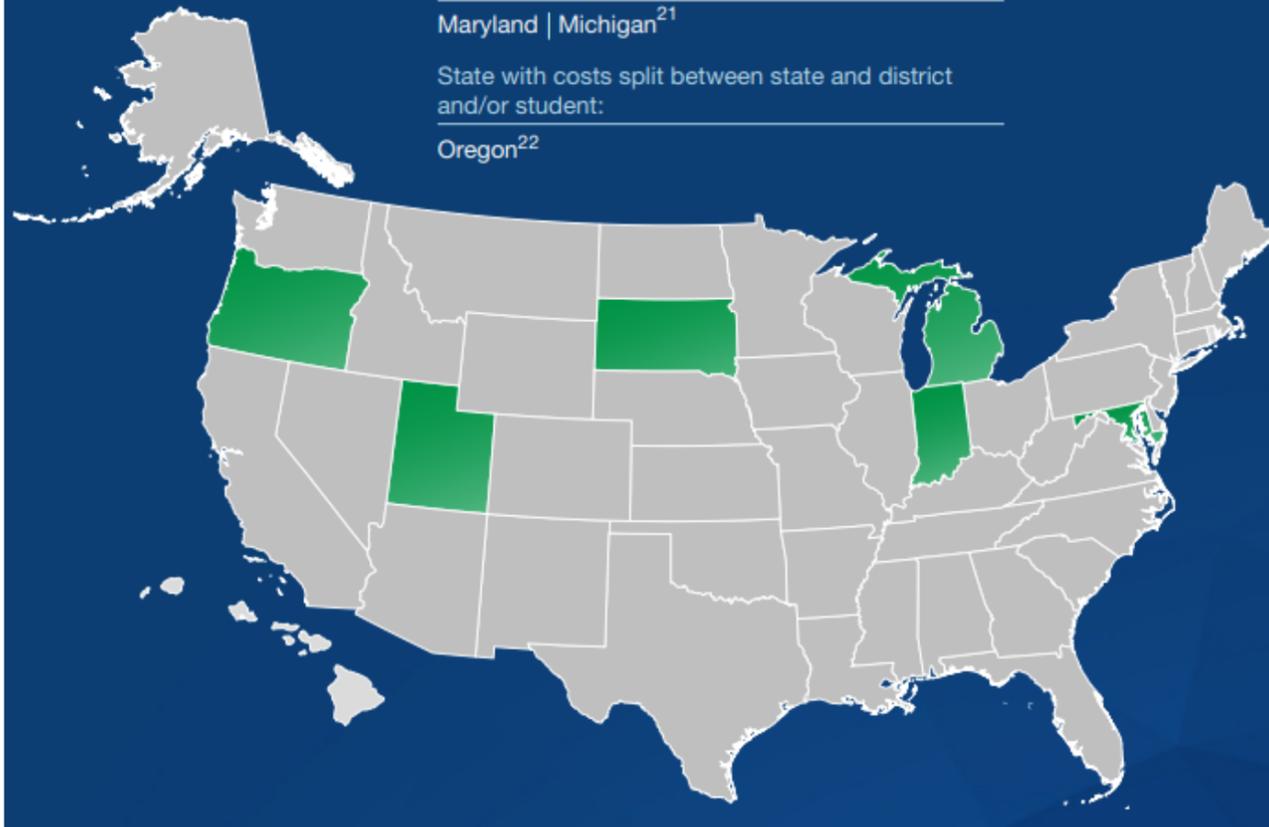
Indiana<sup>18</sup> | Michigan<sup>19</sup> | South Dakota<sup>20</sup> | Utah

States with the District/Student split model include:

Maryland | Michigan<sup>21</sup>

State with costs split between state and district and/or student:

Oregon<sup>22</sup>



## RATIONALE FOR THE MODEL

- Decreases the barrier of tuition cost for students and parents

## POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

### BENEFITS:

- May increase program reach, by reducing the fiscal impact that the state, districts, postsecondary partners or students might otherwise bear in isolation
- Students may take course selections, coursework more seriously if they're bearing some financial responsibility
- May reduce potential disparities in program offerings in low-resource districts or districts with high percentages of low-income students unable to cover their own tuition

### CHALLENGES:

- Without parameters on the amount students are charged (including waivers for low-income students), access and participation may be compromised
- Program sustainability may be compromised without:
  - Parameters on eligible courses
  - Ongoing communication to policymakers on program rationale, return on investment

# Student-Paying Funding Models: Local Decision



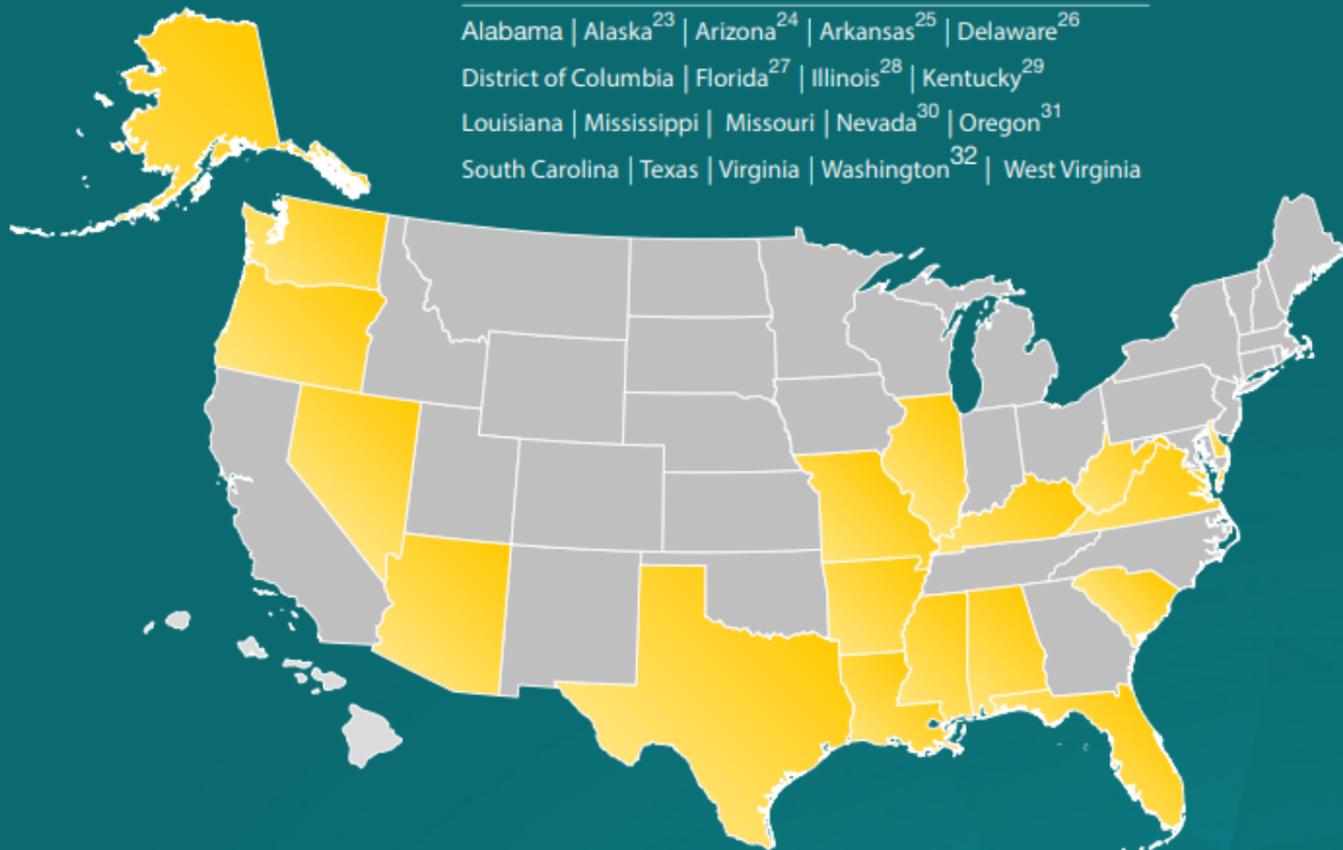
STUDENT PAYS ANYWHERE FROM NO TO FULL TUITION

## LOCAL DECISION

Under this model, state policy does not designate the entity responsible for covering tuition costs, but explicitly states that the amount of tuition, and the party/parties responsible for paying tuition, must be locally determined by the K-12 and postsecondary partners. This model does not include states in which policy is silent on who is responsible for paying tuition.

States with this model include:

Alabama | Alaska<sup>23</sup> | Arizona<sup>24</sup> | Arkansas<sup>25</sup> | Delaware<sup>26</sup>  
District of Columbia | Florida<sup>27</sup> | Illinois<sup>28</sup> | Kentucky<sup>29</sup>  
Louisiana | Mississippi | Missouri | Nevada<sup>30</sup> | Oregon<sup>31</sup>  
South Carolina | Texas | Virginia | Washington<sup>32</sup> | West Virginia



## RATIONALE FOR THE MODEL

- Easier to gain policymaker support than other models
- Appealing in local-control states

## POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

### BENEFITS:

- Districts/institutions must reach mutually agreeable arrangement
- Students might pay little to nothing

### CHALLENGES:

- Some postsecondary institutions may charge districts or students full tuition (or close to it), resulting in significant disparities in student access and affordability statewide

**How Can Community Colleges Afford to Offer Dual Enrollment College Courses to High School Students at a Discount?**

Clive Belfield  
Davis Jenkins  
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February 2023

CCRC Working Paper No. 130

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# How Can Community Colleges Afford to Offer Dual Enrollment at a Discount?

## Costs and Incentives for Redesigning DE as an Onramp to Postsecondary

<https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/easyblog/how-can-community-colleges-afford-dual-enrollment-discount.html>

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2023/02/16/dual-enrollment-can-be-costly-community-colleges>

The screenshot shows the top portion of a news article on the Inside Higher Ed website. The header includes the IHE logo, a search icon, and links for 'My account' and 'Become a Member'. Below the header, the article is categorized under 'NEWS' with sub-sections for 'Institutions' and 'Community Colleges'. The article date is 'February 15, 2023'. The main headline is 'Dual Enrollment Comes at a Cost'. The introductory text reads: 'A new analysis shows dual-enrollment programs can be costly for community colleges —unless they're carefully designed.' The author is listed as 'By Sara Weissman'.

## Key Takeaways

- Dual enrollment (DE) is **large part of community college sector**
- DE requires a **new budget model**
- Baseline scenarios show DE yields **financial losses for colleges**, particularly when DE tuition is discounted (common practice)
- DE is affordable if colleges **take advantage of efficiency gains**:
  - Economies of scale, performance funding, yield surplus
- Affordability **strategy varies across colleges**

**Budgets for dual enrollment programs show potential losses for colleges**

## **DE Context at Community College**

- DE very popular: 1+ million HS students enrolled at CCs annually
- DE instructional modes:
  - College faculty on-campus (CF)
  - College faculty at high school (HSF)
  - Credentialed high school teachers at high school (HST)
- Relative to regular college classes, DE:
  - Requires new budgets for costs/expenditures and revenue sources
  - Causes financial pressure with extra costs, lower revenues
  - Budgets vary significantly per mode

## Our Study

- Derive budget scenarios for DE per mode
- Draw on IPEDS data and interview evidence from FL, OH, & TX

### Goals:

- Show baseline losses **in cases where DE is offered at discount**
- Identify potential efficiency gains
- Provide colleges with scenario plans for making DE sustainable

# Budget for DE Credits

## **Costs/expenditures:**

1. DE implementation
2. DE instruction – per mode relative to regular college classes

## **Revenues:**

1. Tuition/fees
2. Public subsidies
3. Transfers from schools/districts

## Costs (1): DE Implementation

Personnel, overheads and materials for:

- Initiation/negotiation of articulation agreements with districts/schools
- Coordination and management of agreements
- Training/support for high school teachers and school counselors
- Program and enrollment management
- College advising/support for high school students
- IT and infrastructure

Mix of one-time fixed costs and on-going per student costs

## Costs (2): DE Instruction by Mode

- *College faculty on-campus (CF)* -- close to regular college classes; near-equivalent for faculty, overheads, and instructional materials (+ subsidised learning materials, transport to college)
- *College faculty at high school (HSF)* -- lower than regular college classes; near-equivalent for faculty; much lower for overheads and instructional materials (+ subsidised learning materials, transport to college)
- *High school teacher at high school (HST)* -- much lower than (close-to-zero) regular college classes: zero on college faculty; much lower for overheads and learning materials

Costs approx. proportional to credits

# Cost per Credit

	<b>Regular College Classes</b>	<b>CF</b>	<b>HSF</b>	<b>HST</b>
DE Implementation	--	\$18	\$18	\$11
Faculty	\$191	\$181	\$181	\$11
Overheads	\$76	\$74	\$22	\$5
Materials	\$33	\$33	\$25	\$-
<i>Cost per Credit</i>	<i>\$300</i>	<i>\$306</i>	<i>\$246</i>	<i>\$27</i>
<i>% versus college-level</i>		102%	82%	9%

# Revenue Sources

Source	DE Practice
Students/families	Discounted tuition: rate set by state agencies or via local agreements with districts/schools Charges for learning materials (books, computing access) College fees
State/local public funding	Enrolment-based subsidies for DE students Performance funding for DE students who meet milestones Grants for DE inputs (e.g. teacher training)
District/school transfers	Transfer funding (for tuition/fees, learning materials), either by state law or local MOU agreement (usually discounted)

## Revenue Amounts Vary

- Variation in the source of funding: students, public, K-12 schools
- Variation in the mix of DE Mode, depending on:
  - College decisions
  - School/district MOUs
  - State policies
- Net revenue per DE credit a product of:
  - Revenue discounting in each mode of DE (i.e., CF, HSF, HST), and
  - Share of DE offered in each mode (e.g. primarily CF or primarily HST)

# Baseline DE Budgets Show Losses

	CF	HSF	HST
<b>With 25% tuition discount</b>			
Cost per credit	\$306	\$246	\$27
Revenue per credit	\$264	\$219	\$16
Surplus (R-C) per credit	-\$42	-\$27	-\$11
Surplus as % costs	-14%	-11%	-40%
<b>With 100% tuition discount</b>			
Cost per credit	\$306	\$246	\$27
Revenue per credit	\$155	\$110	\$11
Surplus (R-C) per credit	-\$151	-\$135	-\$16
Surplus as % costs	-49%	-55%	-59%

# Baseline DE: Substantial Loss

## Baseline:

- Average college characteristics nation-wide
- DE at 10% of all students\*
- Modes CF 45%, HSF 10%, HST 45%
- 25% tuition discount

Estimated net loss (revenue minus cost) = **2.2% of total college budget**

\*This is a conservative estimate – high school dual enrollment students made up an average of 18% of fall 2021 enrollment at community colleges nationally.

**How can dual enrollment be financially sustainable?**

## Efficiency Gains from DE

### 1. **Economies of scale:** Enrolling DE students reduces average costs

- Resources for DE implementation
- College fixed costs (e.g., for buildings, infrastructure, and personnel contracts)
- Excess capacity; flexible modalities (e.g. online)

### 2. **Student success:** DE students yield more performance funding

- DE students do well academically; less remediation; less pressure on advising
- Increased performance funding revenue

### 3. **Yield surplus:** DE students are future community college students

- Extra revenue + economies of scale + performance funding

# Efficiency Gains from DE: Evidence

**1. Economies of scale** (*high confidence*): As enrollment goes up, AC falls

[Titus et al., 2021]

**2. Student success** (*high confidence*): DE students perform well; funding follows performance

[An, 2013ab; Grubb et al., 2017; Hemelt et al., 2020;

Henneberger et al., 2022; Kremer, 2022; Lee et al., 2022]

**3. Yield surplus** (*modest confidence*): Student tracking finds new yield

[Lee and Villareal, 2022]

## Break-even Scenario with DE at 20%

	Impact on Average Cost and Average Revenue	Percent of Total College Budget
Baseline scenario	Net loss (AC > AR)	-2.2%
Efficiency gains if DE=20%:		
Economies of scale	AC falls	1.1%
Student success	AR increases	0.6%
Yield surplus	AC falls	0.3%
	AR increases	<u>0.2%</u>
Aggregate effect		+2.2%

## DE is Affordable with Efficiency Gains

- Using conservative estimates for economies of scale, student success, and yield surplus, DE is affordable
- Cost, revenue and efficiency consequences vary per college
- To illustrate variation, three case study colleges (FL, OH, TX)

# Case Study Colleges

	Florida	Texas	Ohio
Mode	80%CF	90%HST	45%CF, 45%HST
<b>Costs:</b>			
Implementation	+	+	+
Instruction		+	+
Materials	+		
Economies of scale	-	--	--
<b>Revenues:</b>			
Tuition/fees (discount)	-30%	-25%	- Graduated
Public subsidy		+	+
Performance funding	+		+
Yield surplus	(+)	+	+

*Notes:* DE types: CF: on-campus taught by faculty; HST: at high school taught by high school teacher. (+) indicates upward pressure on either costs or revenues; (-) indicates downward pressure. Public subsidy includes alternative public revenue sources including FTE enrollment subsidies.

## Conclusions

- DE is not going away:
  - >10% of enrollment at 75% of community colleges, >30% at a quarter
- Many community colleges face declining enrollment and increased competition from 4-year colleges
- Baseline scenario: DE is a loss
- Efficiency gain scenarios: DE can be affordable
- Colleges need to (and can) maximize efficiency gains by:
  1. Creating economies of scale
  2. Increasing public subsidy and performance funding
  3. Generating yield surplus (post-HS enrollment)

# Takeaways for College Leaders

Colleges can make DE more sustainable by:

1. Expanding DE enrollment (e.g., from 5-10% of enrollment to 20%+)  
→ Gains in public subsidy, economies of scale, student success, performance funding

And for colleges with large share of DE:

2. Increasing post-HS enrollment by strengthening career advising and supports (DEEP Practices)  
→ Gains in yield surplus (including post-HS student success & performance funding)

# Aligning Economic Incentives and the Equity Imperative: Dual Enrollment Equity Pathways (DEEP) Framework

<https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/easyblog/introducing-deep-research-based-framework.html>

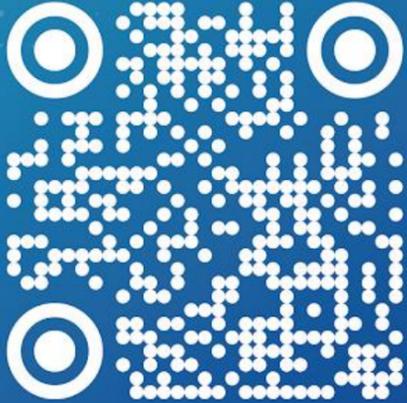
# Dual Enrollment Equity Pathways (DEEP) Framework for Reform

1. What does it look like when **Guided Pathways** practices are implemented in DE programs?
2. What model **ECHS** practices can be scaled?
3. What do we already know about **effective** and **equitable** DE practices?

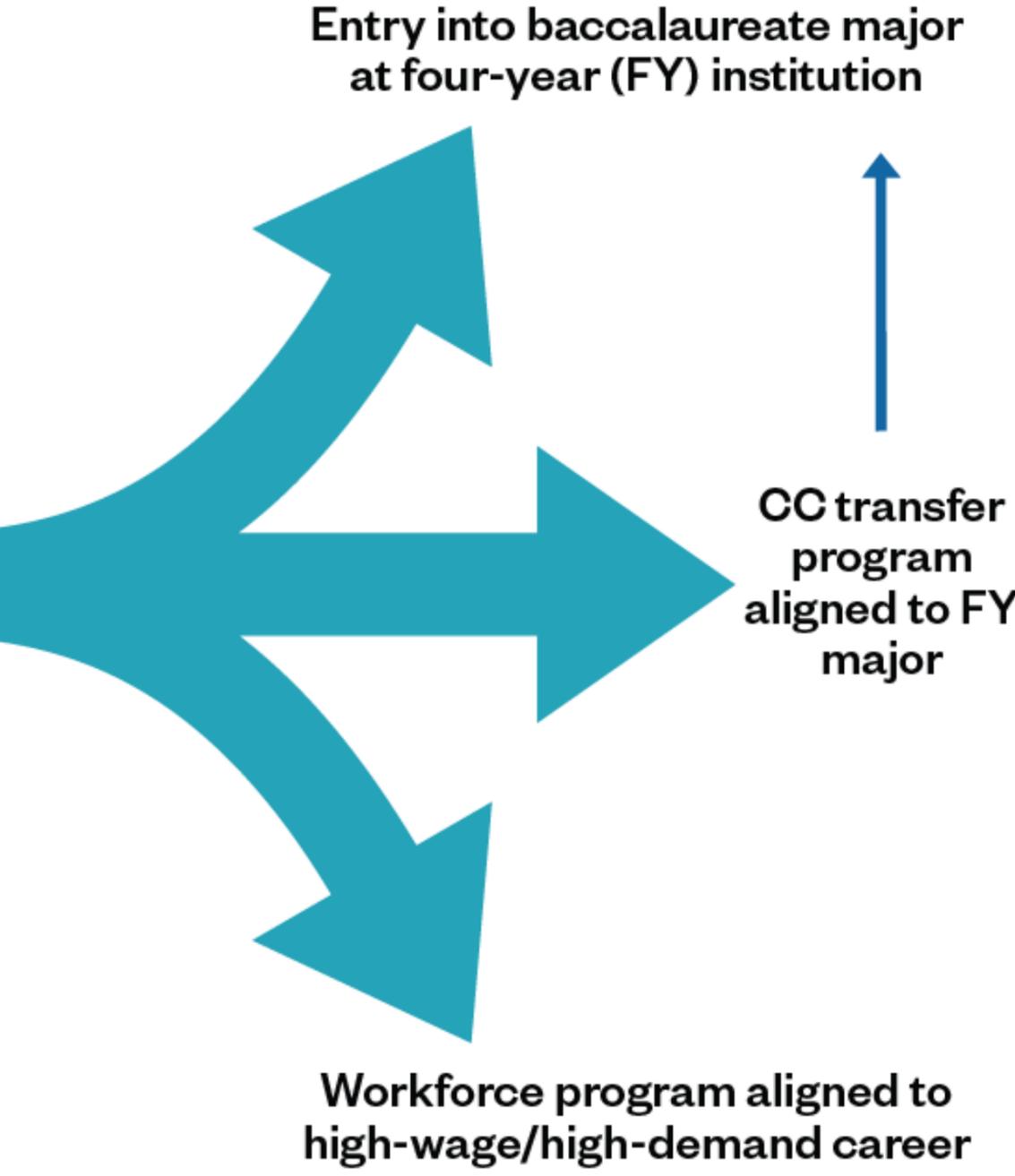
# Dual Enrollment Equity Pathways (DEEP) Framework for Reform

## Extending Guided Pathways to HS Dual Enrollment

**DEEP@CCRC**  
Resources on dual enrollment equity pathways for K-12 and college practitioners.



- 1. Outreach to underserved students & schools
- 2. Alignment to college degrees & careers in fields of interest
- 3. Early career & academic exploration, advising, & planning
- 4. High-quality college instruction & academic support





*Site Visit to Miami Dade College*

# Outreach to Underserved Students and Schools

**Focus** outreach on underserved high schools, students, and communities.

**Start** outreach before high school.

**Leverage** community connections to build awareness.

**Build** trust with and educate parents and families.

**Use** high school grades for eligibility instead of placement tests.

# Align DE to College Degrees and Careers

**Inventory** current DE offerings.

**Map** DE offerings to college degree programs in fields of interest.

**Embed** DE offerings in career-connected high school programs.



*Site Visit to Lee College*

**CCRC**

# Advise Students to Explore Interest and Develop Plans



*Site Visit to Chipola College*

**Use** DE to showcase college programs and support exploration.

**Help** students develop a college program plan and provide checkpoint advising.

**Coordinate** advising roles across sectors.

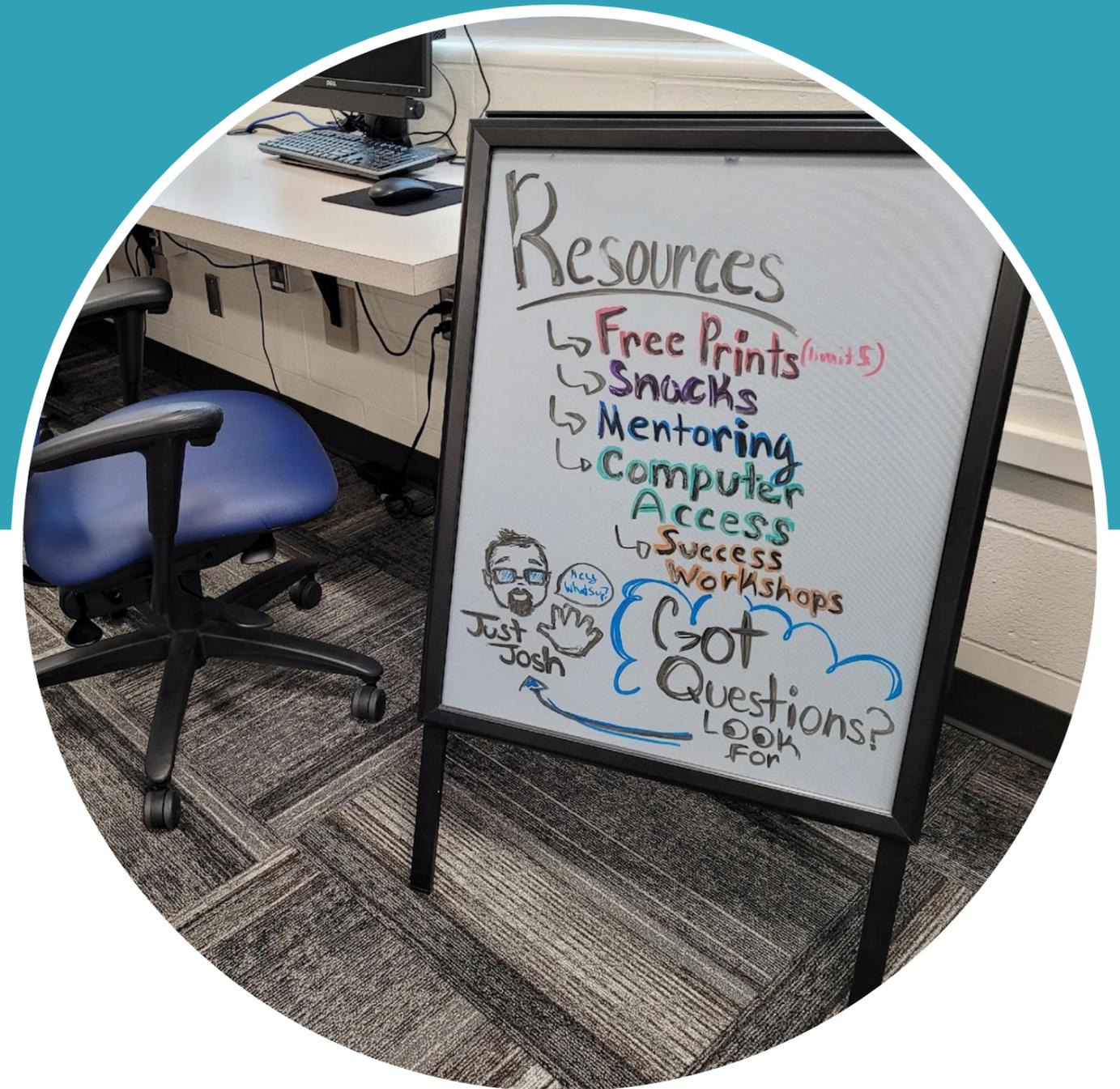
# Support Students by Delivering High-Quality Instruction

**Scaffold** coursework and frontload supports.

**Respond** quickly when students are struggling.

**Provide** additional, structured support for online classes.

**Support** DE instructors and monitor quality.



*Site Visit to San Jacinto College*

# Leadership Strategies for Building DEEP Partnerships

## Establishing a Shared DEEP Mindset

**Prioritize** underserved communities and schools and position DE as a pathway for upward mobility and workforce development.

**Commit** to doing what is best for students (even if not expedient).

**Believe** in—and support—the potential of all students.

**Recast** high school CTE as a college degree pathway and expand college and career opportunities.



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# Leadership Strategies for Building DEEP Partnerships

## Enabling Practices at Scale



**Negotiate** college and K-12 interests to find “win-wins” that benefit students.



**Strengthen** “back-end” business processes.



**Evaluate** whether DE staffing is adequate and effectively organized.



**Develop** a supply of qualified instructors, particularly for underserved schools.

# Incentives for Rethinking Dual Enrollment as an On-Ramp to College Degrees

	Potential Incentives
<b>Colleges</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Declining enrollments among older students; open seats</li><li>2. Expanding the pool of potential college-going students after high school</li><li>3. Downstream benefits to retention, completion, and statewide performance funding by increasing yield of former DE students</li><li>4. Reputational benefits</li></ol>
<b>K-12 Schools</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Attracting students and families looking for college acceleration options</li><li>2. Can offer new and attractive programs in partnership with colleges</li><li>3. Improved student outcomes, particularly for underserved populations and schools</li><li>4. Gains in state performance reporting and funding</li></ol>