Utilizing Centers for Teaching and Learning to Enhance Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships

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Currently, over one-third of all U.S. high school students participate in dual enrollment courses, which provide a jump-start to college and career pathways (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). That number is expected to grow as research substantiates claims of dual enrollment's positive effects on students' persistence to high school graduation, matriculation to post-secondary coursework, and potential for academic and workforce success (Zinth & Barnett, 2018). While a variety of delivery models exist, according to recent statistics from the U.S. Department of Education, 80% of students who participate in dual enrollment do so in a high school setting. When offered on high school campuses, dual enrollment is referred to as "concurrent enrollment" and necessitates a concurrent enrollment partnership (CEP) between the high school and an institution of higher education. This model provides access to college to a wide range of students; however, it also creates a challenge for institutions of higher education that are charged with supporting the professional development needs of the high school concurrent enrollment instructors.

Fortunately, many institutions of higher education have a ready source of expertise they can turn to for this work: centers for teaching and learning (CTLs). This *POD Speaks* outlines how higher education administrators can engage their CTLs to enhance the professional development work needed to ensure successful CEPs. For institutions that have well-established affiliations with their high school partners and are looking to increase instructor support or planning to grow their programming, CTLs have ready access to resources and training materials that can help. For institutions that are new to CEPs or are concerned about the potential workload of adding high school partners, the CTL can be instrumental in easing the transition by providing guidance in best practices for on-boarding and mentoring instructors.

Why Include CTLs in Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships

In order to ensure the integrity of CEPs, institutions of higher education must demonstrate to all stakeholders (students, parents, high school partners, and accreditors) that the quality of concurrent

enrollment courses equals those offered at the college/university (Speroni, 2011). In turn, course quality and delivery depend on concurrent enrollment instructors' knowledge, preparation, and support. While appropriately credentialed high school teachers can teach college courses, they still need orientation and support due to differences in norms, standards, curriculum, and grading scales across secondary and postsecondary institutions (Mollet et al., 2020; Duncheon & Relles, 2020). Several studies have described this professional development as critical to concurrent enrollment success; however, research also indicates that such training is not always timely, consistent, or robust (Ducheon & Relles, 2020; Mollet et al., 2020; Denecker, 2020). The key component, therefore, of a successful CEP lies in planning for and maintaining sufficient training and support for concurrent enrollment instructors, regardless of whether the CEP is established, just getting started, or in its initial stages.

In CEPs, much of the work of supporting concurrent enrollment instructors falls to faculty liaisons, who are appointed members of the faculty (or in some cases staff) from the credit-granting institution. However, while these liaisons are chosen based on their disciplinary knowledge and experience teaching the course(s) they oversee, they may not be prepared to train and mentor concurrent enrollment instructors. This is where a CTL can make an important

contribution to the CEP–no matter how established the partnership is–by providing training materials and guidance to faculty liaisons as they create professional development for concurrent enrollment instructors.

How CTLs Can Help

The National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP), which accredits dual enrollment programs, outlines [sixteen standards](#) for effective CEPs. Many of these standards include specifics regarding the preparation and ongoing support of concurrent enrollment instructors. Since CTLs have knowledge, expertise, and resources to develop and enhance instruction (Beach et al., 2016; Condon et al., 2016), they are a logical choice to help administrators ensure quality in course delivery and assessment for CEPs. Summarized below are key aspects of NACEP's standards that apply to the work of supporting concurrent enrollment instructors and examples of how CTLs can be engaged to enhance those efforts.

Course-Specific Training

NACEP guidelines state that concurrent enrollment instructors should be provided with an orientation to the "course philosophy, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment" (NACEP, 2020, p. ii). This orientation (also known as course-specific training) can include a review of the course syllabus and required learning materials, as

well as a discussion of the preferred instructional methods and standards for assessment and grading.

Many CTLs have experience in orienting faculty to an institution and providing insight into pedagogical approaches most appropriate for specific disciplines (Beach et al., 2016; Crowder & Monfared, 2020). CTLs can therefore assist faculty liaisons by working with them to design trainings that demonstrate respect for the concurrent enrollment instructors' experience as educators while at the same time transitioning those instructors to teach to the college's expectations.

Annual Discipline-Specific Professional Development

Once a concurrent enrollment instructor has been trained to teach the college course, ongoing professional development is an important factor in keeping the instructor up-to-date on disciplinary advances and instructional approaches. To this point, NACEP and many state standards require that concurrent enrollment instructors participate in annual professional development based on the field of instruction (NACEP, 2020, p. ii).

As part of their regular work, CTLs plan and facilitate numerous workshops, programs, and events to support the ongoing professional development needs of faculty. Connecting CTLs with faculty liaisons can save the liaisons time and enhance the quality of

annual training sessions. This collaborative approach also ensures that training sessions are not only interactive and informative, but also serve as models of the kinds of college-level pedagogical approaches that should be utilized in concurrent enrollment classrooms.

Comparable Assessment

Faculty liaisons and concurrent enrollment instructors must measure the same learning outcomes and have a shared understanding of standards and criteria for student performance (NACEP, 2020, p. ii). Though some CEPs require concurrent enrollment instructors to use the same assessment methods as the higher education institution, others allow more freedom in assessing student learning.

CTLs often advise on assessment practices on their campuses, whether at the course, program, and/or institutional levels (Beach et al., 2016; Focarile et al., 2022); therefore, faculty liaisons can consult with CTLs on assessment practices to enhance concurrent enrollment course integrity. For example, CTL support can range from input on assessment design and expectations for student work to the creation of shared grading rubrics and the incorporation of concurrent enrollment student data into programmatic and institutional assessment.

Classroom Observations

Classroom observations conducted by faculty liaisons help ensure that content in

concurrent enrollment courses is being delivered in ways similar to on-campus instruction. In addition, classroom observations provide insight into how students are engaging with the material and whether or not learning outcomes are being met.

Many CTLs have experience conducting formative classroom observations (Beach et al., 2016; Fletcher, 2018) and can provide faculty liaisons with tools for doing this aspect of their work. Importantly, CTLs can also guide faculty liaisons through the nuances of classroom observations so that liaisons can capitalize on opportunities to build trust and collegiality with their concurrent enrollment instructors (and ultimately between the institution and high school partner).

Conclusion

As dual enrollment programs expand, higher education administrators must ensure the quality of courses delivered through their concurrent enrollment partnerships–whether those CEPs are emerging or established. Engaging centers for teaching and learning is one way to enhance this work. Such collaborations allow administrators to leverage built-in resources to ensure concurrent enrollment instructor preparation and development, course alignment, and ultimately, student learning. The reviewers of Boise State University's application for NACEP

accreditation noted the benefits of such a relationship. In their words, "we were impressed with the integrated collaboration that has developed between the [CEP] and CTL and view it as a best practice in concurrent enrollment program administration" (NACEP Accreditation Committee, 2017).

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