



**MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM**  
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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## **Montana University System**

### **Dual Credit Update** **August 28, 2014**

#### **Credit-for-Credit Program**

Credit-for-Credit coupons are the centerpiece of Montana's innovative Dual Credit Incentive Program. This collaborative endeavor between Governor Bullock and the Commissioner of Higher Education rewards Montana educators for teaching concurrent enrollment courses in their high school. For every college credit taught, teachers earn a coupon for the same number of credits of in-state graduate or undergraduate tuition at any MUS college, University, or tribal college. Teachers may use the coupons themselves or pass them along to someone they want to empower with access to higher education.

OCHE has spearheaded coordination of communications and logistics associated with the rollout of this program. The logistical development and launch of this program has required extensive coordination and collaboration across all of our Montana campuses as well as between multiple offices within each campus.

The value of this program is evident, but communicating its existence to the more than 800 high schools and 11 post-secondary campuses in Montana continues to be a vital component of our coordination of this program.

In mid-June, Mrs. Amy Williams, Big Sky Pathways and Dual Credit Coordinator for Gallatin College MSU was hired .5 FTE by OCHE to serve as the Dual Credit Coordinator for the Montana University System through June 2015. Since June, Mrs. Williams has worked with the Commissioner's Office to actively increase awareness of the new Credit-for-Credit Incentive Program as well as worked with the Deputy Commissioner for Two-Year and Community College Education to build statewide knowledge of dual and concurrent enrollment opportunities, increase communication in dual credit coordination across the state, and fundamentally bring more focus to the MUS Dual Credit Program.

#### **Progress since June 2014:**

- Summer communication with educators at program launch: Deputy Commissioner Trevor worked with MEA/MFT and OPI to get the word out to teachers about the new Dual Credit Incentive Program. On June 5<sup>th</sup>, MEA/MFT sent an email about the program to all high school teachers in the state. This email gave an overview of the program and directed teachers to the MUS Dual Credit Incentive Program website for more information. <http://www.mus.edu/dualcredit/>
- Augmenting the existing MUS dual credit website: Phase one included the construction of a new, comprehensive resource for teachers, administrators, and others to learn about concurrent

enrollment, the Dual Credit Incentive Program, and connect with the necessary resources to develop concurrent enrollment.

- Outreach: Amy Williams and Deputy Commissioner Moisey presented updates on OCHE activities to the Montana Board of Public Education on July 17<sup>th</sup>. This presentation summarized the recent policy change and the Dual Credit Incentive Program and explained their implications for educators and administrators in the state, particularly how they have created a climate more amenable to concurrent enrollment growth. Additionally, Mrs. Williams has presented at a variety of educator professional development events and conferences over the summer to promote the program and increase knowledge of concurrent enrollment.
- Both Amy Williams and Deputy Commissioner Cech have joined Lt. Governor Angela McLean on trips to Tribal Colleges to promote the new Dual Credit Incentive program and facilitated connections between the college and the local secondary schools. The communication continued across the campuses of the MUS and tribal colleges.
- Biweekly conference calls for our campus dual credit coordinators, registrars, CAOs, and Deans have increased knowledge of the program, helped facilitate smooth program rollout, and built continuity and collaboration.

### **Increase in Dual Credit Courses Offered in Montana High Schools (2014/15)**

The modification to BOR Policy 730, the new Dual Credit Incentive Program, and the hard work of the MUS dual credit coordinators and their collaborating faculty, have resulted in a rapid expansion of opportunities for Montana students. A preliminary survey of dual credit coordinators on the 11 MUS campuses, as well as the tribal colleges engaging in concurrent enrollment, indicate that the 2014-15 school year will see the addition of 70-80 or more new concurrent enrollment courses across the state. This program growth demonstrates what can happen when efforts are concentrated to develop opportunities for students that have proven value to their post-secondary education preparation and completion.

### **What's Next for the Program?**

The first Credit-for-Credit coupons will go out to teachers this December and can be utilized to pay for credits spring 2015. OCHE continues to work diligently to facilitate the logistical details of the program so that the end user experiences an easy transaction. Additionally, outreach and communication efforts continue.

We will be advocating and educating at the state's two major teacher conferences in October, MEA/MFT and MT ACTE (Montana Association for Career and Technical Education). By reaching out to both academic and Career & Technical educators we aim to facilitate opportunities for Montana students that cover a wide range of career and post-secondary educational options.

Through a partnership with the Montana Digital Professional Learning Network we will begin delivering eBlast news briefs. These brief but informative, topic-based, live, web sessions will be targeted at high school administrators, teachers, and others in the education community. Users will be able to learn about the dual credit world from the MUS Dual Credit Coordinator, secondary and post-secondary guests, dual credit students, and policy makers, and then have the opportunity to ask questions. The sessions will deliver

information, spur discussion, and facilitate the connection to the resources needed to develop programs that benefit our students.

Mrs. Williams and Director of Student Affairs, Ron Muffick, are utilizing OCHE's established relationship with Student Assistance Foundation (SAF) to promote dual and concurrent enrollment opportunities as well as the Dual Credit Incentive Program. SAF provides outreach services to high school juniors and seniors as well as their counselors and teachers. This is exactly the group who would most benefit from hearing about our program, therefore, Mr. Muffick and Mrs. Williams are collaborating on providing materials to SAF representatives to augment SAF's outreach efforts in our high schools.

The temporary waiver option in the modified BOR Policy 730 has created new options for our high school educators. As we charge them to earn nine graduate credits in their content area, it is our responsibility as a system to support them by making available graduate credits that are relevant to education but focused on the content area. Mrs. Williams is in the process of completing a survey regarding the availability of graduate credits in the MUS for non-degree seeking students, like the temporary waiver teachers, their location and mode of delivery. As this information has been submitted by our state graduate programs, she has compiled it into a single, user friendly resource for teachers on the Dual Credit Incentive Program website (<http://www.mus.edu/dualcredit/>). This saves our educators valuable time and energy; no longer must they invest their time trying to discover what graduate options are available through the MUS. Furthermore, it allows the MUS as a system to identify whether or not we even have nine graduate credits available for educators in particular content areas, or if they are delivered in a mode that makes them reasonably accessible to teachers (i.e. face to face during the school year is not the best fit for teachers). Where there are deficits in content availability, is where we can step up as a system to serve these teachers, and all those who will follow.

Programs across the MUS are already rising to the challenge. Computer Science is one area where graduate credits are particularly inaccessible for our teachers and yet it is one of the most highly demanded new course areas by students and parents, particularly for dual enrollment. MSU Bozeman Computer Science Department Head, John Paxton, worked with MSU's Masters of Science in Science Education (MSSE) program to develop Computer Science graduate content rich in computational content but targeted at educators. The first course, offered this summer, had 13 participants, 10 of which were from Montana. Highlands College/Montana Tech are working with MDPLN and area high school educators to develop three, three credit graduate math courses to be offered to concurrent enrollment educators across the state through MDPLN. They are working to launch this program summer 2015. MSU Billings Extended Campus is awaiting the completion of the graduate credit availability assessment and is ready to work with their faculty to address deficits in course availability and develop content. With an established record in online delivery, they are poised to deliver content in a mode that works for teachers. We want our concurrent enrollment teachers to see the MUS as their first and best resource for graduate credit, because of the quality of our courses, the applicability to their teaching, and availability on a schedule that works with their day job. Now that many are earning Credit-for-Credit coupons they can use for graduate tuition, we have an excellent opportunity to empower these educators.

Mrs. Williams and dual credit coordinators across the state are working with all our school districts to increase awareness of dual enrollment options. Meetings in development for this fall in Billings and Helena will bring together secondary and post-secondary partners in two of the state's larger school districts. These events will create the opportunity to discuss recent changes in the dual credit landscape and their impact on concurrent enrollment on both the secondary and post-secondary side. Additionally, they create

the opportunity to brainstorm on common objectives, create priorities, identify who will carry the work forward, and on what timeline.

Research continues to show that dual and concurrent enrollment has a positive impact on the lives of students. It improves the likelihood of completion of high school, entry into a post-secondary program, and attainment of a degree or certificate. Unfortunately, knowledge of dual and concurrent enrollment as well as the local, regional, and on-line options available to students is hit or miss across the state. Increasing knowledge by increasing access to information will be critical to building a public informed and engaged with dual enrollment. We live in a digital age and more information is obtained on-line than ever before. Therefore, we see the enhancement of the portion of the MUS dual credit website targeted at students, parents, and schools as important in increasing knowledge and access. An overhaul, similar to what has already occurred for the Dual Credit Incentive Program, is in development. Several groups need information tailored to their needs: high school junior and seniors, potential students under 16, parents, academic and CTE teachers, counselors, administrators, and non-profit partners. The objective is to create a site with straightforward information that informs all potential consumers of dual credit information and empowers them to take the next step, whatever that may be.

We've had an ambitious few months and have a large amount of work before us; we have a great team in place and are excited to continue our work for Montana students with enhanced focus and motivation.