

### Examination of 1D SBCCC 400.11 Educational Services through Career and College Promise Curriculum and its Utilization in North Carolina

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#### Context for 1D SBCCC 400.11

As a direct result of the Appropriations Act of 2011, the North Carolina State Board of Education and Board of Community Colleges created the Career and College Promise (CCP) program, ensuring tuition-free, dual enrollment opportunities for qualified high school students. This partnership program between the N.C. Department of Public Instruction, N.C. Community College System, the UNC System, and other independent colleges and universities aims to provide eligible N.C. high school students with pathways promoting the obtainment of certificates or degrees in addition to providing workforce readiness skills. This policy brief specifically focuses on the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Pathway, a component of the CCP program, designed for workforce development, providing tuition-free credits leading to a certificate or industry/occupational recognized credential.

#### Multifaceted Issue

Counter to CTE program goals within CCP, accessibility and utilization consistently represent areas of concerns. Expensive tuition coupled with additional costs - materials, transportation, etc. - are sources of major equity gaps in participation among low-income students. This dashboard (Table 1) developed and maintained by the North Carolina Community College System demonstrates a significant overall decline in CCP CTE enrollment since its peak of 14,561 in 2018-19, with steady annual decreases to 6,844 students in the 2020-21 academic year.

Beyond the additional funding needs within the CTE pathway, one may notice major concerns of equity; within this pathway, White student numbers are consistently double that of Black students in the same pathway; at peak enrollment in 18-19, White students made up 4%, 9025 individuals, of the total enrollment compared to Black students' 2% share of the enrollment population, 2643 individuals. The trend persists even through the general enrollment decline within CTE dual-enrollment with 20-21 enrollments showing White students at 2% of the total, 4213 individuals, compared to Black students' 1%, 1139 individuals. These discrepancies rightly raise many questions of access and awareness, but provenance aside, such unequal distribution of engagement with and access to CTE pathways is a rescinding of the titular promise CCP made to a massive population of North Carolina students; the problem is the lack of equitable engagement.

#### Addressing the Problem

The best course of action is two-pronged: increase use of Federal Perkins V funding for community colleges (where applicable), and streamline information to potential CTE students through College Advising Corps programs, which are part of the broader AmeriCorps umbrella. The Perkins V Act was created to develop academic, technical, and employable skills of secondary and postsecondary students enrolling in CTE (NCCCS, 2022). Perkins V specifically is aimed at supportive services for special populations, including populations previously identified as missing from current

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enrollments (NCCCS, 2022). The funding received from Perkins V allows for purchasing the materials already discussed as being a significant barrier, including materials, equipment, and transportation (NCCCS, 2022). As such, and in light of its sustainability, Perkins V is highly encouraged to address equity concerns. Because Perkins V funding (based on Comprehensive Local Needs Assessments) reboots every two years, CTE programs could allow students to keep the Perkins V funded equipment and materials when applicable, smoothing students' transitions into their careers. Additionally, Perkins V funding can be used for recruitment, potentially expanding current CTE program outreach (NCCCS, 2022).

In addition to addressing challenges of access, improving awareness of the program is also a salient strategy; as current data trends demonstrate, marginalized populations are underrepresented within CCP more broadly, and a lack of awareness is identified be a major obstacle at several levels, including community colleges, high schools, and students themselves. To that end, engagement with established partnerships and outreach programs, i.e. the College Advising Corps and Perkins V outreach, can democratize access through increased awareness of the program's purpose and pathways for participation at all levels.

### **Evaluating Alternatives and Tradeoffs**

In evaluating administrative robustness, policy sustainability, equity, and feasibility of both alternatives yields high odds of positive impact on the equity issues outlined above. As with any alternative, a few trade offs are worth noting. Institutions receiving Perkins V funding will have to determine how to distribute those funds internally and may have to select which initiatives to support. Institutions can also form consortiums to apply for this funding but this would limit the funds for each institution. For a college to request higher levels of funding independently, they need to demonstrate higher levels of Pell Grant eligibility and students from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. This in turn could influence recruitment (Perkins, 2022).

Given the siloed College Advising Corps Programs throughout the State of North Carolina, the availability of information and training materials vary from program to program. This tradeoff would require consistent training on and advocacy of CCP with emphasis on the CTE pathway throughout all

five programs in North Carolina. The additional capacity required to retain the CCP programmatic components could be an unintentional burden on the College Advising Corps. However this increased knowledge and collaboration would provide a foundational understanding of and aid in the selection of college or career paths for high school students. This deeper understanding would enhance the confidence of high school students in their educational journey. In addition to being a resource for students, the knowledge and professional proximity of the program aids in the professional development and marketability of College Advising Corps advisors. Considering the service constraints within the College Advising Corps Program, this expertise would aid in future professional opportunities and continued promotion of the CCP.

Significantly, while utilizing Perkins V funding is the most effective and viable option to address the precipitous and inequitable decline in CTE enrollments through CCP, there is very little net consequence in increased engagement with AmeriCorps programs instead. The dominant tradeoff of Perkins V is the potential need to choose between priority projects; however, utilizing AmeriCorps programs can serve as a different pathway toward funding and outreach with equivalent, albeit very different, challenges in staffing. Additionally, the varied types of AmeriCorps options available can provide flexibility at the institutional- or consortium-level.

### **Conclusion**

Ideally, these presented shifts in established policy surrounding the Career and Technical Education pathway of the Career and College Promise program strike audiences as feasible and accessible by building on the established infrastructure of Federal Perkins V funding and the College Advising Corps. However, it must be stressed that individually these systems are complex and require deep knowledge and experience to operate. Cultivating and maintaining them, while demanding of both time and energy, has profound potential for North Carolina students and the state more broadly.

Ultimately, what is of singular importance is the benefit of the community through a more expansive and inviting perspective of higher education - a recognition of the value young people hold in their communities, the services they need in order to achieve their potential, and the responsibility North Carolina educational systems hold in supporting

these young people meet the needs which have yet to surface. A dogmatic fixation on baccalaureate degrees can arguably obscure all of this, and the afore-proposed policy can make the goals of these students - all of them - that much more clear and accessible.

North Carolina Community Colleges. High School Dual Enrollment Rate. Retrieved March 17, 2023, from <https://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/analytics/dashboards/high-school-dual-enrollment-rate>  
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### Authors' Note

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**Table 1**  
*High School Dual Enrollment Rate Dashboard*

