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From: Gabriella Bellows, American University School of Public Affairs student

To: Kansas Board of Regents

Subject: College Accessibility for Rural Students Policy Memo

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Main Purpose:

As Kansas has a relatively high proportion of rural students, it is essential for rural students to have an equal opportunity to attend institutions of higher education. The Kansas Board of Regents has been instrumental in influencing higher education reform in the state of Kansas, and it is necessary to continue to implement and advocate for policy solutions to the Kansas state legislatures.

Background:

Kansas is one of the only states with no references to early college or dual enrollment into their ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) plan. The Every Student Succeeds Act is the plan superseding the No Child Left Behind Act. States are required to submit an educational plan to receive categorical grants from the Department of Education. In turn, the DOE must approve each state's educational plan using specific criteria.

According to the Revised State Template for the Consolidated State Plan as issued by the U.S. The Department of Education accessed via the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) Website, the only plan that aims to increase enrollment in college is the individual plan of study (IPS), which is for all students in grades 8 through 12. The IPS is a clearly defined roadmap that includes students' interests and outlines post-secondary plans individually tailored to each student<sup>1</sup>. However, in ESSA, the federal government suggests implementing dual enrollment or concurrent enrollment programs; thus, the federal government and independent researchers concede that concurrent or dual enrollment is valuable in raising college enrollment<sup>2</sup>. It is important to note that the document accessed via the KSDE website expired in 2017, only six months after the USDOE issued it; however this is Kansas' most current ESSA plan available online. According to public state legislative data made available by the College in High School Alliance (CHSA), a nonpartisan coalition of educational policy non for profits, in 2019 and 2020, no new secondary education-related bills became laws<sup>3</sup>. However, this month, the Kansas board of regents identified the next steps to reach the goal of providing each student with five three college credit hours through concurrent enrollment (CHSA 2020).

There are different models of funding for these programs. According to Jennifer Zinth of Zinth Consulting, an agency that helps states and private sector groups implement dual enrollment, there are four different financing models: the state pays, the district pays, a mixture of the two pay, or the student may help pay<sup>4</sup> (2019).

The Kansas state legislature has shown willingness to implement dual or concurrent enrollment. Kansas Senate Bill 335 would authorize “The board of education of any school

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/ECSETS/ESEA/KSconsolidatedstateplan01182018\\_Approved.pdf](https://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/ECSETS/ESEA/KSconsolidatedstateplan01182018_Approved.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.congress.gov/114/crpt/hrpt354/CRPT-114hrpt354.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/11DxkCV-E8Z85hxWonMrdrtraAcsxz38I1cvVOApXfNM/edit#gid=1312361952>

<sup>4</sup> <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/589d0f90ff7c507ac483988e/t/5d9dd5f1903eb63f750f7e29/1570625034693/FundingForEquity-SinglePage-WithCover.pdf>

district and any eligible postsecondary educational institution may enter into a cooperative agreement regarding the dual or concurrent enrollment of students in courses of instruction for college credit at the eligible postsecondary educational institution[s]”. Although the senate bill passed by 37-2, the House hearing was cancelled and the bill died in the House on May 21st, 2020, according to documents by the Kansas legislature.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, the main problem with not implementing the recommendations seems to be indifference toward secondary education policy, which is where the Kansas Board of Regents can help raise momentum for public policy efforts, if a policy is not in the realm of the board’s authority.

The cost of a student not earning a post-secondary education is overwhelming. The percentage of jobs requiring a postsecondary education is estimated to reach a record high 65% in 2020 according to the Georgetown University Public Policy Institute’s Center on Education and the Workforce (2020, Carnevale et al). And according to the same study, there will be a huge labor shortage in jobs requiring postsecondary certifications<sup>6</sup>.

However, numerous research studies outlined in How To Scale College in High School by CHSA show that dual enrollment and concurrent enrollment programs in high schools increase high school and college graduation rates<sup>7</sup> (2017).

It can be concluded that investing in dual enrollment is a positive investment. According to Joel Vargas, a Vice-President of Jobs for The Future, an educational non for profit, investing in these programs is productive because more students receive postsecondary credentials and degrees more quickly and at higher rates, and the need for and costs of remedial coursework

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2019\\_20/measures/sb335/](http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2019_20/measures/sb335/)

<sup>6</sup> [https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Recovery2020.FR\\_Web\\_.pdf](https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Recovery2020.FR_Web_.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/589d0f90ff7c507ac483988e/t/58bcd0349de4bbb44fb5e7f4/1488769081403/How+to+Scale+College+in+High+School\\_CHSA+%283%29.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/589d0f90ff7c507ac483988e/t/58bcd0349de4bbb44fb5e7f4/1488769081403/How+to+Scale+College+in+High+School_CHSA+%283%29.pdf)

decrease (2013, Vargas). Vargas' research reports that closing the income-related gap (rural students have higher than average poverty rate) in college graduation would increase the productivity of public education investments by \$1,452 per Associate's degree and \$3,607 per Bachelor's degree<sup>8</sup>. Concurrent and dual enrollment courses would reduce the need for spending on remedial courses in public post-secondary institutions. According to Complete College America, a post-secondary education advocacy organization, "More than 50 percent of students entering two-year colleges and nearly 20 percent of those entering four-year universities are placed in remedial classes." With regards to lower-income students, this jumps to 65% at two-year colleges, and 32% do so in four-year colleges. Around 40% of students placed in remedial courses at community colleges never finish<sup>9</sup>. (Complete College America 2012). Vargas' research shows States employing dual enrollment and concurrent enrollment spend less per student because these strategies increase college graduation rates and these students will spend less time in college because they already have transferable credits.

Costs to the program would be minimal, and much of the costs that would incur would be minimal, and the USDOE would most likely give grants to Kansas through the ESSA recommendations. There is not a direct cost assessment for implementing these programs on a consistent state-wide level, but SB 335 indicates that the Kansas state legislature is willing to delegate the power of spending to individuals districts and the Kansas Board of Regents; the Board of Regents, as indicated by their recent advancement in identifying next steps has shown the willingness to incur the costs. The majority of the cost would be teacher training. In 2015, Ohio appropriated \$10 million to provide teachers with concurrent enrollment credentialing<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> [https://jfforg-prod-prime.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/TheEconomicPayoff\\_022513.pdf](https://jfforg-prod-prime.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/TheEconomicPayoff_022513.pdf)

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[https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/server\\_files/files/CCA%20Remediation%20ES%20FINAL.pdf](https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/server_files/files/CCA%20Remediation%20ES%20FINAL.pdf)

<sup>10</sup><https://static1.squarespace.com/static/589d0f90ff7c507ac483988e/t/5dc9ba08e23407334f727b8c/1573501460447/UNLOCKING+POTENTIAL+-+A+State+Policy+Roadmap+for+Equity+and+Quality+in+College+in+High+School+Programs-4.pdf>

Adjusted to the number of secondary education teachers of Kansas and for inflation, the cost estimate for training teachers would be 4.2 million, a small cost considering the alternative. According to Zinth's research, the State of Kansas funds career and technical courses in high school.

Goals and Recommendations:

**Goal #1: Raise percentage of qualified teachers from Kansas' concurrent enrollment system-wide transfer courses from 55% to 90%<sup>11</sup>.** It is understandable that many teachers may be unqualified given that Kansas is experiencing a teacher shortage, particularly in Western Kansas. According to a 2018 study by KMUW, Wichita's public radio station, there were teacher vacancies in most counties but most strikingly, there was 1 teacher vacancy per 104 students in Weskan county, 1 per 48 in Copeland, and, 1 per 86 in Attica county. In addition, the number of Kansas graduates given teachers licenses has been flat for years, and more waivers are being given to unqualified teachers<sup>12</sup>. Various research studies conclude unqualified teachers have a negative impact on students<sup>13</sup>. Most post-secondary schools with faculty involved in concurrent enrollment that are unqualified have been approved with waivers by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). By September 2023, the HLC will verify that each school is in compliance with its standards. The state can help ensure each school is in compliance with HLC standards by creating a staff director, providing tuition assistance and incentives for current teachers, and promote new opportunities for teachers meeting dual enrollment credentialing requirements.

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[https://www.kansasregents.org/resources/2019\\_BAASC\\_CEP\\_REPORT\\_SUMMARY\\_AND\\_TABLES.pdf](https://www.kansasregents.org/resources/2019_BAASC_CEP_REPORT_SUMMARY_AND_TABLES.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.kmuw.org/post/kansas-worsening-teacher-shortage-four-graphs>

<sup>13</sup> <https://issuu.com/ijarw/docs/ijarw1250>

**Goal #2: Require Program Availability.** Currently, not all public high schools students have access to college courses. High schools and colleges must work together to maintain state-wide transferable credit opportunities to high school students. The aforementioned bill authorizes any high school to form any partnership with a post-secondary institution, however it is not required. When there is no requirement, students in rural areas fall through the cracks. Although some rural high schools may not have sufficient students to operate such programs, an alternative delivery method must be developed. The courses may be offered at the postsecondary institution with transportation provided for the student, course work could be given to the student at the school for monitored self-study, or a student may learn the material online. This should not be a problem on behalf of state colleges, technical colleges, and community colleges, since all these institutions have concurrent enrollment programs, but not all high schools have partnerships. This mandate has been implemented in other states. For example, Virginia requires all local school boards to enter partnerships with local community colleges. In addition, each high school must give students access to at least three college courses<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> <http://ecs.force.com/mbdata/mbstprofexc?Rep=DC13P&st=Virginia>