NAVIGATING DUAL ENROLLMENT

Los Angeles Scholars Share their Insights on What Matters Most for Success
In the fall of 2023, the California Community Foundation (CCF) engaged the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities (Gardner Center) to support us in an Action Research Fellowship. This Fellowship is part of CCF’s Los Angeles Scholars Investment Fund (LASIF) Broadening the Dual Enrollment Narrative (BROADEN) Initiative.

We were each nominated by a different program that is part of the LASIF BROADEN Initiative. We each graduated from high school, and currently attend a public four-year university or a two-year college, in Los Angeles County. All of us participated in one or more college courses during high school, and all of us hope that our work during this Fellowship will benefit our community by expanding equitable access to dual enrollment (DE). We developed a set of research questions that addressed CCF’s interests in LA students’ experiences in dual enrollment, so that the Foundation could draw upon our findings as they move the work of LASIF BROADEN forward. To CCF’s questions about messages and experiences that contribute to success in dual enrollment, we added others that addressed college students’ sense of the benefits of dual enrollment and the “ideal” set of dual enrollment opportunities. We then created an interview protocol and conducted 58 interviews with other college students and each other, from September 13 - October 9, 2023. From these interviews we identified, coded, and synthesized the main points to create a set of findings from our research. Our research questions and findings are outlined below, along with our recommendations.

INTERVIEW POOL

We interviewed college students recruited by each of the ten grantee organizations who are part of the LASIF BROADEN Initiative. The organizations differ in size and structure, so the pools from which the interviewees were selected and the processes used varied. Some of these organizations had worked with students when they were in high school, so they recruited students who they had remained in contact with after they went to college. Some of the programs are located in colleges, and they started with a randomly selected group of students from a list of those students at their school who met our criteria. In some cases, when the pools of possible interviewees from their own programs did not yield a sufficient number of interviewees, they reached out to acquaintances who met the criteria. There were mass emails and text messages, along with a lot of individual contacts. In some cases, we provided support by supplementing the interviewee pool with classmates who fit the bill. It was definitely a group effort. Ultimately, we exceeded our goal of interviewing 50 students who had participated in at least one dual enrollment course before graduating from high school in Los Angeles County and were currently enrolled in college.

While we did not collect demographic data, we know that the type of postsecondary institutions attended by the interviewees were as follows: 33% attended a California State University (CSU); 29%, a California Community College; 28%, a University of California (UC); 3%, a private institution outside California; 5%, a private institution in California;
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and 2%, a public institution outside California. All the interviewees attended high school in Los Angeles County, and 67% attend college in Los Angeles County.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND FINDINGS

We identified four research questions:

1. What positive and negative messages about taking dual enrollment courses do scholars receive?
2. What dual enrollment experiences contribute to and/or hinder students’ ability to succeed in college classes during high school?
3. What are college students’ perceptions of the value of dual enrollment?
4. What do students think would be the “ideal” set of dual enrollment opportunities for high school students?

We developed an interview protocol that would help to answer these questions, which were grouped into categories.

We gathered and coded interview data as a full group, including contributions from two Fellows who were not able to complete the Fellowship due to changes in their schedules. After that, we worked in teams to develop findings for each category in each research question. The following sections reflect our teams’ interpretation of the findings, with input from the full group along with our Gardner Center facilitators and guests who shared their reflections throughout the findings development process.

1. What positive and negative messages about taking dual enrollment courses do scholars receive?
   Findings by Daisy Garcia and Jesus Rios

Encouragement to be part of dual enrollment

When asked if anyone encouraged them to participate in a dual enrollment course, more than half mentioned that counselors were a main source of information and encouragement for students. For some students, dual enrollment was part of the curriculum at their high school. In those cases, students shared a sense of being forced rather than encouraged to participate. The third most frequently mentioned source of encouragement to enroll in DE was family members. Of those, mothers and family members who were school faculty or staff came up most often.

About three-quarters of interviewees stated that the encouragement they received to participate in DE focused on the opportunities to earn early college credit, get a head start in college, save money by taking free classes, and in some cases, also earn high school credit. The next most frequent positive messaging focused on the value of experiencing college during high school. These messages emphasized that DE was a great way to prepare for, and experience college early in high school. Students were also told that DE would be a great way to be in more rigorous classes and experience new things that are not normally available for high school students.

Discouragement for being part of dual enrollment

When asked who, if anyone, discouraged them from participating in DE, a significant majority shared that they did not receive discouragement from anyone. Some, however, did note that they themselves had their own doubts about whether dual enrollment was a good fit for them. It is important to remember that everyone we interviewed had decided to participate in dual enrollment, so it makes sense that this pool of students did not experience a high degree of discouragement.

Among those who experienced negative messages, the theme that came up most often was that the workload would make it hard to balance schoolwork with other commitments. They described hearing that dual enrollment courses
were more demanding and more strict than standard high school courses, with DE instructors not as lenient as their high school teachers. While not mentioned by many interviewees, some indicated that the overwhelming workload could lead to negative impacts on mental health.

**Influence of school environment or culture**

When asked about the influence of their high school’s environment or culture on participation in DE, about half of the interviewees shared that there was generally a culture that encouraged college going. Interviewees shared different examples of what this looked like at their school, such as: the school aiming to help students obtain their Associate’s degree before graduating from high school; fostering a competitive yet supportive environment for academic growth; and focusing on college readiness to create a positive learning atmosphere; and encouraging students to excel and attend four-year universities.

The next most frequent response, from around a third of respondents, related more specifically to the high school’s encouragement for dual enrollment participation, often resulting in numerous classmates opting for DE classes. DE courses were common and widely promoted, creating a positive atmosphere. Interviewees described supportive teachers, college counselors, and peers who facilitated the process, and the school providing ample resources such as tutoring services. Interviewees described how their school made it easy for students to learn about and enroll in DE, with counselors offering guidance and organizing informational sessions, along with a competitive yet supportive culture that motivated students to excel in both DE and regular courses. This combined to foster a strong emphasis on academic achievement.

About a quarter of those who responded shared that dual enrollment was not widely discussed or popular within the school or community. Some observed that naturally curious students independently enrolled in DE classes, though it was not a common choice at their high school. These students noted that there was limited support and involvement from the school, including insufficient information from counselors, which left students wishing for more guidance. In some of these cases, unlike AP courses, DE was not widely taken, and interested students had to resort to online classes due to limited on-campus options.

2. **What dual enrollment experiences contribute to or hinder students’ ability to succeed in college classes during high school?**

   *Findings by Harry Ilanyan and Alberto Quiroz*

**Things that contributed to success in dual enrollment**

When we asked students about what contributed to their success in dual enrollment, the cornerstone was frequently attributed to the influential roles of dual enrollment professors, high school teachers, and counselors. Students most frequently mentioned dual enrollment professors as having the most impact on their personal advancement. High school teachers also played a crucial role, highlighted more often than counselors. Their support for dual enrollment gave students the encouragement needed to excel in a dual-learning setting. However, while it was highlighted the least among the three, counselors were acknowledged for their guidance and academic planning. Their role in providing resources and information was described as helping students make informed decisions about their dual enrollment courses and even voiced student concerns to the dual enrollment professors. In essence, the combination of dual enrollment professors, high school teachers, and counselors formed a supportive educational ecosystem that fostered student success within dual enrollment.

Students underscored that their success in dual enrollment was not solely rooted in administrative support; mentioned...
equally often was the importance of the social fabric of the student community. Classmates, often more than mere peers, were integral to succeeding in dual enrollment. Frequently highlighted, the mutual assistance found in collaborative studying and note-taking enabled students to create meaningful relationships that further led to emotional support. These relationships were fostered in a collaborative environment where the students highlighted a heightened sense of comfort and willingness to engage, ask questions, and take academic risks. Moreover, a few students highlighted the motivation derived from classmates who were also friends, acting as a catalyst for perseverance through the challenges faced in dual enrollment.

Students also equally highlighted the strong teaching of dual enrollment professors, contributing to overall student success in dual enrollment. Some students mentioned the professors’ enthusiasm for their subjects, and others cited professors being supportive and approachable. The professors’ openness to networking and connecting with students was repeatedly underscored as being important to creating a successful learning environment. Professors who were more engaged with the students led to students feeling empowered to reach out, communicate their needs, and prioritize their workload, knowing their professors were allies in their academic journeys.

The professors’ teaching styles and experience in the subject matter were also crucial, as they conveyed content effectively and made it relatable to students. For some students, this created a more engaging learning environment. Students also consistently noted the value of professors who were understanding. A few highlighted the small class sizes that enabled everyone to be familiar with one another, allowing for a more personalized educational experience. Such professors were commended for their flexibility and empathy, particularly in recognizing the challenges faced by a high school student in a collegiate setting. Furthermore, most interviewees highlighted the leniency and adaptability of the professors in adjusting deadlines and course structures for their high school responsibilities as factors that significantly increased success in dual enrollment.

Another prominent theme was the personal qualities that supported students to succeed in DE. Interviewees identified a strong sense of personal responsibility, determination, effort, perseverance, and a proactive mindset as driving factors for achieving their goals. Overall, students noted the importance of these attitudes and behaviors, especially when dealing with increased pressure and responsibility from dual enrollment courses.

**Things that were challenging about the dual enrollment experience**

Students navigating dual enrollment often grappled with the complex interplay of collegiate and high school demands. Delving into the challenges of dual enrollment, students most frequently highlighted their struggle to balance their dual enrollment and high school courses; more often, they highlighted the difficulty of integrating their dual enrollment coursework with the existing demands of their high school life. The consumption of their free time by dual enrollment responsibilities was an overarching theme, which in some cases led to a reduction in participation in extracurricular activities, notably sports. A particular reflection was the rigidity of dual enrollment professors regarding high school deadlines, a factor that, while not universally noted, did underscore the broader challenge of synchronizing two distinct academic institutions. This inflexibility could contribute to the feeling of being overwhelmed, a sentiment echoed by several students who spoke of feeling swamped by the combined pressures of their academic workloads, which challenged their ability to manage time effectively. Ultimately, this reflected not just the quantity of work but also the adjustment to the structure and self-discipline required for success in a college environment.

Reflecting on the dual enrollment journey, students pinpointed the academic rigor as the second most formidable challenge, starkly contrasting the more manageable demands of their high school studies. Some students reported feeling lost, navigating the course material, and planning their academic paths, while others highlighted demanding
final projects, heavy testing, and heavy coursework overall. Students noted the rapid pace of college-level classes, where topics were covered in a few days, rather than the more gradual progression of high school learning.

One student mentioned the brevity of contact with professors resulted in increased pressure to succeed on his own. In another instance, a student felt compelled to withdraw from a course that became excessively challenging due to the professor’s approach. The challenges were further amplified in online classes, as a handful of students pointed out that seeking assistance was less straightforward than in traditional classroom settings.

The third most mentioned challenge was the lack of readily available tutoring, which left students navigating the DE course content without academic aid.

Interestingly, one student mentioned that support from teachers and counselors appeared to be conditional, often reserved for those already excelling, thereby excluding those who might be struggling and in greater need of assistance. Subsequently, the same interviewee highlighted the paradox where students had first to demonstrate academic success to access the support that could facilitate it. The absence of structured support systems or programs tailored to dual enrollment students exacerbated the challenge.

Interviewees also highlighted the enrollment process as a challenge. Many expressed their frustration over the lack of clear guidance from counselors, which left some students to decipher the enrollment process on their own. The task of registering for classes and the completion of necessary paperwork was brought up most frequently, often described as confusing. Additional technical difficulties with college systems, such as navigating Canvas, were mentioned once. As one student highlighted, this lack of assistance was amplified when dealing with administrative errors, such as being wrongfully classified or charged.

Scheduling conflicts surfaced as the fourth most prevalent challenge for students in dual enrollment, with many struggling to balance the timing of their courses with pre-existing commitments. The timing for dual enrollment courses frequently clashed with student work schedules and extracurricular activities, such as sports, which could necessitate leaving class early. In addition, finding appropriate timeslots to accommodate the additional course load was a concern, especially for those taking night classes, where there were challenges related to traveling and transportation. This issue was compounded by the limited contact time between students and the professor, which some students needed more for their learning needs. The structure of the dual enrollment schedule was also brought up, particularly during the summer when students had to navigate the enrollment process independently, a task they found challenging due to the lack of familiarity, especially for students who were fortunate enough to have counselors that managed this during the academic year.

Support systems that would have made the dual enrollment experience better

When asked what support systems might have improved their experience with dual enrollment, interviewees most commonly spoke about changes to counseling supports both before and during DE course participation. Among these interviewees, there was a range of ideas for changes to counseling that would have improved their experience with DE. Prior to enrollment, some wished the counselors at their schools had shared knowledge about DE opportunities and enrollment processes more broadly, for example, through informational workshops, assemblies, or other accessible outreach events. Some interviewees also wished their counselors were more knowledgeable about available DE courses, enrollment processes, and how DE participants could improve their chances of success. Once enrolled in their DE courses, some interviewees shared that they wished they had greater access to counselors, such as dedicated DE counselors or support programs that automatically included all DE participants. A related theme, mentioned by
several interviewees, was a desire for counseling support to be offered proactively to students rather than requiring students to pursue it. Normalizing the need for support and ongoing encouragement to succeed in DE was a desired support for a few interviewees.

The next theme that emerged was the desire for accessible office hours, highlighting the interest in having dedicated time for one-on-one interactions with professors. While it is uncommon for professors not to have office hours, they were not always readily accessible. One particular student highlighted how some professors do have office hours, but they were strictly scheduled due to the professor having to leave campus after finishing their class. The limited availability of professors after class is a logistical challenge that underscored the need for a more systematic approach to office hours to ensure that all students, regardless of their class schedules or professors’ commuting constraints, had equal access to academic support.

The third most common theme was the desire for more study skills support, particularly in the form of optional study groups, which students believed would foster collaboration, enhance learning, and support academic growth. In addition, there was a desire for more comprehensive resources and guidance on effective study habits and strategies. Overall, students were advocating for a dual enrollment environment that not only provided the academic content but also supported them with the tools and systems that are necessary for successful studying and time management.

Subject matter tutoring was the fourth most common theme, underscoring a broader request for a more robust academic support system. Students highlighted that the availability of dedicated tutoring was a desire that would boost their learning process and ultimately improve their learning journey; moreover, they highlighted the value of having tutors who are not only knowledgeable in the subject but also passionate about teaching it. This would provide a more engaging and inspiring learning experience while having a more personalized learning approach where students could address specific challenges they face. Moreover, students expressed the need for tutors on high school campuses to offer convenience and support.

Similarity of dual enrollment experience among students

When asked whether they thought they had a typical experience with dual enrollment, many more students perceived that they had similar experiences to peers than dissimilar experiences. Interviewees noted the uniformity of their coursework and the camaraderie that arose from facing similar challenges. A sense of community could emerge as many students reported a shared curriculum, taking the “same” courses, while most reported a “similar” journey to their classmates. Some of these perceptions could be due to the required dual enrollment curriculum for some interviewees.

Among students who thought they had distinct dual enrollment experiences, they pointed to the fact that they struggled in the courses, feeling overwhelmed with the many assignments from their dual enrollment courses and their high school homework. Some of these students reported they had difficulty managing their coursework, which led them to fail or drop the class. Overall, whether they thought they had similar or unique dual enrollment experiences, most students had both positive and negative experiences with dual enrollment that likely prepared them when arriving at college.

3. What are college students’ perceptions of the value of dual enrollment?

Findings by Georgina Henriquez and Sahara Sanchez

How dual enrollment has been helpful
When asked to reflect on how they thought dual enrollment had been helpful to them, two main themes emerged: gaining familiarity with the demands of college courses and accelerating progress through college.

Most often, interviewees spoke of how participation in dual enrollment courses gave them familiarity with what to expect from college, including things like: the rigor or difficulty, the workload, and pace; college course structure/format; college processes and systems; time management and study skills necessary for college success; and communication with college faculty. Going into college as a freshman, you have no idea what to expect and how different college is going to be. Students who took DE courses in high school were given the college experience and were exposed to the lifestyle as well. Taking DE courses allowed students to know what classes would feel like, to experience Canvas (a common college course system), and how to communicate with the professor as well.

**Rigor/Workload/Pace.** The most commonly shared benefit of DE was that taking college courses while still in high school made the courses feel easier when they started college, and also made high school courses seem easier. There was a general perception that college courses are more rigorous, although a range of difficulty was noted. Some discussed the need to adjust to the increased demands related to expectations related to work quantity (for example, reading) and quality (for example, deeper thinking, writing, etc.).

**College Course Structure/Format.** The next most common responses focused on gaining familiarity with college course structure and format, including virtual learning platforms as well as the way college courses feel. Students also described experiencing large lecture formats as helpful preparation.

**College Processes/Systems.** The third most common theme was the value of experiencing college processes and systems before matriculating, including applying and enrolling in college and managing other college systems. It was noted that taking DE courses helped prepare students for other colleges, not just the one where the DE course was taken. Broadly, students noted that they felt more comfortable during the transition to college because they had an idea of what to expect.

**Time Management/Study Skills.** Another commonly noted benefit of dual enrollment was the opportunity to build time management and study skills, valuable both in high school and later for college. Students shared that DE helped them learn study techniques, using available resources, studying in groups, and note taking. In addition, students spoke of the mindsets they built, such as being more consistent and disciplined in completing work.

As one interviewee described, DE made her understand that college life differs from high school by not having professors pursue a student to do well. In contrast, they would contact the student in high school to ensure they can redo assignments and raise their grade. Essentially, no one will force her to be responsible in college as in high school they did.

Another student described that being in dual enrollment made him feel more serious about taking his current college courses since dual enrollment professors would typically be more knowledgeable in the subject and had a different approach to teaching than typical high school teachers.

**Communication with College Faculty.** Several students noted that they learned about the importance of communicating regularly with their professors, and ways to do that. Of note, many students shared that they realized the importance of taking advantage of office hours and effectively communicating with their professors. Students noted that strong communication and relationship building with faculty can positively impact one’s experience in the course.
As one interviewee described, when in college, the communication with professors is different from the communication with high school or middle school teachers. In college, you send emails, and not just any emails, but professional emails. Communicating with a college professor consists of making sure you let them know what class and section you are in as well as your name and inquiry. Making sure to correctly communicate with a college professor can tell them a lot about you, and vice versa.

A second main theme that emerged related to the benefits of dual enrollment was how it accelerates progress through college. By taking DE courses, students accumulate college credits as they pass each class. This may allow them to graduate sooner if they take enough classes and pass them. It also allows them to complete their general education courses earlier, potentially saving them time and money. Some students shared the amount of time they saved in college (for example, one or more terms) and some shared that they valued being able to move more quickly to higher-level courses, courses related to their major, and/or courses they were more interested in taking.

One student described that DE introduced her to many interesting topics and various niche subjects that she could study at a four-year. She noted that she enjoyed exploring different courses rather than focusing on one path for a specific major. Additionally, taking various courses fulfilling her GEs gives her more freedom to choose specific courses at UC Berkeley.

**How dual enrollment has assisted in the pursuit of a college major or career path**

When asked how dual enrollment supported their pursuit of a college major or career, the most common response, shared by more than half of those interviewed, was that it allowed them to focus on their major or career exploration in that they were able to transfer credits or complete general education courses before college, as described above.

When asked, students often shared that taking DE courses wasn’t the biggest help when it came to a student’s pursuit of their major/career. Most DE courses offered were GE courses, so they weren’t necessarily exposed to their interests. DE courses just allowed students to build their college credits. Although there were around one or two students who said otherwise, it was not too much help when it came to their career/major.

About a third of the students interviewed shared that they developed relevant skills in DE courses, although the content was not necessarily related to their major. Although there were not many students who had the opportunity to develop the relevant skills that could have assisted them in their desired major/career, the courses that they did take helped develop basic skills such as writing, time management, studying, and organization.

DE did support a smaller share of interviewees to feel more confident when they selected their major and future career path. It allowed these students to figure out what they were interested in pursuing (content and requirements), including confirming or changing previous plans for a major or career path.

One student noted that taking dual enrollment courses opened his eyes to other careers earlier, making him question if he’d want to pick a career path in Computer Science, as he was now open to many potential majors after taking various dual enrollment courses. However, he noted that while this was great for students to navigate and find the right career path or major to pursue, it could have also confused young students and overwhelmed them when deciding what career path to take. It may have exposed them to so many different courses that they could become unsure if they’d want to make a switch into another field. Ultimately, even if the students would find themselves confused, it was also noted that exposure to this earlier in their academic pursuit would be better than deciding late and feeling even more pressured.
Another student shared that initially her major was humanities, but because of DE, she has swapped to a history major. It allowed her to navigate through what she was passionate about and find what really interested her.

**Perceived benefits of dual enrollment versus Advanced Placement (AP) courses**

When asked to consider the benefits of dual enrollment compared to AP courses, a majority of interviewees spoke to the value of dual enrollment. Most often, interviewees preferred dual enrollment as a more reliable way to earn transferable college credits, noting that course completion rather than a single test was the preferable requirement. They described dual enrollment as a way to receive credit from completion of a full course’s worth of work rather than passing a single test on a given day. Students talked about the anxiety that comes with one big AP test, as well as the cost of the test.

*This student’s reflection echoed many: DE is preferable to AP courses since DE tests your knowledge throughout the entire course, while AP courses rely on one test at the end of the year, which you need to pay for. The test may not even accurately test you on the material you learned, or the teacher taught since the test is independent of each AP class structure. Therefore, she notes that DE courses are more suited to student’s needs than AP courses.*

As discussed earlier, another often-cited benefit of dual enrollment that is not a feature of AP courses is the opportunity for students to become more familiar with the college experience. While AP courses may be equally rigorous and offer the opportunity of college credit, they do not offer the real-life experience of taking a college course.

*As one interviewee shared, DE courses are better than AP since they give a sense of independence when taking the classes. They allow you to connect with your teachers, learn more about college from the professors, and help you decide what college you would be interested in.*

A much smaller number of students preferred the AP structure and format, and a few thought that it would develop stronger knowledge and skills or was a preferable way to earn college credit. Again, all students interviewed had taken at least one DE course and may or may not have taken any AP courses.

4. What do students think would be the “ideal” set of dual enrollment opportunities for high school students?  
*Findings by Alec Magsombol and Carlos Preciado*

**Dual enrollment courses wished for**

Interviewees expressed interest in a range of DE courses they wished they had access to during high school. Of the interviewees who shared their wishes, about a quarter of them wished for more STEM courses. While many of these interviewees said they needed more mathematics courses, there were about an equal number who wanted a greater range of science classes, including human biology, biology, chemistry, and physics. In addition to STEM courses, a small number of students shared an interest in wanting more courses in humanities, social science, and business. In addition, about an equal number of interviewees wanted to see a greater number of courses available through DE, with some stating that courses fill up rather quickly. Other interviewees desired courses related to their major, including prerequisite courses. A few added that they desired courses to help them explore majors.

*One student expressed a wish for no limitations on what math courses she could take so she would be able to take the more advanced classes early. Another wished for more courses that are prerequisites for more advanced classes that are offered in four-year universities, as well as more courses for specific majors. And another wished for more upper division biology courses as those available to her were always at times that*
conflicted with her high school classes. Finally, one interviewee shared that DE students had lower priority than normal college students, so she didn’t always get the classes that she wanted.

Recommended format for dual enrollment courses

More than twice as many interviewees stated that they found in-person classes more beneficial due to the engaging environment and opportunities to connect with their professors and peers in person rather than through a screen. It should also be noted that having in-person courses at the high school campus was seen as extremely beneficial for students who couldn’t commute to other locations, but that an in-person experience at a college campus brings many of the benefits described above.

One student shared that she took her DE classes in person, and would also recommend students take DE in person. Despite virtual classes being easier, and more convenient, in-person classes are a much better learning environment. Another shared that if she had to pick one, she would only recommend having DE in person at the high school since it was more engaging than virtual, and she didn’t have to travel outside the high school for a class. Another recommended having the professor come to the high school and teach in person since it is the most engaging and would not be an inconvenience since the students would already be at school and would not have to travel to a different campus.

About half as many interviewees shared their preference for taking online (some preferring synchronous, others preferring asynchronous formats) DE courses, which were more beneficial when fitting them into their schedules. Additionally, students shared that it was beneficial when they needed to go at their own pace.

As one student shared, a virtual format is more beneficial to students, as it allows students to be more flexible with their time, where they can work, and be more efficient with assignments and studying.

What students liked most about dual enrollment courses

Echoing the earlier findings about what students liked about participating in dual enrollment, for many interviewees, DE “opened many windows.” It not only challenged students but allowed them to feel and understand what college would be like. Students liked that participating in DE made them feel more prepared for college. The second most frequently mentioned thing that students liked about dual enrollment was the ability to accelerate their college career, with some even managing to get enough credits to get their AA while in high school.

What would be changed about the dual enrollment experience

When asked to describe what they would change about the dual enrollment experience, almost half the interviewees described a general need for a wider range and number of available courses. They shared a desire for more control over course selection, supported by more guidance and access to information about course sequences. Students also mentioned a desire for more courses during times that work with high school schedules and over the summer.

As one interviewee explained, at their school, counselors were the ones who decided what classes a student would take. It would have been more ideal for counselors to give options to the students instead and allow them to pick. Having a college counselor who informs and communicates about their academic progress and information about other options would also be a helpful change.
Another shared that she wished that there was a counselor or some system that would allow you to compare the DE courses that were being taken and the college that was interesting to the student at the time to ensure that the credits transferred and that they were the most optimal courses to take for that pathway.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations flow from the findings and our own experiences.

Messages and Information

- **Advertise DE alongside AP classes as a way to earn college credit, providing students with information about each as well as guidance about how each option might fit with a student’s needs and preferences.** Schools should ensure that students are aware of their options and give them the information to explore available college courses and professors. Allowing students to choose gives them more flexibility.

- **Promote DE by informing students about the benefits, types of classes, and opportunities dual enrollment has to offer through class presentations or school assemblies early in high school.**

- **Advertise DE to families by emailing and/or calling parents, allowing them to understand what this option consists of along with its benefits.**

- **Emphasize the appeal of DE to students, such as earning college credits early and the free cost of DE courses for high school students.**

- **Quantify the impact of DE on university acceptances, high school success, student involvement, and any statistics that could draw more students’ attention to a dual-enrolled curriculum.**

- **Counselors should communicate the positive messages associated with dual enrollment early in the first year of high school, not only to students but also to the parents.** Providing information about saving money, building stronger resumes for college applications, and ultimately getting a head start on their journey to achieving their goals will begin with engaging both students at school and home.

Enrollment Support

- **Encourage students to take a survey to see if they are interested in participating in dual enrollment and a career aptitude test to reveal their individual interests and strengths in potential majors and career choice.** This would be particularly helpful for students who do not know what courses to take or what to major in. Student interests can determine the trajectory of both general and major-specific courses that can be taken while fulfilling the same IGETC section; becoming an incentive for students to be interested in participating in dual enrollment.

- **Offer a multifaceted web application that would provide students with comprehensive information about dual enrollment, giving counselors/advisors more time to provide personalized advising and support.** A well-conceived, scalable web application could allow all students (as Tier 1 support) to see dual enrollment courses being offered, along with information about transferable/non-transferable courses to prospective four-year universities they are interested in. Additionally, it could recommend courses based on student interests and majors. It would streamline general and personalized information about dual enrollment to counselors and students for a more comprehensive and efficient dual-enrolled journey while allowing counselors to have more time for 1:1 meetings with students who need further assistance.
• **Make a plan for dual enrollment that supports the student’s intended major to ensure appropriate course enrollment.** Identify classes that will support the student to make progress in their major. Help students thoughtfully choose courses that advance their academic goals. A parallel to a web application that provides general counseling and guidance for displaying all available dual enrollment courses that fulfill the student’s intended major. An example of this would be identifying specific courses or working towards an Associate for a Transfer Degree for a particular major.

• **Make sure there are enough advising staff who are capable of providing students with all the information and support they need to enroll in DE.** Schools should ensure that advisors support students and their families in navigating the enrollment process, including the correct completion of all applicable forms.

• **Ensure that counselors are well versed in the DE courses available and that they know what courses students should take based on their desired major and the schools they want to go to.** This includes being well-informed about course articulation between the IGETC and major-related coursework. A significant issue faced in the Los Angeles Community College District is that the same courses taught on different campuses are not articulated as transferable credits; counselors need to discover the course articulation in certain areas of studies that students have shown interest in. Access to this knowledge is a baseline requirement, so students are confident in even considering dual enrollment.

**Supporting Students’ Ability to Succeed in College Classes During High School**

Counselors and Advisors

• **Form support systems and inform students of support services in order to ease their fears of the workload, or of not being capable enough to succeed in DE.**

• **Ensure strong communication and collaboration between counselors from the colleges and from the high schools so that students have a more tailored educational experience as well as having “baseline” support.**

• **Counseling should be done in multiple formats, including one-on-one and group settings.** Counseling in a larger group setting would promote a more inclusive environment, as a more extensive audience would benefit from hearing the guidance typically communicated during a one-on-one session with a counselor. This would also allow counselors to become more aware of students’ needs as they would be brought up if it were a common thread among a larger audience.

• **Bring awareness to student mental health, including the importance of strategies to keep from overextending oneself.** It would be beneficial to have a room full of de-stressing activities once a week or always available to the students.

Faculty and Academic Supports

• **High school and college faculty who are supporting dual enrollment students should extend as much flexibility as possible around assignments, taking into consideration possible institutional conflicts as well as individual circumstances.** It is important that teachers/professors be more understanding and open to discussing deadlines with dually enrolled students, given the difficulty in balancing both course loads and their extracurricular activities.

• **Ensure that students are aware of tutoring options at both the high school and college that support students in academic subjects as well as study skills and time management competencies.** Work to address any gaps in capacity to meet students’ needs.
• **Encourage DE faculty and teachers to offer more collaborative work that is not weighted heavily in students’ grades to promote peer relationships and foster a helping environment.** The study reflects that students found peers as a factor that led to their success in dual enrollment. Although counselors, dual enrollment professors, and teachers were highlighted as the leading factors to student success, promoting a peer environment that enables long-term relationships would allow the students to receive support in or out of the classroom, ultimately leading to a higher success rate.

• **Facilitate opportunities for dual enrollment students to meet each other and other college students.** Professors can shuffle seats or give assignments with different groups to provide an opportunity for the students to network with one another and give the space to exchange information and develop relationships.

**Building the “Ideal” Set of Dual Enrollment Opportunities**

**Course Offerings / Requirements**

• **Provide students with a wider variety of courses through both AP and DE, giving students a range of options to complete college level work on their educational pathway.**

• **Allow students to take more courses that explore different fields or majors, rather than just the normal General Education courses offered.**

• **Explore the potential value of making dual enrollment courses mandatory for at least one full academic year for sophomores and/or juniors.** This would be a step towards pushing students out of their comfort zone. Reflected by the findings, mandatory dual enrollment was the second leading factor for engaging students in DE. We believe that making dual enrollment mandatory for the entire four years may be excessive, but making it mandatory during one year will allow students to feel more capable and have the perspective to want to continue a dual-enrolled path throughout high school.

**Logistics**

• **Facilitate accessible education for high school students by encouraging college professors to teach on high school campuses.** For classes offered at colleges, ensure that students have transportation to and from the college campus.

• **Offer dual enrollment courses in both online and in-person formats.** If a college cannot provide both, figure out which one is most desired for students based on a survey for each class.

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• California Community Foundation - for funding this project, giving us the opportunity to engage our peers and strengthen our voice to support our community

• The Gardner Center team—for bringing us together each week and for teaching, guiding, and coaching us to undertake this important work.

• The LASIF BROADEN Leadership Team and our mentors and friends in the BROADEN Professional Learning Community – for believing in, and amplifying, the power and voice of youth

**Navigating Dual Enrollment: Los Angeles Scholars Share their Insights on What Matters Most for Success**
DAISY GARCIA

University of California, Los Angeles

My name is Daisy Rocio Garcia. I am currently a freshman majoring in neuroscience at the University of California Los Angeles in hopes of becoming a neurosurgeon. During my time in high school, I took part in three dual enrollment courses, including History 107, Music 101, and Statistics spread out throughout my four years. As a young student who felt underrepresented and as a Latina at her high school, I sought out help and representation along with guidance in terms of how to apply to my courses and assistance with my courses. My questions were never answered until I encountered an amazing mentor who was my junior-year teacher in two of my courses. The impact she had on my life was something that I wish everyone could have. This is why I decided to take part in this extraordinary internship. I want to bring awareness to proper dual enrollment and support students needs from school staff and their peers.

GEORGINA HENRIQUEZ

East Los Angeles College

My name is Georgina Henriquez. I went to high school at Miguel Contreras Learning complex, School of Social Justice. I am currently attending East Los Angeles Community College. When I was a high school student, I took four community college classes, which were Communication 101, Intro to Social Problems, Woman in Humanities, and College Algebra 2. I decided to participate in the fellowship because I wanted to voice my personal experience in dual enrollment. I am Immigrant from El Salvador. I came to the United States when I was 17 and I had to learn English for the first time. As an English learner, I was not given the opportunity to take college classes right away because English was my second language. I had to claim to be included in the dual enrollment courses and advocated to show I was ready for college classes. Taking Dual Enrollment allowed me to feel confident about my English and gave me hope that one day I could attend college and actually succeed. Dual Enrollment made the college transition easier and more organic. Now, I want to help to work in making dual enrollment a more inclusive program and more accessible for students of different backgrounds so they have a higher chance to go into higher education.
HARRY ILANYAN  
Los Angeles Valley College

Hello! My name is Harry Ilanyan, and I'm a second-year at Los Angeles Valley College, studying Computer Science and Applied Mathematics. Prior to college, I attended The Science Academy STEM Magnet High School, where I completed 15 AP courses and over 50 units of Dual Enrollment classes, graduating with an associate's degree. At that time, I had not considered attending LAVC, but I can now assuredly say I’m thankful that circumstances turned out this way. As a student at LAVC, I’ve been able to focus more time on supplementing my education with involvement in such impactful organizations, which have allowed me to support my community. This fellowship, especially, I chose to participate in because I've always been driven by innate curiosity, always eager to pose questions and delve deeper into their intricacies. I believe the key to effecting meaningful change is not just seeking answers but framing and directing the right questions to the right audience. This research fellowship offers a unique platform to challenge myself, push the boundaries of my understanding, and make a tangible difference in my community. It’s an opportunity to immerse myself in a mentorship role, observing and learning from experts in the field; particularly observing the guidance and leadership of my advisors, as I aspire to take on similar roles in the future.

ALEC MAGSOMBOL  
California State University, Dominguez Hills

Hello, my name is Alec Magsombol, an aspiring computer science enthusiast with a unique academic journey. My high school years were spent at the California Academy of Mathematics and Science, where I pursued a computer science pathway. Now, I am pursuing a degree in computer science as a Junior at California State University Dominguez Hills.

During high school, I had the incredible opportunity to take dual enrollment classes such as Intro to Design, Principles of Engineering, Introduction to Chemistry, Chemistry II, and Intro to Biology. These diverse courses expanded my horizons, introducing me to a range of subjects beyond my primary field of study. Dual enrollment broadened my perspective and has been invaluable in shaping my academic interests. With this positive experience, I was inspired to join the LASIF fellowship program to share my own experience as well as the experiences of others through qualitative research.
CARLOS PRECIADO

Pasadena City College

Hi, I’m Carlos Preciado. I am currently attending Pasadena City College and studying nursing with an interest to transfer to a four-year University. I was previously enrolled in Pasadena High School where I was first introduced to Dual Enrollment. My journey with Dual Enrollment began in my freshman year PUENTE classroom where DE representatives motivated me and my peers to enroll in a Mexican-American history course that would take place on campus. Upon completion of the course, I continued utilizing DE during my time in high school and enrolled in courses such as first aid-responding to emergency and personal finance. Having been so far ahead in credits due to dual enrollment, I wanted to continue to promote the program, as well as better it in any way possible. This research fellowship allows me to help make dual enrollment more accessible so that more students know of this opportunity.

ALBERTO QUIROZ

Pasadena City College

Hello, my name is Alberto Quiroz Arana. I am currently in my second year attending Pasadena City College. For the upcoming fall semester, I hope to transfer in order to continue my education as a psychology major. I’m pursuing a career as a social worker or psychologist. The school I attended throughout my high school years was called Camino Nuevo Dalzell Lance. I took 4 dual enrollment classes: Sociology, Criminal Justice, Psychology, and Child Development. When taking these courses, I didn’t have a plan of what I wanted to study but was recommended to take these classes in order to get college credit.

I heard about this fellowship from my high school counselor before applying to the program. I thought it was going to be workshops about dual enrollment or just watching videos and giving our thoughts on it. But then reading further on what the program demanded of us, I joined because I wanted to work together with other college students doing interviews and presentations about dual enrollment, hearing their stories where dual enrollment helped them prepare for college or helped them be sure of what to pick for their college major. I believe every experience each of us students has on dual enrollment can help prepare future high school students and help improve it.
JESUS RIOS
Los Angeles Trade-Technical College

My name is Jesus Rios. I graduated from STEAM Legacy High, and I am currently attending my second year at LATTC. I took a variety of dual enrollment classes, most of them involving either architecture or engineering as well as a single math course. Taking these classes helped me to figure out what kind of field I should study, and it also showed me what opportunities I had available to me. Although I had the option to, I never really took too many dual enrollment classes that could help my progress in either high school or my current college and I really regret it. That’s part of why I wanted to join the fellowship: I want to help students explore their options and discover how dual enrollment could not only help them in high school but also in their future college.

SAHARA SANCHEZ
California State University Dominguez Hills

Hi, my name is Sahara Sanchez. I graduated from Carson Senior High School in 2022. I’m currently a sophomore at California State University Dominguez Hills. (Fun fact, I am a presidential scholar recipient.) Back in high school, I took one dual enrollment course during my junior year, at Los Angeles Harbor College, this course was Political Science. I was informed about the amazing opportunity to join the LASIF Broaden Student Action Research Fellowship by my Scholarship coordinator. I knew I wanted to become a part of this program because of my interest when I read about the research they were conducting. I thought it was so cool to interview other students like me who have also taken dual enrollment courses and get their point of view of their experience. This fellowship has been such an amazing time. Other than this fellowship, I am also a part-time associate at The Home Depot, I work in the customer service department. When I’m not at school or work, I love being at the gym. I also find it therapeutic to clean the house, which may be something people dread but it’s something I enjoy doing as I listen to music. Another fun fact is that I have a Mexican Parrot and a Minicher Pinscher.
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SHEYLA PORTILLO
University of California, Los Angeles

I am a first-year bioengineering student at UCLA, passionate about making a positive impact in my community and the education system. Through my experiences with dual enrollment (DE), I strongly believe in the importance of making it accessible to everyone, regardless of their economic status. I am dedicated to advocating for greater opportunities and resources for students seeking to participate in dual enrollment programs. By bridging the gap between high school and college, I aim to empower students to pursue their academic goals and unlock their full potential.