We Are One: Spotlight on Dual Credit

Dual Credit continues to play an important role in the college' record enrollment, with participation increasing 7% over last year. This growth is a team effort. By working closely with area school districts, our Dual Credit team helps students explore college and career pathways while still in high school, strengthening connections between local schools, Lee College and the workforce. We sat down for a Q&A with Jordan Salazar, director of Dual Credit Programs at Lee College, to learn more.

Q: For someone who may not be familiar with Dual Credit, how would you describe what the program offers students?

A: Lee College' Dual Credit program gives high school students the opportunity to begin their college journey before they graduate from high school. For some students, Dual Credit is an opportunity to get ahead; for others, it is the experience that shows them, "I can be a college student." What makes Dual Credit especially exciting is that there is not just one pathway for every student. Through our partnerships with local school districts, students can explore options that align with their individual goals. Whether that means earning 15 college credit hours to transfer to a university, completing a certificate, working toward an associate degree, or simply getting a head start on college. Ultimately, Dual Credit gives students the chance to experience college earlier, build confidence, save time and money, and begin creating more options for what comes after high school.

Q: What does your team do behind the scenes to make Dual Credit possible for students, families, and our high school partners?

A: There is a tremendous amount of collaboration behind every Dual Credit course and every student enrollment. Our team connects many moving pieces to make Dual Credit work for students. A student may see one course on their high school schedule, but behind that course is coordination between two educational systems, the high school and the college, with different calendars, processes, requirements, and people involved.

Our team works closely with high school counselors and administrators, as well as teams across Lee College, to make Dual Credit possible. Behind the scenes, we are constantly collaborating to build pathways and course schedules, coordinate qualified faculty, navigate admissions and testing requirements, register students, and make sure the right supports are in place for student success.

We also spend a lot of time connecting directly with students and families through parent nights, information sessions, registration events, and individual conversations. We want students and their families to understand not only how to participate in Dual Credit, but how the choices they make now can connect to what comes next.

Our advisors are a big part of that connection. They are regularly present on our partner high school campuses, building relationships with students and working alongside counselors, administrators, and faculty. That presence matters because our responsibility does not end when a student gets registered. We monitor student progress throughout the semester and work closely with our high school partners and faculty to identify students who may need additional support. Sometimes that means connecting a student with tutoring or another college resource. Sometimes it means helping them understand a college process they are navigating for the first time. And

sometimes it is simply making sure they know there is someone at Lee College who knows their name and is paying attention.

There is a lot happening behind the scenes, but the goal is pretty simple: students should be able to experience the opportunity of college without having to figure out the complexity of two systems on their own.

Q: What are you most proud of about the Dual Credit program right now?

A: I am most proud of how much our program continues to grow while remaining focused on student success. Dual Credit serves nearly 3,800 students, representing a significant portion of Lee College' student population, and we continue to expand both academic and Career and Technical Education opportunities with our K-12 partners.

I am especially proud of the relationships my team has built with our high school partners and the intentional work we have done around advising and student support. We have increased our presence on high school campuses, strengthened early intervention efforts, and created more opportunities for students to connect with their Dual Credit advisors throughout the semester.

For me, growth is exciting, but enrollment is only part of the story. This past school year, our Dual Credit students earned 215 certificates of completion, 104 Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degrees, and 28 Associate of Applied Science degrees before graduating from high school. There is another number I am especially proud of: 76% of our participating high school seniors completed at least 15 college credit hours before graduation. That matters because those students are leaving high school with meaningful college progress already behind them. Seeing a student reach 15 college credit hours, complete a certificate, earn an associate degree before high school graduation, or realize that college is something they can successfully navigate is what makes this work meaningful. Being able to celebrate those milestones with our students is what makes it even more special.

Q: What' something you wish more people knew about the Dual Credit team or the work you do?

A: I wish more people knew the scale of what happens behind the scenes to make Dual Credit feel simple for students, families, and partners. Dual Credit truly touches almost every area of the college, and my team serves as a bridge between Lee College and our K-12 partners. We are constantly balancing the expectations and requirements of two educational systems while trying to make the experience feel seamless for students and families. That requires an incredible amount of communication, problem-solving, flexibility and collaboration.

To put that scale into perspective, we have almost 70 dual credit adjuncts currently teaching at our partner high schools. These adjuncts have been vetted by their respective division and meet the qualifications to teach college courses. Our office also builds over 300 dual credit-only courses in PeopleSoft. Those are pieces students and families may never see, but they are essential to creating the opportunities they do see.

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Team members pictured left to right (front row): Jade Godoy, Kurshine Jackson, Ofelia Ferman, Cynthia Henley, Katrena Johnson, Laura Iglesias; second row: Tammy O'Neill and Jordan Salazar.