

When Mid-Plains Community College began offering dual credit classes to high school students in 2004, area Dean of Career Services Bill Eakins referred to them as “the wave of the future.” Turns out he was right.

In the past seven years, MPCC's Dual Credit Program has grown from offering several basic classes to students at eight high schools to offering 68 courses at 50 high schools in the college's 18-county service area and beyond.

“Basically, every high school in our service area receives college credit opportunities from MPCC,” Eakins said.

According to Eakins, “dual credit” means the student receives credit for both the high school class and the college class. The dual credit agreements between MPCC and the high schools utilize an “approved/qualified” high school instructor to teach the college level courses within the school day. MPCC also assigns a “teacher of record” who is teaching the same course at the college to share information or answer any questions the secondary instructor might have.

“We currently have 66 high school instructors and 10 Nebraska Certified MPCC instructors in our Dual Credit Program,” Eakins said.

To insure classes meet MPCC standards, certain criteria has been established that must be met in providing a dual credit program at a high school. Any course offered to a high school student for college credit must follow the same format as an on/off campus course.

College credits earned are recorded on MPCC transcripts. The credits are also directly transferable to both two-year and four-year institutions.

Eakins said students must be at least 16-years-old to take dual credit classes. Their tuition is currently \$74 per credit hour plus any related fees – the same as it would be if they took the course at MPCC. This can be a very cost-effective option for students since tuition is much higher at most four-year institutions.

The dual credit option can benefit schools because when the college uses a high school instructor to teach the classes within the school day, the district can choose to be paid directly for the use of their instructor.

“We reimburse the school for the same amount as the tuition is,” Eakins said. “They can take that money and either pay the student's tuition, buy text books, or whatever else they choose to do with it for the classes.”

Eakins said one other benefit of the dual credit program is that there is no minimum number of students required in order for a class to take place. Classes at MPCC are required to have no fewer than eight students. He noted that the program currently also adds 6 to 8 percent to the colleges FTE (full-time equivalent) student enrollments.

“This program benefits the high school students who participate as they move on into post-secondary institutions while greatly benefiting the college at the same time,” said Eakins.

For more information about MPCC dual credit options, contact Bill Eakins at (308) 535-3607 or by email at: eakinsw@mpcc.edu.