



COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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MEMORANDUM

Date: December 1, 2010

To: State Board of Education, Colorado Commission on Higher Education,
Education Committees of the house of representatives and senate

From: Concurrent Enrollment Advisory Board

Re: Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act guidelines and recommendations

Background

In May 2009, Colorado State Legislature passed HB09-1319 and SB09-285 (hereafter the "Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act" or CRS 22-35-101 et seq). The intent of the Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act is to broaden access to and improve the quality of Concurrent Enrollment programs, improve coordination between institutions of secondary education and Institutions of Higher Education, and ensure financial transparency and accountability. Beyond coordinating and clarifying the existing Concurrent Enrollment programs, the legislation also creates the "5th year" ASCENT program and establishes the Concurrent Enrollment Advisory Board within the Colorado Department of Education.

Role of the Concurrent Enrollment Advisory Board

As defined in 22-35-107 (6)(a) through (d) The Concurrent Enrollment Advisory Board duties include:

- 1.) Establishing guidelines for the administration of the ASCENT program;
- 2.) Advising and assisting local school education providers and institutions of higher education in preparing cooperative agreements;
- 3.) Making recommendations as necessary to the general assembly, the State Board of Education, and the Commission on Higher Education concerning the improvement or updating of state policies relating to concurrent enrollment programs, including but not limited to recommendations of policies that will allow every local education provider in the state to have adequate resources to enter into at least one cooperative agreement; and
- 4.) Considering and making recommendations to the State Board of Education and the education committees of the House of Representatives and Senate, regarding the feasibility of a wavier process for a qualified student to apply to the Colorado Department of Education to be designated as an ASCENT program participant in the second year following the year in which he or she was enrolled in the twelfth grade.

Concurrent Enrollment Advisory Board Reporting Requirements

Pursuant to the Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act (section 22-35-107 (7)(a) (b), C.R.S.), the Concurrent Enrollment Advisory Board is required to prepare a report and submit it to the State Board of Education and the Commission on Higher Education regarding any guidelines that the board has established for the administration of the ASCENT program; and any recommendations that the board makes concerning the improvement or updating of state policies relating to concurrent enrollment programs.

Pursuant to the Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act (section 22-35-107 (6)(d), C.R.S.), the Concurrent Enrollment Advisory Board is required to make recommendations to the State Board of Education and the education committees of the House of Representatives and Senate, or any successor committees, regarding the feasibility of a waiver process whereby a qualified student could apply to the department for a waiver, which would allow the student to be designated by the Department as an ASCENT program participant in the second year following the year in which he or she was enrolled in the twelfth grade so long as he or she:

- a. Was so designated in the year directly following the year in which he or she was enrolled in the twelfth grade of a local education provider;
- b. Requires fifteen or fewer credit hours of postsecondary course work to achieve a postsecondary credential; and
- c. Is eligible for free or reduced-cost lunch pursuant to the federal "National School Lunch Act", 42 U.S.C. sec. 1751 et seq.

Progress of the CEAB on Reporting Requirements

I. ASCENT Guidelines

On March 15, 2010, the CEAB finalized the guidelines for the ASCENT program. See Attachment A for a copy of the ASCENT Guidelines.

I. Recommendations for Improvement or Updating of State Policies

The Concurrent Enrollment Advisory Board has reviewed current policies regarding concurrent enrollment opportunities for Colorado students. Based on Year 1 implementation for the Concurrent Enrollment Act, the board believes that no recommendations are needed at this time for updating state K-12 policies. The Board will recommend several technical policy changes to the Colorado Commission on Higher Education by February 2011.

II. Recommendations on Waiver Provision

The Concurrent Enrollment Advisory Board has begun to examine the feasibility of a waiver process whereby a qualified student could apply to the department for a waiver, which would allow the student to be designated by the Department as an ASCENT program participant in the second year following the year in which he or she was enrolled in the twelfth grade. By late Spring 2011, the Concurrent Enrollment Advisory Board will continue to explore the feasibility of the waiver provision utilizing additional data, to be obtained from results of Year One implementation.

ASCENT Program, State Guidelines

Eligibility:

- Any student who has fulfilled all local school district graduation requirements at the end of 4 years, and has completed, or is scheduled to complete, 12 credit hours of postsecondary course work is eligible for the ASCENT program. Students must be college ready in accordance to the pathway they enroll. Any remedial coursework previously taken does not qualify as a part of the 12 credit hours of required college coursework.
- Students must complete an Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP) prior to declaring intent to participate in ASCENT.
- Students must apply, and be accepted, into a Colorado post secondary institution.
- Students are not to be granted a high school diploma until they complete the ASCENT program.
- Eligible students may only participate in the ASCENT program for 1 academic year.
- If an eligible student is denied admission to a public higher education institution, the institution must provide a written explanation to the student and the local education provider within 10 days.

Enrollment:

- On or before September 1, and each year thereafter, a local education provider shall submit to the Colorado Department of Education an estimate of the number of students in the local education provider who will seek to be designated by the department as ASCENT program participants for the following school year.
- Students may only enroll in Guarantee Transfer credit courses, or state approved Career and Technical Education (CTE) postsecondary program, unless parent and student sign a form indicating "credits may not transfer." The ASCENT pathway (AAS, AS, AA, etc.) must be clearly spelled out which would include an explanation of "credits may not transfer." Eligible students will be selected for participation by the high school principal or equivalent school administrator.

Funding:

- School districts must report ASCENT students in October count to the Colorado Department of Education (CDE). Fall term schedules and corresponding transcripts at term's end shall suffice as documentation for the October 1 enrollment for ASCENT students.
- Textbooks and fees are the responsibility of the student.
- Institutions of higher education will include enrolled ASCENT students in official full-time equivalent student reporting.
- ASCENT participants will be required to apply for Colorado Opportunity Fund (COF) funding, and authorize, for each term of postsecondary enrollment at institutions which receive COF funding.

Reporting

- Each participating school district shall provide a report to the CDE on or before April 15 each year that includes:
 - Summary demographic information on ASCENT participants;
 - Total tuition costs paid on behalf of ASCENT students.

- Each participating higher education institution shall provide a report to the CDHE on or before April 15 each year that includes:
 - Names of school districts that have entered into cooperative agreements;
 - Number of qualified students who participated in the ASCENT program for the academic year;
 - Total number of credit hours attempted;
 - Total number of credit hours completed by ASCENT students. Students must pass successfully complete the course;
 - Summary data on the degree programs in which ASCENT participants were enrolled at the postsecondary institution;
 - Data indicating the total number of ASCENT participants who completed a postsecondary degree or certificate within the 5 year period of student's high school career

ASCENT Program School Procedures

- Notification of participation to students.
- Determine appropriate GPA standard for students enrolled in program or intending to enroll.
- Districts should create procedures for students who fail one or more courses.
- Timeline for students to sign up for ASCENT program, prior to September 1 of senior year. Districts should consider adding ASCENT interest in students' ICAP form, during their sophomore year of high school.
- Student orientation in partnership with local post secondary institution.
- Districts should create policy for students to participate in graduation. Diploma may not be awarded, but a certificate of attendance or completion may be awarded at high school graduation.
- Districts should create procedures for students who drop the ASCENT program in the middle or end of the semester.
- Districts should create a system to prioritize students for ASCENT participation.
- Books and fees will be purchased by each student or his/her parent or guardian at participating college, unless identified differently in the cooperative agreement or district policy.
- Secondary Advising: High School is responsible for advising 9-12th graders per American School Counseling Association model. High school should work with students in their senior year to develop "self advocacy" to access college advisors for the ASCENT year. High school counselors should continue to pursue college admission and financial aid opportunities.
- Post Secondary Advising: Colleges will provide advising that shall be sought out by the ASCENT student. College should ascertain the degree/certificate plan each ASCENT student is seeking and will advise for courses according to that track and course eligibility.
- Districts should notify ASCENT-eligible students to complete college admissions and financial aid application processes at desired post-secondary institutions. Prior to participation in ASCENT, students and parent/guardian should review the best financial option for them.