## Proposal for the Formation of a Dual Credit Council

#### Background

Washington’s public colleges and universities have recognized dual credit programs for decades. Starting with the Carl D. Perkins Act of 1990, which emphasized Tech Prep (the precursor to Career and Technical Education Dual Credit, or CTE DC), the Washington State Legislature also created Running Start (RS) in 1990.

Over the past fifteen years, the Washington Legislature has passed numerous bills to increase access to dual credit programs for high school students:

* 2011: The Launch Year Program (RCW 28B.10.053) was implemented to provide students the opportunity to earn the equivalent of one year’s worth of postsecondary credit toward a credential.
* 2015: RCW 28A.600.287 defined College in the High School (CiHS) in statute, differentiating it from RS.
* 2019 and 2021: Legislation required all CiHS programs offered by any higher education institution in Washington to be nationally accredited by 2027-28, established a Dual Enrollment Scholarship Pilot Program, a RS Summer School Pilot Program, and expanded student eligibility for CiHS.
* 2023 and 2024: Further investments included eliminating CiHS fees for all students (RCW 28A.600.287), expanding RS to the summer term (RCW 28A.600.40), increasing notification about dual credit to families (RCW 28A.600.275), and introducing new reporting requirements (RCW 28A.600.280).

Source: Education Research & Data Center. <https://erdc.wa.gov/publications-and-reports/dual-credit-dashboard>

Currently, 90% of Washington public high school students enroll in a dual credit course, with tens of thousands of students participating in RS, CiHS, and CTE Dual credit within the ctc system(further statewide data can be viewed at <https://erdc.wa.gov/publications-and-reports/dual-credit-dashboard>)

Dual credit programs have proven to be highly effective in boosting postsecondary persistence and supporting student success.

**Postsecondary Persistence:** 27% of CiHS students from the Class of 2022 who enrolled for credit at a community or technical college (CTC) returned to a CTC within one year after graduating high school.

**Postsecondary Success:**

* CiHS students in Washington had a course success rate of 96% at the community or technical college with a 2.0 decimal grade or above.
* RS students in Washington passed 94% of their courses at the community or technical college and earned a 2.0 or better in 88% of their courses.
* In the class of 2023, 24% of students who participated in RS in a Washington community or technical college earned a credential while in the program.

RS has become an important source of revenue for CTCs, generating $217M in revenue for the college system in 2024. Colleges have become reliant upon this funding so there is a need to manage RS enrollment. The current funding for CiHS is insufficient to sustain healthy programs and additional advocacy is needed to address the funding gaps. There is an opportunity to advocate for funding to support CTE Dual Credit.

#### Problem

Since the inception of dual credit programs, administrators and practitioners have been meeting informally to discuss legislation, business practices, strengthening K12 relationships, enrollment strategies, and ensuring quality course development. These informal connections have supported growth and success with dual credit programs to date. Unfortunately, our current system has proven ill equipped to proactively address a variety of issues related to dual credit programs including:

**School district requests**: School districts continue to actively seek dual credit alternatives to RS in order to keep state funding at the schools. Several school districts are actively identifying ways to make a DTA available to their high school students through CiHS. School districts are also seeking multiple dual credit agreements with various colleges, which can create a messy network of agreements that are more confusing than helpful for students. There is currently no venue for sharing best practices or creating statewide approaches for responding to these requests.

**Competition from universities:** Increased competition with universities in the dual credit space has increased dramatically with the passage of SB5048. The decision by Central Washington University (CWU) to offer an associate degree only strengthens CWU’s position in this space to the detriment of CTCs. State demographic projections of declining birthrates and resultant declines in the numbers of high school graduates will only exacerbate the competition for students. There is currently no body that can share ideas and coordinate strategies for growing dual credit programs in the face of increased competition.

**Policy advocacy:**

Our system has historically been more reactive than proactive in the dual credit space. A prime example is the response to SB5048, which inadvertently provided a funding advantage to universities at the expense of community and technical colleges (CTCs).

Too often, we find ourselves responding to dual credit bills proposed by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) or other bodies, rather than proactively collaborating with legislators to craft legislation that supports CTCs. Currently, there is no formal group dedicated to identifying operational concerns and potential policy solutions to be included in legislation.

**Meeting compliance requirements:** RS, CiHS, and CTE Dual Credit require regular and significant data management and reporting requirements. There are currently some informal gatherings to share best practices, interpret policy requirements, and raise awareness of logistical concerns. However, there is no organizational body that can collectively identify strategy and solutions, nor put forward proposals for needed changes such as ctcLink modification requests.

**Supporting student success:** Pathways from high school dual credit into college programs are not always clear, especially when a school district works with multiple colleges. There are not consistent statewide admission and transcription procedures for all dual credit programs within the ctc system that serve students well. There is currently no body for addressing questions around enrollment, matriculation, advising, transcription, articulation, and assessment of student learning.

#### Proposed Solution

There is a need to create a formal organizational structure that will provide structured support and a unified voice for dual credit initiatives, ensuring sustained progress and innovation. To continue leading and enhancing dual credit programs proactively, the formation of a Dual Credit Council is essential. This council will provide structured support and a unified voice for dual credit initiatives, ensuring sustained progress and innovation. The Dual Credit Committee through the Instruction Commission seeks approval for the formation of a Dual Credit Council. This council will be composed of administrators and staff responsible for implementing RS, CTE DC, and CiHS programs.

**Mission**: To strengthen dual credit pathways and credential attainment. The council aims to create clear and seamless transitions from high school to postsecondary education, ensuring students earn credentials that lead to high-wage and high-demand careers.

**Dual Credit Council Deliverables**

* Collaborate with State Agencies: Establish and maintain a unified vision and set of goals for dual credit programs.
* Impact Policy: Provide the legislature with recommendations for current and future policy decisions impacting dual credit.
* Create Advising Tools and Materials: Develop brochures, flyers, and other materials to raise awareness and promote best practices for dual credit programs.
* Streamline Processes: Improve dual credit admissions, course building, transcribing, and credit transfer.
* Develop Unified Messaging: Ensure consistent communication across all platforms and stakeholders.

**Dual Credit Council Composition**

*Staff*

* Student Services & K12 Alignment Policy Associate
* Workforce Education Policy Associate

*Council Representation*

* Admissions and Registration Council
* Advising and Counseling Council
* Articulation and Transfer Council
* Workforce Education Council

*Council Members*

* Running Start Administrators
* College in the High School Administrators
* Career and Technical Education Dual Credit Administrators

*Meeting Cadence*

The council will meet quarterly and can adapt to virtual spaces based on the financial health of the system and colleges.

*Reporting Structure*

Dual Credit impacts both instruction and student services. While this proposal places the council within the Instruction Commission, it is essential that the council also connects with the Washington State Student Services Commission (WSSSC). This connection will be maintained through regular updates to WSSSC and representation from the Admissions and Registration Council (ARC) and the Advising and Counseling Council (ACC).

The council's work plan will align with and integrate into the IC work plan, specifically focusing on dual credit initiatives.