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Iowa Community College Dual Enrollment Programs Create Significant Economic Impact

High school students participating in dual enrollment programs through the Community Colleges of Iowa in a partnership with local community school districts saved the State the equivalent of \$21.7 million in future state general aid assistance at other educational institutions and saved their families \$30.7 million in future college-related expenses, according to a recent study by Strategic Economics Group.

“Our study determined that Iowa’s community college ‘early college opportunity’ program generated more than a five-fold return on the taxpayers’ investment,” according to former state economist Harvey Siegelman. The 2008 study was authored by Siegelman and Iowa State University economics professor Daniel Otto.

Dual enrollment programs benefit a number of areas reflected in the study, which underscores the importance of such programs at Iowa’s community colleges. “These programs are of value for several reasons. First, they are successful in helping students make the transition from high school to post-secondary education and the world of work. A growing body of research indicates that college students who take college credit in high school earn higher college GPAs and have higher two and four-year graduation rates. Second, these programs are strategic assets to meet Iowa’s workforce and economic development challenges. Third, Siegelman and Otto’s study demonstrates that these programs save the State and families a considerable amount of money,” said Michael Morrison, president of North Iowa Area Community College.

Derrick Franck, president of the Iowa Association of Community College Trustees, agrees, “This study confirms our belief that Iowa’s community colleges are highly cost effective providers of higher education for Iowans. Money invested in Iowa’s community colleges pays big dividends not only in increased skills for Iowa’s workforce but also in helping more Iowa students attain two and four year degrees.”

As a result of the savings due to the community college dual enrollment programs, the study also estimated the impact on Iowa's economy translates to a consumer spending increase of \$57.8 million, a personal income increase of \$12.7 million, a State gross domestic product increase of \$24.2 million, a state tax receipt increase of \$2.2 million and an increase of 470 jobs, according to Siegelman and Otto.

Based on 2005 data, which was the most recent year for which consistent and complete data was available, 27,331 students participated in early college opportunity programs at Iowa's community colleges. The students earned 142,140 credits in college-level courses, which is the equivalent to 4,738 full-time students.

For more information on dual enrollment programs at the Community Colleges of Iowa, contact your local community college.

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