

Brief 9: Ready, Set, Launch – Baseline Outcomes for Historically Underrepresented *DE4EC* Participants

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Introduction

California's educational leaders and equity champions are advocating for dual enrollment programs to expand their reach and intentionally engage students historically underrepresented in higher education. These opportunities can provide early access to college experiences that increase students' academic and career preparation and position them for long-term economic mobility. State legislation—including the College and Career Access Pathways Act (AB 288, 2015; AB 30, 2019)—along with collaborative efforts like *DE4EC* (see *Sidebar 1.1*) are advancing this movement.

To identify the initiative's impact over time, *DE4EC*'s learning partner, [RDP Consulting](#), conducted baseline analyses of participants' high school and college outcomes in the period before the initiative's launch (2015–2020).¹ We specifically examined these metrics for high-priority *DE4EC* participants, including first-generation, African American/Black, Hispanic/Latina/o/x, and male² students. These analyses offered an opportunity to understand if *DE4EC* partnerships were primed to deliver equitable dual enrollment experiences coming into the initiative.

Find below notable findings by student group, including participation in dual enrollment; GPA and college unit and credential attainment upon high school graduation; rates of matriculation to postsecondary systems, including the California Community Colleges (CCC), the California State University (CSU), and the University of California (UC); and trends in initial course success and retention. We conclude with ideas for action based on these results.

Sidebar 1.1 *Dual Enrollment for Equitable Completion (DE4EC) Overview*

DE4EC is a multiyear collaborative initiative among the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#), [College Futures Foundation](#), and [Tipping Point Community](#), carried out with research support from RDP Consulting.

DE4EC support 10 California community colleges and their high school partners build dual enrollment programs centered on strengthening equitable access and completion outcomes for students underrepresented in higher education, particularly African American/Black, Latina/o/x, and students experiencing economic disadvantage.

Find more information at <https://www.r-d-p-consulting.com/de4ec>

First-Generation Student Highlights

Dual enrollment involvement and impact appeared to be on a positive trajectory for first-generation students in the period before *DE4EC*'s launch. **Dual enrollment participation among first-generation students rose by 56%** in the years leading up to the initiative. While the increase among non-first-generation students was slightly higher (60%), the difference is nominal. This trend holds promise for improved college access among students who are the first in their families to attend higher education.

First-generation students involved in dual enrollment had higher high school GPAs than their peers who did not participate. While they earned fewer college credits by high school graduation than their non-first-generation counterparts who also participated in dual enrollment, they completed more college credentials through these opportunities than their non-first-generation peers.

1 Find detailed information on data and methods and key findings from these analyses in [Ready, Set, Launch: Baseline Academic Outcomes for Students Participating in Dual Enrollment for Equitable Completion Partnerships Compared to Their Peers, 2015–2020](#).

2 While not explicitly identified as a focus of the *DE4EC* initiative, we looked at these outcomes based on gender, given recent trends toward decreased higher education participation and attainment among male-identifying students. Additionally, we did not look at student outcomes by economic disadvantage in these initial analyses as these data were unavailable.

After high school, **most first-generation students who previously participated in dual enrollment matriculated to a CCC (65%)**, followed by a CSU (22%) or UC (9%). As a result, among those with dual enrollment experience, first-generation students were more likely to attend a CCC and less likely to attend a CSU or UC than their non-first-generation peers.

Once enrolled at a *DE4EC* partner college, **first-generation students with dual enrollment experience had consistently higher course success³ in their initial semester** compared to their first-generation peers who did not participate (see *Figure 1*). Notably, this difference is consistently about 20 percentage points each year.

First-generation students who previously participated in dual enrollment also had higher rates of one-term and one-year retention⁴ compared to first-generation, first-time freshmen who did not (see *Figure 2*). While the overall proportion of first-generation students in the 2019 graduating cohort who returned in fall 2020 (one-year retention) dropped significantly, likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this decrease was smaller among first-generation students who had participated in dual enrollment. This finding suggests that this experience may have prepared them to weather the impacts of this unprecedented disruption.

African American/Black Student Highlights

Baseline findings for African American/Black students participating in dual enrollment through a *DE4EC* partner appeared more variable, signaling opportunities for improved recruitment and support through these experiences. Dual enrollment participation among African American/Black students peaked for the 2015–2016 9th grade cohort at 311 students and then dropped among the groups entering in 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 (to 272 and 236 respectively)—a troubling trend. **African American/Black graduates from DE4EC partner high schools were less likely to have participated in dual enrollment compared to other racial/ethnic groups.**

Moreover, **most African American/Black high school graduates with dual enrollment experience attended a CCC (61%)**, followed by a CSU (20%) or UC (8%). Interestingly, among those who previously participated in dual enrollment, African American/Black students were more

Figure 1 First Semester Course Success Rates for First-Generation Students by Prior Dual Enrollment Participation (Fall 2015–Fall 2020)

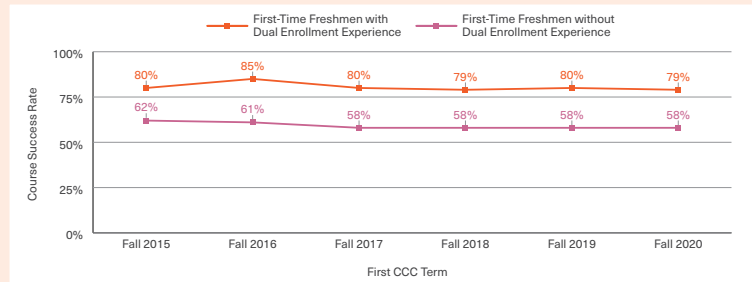
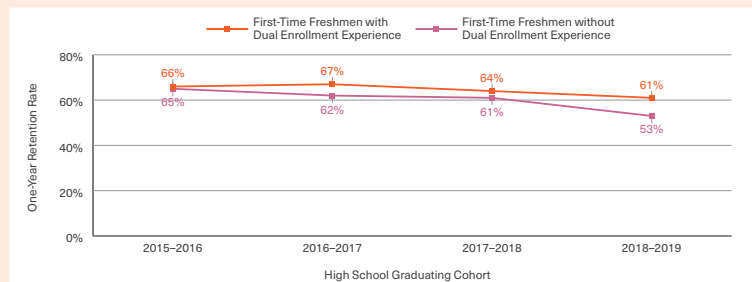


Figure 2. One-Year Retention Rates by Prior Dual Enrollment Participation and First-Generation Status (Graduating Cohorts, 2015–2016 –2018–2019)



likely to attend an out-of-state college (9%) than their non-African American/Black peers.

After matriculating to a *DE4EC* partner college, **African American/Black who previously participated in dual enrollment had significantly higher first-term course success** than their counterparts (see *Figure 3*). While these rates were consistently 30 percentage points higher for multiple years, they declined for the 2019–2020 graduating cohort who entered in fall 2020; simultaneously, course success among their peers without dual enrollment experience increased. It is important to note that the number of African American/Black students who participated in dual enrollment during this time dropped significantly, most likely a result of COVID-19 pandemic impacts.

Similarly, **one-year retention among African American/Black students with prior dual enrollment experience trended upward** between 2015–2016 and 2017–2018, surpassing that of their peers who did not participate (see *Figure 4*). However, this rate dropped significantly to 5 percentage points *below* their peers without dual enrollment experience at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. It will be important to monitor these metrics among African Amer-

³ Course success is defined as earning an A, B, C, or Pass grade. The rate is calculated by dividing the number of students who earned a successful grade by all the students who received a grade.

⁴ Retention is defined as enrolling in a subsequent term. Retention rates are calculated by dividing the number of students who enrolled in the subsequent term by the total number of students who were enrolled in the first initial term. An example of one-term retention would be fall 2019 to spring 2020; an example of one-year retention would be fall 2019 to fall 2020.

ican/Black students in subsequent years to determine whether these findings were an anomaly or the beginning of a shifting trend.

Hispanic/Latina/o/x Student Highlights

These baseline findings indicate that dual enrollment participation was proving positive for Hispanic/Latina/o/x students in the period leading up to *DE4EC*'s start. **Hispanic/Latina/o/x student involvement in dual enrollment increased by 40% between 2013 and 2020**, steadily rising between 2013–2014 and 2016–2017, and dropping slightly for the 2017–2018 9th grade cohort, most likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

While dual enrolled students overall achieved higher high school GPAs than their peers who did not participate, **Hispanic/Latina/o/x students posted the largest gain in their GPA among all racial/ethnic groups (0.26 points) over that period.** Interestingly, despite earning fewer college units compared to other racial/ethnic groups, **Hispanic/Latina/o/x students also earned the most college credentials by high school graduation.**

Most Hispanic/Latina/o/x students with dual enrollment experience matriculated to a California community college (66%), followed by a CSU (22%) or UC (9%). **Hispanic/Latina/o/x students who previously participated in dual enrollment had consistently higher course success rates in their first term at a *DE4EC* partner community college than other first-time Hispanic/Latina/o/x freshmen (see Figure 5).** This difference is consistently about 20 percentage points each year.

Before 2020, one-term retention rates for formerly dual enrolled students did not vary much from other Hispanic/Latina/o/x students without this experience. However, these rates jumped during the COVID-19 pandemic, exceeding their peers by 7 percentage points. Similarly, for multiple years, the one-year retention rate was just slightly higher for Hispanic/Latina/o/x students with dual enrollment experience compared to their peers without. However a more significant gap emerged for the 2018–2019 graduating cohort returning in fall 2020. This finding indicates that **having dual enrollment experience may have prepared Hispanic/Latina/o/x students to persist in spite of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (see Figure 6).**

Male Student Highlights

Both in California and across the country, male student participation and outcomes in higher education lag

Figure 3. First Semester Course Success Rates by Prior Dual Enrollment Participation for Black/African American Students (Fall 2015–Fall 2020)

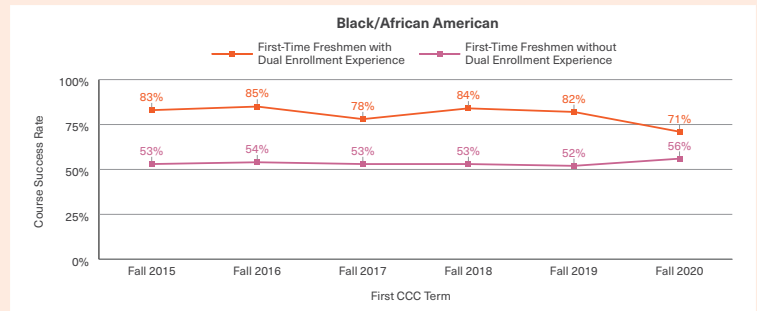


Figure 4. One-Year Retention Rates by Prior Dual Enrollment Participation for Black/African American Students (Graduating Cohorts, 2015–2016 – 2018–2019)

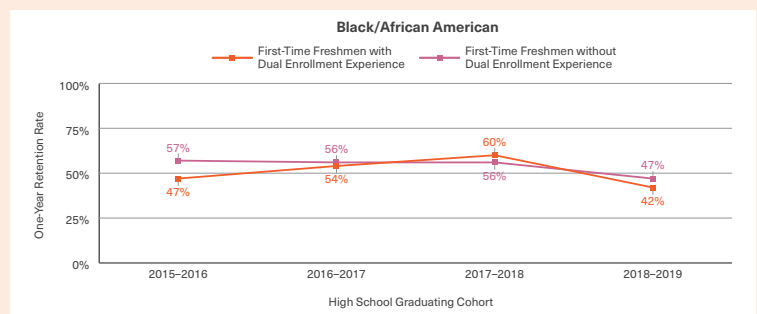


Figure 5. First Semester Course Success Rates by Prior Dual Enrollment Participation for Hispanic/Latina/o/x Students (Fall 2015–Fall 2020)

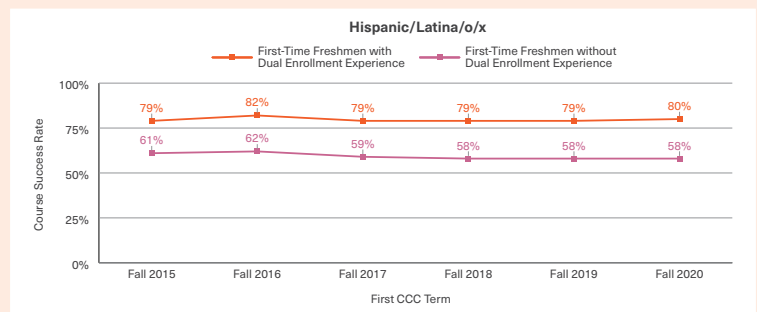
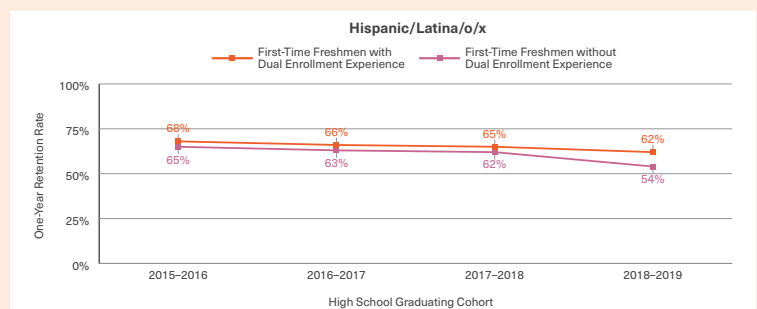


Figure 6. One-Year Retention Rates by Prior Dual Enrollment Participation for Hispanic/Latina/o/x Students (Graduating Cohorts, 2015–2016 – 2018–2019)



their female-identifying peers (Mangan, 2022; Johnson, Payares-Montoya, & Mejia, 2023). Dual enrollment has the potential to help close these gaps. Yet, **male students were less likely to participate in dual enrollment** prior to *DE4EC*'s launch. Female student participation increased by 1,571 between the 2013–2014 and 2017–2018 cohorts, representing a 66% jump in involvement. Yet, during the same period, **male students' engagement with dual enrollment grew just 50%** (911 students) (see *Figure 7*).

The average number of college units dual enrolled male students earned by high school graduation fluctuated over time; however, **female students completed comparatively more college units on average than their male peers** (apart from the 2016–2017 cohort). Further, for the 2019–2020 graduating cohort, the average units by male students declined significantly in these early days of the COVID-19 pandemic from 7.29 to 5.87, compared to 7.71 to 7.05 for female students.

When matriculating to higher education, most **males with dual enrollment experience enrolled in the CCC** compared to their female peers, who were more likely to attend a **CSU or UC**. Positively, when attending a *DE4EC* partner community college, male students had higher first-term course success (see *Figure 8*), and this difference was consistently 20 percentage points higher. Additionally, male students with prior dual enrollment experience had one-year retention rates higher than first-time male freshmen who did not previously participate.

Figure 7. Number of Partner High School Students Participating in Dual Enrollment for Males (Entering 9th Grade Cohorts, 2013–2014 – 2017–2018)

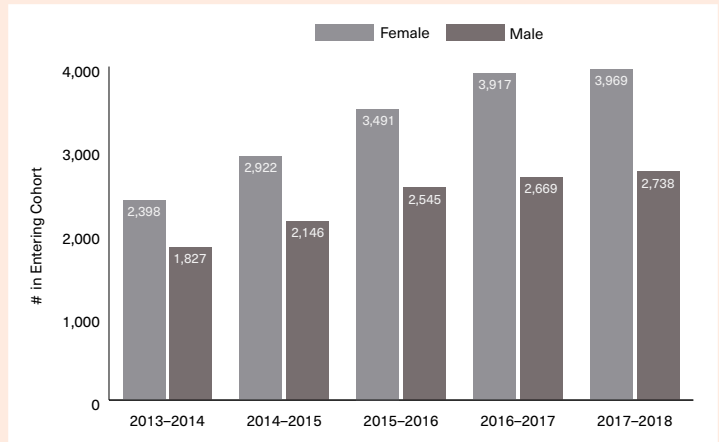
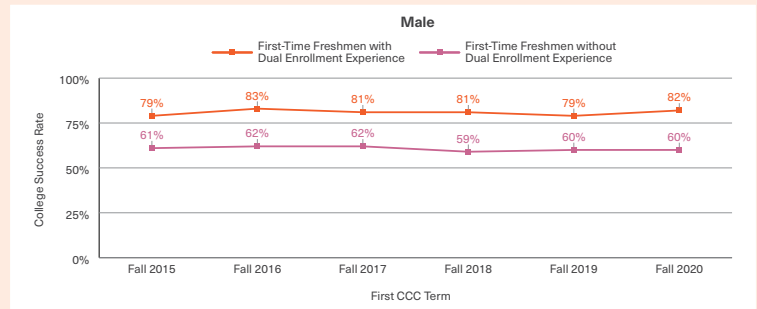


Figure 8. First Semester Course Success Rates by Prior Dual Enrollment Participation for Males (Fall 2015–Fall 2020)



TAKE ACTION

Baseline findings for dual enrollment participants in the period leading up to *DE4EC*'s launch suggest these 10 partnerships have a strong foundation for fostering equitable higher education access and completion. **Participation in dual enrollment was associated with positive high school and college outcomes across these student groups**, particularly for first-generation and Hispanic/Latina/o/x students. At the same time, these findings call out opportunities for community colleges and their high school partners to strengthen the experiences of specific groups historically underrepresented in postsecondary education, including:

- Increasing outreach, recruitment, and engagement of first-generation, Black/African American, and male students in dual enrollment programming
- Ensuring first-generation, Hispanic/Latina/o/x, and male students maximize the number of college units they complete through dual enrollment by the time they graduate from high school to advance their college progress
- Strengthening supports for Black/African American students with dual enrollment experience once they enroll in college to facilitate their postsecondary success

These baseline outcomes also highlight the importance of disaggregating data on dual enrollment participation and its impact on different student groups' success. These data can also be used to flag additional areas for examination moving forward. Specifically, these results signal potential intersectionality worth investigating, such as how first-generation Hispanic/Latina/o/x participants or Black/African American males experience and benefit from dual enrollment. Additionally, we hope to explore the interplay of economic disadvantage with students' involvement in these opportunities in our future research.

Community college and high school partnerships can also use this baseline assessment as a template for gathering and disaggregating their own quantitative data. Dual enrollment collaboratives can examine the metrics outlined in these analyses and the ways we disaggregated this information at the local level to support their own program planning and implementation. Determining trends in dual enrollment participation and high school and postsecondary outcomes for different student groups can help with both case-making and improvement efforts over time.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

This brief and two others in the *Advancing Equitable Dual Enrollment Research Series* provide highlights from a detailed quantitative analysis of baseline outcomes, disaggregated by student population, in the period leading up to *DE4EC*'s launch (2015–2020). The full set includes:

- [Brief 7: Ready, Set, Launch – Baseline High School Outcomes for DE4EC Participants](#)
- [Brief 8: Ready, Set, Launch – Baseline College Enrollment and Outcomes for DE4EC Participants](#)
- [Brief 9: Ready, Set, Launch – Baseline Outcomes for Historically Underrepresented DE4EC Participants](#)

Find these briefs and the full report at <https://www.r-d-p-consulting.com/de4ec>.

References

- Mangan, K. (2022). *The Male Enrollment Crisis*. The Chronicle of Higher Education. https://connect.chronicle.com/rs/931-EKA-218/images/MaleEnrollmentCrisis_Ascendum_ExplainerV4.pdf
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