



March 14, 2017

Education Committee  
Oregon House of Representatives  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Doherty and Committee Members:

We write to provide public comment on HB 2867, which includes the following provision: “*A school district shall ensure that a teacher of a course that is part of a dual credit program has completed a minimum of 27 quarter hours of graduate level course work relevant to the course*” [Section 1(3)].

We understand that HB 2867 is intended to increase the quality of instruction in accelerated credit courses in high schools, and we share the commitment to academic rigor and integrity. That said, we are concerned about HB 2867’s impact on recent efforts by programs like Willamette Promise and Eastern Promise to (1) expand access to accelerated credit, and (2) close achievement gaps.

In June of 2016, after an extensive consultative process, Oregon’s Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) approved revised standards for accelerated learning. Two new models were introduced: “Sponsored Dual Credit” and “Assessment-Based Learning.” HB 2313, part of HECC’s 2017 Agency Bill Package, would allow these newly defined models to satisfy the state’s requirement that all school districts offer their students dual credit opportunities.

The new state standards enable innovative approaches to quality assurance (i.e., professional learning communities of teachers and faculty; collaborative assessment of student work). They do not include HB 2867’s restrictions on who can teach dual credit courses because, with alternative approaches to quality assurance, teacher credentials need not be a barrier to offering accelerated credit.

Barriers are significant. We know that Oregon’s rural students have less access to traditional dual credit, as do other “New Majority” students (i.e., minority, economically-disadvantaged, immigrant and potential first-generation college students). But innovation makes a difference. In 2014-15, for example, six rural school districts in the Willamette Education Service District were able to offer accelerated credit because Willamette Promise ensures quality by examining evidence of student learning rather than teacher credentials. In 2015-16, 45% of Willamette Promise students were from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and 39% were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups.

Because Willamette Promise is a relatively new program, we have limited data on how students fare in college. Based on a small sample of students at WOU in 2015-16, however, we found that Willamette Promise students compared favorably with those who brought AP credits: While from similar demographic profiles, Willamette Promise had somewhat higher GPAs, course completion rates, and rates of retention.

Quality matters, and can be assured in a variety of ways. We hope you will reflect on these nuances of quality as you consider HB 2867.

Sincerely,

Stephen Scheck, Provost