

STATE OF COLORADO



DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION
Colorado Commission on Higher Education

Bill Ritter, Jr.
Governor

David E. Skaggs
Executive Director

April 2, 2009

Memorandum

To: House Education Committee

From: David Skaggs, Executive Director, Department of Higher Education

Subj: ASCENT legislation, HB09-1319

The Department of Higher Education (DHE) strongly supports the overall objectives of the concurrent enrollment legislation (HB09-1319). It will create new and strengthen existing pathways between high schools and institutions of higher education. DHE has worked with Dr. Gianneschi to address a number of concerns and understand that those were in turn discussed with Chairman Merrifield and that most may be acceptable. We are grateful for this accommodation.

One aspect of the bill is of particular concern, and I would ask the Committee to consider revising the section of the bill that would establish an Advisory Board. The proposed Board would have responsibilities to "1) establish standards for qualified students who currently enroll in college courses, 2) to establish policies on administration of the ASCENT program, 3) to advise and assist school districts and institutions of higher education in preparing cooperative agreements, and 4) make recommendations on improving or updating state policies related to concurrent enrollment."

DHE's concern is that the proposed Board would appear largely to duplicate statutory responsibilities of the Commission and DHE staff (and State Board of Education and Department of Education staff) and could even inhibit implementation of concurrent enrollment policies. The composition of the proposed Board would also mean a separate entity, with a majority appointed by the two department heads, and essentially designed to nudge the two departments toward more transparency and better coordination and collaboration in handling concurrent enrollment issues.

DHE suggests taking advantage of the improvement in interdepartmental coordination and cooperation occasioned by our mutual responsibilities under the CAP4K legislation (SB08-212) and the regularity with which the interdepartmental working group now meets to address common responsibilities.

With that successful existing structure in mind, I'd like to suggest the following structure for overseeing the concurrent enrollment legislation, replacing the provisions of section 25-35-107 of the draft bill:

By September 30, 2009, The State Board of Education and the Commission on higher Education will set up a Concurrent Enrollment Coordinating Board whose membership will consist of designated CDE and DHE staff, representation from school districts, institutions of higher education, rural and urban school districts and institutions of higher education, and practitioners from federal, state, and private programs who focus on building pathways from K-12 to postsecondary education. The Concurrent Enrollment Coordinating Board will be chaired by the Commissioner of the Department of Education (or his designee) and co-chaired by the Executive Director of the Department of Higher Education (or his designee).

By February 15, 2010, the Concurrent Enrollment Coordinating Board will recommend to the State Board and Commission policies that address the following:

- a) Establishing standards for qualified students who concurrently enroll in college courses, including but not limited to standards by which the institutions of higher education shall determine whether a qualified student's performance in a college course is satisfactory; and
- b) The administration of the ASCENT program pursuant to section 22-35-108(4);
- c) Advising and assisting school districts and institutions of higher education in preparing cooperative agreements;
- d) Improving and updating policies related to concurrent enrollment programs; and
- e) Establishing standards for enrollment of students in basic skills courses.

The Department of Higher Education believes the structure described above will result in the implementation of concurrent enrollment policies that reflect the needs of students and state's interest in increasing the college going rate of Colorado citizens.

Thank you very much for your consideration.