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## Problem Statement and Background

Across the nation, workforce development, postsecondary completion and educational access agendas converge in the high impact educational practice known as Concurrent Enrollment. Concurrent Enrollment refers to an educational setting in which a high school teacher is hired or endorsed by a partnering postsecondary institution to teach high school students courses for which they receive both high school and college credit.<sup>1</sup> In the last two decades, concurrent enrollment practices have spread to all 50 states and a majority of the nation's high schools.<sup>2</sup> This growth is not surprising, as research indicates such practices are associated with numerous educational benefits for students, including increased college readiness,<sup>3</sup> second year college retention, and four-year and six-year college completion rates.<sup>4</sup> As a result, many states, including Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Ohio, Minnesota, and South Dakota, have enacted comprehensive, ambitious statewide concurrent enrollment plans designed to increase the opportunities high school students have access greater numbers and a wider varieties of such courses before they graduate.

However, in 2015, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), the regional accreditor for Midwestern states, refined the policy language it used to describe expectations for the educational credentials of adjunct faculty.<sup>5</sup> By default, these expectations apply to concurrent enrollment instructors. Such instructors must be hired or endorsed by the postsecondary institution as adjunct faculty before the institution can grant college credit to students who take concurrent enrollment courses at the high schools that partner with the institution. The newly worded guidelines clarified that adjunct instructors must possess a master's degree in the content field in which they are teaching, or they must possess a master's degree in another field (usually Educational Leadership or Curriculum and Instruction) plus 18 graduate credits in the field in which they are teaching concurrent enrollment courses.

**With few exceptions,<sup>6</sup> states across the Midwest suddenly had a looming crisis on their hands: did their concurrent enrollment instructors throughout the state have the credentials that would allow them to teach the growing number of concurrent enrollment courses desired by students and families and sometimes mandated by statute?** State-level stakeholders began to collect data about the teacher credentialing dilemma and asked HLC to offer an extension of the deadline for institutions to meet the clarified expectations. As a result, many institutions across the region applied for and were granted an extension until 2022.

Since that time, states, institutions, and school districts continue to search for and create ways to help more high school teachers attain the credentials needed to qualify them to teach concurrent enrollment courses. MHEC was asked by constituents to investigate the status of those efforts to see if

states will meet their teacher credentialing goals by 2022 and, possibly, to offer support from a regional level to assist states with this endeavor.

In response, MHEC staff conducted interviews during the spring of 2018 to gain an understanding from a wide range of concurrent enrollment stakeholders (N=75) across the Midwest (12 states) of what teacher credentialing work remains to be done and what challenges add to the complexity of that work (for more details on the findings from these interviews, please see Appendix A).<sup>7</sup>

Findings from the interviews were shared with 30 representatives from all 12 MHEC states at a convening on May 16, 2018, in Cincinnati, OH. At the Midwestern Concurrent Enrollment Teacher Credential Summit, state representatives worked with each other and with experts from national organizations such as the National Association of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP), the Education Commission of the States (ECS), and Jobs for the Future (JFF) to share ideas and plans for how to help up-credential more teachers across the region. The result was a new set of interstate collaborations as well as recommendations for possible regional-level action to help address the shortage of properly credentialed concurrent enrollment teachers in the Midwest.

### **Recommended Regional Actions**

The following list of recommended regional actions comes from an analysis of the 75 interviews as well as the Teacher Credential Summit.

1. A series of templates and best practices documents to include:
  - a. Recommendations on how institutions can evaluate teachers' credentials to enhance consistency between institutions within and among the states.
  - b. Playbook for K-12 district administrators and secondary teachers to use when planning and managing up-credentialing.
  - c. Recommendations for institutions considering creating more graduate course and program options for teachers (e.g., needed subject areas, course naming and numbering recommendations, numbers of teachers needing such coursework/programs).
  - d. Ideas and promising practices for K-12 district administrators hiring teachers with concurrent enrollment credentialing in mind.

- e. Ideas and lists of incentives to help districts pay for teacher coursework and incentivize teachers to pursue additional credentials (e.g., information about flexible contracting, etc.).
  - f. Information for parents, students, school districts, institutional faculty to explain the background of the teacher credentialing dilemma, and the possible ways to address it. **\*\*There is much confusion about the Triad and the relationship between accreditors and the state.\*\***
  - g. Ideas and conventions for using the “tested experience” exception for certifying concurrent enrollment instructors.
  - h. Templates for how to collect and organize state, institution, and district-level data about concurrent enrollment teacher needs and teacher credentialing needs.
2. Database of available courses and programs that meet teachers’ needs for additional academic credit.
3. State Policy Recommendations/advocacy
  - a. Statewide transcribing conventions and course transfer policies (i.e., college transcripts for concurrent enrollment courses should not indicate that they were taken as concurrent enrollment courses).
  - b. Concurrent enrollment funding and budgeting that is consistent and predictable.
  - c. Recommendations of pools of money (e.g., Title II, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) etc.) that can be used by districts and institutions to help address the teacher credentialing dilemma.
4. Work with schools of education and teacher licensing boards to create a concurrent enrollment instructor pathway and credential that is more universally recognized.
5. Confer with HLC about reopening the extension application process and about courses, programs and practices that would meet their expectations.

## Proposed work in 2019

Moving forward, MHEC staff propose the following timeline and set of actions to assist its states as they face the teacher credentialing crisis:

1. Update policy brief produced by MHEC in collaboration with ECS: [\*Increasing the Supply of Qualified High School Teachers for Dual Enrollment Programs: An Overview of State and Regional Accreditor Policies\*](#). (accomplished, June 2018)
2. Facilitate a **workgroup** to develop a regional set of recommended practices for postsecondary institutions when they are reviewing and making decisions about teacher credentials (spring and summer 2019, in collaboration with NACEP).
3. Explore the feasibility of a **database** of graduate courses and programs secondary teachers can take online or flexibly to gain credentials that will allow them to teach concurrent enrollment courses in high schools. The goal would be to create a self-certification tool that institutions could use to assess their graduate course offerings and certify their compliance with a set of criteria. The criteria would be developed by a MHEC Concurrent Enrollment Advisory Group and collaborators, such as NACEP, Credential Engine, and/or other organizations. (summer and fall 2019).
4. Explore opportunity to **converse** with HLC regarding regional stakeholder concerns (ongoing 2019). To date, conversations between MHEC and HLC staff have resulted in a request by HLC staff for MHEC staff to collaborate in writing a white paper on the teacher credentialing issue from the perspective of states.

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<sup>1</sup> Concurrent enrollment is merely one term that is used for the practice of high school teachers teaching high school students in high school classrooms courses for which the students receive both high school and college credit. Other terms included “dual enrollment,” “dual credit,” and “concurrent credit.” Conversely, these terms are also used by various organizations and in different states to refer to other “early college” teaching practices which can include college faculty teaching high school students on a high school campus, college faculty teaching high school students who attend classes on a college campus and college faculty who teach high school students via a distance modality.

<sup>2</sup> Glancy, E., Fulton, M., Anderson, L., Zinth, J. D., & Millard, M. (2014). Blueprint for College Readiness: A 50-State Policy Analysis. *Education Commission of the States*.

<sup>3</sup> Glancy, E., Fulton, M., Anderson, L., Zinth, J. D., & Millard, M. (2014). Blueprint for College Readiness: A 50-State Policy Analysis. *Education Commission of the States*.

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<sup>4</sup> Allen, D., & Dadgar, M. (2012). Does dual enrollment increase students' success in college? Evidence from a quasi-experimental analysis of dual enrollment in New York City. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2012(158), 11–19.

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.mhec.org/sites/mhec.org/files/4\\_HLC\\_FacultyGuidelines\\_2016\\_OPB.pdf](http://www.mhec.org/sites/mhec.org/files/4_HLC_FacultyGuidelines_2016_OPB.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> In some states, high school teachers are rarely used to deliver concurrent enrollment courses. Examples of such states are Michigan and South Dakota. In other states, the pre-existing requirements for concurrent enrollment instructors already mirrored or closely approximated the requirements HLC set forth for such instructors. Examples of such states are Iowa and Missouri.

<sup>7</sup> Follow-up interviews were conducted with a subset of interviewees in spring 2019.

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### Exploratory Work by MHEC, Fall 2017 and Spring 2018

*Jenny Parks, director of academic leadership initiatives at MHEC, conducted interviews from the fall of 2017 through the spring of 2018 to understand from a wide range of concurrent enrollment stakeholders across the Midwest what teacher credentialing work remains and what challenges add to the complexity of that work. Short follow-up interviews with a subset of the interviewees were conducted in Spring 2019.*

To understand the teacher credentialing dilemma broadly and deeply, a wide range of concurrent enrollment stakeholders were interviewed. These included:

- State higher education executive officers and staff
- State Board of Education (K-12), Department of Education, etc. executive officers and staff
- Concurrent enrollment directors for school districts, postsecondary institutions and postsecondary institutional systems
- School district superintendents
- Legislators

### Overview of Findings

A total of 75 individuals from the 12 MHEC states were asked the following four questions pertaining to the concurrent enrollment teacher credentialing dilemma, with answers to these questions varying widely.

1. When HLC refined its policies regarding the credentials required for concurrent enrollment instructors, what were the impact and implications in your state?



2. What sorts of responses at the state, institutional, and school district levels have there been to the change in HLC policy language?



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3. How effective have those responses been in increasing the number of instructors who possess credentials that will allow them to teach concurrent enrollment courses?



4. What work remains to be done, and what challenges make that work more difficult?



Whether a state's responses fell on the left or the right side of the ranges above tended to coincide with the following factors:

- **The amount of concurrent enrollment conducted in the state.** States with larger numbers of students taking concurrent enrollment courses tended to react more concertedly and at a higher level to the change in HLC's policy language.
- **The length of time a state has possessed a concurrent enrollment statute or regulation and how deeply concurrent enrollment goals and metrics are tied to other state social, economic, and educational agendas.** The longer concurrent enrollment has been practiced in the state and the more deeply embedded it is in various state agendas, the more likely it seemed to be that the state launched statewide, comprehensive efforts to assist teachers in obtaining additional academic credentials.
- **The level and rigor of state credentialing requirements and monitoring prior to the change in HLC policy language.** States where there were already higher credentialing requirements for concurrent enrollment instructors and where those credentials were also closely monitored tended to be states where the change in HLC policy language caused the least panic and where efforts to up-credential teachers were most effective.
- **The level of concurrent enrollment mandates and targets enacted by the states.** States where performance funding and other metrics were tied to levels of concurrent enrollment courses completed by students tended to be states where there were more assertive and coordinated efforts to find ways to help teachers increase their credentials.
- **The structure of higher education governance in the state.** The more centralized and coordinated the oversight of higher education was in a state, the more the state could collect consistent data, create a cohesive plan, and distribute funds efficiently to help with the teacher credentialing dilemma.

Finally, it is important to note that the most effective programs to help teachers gain credentials were those that were based on robust data, adequate funding, and a sufficient amount of time to accomplish the task.

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### Summary of Remaining Work

In all but three states,<sup>j</sup> there persists a perceived need to create opportunities for substantial numbers of teachers to obtain additional graduate education that will qualify them to teach concurrent enrollment courses. To accomplish this goal, interview respondents felt the following five issues were the most important to address:

1. There is a need for high quality, consistent **data** about the number and content areas of concurrent enrollment courses taught in each state as well as the number of teachers who need different numbers of graduate credits and in which content areas. Examples of states with very robust data include Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, and Ohio.
2. **Funding** from the state is needed to incentivize postsecondary institutions to develop graduate courses and programs that meet the credentialing needs of teachers. Funding also needs to subsidize the cost of graduate credits so that less of the financial burden falls on teachers.
3. **Graduate course and credit opportunities** for teachers need to be flexibly available to teachers in terms of time and location. Institutions in several states have developed online master's degrees and 18 credit hour programs and at reduced costs to teachers. Such institutions include University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, University of Minnesota – Moorhead, University of Northern Iowa, the University of Northern Illinois, and the Indiana University.
4. Opportunities for teacher up-credentialing need to address rather than exacerbate the **under supply of properly credentialed concurrent enrollment teachers in rural and distressed urban areas**. For teachers in rural areas, the low availability of local institutions makes it difficult for them to obtain additional credentials. In both rural and distressed urban districts, a lack of adequate funding makes it nearly impossible for school districts to subsidize tuition costs for graduate courses and to offer incentives and bonuses for teachers who take their time to go back to school in pursuit of concurrent enrollment credentials.
5. The undersupply of properly credentialed concurrent enrollment instructors is unfolding in the context of a **general shortage of K-12 teachers and amidst a rapidly aging and retiring teacher workforce**. There will be an increasingly smaller number of teachers from which to recruit concurrent enrollment instructors. The supply of concurrent enrollment instructors must be addressed as a pipeline issue as well as an immediate one. Interview respondents hoped that this concern could be raised with schools of teacher education as well as with state educational licensing entities.

### Summary of Challenges

Besides the logistical concerns of time, space, and funding, there are less tangible challenges that complicate the process of creating and delivering more opportunities for teachers to gain the additional graduate credits they need to be qualified to teach concurrent enrollment courses. These challenges include:

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1. *Many postsecondary institutions do not perceive the concurrent enrollment teacher credentialing dilemma as a problem that is theirs to address.* This is particularly true for institutions that do not serve as partner institutions for high schools in which such courses are offered. In many states, the bulk of concurrent enrollment courses are delivered by community colleges, with the credits from those courses not necessarily transferable to universities in the state. If an institution is unfamiliar with, uninvested in, and does not perceive a pipeline of students coming from concurrent enrollment activities, it is not a surprise that creating new, flexible, and online graduate programs and courses for concurrent enrollment teachers is not high on their list of priorities. In states where financial incentives have been offered to institutions to develop such options (i.e., Minnesota, Ohio, Indiana) there have been a mix of institutional responses.
2. *Even in states and at institutions that are willing and eager to create new graduate programs and courses for concurrent enrollment teachers, there are often significant barriers to launching such initiatives.* These include the bureaucratic barriers to new program development in some states, a perception among institutions that concurrent enrollment is not a desirable practice (in some states, the Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and college faculty models are preferred), continued concerns about the quality of online and distance education, and faculty reticence to create programs and course sequences that do not mirror existing programs and courses as well as their selection and admissions processes (this seems to be most prevalent in certain STEM fields).
3. *Many institutions that certify concurrent enrollment instructors as well as graduate institutions are unsure which courses, sequences, and configurations of master's degrees will be acceptable to HLC and other institutions that might review a teacher's postsecondary transcript to hire him/her for a concurrent enrollment teaching position in the future.* Lack of consistency in how

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institutions accept graduate credits for concurrent enrollment instructor vetting make it difficult for graduate institutions to know how best to commit to a new program or set of courses.

4. *Sometimes unions at the school district and/or community college level have established practices that make it difficult* for the school to incentivize teachers to take additional coursework and teach concurrent enrollment courses. Similarly, unions at community colleges sometimes establish rules for hiring adjunct faculty that exceed HLC requirements or include additional requirements that preclude institutions from certifying concurrent enrollment instructors who are otherwise properly credentialed. Finally, there are two-year faculty unions in some states that have taken the positions that concurrent enrollment practices result in decreases to enrollments at their institutions and in the classes they teach there. When such schools and unions are part of a statewide higher education system, they can hamper efforts by the system to address the teacher credentialing dilemma.
  
5. Even when graduate coursework for teachers is low cost or free and available online or flexibly, it is still difficult to get enough teachers to take time away from their families and careers to return to graduate school. Additional incentives like stipends for coursework, release time for coursework, and travel allowances can help with this. However, such incentives are usually only available in school districts that are well funded, meaning that teachers in rural and distressed urban areas have fewer incentives to return to graduate school and pursue their concurrent enrollment credentials. Similarly, the nation's teacher workforce is aging. Older teachers often feel disinclined to return to graduate studies in pursuit of a concurrent enrollment teaching credential if they have only a few years left to teach before retiring.

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<sup>i</sup> In Iowa, because of historically high concurrent enrollment teacher credentialing requirements and rigorous monitoring of those requirements, there were few teachers who lacked the necessary credentials to teach concurrent enrollment courses in high schools. The few that required additional courses were put on improvement plans and were able to take courses tailored to their needs, at a discounted rate which were offered by the state's largest teacher education school at the University of Northern Iowa. In South Dakota, the bulk of concurrent enrollment is conducted by postsecondary faculty via distance education, due to the highly rural nature of the state. Therefore, it is rare for a high school teacher to offer such courses in a high school setting. Finally, in Michigan there is no central higher education authority nor the ability to mandate that postsecondary institutions offer concurrent enrollment courses. When they do, it is because there is a uniquely negotiated agreement between an institution and a school district, with the school district taking on the responsibility to hire/provide faculty who are properly credentialed to teach such courses. The bulk of concurrent enrollment type courses in the state are taught by college faculty, some on college campuses, and some on high school campuses.

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### How Concurrent Enrollment Teacher Credentialing Efforts Align with MHEC's Mission and Priorities

Concurrent enrollment teacher credentialing is an important and timely concern for the higher education community throughout the Midwest. As discussed, the majority of MHEC states are experiencing the teacher credentialing dilemma as a *crisis*. Addressing this issue is consistent with MHEC's mission to expand the opportunities, accessibility and affordability of higher education in the Midwest. Also, actions that can address the concurrent enrollment teacher credentialing dilemma align with MHEC's four strategic themes:

- 1. Shifting demographics and the changing composition of the student body:** Research tells us that students who take concurrent enrollment courses exhibit higher levels of college readiness and are more likely to enroll in and complete a postsecondary course of study.<sup>1</sup> This is why such courses feature prominently in many states' completion agendas and ESSA accountability measures. Importantly, however, these positive effects for students are greater for students who are first generation college attenders, are members of underrepresented minority groups, and who come from poverty.<sup>2</sup> Helping more states help more teachers attain the credentials they need to teach concurrent enrollment courses allows MHEC to address the needs of the changing demographic profile of students in the Midwest.
- 2. Evolving modes of packaging and delivering education:** Concurrent enrollment courses are, by definition, a repackaging of postsecondary education. They provide opportunities for students to jump start their postsecondary educational plans on high school campuses where they can adjust to the level of academic rigor one or two courses at a time and in an environment where they are already comfortable. Such courses are considered by many to be a high impact practice that has revolutionized the nature of late secondary and early tertiary education, blurring the lines and many of the historic barriers between the two.<sup>3</sup>
- 3. Declining share of public investment in higher education:** The high number of concurrent enrollment courses offered in most MHEC states is a result of states' efforts to bring down the cost of higher education. These costs have risen in the last two decades in large part because of declining shares of public investment devoted to higher education. However, public investment in secondary education, especially in early college and concurrent enrollment programs, has increased,<sup>4</sup> and offers a means by which students and their families can offset the increasing costs of higher education in most states.
- 4. Desire for collaboration beyond the institution:** Concurrent enrollment programs are also, by definition, a form of collaboration beyond individual institutions. They necessitate that postsecondary institutions work with local schools and find ways to offer courses to high school students. The teacher credentialing dilemma provides an even greater opportunity for institutions to collaborate with each other. In many MHEC states, concurrent enrollment courses are provided through local community colleges, but those same institutions cannot offer the graduate level courses teachers need to gain the credentials that will allow them to continue to teach concurrent enrollment courses. As a result, community colleges and universities find themselves in new collaborations to address this situation. Similarly, universities in state systems and organizations of independent institutions are also collaborating to create courses and programs to up-credential teachers effectively and efficiently.

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<sup>1</sup> Blankenberger, B., Lichtenberger, E., & Witt, A. (2017). Dual Credit, College Type, and Enhanced Degree Attainment. *Educational Researcher*, 46(5), 259–263.

<sup>2</sup> An, B. P. (2013). The impact of dual enrollment on college degree attainment: Do low-SES students benefit?. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 35(1), 57-75.

<sup>3</sup> Vargas, J., Roach, R., & David, K. (2013). Successful Concurrent Programs: An EXCELeRate Program in Oklahoma. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 38(2-3), 166–173.