

Dual Enrollment Stipend Report
Sec. E. 605.2 of the FY 2015 Appropriations Act
(No. 179 of the Acts of the 2014 General Assembly)

To: House and Senate Committees on Education and Appropriations
From: Marilyn Cargill, Vice President of Financial Aid Services and Research, VSAC
Date: January 15, 2015
Re: Dual Enrollment Stipend Report

Introduction and Background

A \$50,000 need-based stipend for dual enrollment and early college students was passed in the 2014 Legislative session in Section E.605.2 of the Appropriations Act. Students who meet the eligibility criteria receive a need-based stipend to help offset the out-of-pocket expenses of books, fees, or transportation. Section E.605.2 reads as follows:

Sec. E. 605.2 NEED-BASED STIPEND FOR DUAL ENROLLMENT AND EARLY COLLEGE STUDENTS

(a) Of the Next Generation Funds appropriated in Sec. B1100(a)(3)(C) of this act, \$50,000 shall be used to fund a flat-rate, need-based stipend or voucher program for financially needy students enrolled in a dual enrollment course as defined in 16 V.S.A. § 942(7) and § 944 or in early college as defined in 16 V.S.A. § 4011(e) and § 942(8) to be used for the purchase of books, transportation costs, and payment of fees. The Vermont Student Assistance Corporation shall establish the criteria for program eligibility. Funds shall be granted to eligible students on a first-come, first-served basis until funds are depleted.

(b) VSAC shall report on the program to the House and Senate Committees on Education and on Appropriations on or before January 15, 2015.

VSAC prepared this Report in consultation with the Vermont State Colleges, School superintendents and other dual enrollment stakeholders, as explained in more detail below.

Policy Objectives

The policy objectives of the stipend program are to:

- ✓ Introduce a larger pool of Vermont high school students to a college experience;
- ✓ Increase attendance at Vermont colleges; and
- ✓ Ensure that dual enrollment and early college opportunities are available to all Vermont high school students including low and middle income families.

Eligibility Requirements

- ✓ To be eligible for the program's stipend, a student must:
- ✓ Be enrolled in a Dual Enrollment course or in the Early College program, with Dual Enrollment receiving preference;
- ✓ Be attending a Vermont high school or be home schooled in Vermont;
- ✓ Have completed the sophomore year in HS for Dual Enrollment or be in the senior year for Early College;

- ✓ Demonstrate financial need – i.e., must be verified by their high school dual enrollment designee as eligible for free and reduced hot lunch (F/RL). All students will be required to submit the application for free and reduced hot lunch unless already they have already been determined to be eligible by another state-accepted means such as students receiving benefits from TANF, 3SquaresVT, etc.; and
- ✓ Have confirmed books, fees, and/or transportation costs by their high school dual enrollment designee if attending a high school or if home schooled, self-reported.

Methodology

In early June, a committee representing Vermont principals, Vermont superintendents, the Agency of Education, College Financial Aid Administrators, Community College of Vermont staff providing oversight to the dual enrollment voucher program, the VSAC Outreach program and other VSAC staff convened to help design a program that would implement Section E.605.2 to reach the targeted audience as early as possible while providing an efficient and effective application method for students and families.

The committee elected to use eligibility for free and reduced hot lunch as the determination of “need.” This decision along with the decision to add questions to the existing dual enrollment voucher application removed any additional application barriers that might have prevented low income families for applying for the stipend.

Verification of both need and out-of-pocket expenses for books, fees, and/or transportation is provided by the dual enrollment designee at each high school. Home schooled students do not have a separate verification process.

The stipend was set at \$150/student which would allow 330 students to be funded.

Priority was given to dual enrollment students who have no other broad-based funding options.

Spending Outcomes

In the 2014 fall semester 64 names were forwarded from the dual enrollment voucher program and \$ 9,600 was disbursed. To date in the 2015 spring semester, 82 additional students have received the stipend. There are another 107 students in the pipeline pending registration and school verification. CCV courses begin on 1/26/2015 so we are expecting an additional group of eligible students may be identified following the submission of this report.

Conclusions

Students can enroll for dual enrollment courses during the summer, fall and spring semesters. They make the decision to enroll in summer and fall courses before leaving high school at the end of the spring term. Because this program was created after the end of the 2013-2014 school year we were too late to influence the behavior of many of the students who might have wanted to enroll in summer or fall classes but who were concerned about funding for the out-of-pocket expenses. Despite this, 64 students were awarded stipends for fall classes.

Currently, demand for stipends for the spring semester is more than 2 times as large as it was last fall. This is a result of a normally larger spring dual enrollment class combined with high

schools and students becoming aware of the program. There are still eligible students who remain unaware of the program but information continues to be disseminated through school counselors and other school leaders.

We recently received the following communication from a Winooski High School student who was able to take advantage of this stipend this past fall:

“I am a senior at Winooski High School. This fall I was able to take Chemistry at CCV and use the \$150 to help me with a variety of things. I was able to pay for my bus fare to and from class. While Winooski HS is close to CCV I only had 15 minutes to get from Winooski HS to CCV before my class started. I also used the funds to purchase a scientific calculator that I needed as part of this class and I purchased notebooks and a folder. Without these funds I would have found it difficult or had to borrow a calculator and I would have been late to my class each week. This semester I am taking Pre-Calculus and really enjoy taking classes at CCV. I hope to receive another stipend to support my college class. I am from a family of 5. We relocated to Vermont from Jordan in 2013. My brother will be using the stipend this semester as he is taking a computer class that requires many expensive computer parts to build a computer.”

The following quotes come from Tracy Wrend, Superintendent of Lamoille South Supervisory Union. “In reviewing data for one of my high schools, 50% of our DE (dual enrollment) courses were taken by students eligible for F/RL, which matches our overall school population.” “The stipend was critical for book purchasing”

Recommendation

VSAC recommends that the General Assembly continue funding this program at a minimum through FY 2016, i.e., through at least one more full school year, to be able to gauge the true need of the program over the course of all three semesters. This will also allow for more low income families to become aware of the program.