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Concurrent Enrollment Outcomes by Course Location

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This study examines concurrent enrollment (CE) course location and whether it has an impact on postsecondary GPA and credit hours earned. For location the study divides students into whether they took concurrent enrollment coursework at a high school, with a qualified high school instructor, or on a community college campus, and uses longitudinal data from the state of Colorado to track their GPA and credit hours earned through their second semester of postsecondary education.

The data included nearly 11,000 Colorado students who took CE courses so the study used propensity score matching (PSM) to create similar groups across comparable characteristics. These observable characteristics included individual characteristics (e.g., gender, ACT scores, race/ethnicity), and school characteristics (e.g., rural, urban). They excluded students who took coursework in both locations (8% of total students) and those who took online CE courses (1% of total students). This left researchers with 9,710 total students, which resulted in 4,473 matches following the PSM.

An important consideration for the researchers was the caliper of matches, which is the distance between matches. As they were utilizing a nearest neighbor approach, as opposed to exact matching, they conducted their analysis with a caliper of 0.10 as well as 0.05. They found the results to be substantively similar at both calipers.

Comparing the treatment group (students who took CE at high school) and control group (students who took CE at a community college), researchers examined grades in CE courses, CE credit hours earned, and GPA and credit hours earned after the first and secondary postsecondary semesters. Overall, the researchers found no statistically significant differences in any of these measures.

The study notes some limitations of their study, which may include grade inflation in high school CE courses and the lack of longitudinal data for students who matriculated to postsecondary opportunities outside of Colorado. It is also important to note that institutions in Colorado are accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), which has education requirements for CE instructors. However, given the lack of statistically significant differences, the study argues that delivery location of CE courses should be determined based on individual school and student needs, such as budget, demand, and instructor availability. Further, data suggests that postsecondary institutions should have less concern about delivery location when reviewing incoming CE credits.