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## Never too Early for College

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At Roosevelt High School Thursday, college instructor Jay Stout answered a question from Jennifer Xiao as Ren Nakamura looked on during an Early College speech class.

Karen Lee has assembled a lot of data points to support the push for Early College, a program in which high school students earn tuition-free credits toward both their diplomas and a future college degree.

But the most persuasive points may be made by the students and their families who stand to benefit from the academic boost and cost savings.

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Among those who support its continuation is Waipahu High School senior Trisha Madamba. She called Early College a "life-changing program," especially for lower-income students who get "a free ticket to higher education."

"Because of Early College, I was able to discover my strengths and abilities," said Madamba, whose goal is to become a naturopathic physician.

Brandy Allen, the single mother of a Waiakea High School student, said the program raised her daughter's confidence about college. "She totally is very excited and ready to hit the road," Allen said.

Lee is the outgoing executive director of Hawai'i P-20 Partnerships for Education, which draws together agencies supporting the full spectrum of public education, from preschool through college.

The partners have set various college- and career-readiness goals and see Early College as one component of the statewide strategy.

The partnership was testifying before the BOE in support of the Department of Education budget request to fund the Dual Credit/Early College Initiative for the coming 2017-2019 biennial budget. An item in the state budget now under review by lawmakers, the department seeks \$3 million in the first year of the fiscal biennium and \$6 million in the second year.

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#### **DUAL CREDIT PROGRAMS**

*High school students have the opportunity to take college-level courses with the intent of earning both high school and college credits. The options:*

**Running Start:**

>> For students grades 9-12

>> High school students take college-level courses at a University of Hawaii campus with college students

**Early College:**

>> For students grades 9-12

>> Students take college-level courses at their high school with other high schoolers

**Jump Start:**

>> 12th-graders at select high schools take college courses toward a career/technical education program at select UH campuses

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If approved, Lee said, this will be the first investment of taxpayer funds in the effort. This semester marks the end of its first full two-year run, partially underwritten by the federal Gear Up grant program. That was supplemented by private grants from sources such as the McInerny Foundation, the AT&T Foundation and the Harold K.L. Castle Foundation.

There seems to be some momentum behind it. Lee is leaving in March to take a post with the University of Hawaii community college enrollment office. She will be succeeded by outgoing DOE Deputy Superintendent Stephen Schatz.

Interestingly, Schatz will be replaced by Keith Hayashi, the Waipahu High principal who was one of the pioneers of the Early College program.

Further, it's not only a priority for the DOE but for Gov. David Ige as well. Ige underscored the potential for the program in his recent State of the State address. The heroine cited in the speech was Rovy Dipaysa, an immigrant to Hawaii who barely spoke English in 2012.

Like 13 others at Waipahu, she is an Early College "Olympian" — students who aim to complete their associate of arts degree by high school graduation.

"That kind of success is the reason why I want to expand the Early College Program to eventually include every public high school in the state," the governor said.

## **College classes at high schools**

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### **DUAL CREDIT BENEFITS**

*Dual credit opportunities hold potential benefits for students, institutions and the state:*

#### **Student benefits include:**

- >> College-level academic preparedness
- >> Exposure to college
- >> Shorter time and reduced cost to degree
- >> More access to courses not available at high schools

#### **Higher education benefits include:**

- >> Targeted student recruitment opportunities
- >> Greater rates of college persistence and completion
- >> More high schoolers likely to be college ready

#### **Benefits to state include:**

- >> Higher incomes resulting in higher tax revenues
- >> Highly skilled workforce to maintain economic competitiveness
- >> Fewer demands on social services; improved health
- >> Increased civic engagement

*Source: [www.p20hawaii.org](http://www.p20hawaii.org)*

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That is the idealized result of Early College. Lee said the funding is intended to provide enough UH faculty support so that by 2020, each public high school senior will be able to graduate with two college classes under his or her belt.

Early College is the outgrowth of what began in 2001 as Running Start. That was a partnership program between the DOE and UH, offering the first dual-credit college courses to high school students. Ten years later, four Oahu high schools started Jump Start for seniors to take technical education courses within the UH system.

Early College, however, sought to bring the college classes to the high school campuses themselves.

"The main issue was transportation," Lee said. "It's been limited by logistical factors."

### **Spreading beyond 12 schools**

The original law supporting early admission to college courses needed revision, she added. In 2015, the language was broadened to enable students to enter the classes earlier than their senior year.

There were 12 high schools that got the initial grant money for Early College, which targeted students underrepresented in the UH system.

Roosevelt High School was not among them, said Principal Sean Wong: Its student body does not include enough needy kids for the campus to qualify as a Title I school.

But Wong wanted this opportunity for his students enough to secure grant money and launch the first college classes last semester. This term there are two dual credit classes: Speech 151, taught during the school day, and Hawaiian Studies 107, which convenes after school.

The law now allows for kids to enroll before their senior year, Wong said, but most underclassmen have a fully booked course schedule, with no time for college classes during the day. An after-school class gives access to more students, he said.

Advanced Placement classes, like Early College, allow students to earn credit tuition free. Students who are college-bound anyway can opt for AP courses, which, if they pass with sufficiently high marks, will give them college credit transferable to most college campuses.

But for many students who are staying in Hawaii, getting a jump on UH credits makes perfect sense, Wong said.

"For almost 50 percent of our kids, cost is a factor," he added. "If we can find a way to give them a head start in the college career, all the more power to them."

Lee acknowledged that some classes may require a "ramp up" for young students, and some high schools are working with the feeder middle schools to offer preparatory work in advance of freshman year.

But in many cases, the material is perfectly appropriate for high schoolers, Lee said. Introductory foreign language classes are examples of these; Waipahu offers beginning Ilocano to its students.

### **'No down side'**

Jay Stout, who teaches the speech class at Roosevelt, said he adjusts his presentation to the time allotted as he would for any class, but otherwise does not amend the content.

"The students are taking the same course, so I ensure to cover the same content, assign the same assignments, and hold the same overall expectations," he said in response to an email query. "I believe this is important for them and would be a disservice on my end to do otherwise."

The case for Early College will be bolstered in the Legislature by presenting some favorable metrics. Hawaii students earning dual credits have higher college enrollment rates and are more likely to continue into a second year.

Lee sees the program as having "no down side," and lots of support from those she visits in the state Capitol. Chances look good now, but even that doesn't guarantee the funds will be there at the end of the session.

"It's just a matter of, with all the other priorities, how high will this rise?" she said.

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**manakuke** says:

February 5, 2017 at 12:11 am

Let talented students pursue their education; after all this IS the United States.

[Reply](#)

**Bdpapa** says:

February 5, 2017 at 7:49 am

Personally, I like this integration for students that are ready. Let them earn some college credits and assimilate into college life.

Reply

**Cellobad** says:

February 5, 2017 at 11:06 am

Even more important than credits for university-bound students is preparing them to be successful by allowing them to learn the skills, aptitudes, and habits of mind that they will need in pursuing higher education.

Reply

**Cricket\_Amos** says:

February 5, 2017 at 11:46 am

Curious about the logistics.

Will the UH lecturers travel from campus to campus or be permanently allocated to a single campus.

Seems easy for courses like "speech" and "Hawaiian studies".

Is there an expectation it will include courses like the hard sciences, math and computer science?

Reply

**palani** says:

February 5, 2017 at 12:16 pm

Many, if not most, high schools already offer advanced placement courses. After passing a recognized Advance Placement exam, students are awarded credits by the colleges in which they enroll. This "Early College" program at first sounds good, but it may just be a means of circumventing a more academically rigorous process that has been around for decades.

Reply