

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative, instrumental, multiple case study is to answer the question – how does the dual enrollment partnership between the county public school system and the community college prepare students to be college and career ready? The twenty participants in this study are administrators, professors, academic counselors, business partners, and dual-enrollment alumni from two community colleges in Maryland. The data collection methods include one-on-one interviews with the participants, focus groups, and document analysis. Open coding of verbatim transcriptions was used to develop themes. The results of the study illustrate that the dual enrollment partnership helps students to be college and career ready through a curriculum sequence of courses which support a specific field of interest and through hands-on experience in the workforce. Although the course content was the same, professors observed a difference in attitude among students who took their college courses in their high school with those who took the same classes on a college campus. Students who took college courses while still in high school learned to manage their time and adjust to the expectations of college. Future research might consider if students who participated in dual enrollment are able to transfer their credits to a four-year degree, continued with the same field of study in college, or are employed in a field related to their degree.

Keywords: college access, dual enrollment, early college, career pathways, underserved students