

Column: College Community Connection

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Dual Enrollment Opens Diverse Doors

By Dr. Al Roberts

At the end of the last school year, in addition to their high school diplomas, 741 graduating seniors received credentials from Southside Virginia Community College. Awards included 287 Associate Degrees, 300 Career Study Certificates, and 154 other Certificates documenting the completion of job readiness training. These achievements were made possible through collaborative dual enrollment partnerships with 14 public and private high schools across SVCC's service region.

Dual enrollment programs offer students an opportunity to get an early start on postsecondary education pursuits. For students in transfer associate degree programs or enrolled in courses designed to satisfy general education requirements at senior institutions, dual enrollment credits can shorten the time required to complete a bachelor's degree, resulting in tuition cost savings. For students with plans to enter the workforce in technical areas, dual enrollment offers a chance to receive training necessary to pursue more advanced opportunities, enter apprenticeships, and embark on career pathways with family-sustaining earnings.

Standards adopted by the Virginia State Board for Community Colleges safeguard the quality and rigor of college courses offered to high school students. These rules ensure that high school students meet the same academic challenges faced by on-campus college students and that the students be held accountable to the same criteria of achievement. In addition, instructors who teach college-level courses to high school students must hold the same qualifications as instructors who teach older college students.

Brent Richey, Chair of the Mecklenburg County School Board, says "The dual enrollment partnership between Mecklenburg County Schools and Southside Virginia Community College offers our students a wide range of higher education opportunities. Some students will complete a degree, certificate, or industry-recognized certificate that they can use to move immediately into the workforce, while others take their credits with them as they matriculate at a university. It also provides the rigor needed to give Mecklenburg County a talented and well-qualified workforce, which helps us attract new industries to our area."

Shanley Childress Dorin, a dual enrollment (DE) instructor at Kenston Forest School, says her work with college-bound students equips them for success. "As an instructor I try to prepare my students for college life. Students leave a DE class with college credits and a glimpse into meeting college deadlines, learning various teaching styles, and mastering time management."

The Commonwealth of Virginia first opened the door to dual enrollment opportunities in 1988. Since that time, course offerings have expanded to provide young adults with multiple pathways to achieve

wide-ranging academic goals. SVCC's most recent Annual Report highlights the diverse successes made possible through collaborative partnerships between the college and regional high schools. For more information about dual enrollment or to view the Annual Report, visit the college's website at <http://southside.edu/parallel-pathways-svcc-annual-report>

Dr. Al Roberts is president of Southside Virginia Community College, an institution of higher learning that provides a wide variety of education opportunities to a diverse student population within a service area that spans ten counties and the city of Emporia. He can be reached via email at al.roberts@southside.edu.