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Tennessee High School Counselors' and Dual Enrollment Advisors'  
Perceptions of Student Readiness for Dual Enrollment

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A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctorate of Education in Educational Leadership

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by

Aleeta Shaw

May 2019

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Keywords: Dual Enrollment, Concurrent Enrollment, College Completion, Advisement

## ABSTRACT

Tennessee High School Counselors' and Dual Enrollment Advisors'

Perceptions of Student Readiness for Dual Enrollment

by

Aleeta Shaw

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore Tennessee high school counselors' and dual enrollment advisors' perceptions of student readiness for dual enrollment within the context of school, institutional, state, and federal policies as aligned with adolescent development theories in order to inform both policy and practice. Twelve purposely sampled participants from three school districts within the First Tennessee Core Region responded to questions via a recorded phone interview. Participants reflected on the readiness of their students for dual enrollment in the academic, social, and emotional domains. Additionally, participants identified strengths and weaknesses of dual enrollment programs and the *Ready Graduate* initiative in Tennessee through the lenses of their school, post-secondary institutions, and their students and shared ideas for the improvement of programs and increasing student readiness.

## DEDICATION

For Mama and Daddy and their never-ending support.

For Unk, yes, I made a doctor.

For Cody and Mini, my loves.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Dual enrollment, sometimes called concurrent enrollment, is a program that allows high school students to take college courses while enrolled in high school. In most cases students can count the course credit as both high school and postsecondary credit (National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships, 2017a). Minnesota was one of the first states to have legislature that defined normal, public dual enrollment program with the *Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program*, approved by the state's legislature in 1985 to provide more rigorous learning opportunities to high school students (Minnesota Department of Education, n.d.; Minnesota State University, n.d.) Dual enrollment has become more common and with 1,413,500 high school students taking courses for college credit in the 2010-2011 school year (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2013), an increase of 42% since the 2002-2003 school year (NCES, 2005). Prior to state legislators clarifying the opportunity for high school students to enroll in courses in public colleges and universities most students participating in dual enrollment courses were allowed to take courses because of their exceptional academic skills. In 2004, the U.S. Department of Education collected comprehensive data on state policies signaling national recognition of the growth of dual enrollment (United States Department of Education [USDOE], 2005). In efforts to better prepare students for the college experience and to establish a qualified workforce, students who possess average to excellent academic aptitude and ability are encouraged to enroll in college courses while still in high school. Research about dual enrollment relates to the academic readiness of students for college, their subsequent academic achievement, and their postsecondary completion (Allen & Dadgar, 2012; An, 2015; Crouse & Allen, 2014; Ganzert, 2014; Kanny, 2015; Swanson, 2008).

Less attention has been given to the social and emotional readiness of dual enrollment students (Gronlund, 2017). Many states, including Tennessee, have created early postsecondary opportunities with different eligibility requirements for students—high schools and colleges retain the right to set additional eligibility requirements as long as the legislation is honored (Tennessee Department of Education [TDOE], n.d.c). Success has been defined in terms of subsequent postsecondary enrollment and number of credits earned (TDOE, 2017a). The Tennessee Department of Education (2017b) published recommendations for “building a postsecondary-going culture” with increased focus toward academic achievement and postsecondary enrollment and completion (p.1).

Tennessee has policies to establish a framework for college readiness and postsecondary enrollment. Despite the increase in states using dual enrollment expansion for postsecondary attainment goals, current high school students may be less college ready for dual enrollment than those who have participated in previous decades and will need extra support (Lichtenberger, Witt, Blankenberger, & Franklin, 2014; Pretlow & Wathington, 2013). Savitz-Romer and Bouffard (2012) proposed moving toward a model of postsecondary readiness counseling and advisement that is more inclusive of the whole student, taking developmental factors and life circumstances into account, rather than using a more trait-based approach to identifying eligible and ready students. Strengthening student readiness for college includes far more than just academic readiness because “development is a continuous process, and practitioners who work at all points in the college pipeline therefore need to have an understanding of how their work is connected to other points along the pipeline” (p. 13).

### Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions that high school counselors and other dual enrollment advisors in Tennessee have about dual enrollment programs and the students who enroll in them. Studies of dual enrollment programs have focused on the positive correlation between dual enrollment participation with college GPA and college persistence (An, 2015). Despite academic gains that are made by taking dual enrollment courses while still enrolled in high school, there may be other benefits or detriments yet to be explored. According to Karp (2012) and Kanny (2015), dual enrollment has many potential outcomes, both positive and negative. Students enrolled in high school classes have the benefit of oversight by school counselors, advisors, faculty, and parents. However, when a student turns 18 years old, or enters a postsecondary institution at any age, the rights under Family Educational and Privacy Rights Act (FERPA) transfer from the parents to the student. While FERPA was created to protect the privacy of students, the protected information makes it difficult for high school personnel or parents to offer support to dual enrollment students because of a lack of information about grades, attendance, participation, and behavior (Dorsey & Myers, 2016). Karp (2015) stated that the divide between high schools and institutions of higher learning must be narrowed if states and the nation hope to meet their college completion goals. One aspect of narrowing this divide can be better communication and relationships among high school and college staff. A second aspect is ensuring that students are supported as they bridge the gap while being simultaneously enrolled in both types of institutions. Finding ways to better support dual enrollment students tailored to individual needs and inclusive of non-academic skills may be the best way to encourage overall success (Howley, Howley, Howley, & Duncan, 2013; Jordan, Cavalluzzo, & Corallo, 2006; Karp, 2015; Savitz-Romer & Bouffard, 2012).

### Significance of the Study

With increased opportunities for a wide variety of students to dually enroll (Karp, Hughes & Cormier, 2012; Hughes, Rodriguez, Edwards & Belfield, 2012), students need appropriate support to be successful which will, in turn, build smoother pathways for student transition (Taylor & Pretlow, 2015). Savitz-Romer and Bouffard (2012) found that the best supports for creating a college-going identity and keeping students enrolled in postsecondary education must encompass not only academics, but also take the whole student into account, including social and emotional factors and adolescent development. Conducting interviews with high school counselors who work with dual enrollment students can provide a deeper understanding of the breadth of the dual enrollment experience, range of students participating in dual enrollment, and the needs of dual enrollment students. These interviews help shape recommendations for improved student support structures to plug the leaks in the college pipeline for dual enrollment students (Karp, 2013; Savitz-Romer, Bouffard, & Killian, 2014). Findings from this study will make “contributions to practice [and] policy” as described by McMillan and Schumacher (2010, p. 325).

### Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as used for the purposes of this study:

1. *ACT*- A college admissions exam created by ACT, Inc. that is widely used in the United States (ACT, Inc., n.d.)
2. *Advanced Placement*- Advanced high school courses that include a nationally standardized assessment from the College Board. Colleges and universities may use these scores to make college placement decisions or to grant college credit (College Board, n.d.).

3. *Bridge Programs*- Programs designed for graduating high school seniors or rising college freshmen to earn college credits. These programs are usually held in the summer preceding college enrollment (Nelson, 2017).
4. *Concurrent Enrollment*- Sometimes used synonymously with the term dual enrollment, but may also indicate college courses that are taught in high schools by college approved high school teachers (National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships [NACEP], 2017b).
5. *Dual Credit*- The term dual credit is sometimes used synonymously with the term dual enrollment but may indicate that college credit was granted based on exam results (NACEP, 2017a).
6. *Dual Enrollment*- Programs that allow high school students to enroll in college courses to earn college credit (NACEP, 2017a).
7. *Early College*- High schools, or a program within a high school, that combines both high school and college courses in a rigorous, yet supportive, environment (Vargas, 2017).
8. *Early Postsecondary Opportunities (EPSOs)*-These programs include a wide array of options for earning college credit while in high school including dual enrollment, concurrent enrollment, dual credit, statewide dual credit, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, College Level Examination Program, industry certification, and the Cambridge International Examination (TDOE, 2017c).
9. *International Baccalaureate*- Advanced high school courses that include a nationally standardized assessment from the International Baccalaureate (International Baccalaureate, n.d.).

10. *SAT*- a college admissions exam created by The College Board and widely used in the United States (College Board, 2018).

*Statewide Dual Credit*- College level courses taught in high schools by high school faculty where students earn state level college credit by obtaining a specific score on a challenge exam (TDOE, n.d.d).

### Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations are the potential weak areas of the research design; delimitations refer to the limits of the scope and boundaries of the study (Patton, 2002). This study was limited by the assumption that high school counselors in Tennessee are the primary advisors to dual enrollment students in the state although some other school personnel were included to broaden the knowledge base for analysis. Participants for the study were solicited from high schools in three Tennessee school districts making the study more limited. Additionally, the sample group was limited to only include those who responded to the solicitation email.

This study was delimited to high school counselors and other school personnel in Tennessee who have experience in advising dual enrollment students and were purposefully selected based on that experience. Interview responses were delimited to self-reported information gathered from a relatively small sample size and may not represent the breadth of Tennessee high school counselors' and dual enrollment advisors' experiences.

### Chapter Summary

Rapidly increasing opportunities and funding for dual enrollment within Tennessee and across the nation have simultaneously increased the number of students able to enroll in college courses while still in high school. With the increase in opportunity, it is likely a more diverse student population will enroll in dual enrollment courses requiring expanded approaches to the

advisement process. Increasing the early postsecondary opportunities for high school students, including dual enrollment, will improve college completion rates (Karp, 2013). Finding ways to support students in their readiness for dual enrollment can only enhance Tennessee's college completion goals.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Introduction

A preponderance of the literature on dual enrollment focuses on the impact that dual enrollment has on college academic achievement. As dual enrollment becomes more popular and prevalent, it is important to consider the tangible and intangible benefits and costs of dual enrollment. Dual enrollment has become available to a broader range of students encouraged by state policies providing some financial compensation and discounted tuition prices for dual enrollment (TDOE, n.d.b). Not only must students consider impacts on their lives and educations that may not be financial, it is important to gather information so that people in positions to aid and advise potential dual enrollment students can help them to make a fully informed decision and be ready for the challenge of taking college courses as a high school student. As policies regarding dual enrollment and new technology evolve and as more longitudinal, quantitative studies are undertaken, we must keep the whole student in mind which may be better discovered through qualitative research (Taylor & Pretlow, 2015).

#### Dual Enrollment in the United States

##### *Historical Foundations*

The national push toward dual enrollment and increased postsecondary education opportunities can be traced back to the Soviet Union's launch of the Sputnik satellite in 1957, which began an era of fear that education in the United States was falling behind that of other countries. Soon afterward in 1966, the Coleman Report pointed out serious inequities in school systems across the nation (Holloway-Libell, Amrein-Beardsley, & Collins, 2012). The Coleman Report, formally known as the Equality of Educational Opportunity Report, was commissioned

by the United States Office of Education in response to Section 402 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 where the government called for a study to be conducted of the equality of educational opportunities in the United States. The federal government expected Coleman to find issues of segregation and unequal funding for black students. However, Coleman took his commission much further than many expected, surveying about 600,000 students about their schooling and finding that unequal funding was less of an issue than expected. The pivotal findings of the report highlighted the importance of a student's family's educational background, the impact on student achievement made by other high achieving students, and the significant achievement gap between black and white students. Coleman asserted that the inequities in education had more to do with student poverty than regional resources. Since its presentation in 1966, many efforts have been made to close the gaps found by Coleman. A recent follow-up report in 2016 by Stephen Morgan called *The Coleman Report at 50: Its Legacy and Enduring Value* stated that despite the many educational innovations made in the last five decades, many of the gaps found in the mid-sixties still exist today (Dickinson, 2016).

With the first sentence "our nation is at risk," *A Nation at Risk*, commissioned by Secretary of Education Terrell Bell in 1983, ushered in a new era of fear about American students falling behind those in other countries and new educational reforms (Graham, 2015).

Our society and its educational institutions seem to have lost sight of the basic purposes of schooling, and of the high expectations and disciplined effort needed to attain them. This report, the result of 18 months of study, seeks to generate reform of our educational system in fundamental ways and to renew the Nation's commitment to schools and colleges of high quality throughout the length and breadth of our land (USDOE, n.d., p.1).

In 1989, President George H. W. Bush convened an education summit of the nation's governors. The goal of the summit was to create a national set of education goals that would be bi-partisan and embraced by all of the states. The goals included making sure that every child started to school ready to learn, increasing the high school graduation rate to 90%, and ensuring that American students leave grades 4, 8, and 12 demonstrating competency over challenging subject matter. Additionally, the goals included ensuring that all teachers had access to professional development, that U. S. students would be first in the nation in science and mathematics, that every adult American would be literate, that every school in the United States would be free of drugs, violence, and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol, and that parental involvement would be promoted. Remaining virtually unchanged, the *National Education Goals* became the *GOALS 2000: Educate America Act* signed into law by President Bill Clinton on March 31, 1994. Despite Section 318 of the *Act* which explicitly stated that no state or local education agency could be mandated to follow the goals or to spend money to attain them, the *Act* underpinned the findings of *A Nation at Risk* (Austin, n. d., p. 1).

In 1990, amid concerns that the weak American educational system was putting our nation at risk, Admiral James Watkins, U.S. Secretary of Energy, commissioned Sandia Laboratories to enhance *A Nation at Risk* with data to clarify where efforts should be made to strengthen the educational programs of the department. However, researchers found that the analysis of data conflicted with the numbers asserted by *A Nation at Risk*. For example, the authors of *A Nation at Risk* cited declining Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores from 1963 to 1980 as a primary cause of concern. Using scores between 1970 and 1990 broken down by subgroup, researchers at Sandia Laboratories discovered that scores had stayed the same or slightly improved. *The Sandia Report* confirmed that the United States was making progress

toward the goal of providing access to educational opportunities to a wider population (Ansary, 2007). Information from *The Sandia Report* was never made widely available and the reasons stated range from “the government never released” the report (Ansary, 2007, p. 4) to the report was “censored” because the results did not support the political agenda of George H.W. Bush and the recently formed *National Education Goals* (Austin, 2015, p. 2)

Former National Education Association (NEA) President Dennis Van Roekel asserted that *A Nation at Risk* moved American education to the top of the policy agenda spurring national reforms like the *No Child Left Behind Act* (Graham, 2015). In March 2001, Representative John Boehner (R-OH) first sponsored the legislation to amend the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* into the *No Child Left Behind Act* that was signed into law the following year by President George W. Bush. Highlighted in the act were educational reforms to establish yearly assessment of student achievement, implementation of state standards and requirements for adequate yearly progress (AYP), identification of schools needing improvement, new schoolwide programs with specific eligibility requirements, and increasing qualifications for teachers (Boehner, 2002).

In 2009, President Barack Obama signed the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* into law which authorized \$4.35 billion for the Race to The Top fund. Race to The Top offered competitive federal grants to states to reform education with the goals of, achieving significant improvement in student outcomes, including making substantial gains in student achievement, closing achievement gaps, improving high school graduation rates, and ensuring student preparation for success in college and careers; and implementing ambitious plans in four core education reform areas (USDOE, 2009, p. 1).

## *Growth*

In 2013, on behalf of the NCES, Thomas, Marken, Gray, and Lewis reported that between 2002 and 2011 dual enrollment in the United States had more than doubled with an excess of two million students participating annually. The NACP (2017a) cited the growth rate of dual enrollment programs as 7% annually between 2003 and 2010. Growth rates were even higher at 12% among racial minorities, 12% among rural schools, and 9% in the Northeast and Southeast. At that time, about 10% of high school juniors and seniors completed dual enrollment courses, and in 2011, about 82% of public high schools had students enrolled in dual enrollment courses. Since that time, the number of high schools participating in dual or concurrent enrollment has increased from 15,000 to 18,000. The National Center for Educational Statistics (2019) updated that number to 34% of high school students who entered ninth grade in 2009 took dual enrollment courses.

Support for dual enrollment continues to grow in the United States. In December 2015, ACT Inc. released four recommendations for informing policy and increasing dual enrollment nationwide: increasing funding and other incentives for students, increasing funding for training high school teachers to become dual enrollment instructors, preparing students for the challenge of early college work and improving progress monitoring, and providing access with more online options. Then in mid-May of 2016, President Obama invoked use of Section 487A(b) of the *Higher Education Act* which allowed experimental access of federal Pell grant funds by high school students at 44 participating two-year colleges (USDOE, 2016a). The *Go to High School, Go to College Act* of 2017 was sponsored by Senator Rob Portman on April 5, 2017, and is being considered by the Committee on

Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (S.840, 2017). The act was still being reviewed in committee at the time of this writing.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that between 2014 and 2024, 94.6 % of all new jobs created in the United States will be in the service industries—primarily healthcare and social services. The majority of these jobs will require a college degree. Simultaneously, the number of people able to perform these jobs will decrease because the greatest percentage of the population during those years will be those of retirement age. Since 1994, the average age of the American worker has risen by about five years (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015).

Following the release of the report by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the U.S. Department of Education published the 2016 *College Completion Toolkit: Promising Practices for Improving Student Degree Attainment* in an effort to encourage institutions of higher learning to share best practices for improving the college completion rate, which currently stands at approximately 60% for a four-year degree and about 33% for a two-year degree. Among the best practices found to have been most successful were specialized first-year courses, living/learning communities, and bridge programs. Bridge programs are summer or early college programs that allow students to earn credit for introductory college courses with the additional support of specialized advisors or program supports. Rutgers and the University of Illinois-Chicago are cited as exemplary programs. Research at the University of Illinois-Chicago found participation in their summer bridge program resulted in increased four-year and six-year graduation rates, as well as more credits earned by first-year students and higher GPAs (USDOE, 2016a).

Evidence continues to show growth in dual enrollment or concurrent enrollment programs (USDOE, 2016b; NACP, 2017a). However, a study of programs in Texas found that inequitable access to dual enrollment programs still exists. Students who were white, not

economically disadvantaged, and enrolled in gifted and talented programs were significantly more likely to enroll in concurrent enrollment programs than their African-American, Hispanic, and low-income counterparts. Inequities in the preparation of faculty teaching concurrent enrollment programs and wide variance in the advisement of concurrent enrollment students was found. Schools' locations were also found to impact the access of concurrent enrollment (Miller et al., 2017). A study in Oregon supported the findings of the Texas study citing lower dual enrollment participation rates among students eligible for free/reduced lunch and minority subgroups within that low-income group. School location also had an impact on dual enrollment rates. The majority of students participating in dual enrollment in Oregon were found to be white, higher achieving, non-low-income females (Pierson, Hodara, & Luke, 2017).

As of February 2019, the NCES continues to show inequities among subgroups taking dual enrollment courses: 38% of students taking dual enrollment courses identified as white, 38% Asian, 30% Hispanic, and 27% African American. Parents' educational levels also impact the rate at which students take dual enrollment courses with 42% of students whose parents have earned a bachelor's degree or higher as compared to 26% of students whose parents have less than a high school diploma. Findings also showed that where students live and take dual enrollment courses had an impact on their dual enrollment participation. Eighty percent of all dual enrollment students took courses on their high school campus. Only students who lived in cities reported slightly higher levels of taking courses on college campuses. Rural students reported slightly higher levels of taking courses online.

## Dual Enrollment in Tennessee

### *Historical Foundations*

Early in 1983, Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander began promoting what he called the *Better Schools Program*—a ten-point program to reform Tennessee’s schools. Several of the program’s points directly addressed improvement in both secondary and postsecondary education including learning computer skills before the 9th grade, doubling the high school science and math requirements, creating summer programs for academically gifted students, and restructuring vocational education to better align with job opportunities. Responses to the governor’s plan were mixed, and only changes to vocational education were approved at the next meeting of the Tennessee General Assembly. Governor Alexander convened an Extraordinary Session of the General Assembly resulting in the *Comprehensive Education Reform Act of 1984* and the *Education Governance Act*. Several requirements of these acts had a direct impact on the increased expectations for secondary school students.

- A 20% decrease in the percentage of high school students who enter high school but do not graduate from high school.
- An improvement in performance shown by a 10% decrease in the number of students failing the statewide proficiency test in each subject at the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade levels.
- A relative increase in test scores of students who take the SAT or ACT tests, such increases expected to enable Tennessee students to rank higher than the national average in each and every subject area or category.
- An increase in the percentage of students who enter four-year university degree programs and who subsequently earn baccalaureate degrees.

- An increase in the scores of public university entry-level students on the composite tests of ACT and SAT.
- An improvement in standardized examination scores of graduating seniors at public universities (Saunders, 1984).

At about the same time the *National Goals for Education* were created, 77 small rural school districts in Tennessee organized into *Tennessee Small School Systems* and filed suit against the state and Governor Ned McWherter to protest the inequity of funding and resources available to schools. On August 6, 1991, *Tennessee Small School Systems* won their case as Davidson County Chancellor C. Allen High explained that students in rural school[s] did not have equal access to science labs, computers, current and new textbooks, adequate buildings, foreign language courses, state-mandated art and music classes, and other extracurricular activities. The state lost upon appeal to the Tennessee Supreme Court, but had been crafting the *Educational Improvement Act of 1992* which created the new Basic Education Program (BEP) funding formula (Hurder, 2018). Sanders and Horn (1998) stated that these lawsuits were the impetus for Governor Ned McWherter signing the *Education Improvement Act* into law in Tennessee in 1992. The act included a mandate to increase educational funding by increasing the state sales tax rate from 5.5 % to 6% (Roerich-Patrick, Mount, More, Brown, & Gibson, 2016).

In Comptroller Morgan's *The Education Improvement Act: A Progress Report* (2004) some of the positive outcomes of the act since 1992 included a 1% attendance rate increase in grades 7-12 while attendance in grades K-6 stayed relatively steady at about 94.75%. Funding for education in the state increased by 72%. Improvements in academics in the state included positive trends on *The Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Achievement Test* in math, science and English, but not in reading. The analysis showed higher gains in earlier grades with declines

as grade level rose. The percentage of students who took the ACT rose between 1994 and 2003 from 67% in 1994 to a high of 83% in 1997, but composite scores remained about the same and below the national average. Graduation rates were difficult to determine due to variations in computation strategies but cited a graduation rate of about 60% in 2001 and 76% in 2003. Takers of the ACT who completed core coursework rose by 16%, and fewer college entrants required remediation courses, a drop from 55.7% to 50.2%. The college-going rate of students improved by 16% between 1988 and 2000. The college completion rates at four-year institutions increased by about 3% to 49% but declined at two-year institutions by about 2% to 23.98%.

As previously discussed, on March 29, 2010, the U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, announced that Tennessee was the first of two states to win *Race to The Top* funding, a federal grant of \$500 million. Four mandatory components were required in order to receive funding, one being “adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace” (USDOE, 2010, p. 1). The Tennessee application included several goals that directly related to improving college-going rates such as improving high school graduation rates, increasing college enrollment, increasing the number of students who earn a year of college credit leading to a degree within the first two years of enrollment, revision of university admission requirements, and corresponding high school graduation requirements (begun as part of the *Tennessee Diploma Project*). Additionally, Tennessee lawmakers committed to continuing to work toward the recommendations of the 2010 *Complete College America* report requested by Governor Bredesen and Tennessee legislators. The recommendations included providing higher education funding based on success and student outcomes, focusing more attention on the community college system, creating a statewide transfer policy, and requiring both public college and university systems (Tennessee Board of

Regents and the University of Tennessee system) to establish policies for both dual-enrollment and dual-admission at all two-year and four-year institutions (Office of the Governor of the State of Tennessee, 2010). The ideas presented in the application became Tennessee law with the passage of the *Complete College Tennessee Act* of 2010 (TDOE, 2010).

In 2012, a group of education and business stakeholders—both public and private—commissioned Melinda Karp of the Community College Research Center and Columbia University’s Teachers College, to study dual enrollment in Tennessee and peer states and to make policy recommendations in order to further the progress of the *Complete College Tennessee Act*. Underpinning both the act and the commission of the study was the belief that “educational reform [must] increasingly focus...not on access to college, but on college completion” (Karp, Hughes, & Cormier, 2012, p. 4). The study found that successful dual enrollment programs in peer states had four factors in common—state support, state funding, inclusion of a wide range of students in the programs, and increased structure of programs within the states.

Governor Bill Haslam signed Public Chapter 967 into law on May 10, 2012, requiring the creation of a consortium including the chancellor of the board of regents, the president of the University of Tennessee system, the executive director of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, the executive director of the State Board of Education, and the Commissioner of Education. The duties of the consortium included developing and implementing early postsecondary credit opportunities, aligning secondary and postsecondary courses, informing students about the available opportunities, and providing oversight of the early postsecondary programs. The consortium was encouraged to create a committee to keep them apprised of workforce needs. Additionally, the law created an Office of Postsecondary Coordination and

Alignment to be housed within the Division of Career and Technical Education (Public Chapter 967, 2013).

In phase two of the commissioned report regarding dual enrollment in Tennessee, Karp (2013) stated, “College completion is a pipeline issue [and that] dual enrollment is a research-based, pre-existing pipeline strategy with broad stakeholder support” (p. 2). Four policy recommendations emerged from Karp’s study. First, dual enrollment programs should be guided by clear state-level policy and leadership to improve quality and consistency among programs. Second, programs should be inclusive of all students and not focus solely on those who were already likely to be successful. Third, dual enrollment programs should work in tandem with other education initiatives within the state. Finally, Karp recommended that dual enrollment and all associated fees and costs of the program be completely free to improve access for all students who would then be more likely to complete a degree program.

### *Growth*

In 2010, following the implementation of the *Complete College Tennessee Act*, Tennessee began funding the Dual Enrollment Grant using funds drawn from the HOPE Lottery fund, authorized in the Tennessee Code Annotated § 49-4-930. Though the grant did not cover the full amount of dual enrollment costs (Karp, 2013), participation in dual enrollment began to rise steadily over the next six years showing an increase of 57% as shown in Table 1 (House, 2017).

Table 1.

*Dual Enrollment Participation as Indicated by Dual Enrollment Grant Application and Award*

Academic Year	N Participants	Program Cost
2011-12	16,995	\$8.7M
2012-13	17,759	\$9.8M
2013-14	20,594	\$11.8M
2014-15	21,745	\$12.6M
2015-16	24,671	\$15.9M
2016-17	26,659	\$19.3M

Note: Reprinted from House, E. Dual enrollment: Program structure, take up, and early outcomes from Dual enrollment: Program structure, take up, and early outcomes, by Emily House, for the *Annual THEC/SBE Joint Meeting*. Retrieved February 24, 2018, from [https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/stateboardofeducation/documents/meetingfiles/July\\_2017\\_Dual\\_Enrollment.pdf](https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/stateboardofeducation/documents/meetingfiles/July_2017_Dual_Enrollment.pdf). Copyright 2017 by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission.

In 2015, 41% of Tennessee’s high school graduates participated in at least one early postsecondary opportunity. Nineteen percent of those students took at least one dual enrollment course (TDOE, 2017c). The average ACT score of Tennessee’s 2017 graduates was 19.8 (ACT, 2017). Tennessee will fully transition into the requirements of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* during the 2018-2019 school year, and early postsecondary opportunities are a key feature of the new plan with high schools being awarded a grade for students who are considered *Ready Graduates*. Students are considered a *Ready Graduate* if they have a score of 21 or above on the ACT, or complete four early postsecondary opportunities, or complete two early postsecondary opportunities and an industry certification, or complete two early postsecondary opportunities and achieve a designated score on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery. The only *Ready Graduate* indicator to be used in the 2017-2018 school year is ACT score (TDOE, 2018),

and 35.8% of Tennessee high school graduates met the Ready Graduate indicator (TDOE, 2019b).

In 2013, Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam announced his *Drive to 55* initiative with the goal of increasing earned postsecondary degrees or certificates in Tennessee to 55% by the year 2025 in order to keep up with the increasing demands of the workforce in the state. Currently, only 38% of adults in Tennessee have a postsecondary degree or certificate. For every 100 ninth grade students in Tennessee, only 28 of those students graduate from college (TDOE, 2017a).

On February 5, 2019, newly inaugurated Tennessee Governor Bill Lee announced his first legislative initiative as governor, the Governor’s Investment in Vocational Education (GIVE). The GIVE initiative will use excess lottery funding to create the GIVE Community Grant and the GIVE Student Grant. The GIVE Community Grant will fund regional partnerships to help grow apprenticeship and work-based learning opportunities. The GIVE Student Grant will go to juniors and seniors in high school to fully fund four dual enrollment courses in a trade or technical program (TDOE, 2019b).

#### Effect of Dual Enrollment on Postsecondary Achievement

Using information from the NCES, the National Education Longitudinal Survey of 1988 and 2000, and the Postsecondary Education Transcript Study of 2000, Swanson (2008) found several positive academic outcomes for students who were dually enrolled. First, students were more likely to persist into subsequent years of college and to complete a degree. Second, students were more likely to complete a degree in less than the average amount of time. Swanson attributed these outcomes to a phenomenon called academic momentum—students entering college or completing their first year of college with at least 20 credits were more likely to stay enrolled and graduate.

Speroni (2012) conducted a study using the dual enrollment system in Florida to learn more about the impact dual enrollment has on academic outcomes. Florida was chosen because the state mandates a minimum GPA to participate, as well as requiring a college placement test to enroll in specific courses. Speroni's findings were reinforced by other studies (e.g., Allen & Dadgar, 2012; Karp et al., 2012) that showed dual enrollment can increase college success, but also that specific dual enrollment courses such as college algebra make the most significant difference. Khazem and Khazem (2014) found that participation in dual enrollment programs in Florida increased the likelihood that students would continue their postsecondary education at a Florida institution.

Crouse and Allen (2014) found that dual enrollment students typically outperformed traditional enrollment students when considering college GPA. However, this difference was less significant when dual enrollment students' and traditional enrollment students' high school GPA and ACT scores were considered showing that the students' performance was similar. Student motivation and commitment were not considered in this particular study, but may have bearing on future study. The most significant finding was that dual enrollment students enrolled in four-year institutions at a higher rate than their peers (Crouse & Allen, 2014).

Berger, Turk-Bicakci, Garet, Knudson, and Hoshen (2014) conducted a study on early colleges created following the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Early College High School Initiative. They found that 81% of the early college students subsequently enrolled in college as opposed to 72% in their comparison group, and that 25% of the early college students completed a college degree (two-year or four-year) as opposed to only 5% in the comparison group. One finding revealed that early college students were more likely to enroll

in two-year colleges; there was no difference in enrollment rates for four-year institutions between the sample and the comparison group.

Cowan and Goldhaber (2015) conducted a study of a Washington-based dual enrollment program called *Running Start* and discovered that participants of the program were more likely to enroll in college or to complete a two-year degree within one year after high school graduation. Additionally, they posited that the lowest performing students gained the most from the intervention of the *Running Start* program.

While definitions for college readiness traditionally include high school academic standing and test scores, Grubb, Scott, and Good (2017) included the lack of need for remediation upon entering college as an important factor. Their study of community college students concluded that taking dual enrollment courses while in high school reduces the need for college remediation by 9%. Reducing the need for remediation increases the likelihood of graduating within three years from a community college by 28%.

#### Model Dual Enrollment, Concurrent Enrollment, and Early College Programs

##### *Concurrent Courses Initiative*

Between 2008 and 2011, *The James Irvine Foundation* invested \$4.75 million in the *Concurrent Courses Initiative* to develop eight concurrent or dual enrollment programs in California schools with a career focus and to enhance already existing programs in those schools. Participating in relevant learning is more likely to lead to success and completion (Hughes, Rodriguez, Edwards, & Belfield, 2012).

Underpinning the development of the programs was the idea that “career-technical students who participated in dual enrollment showed higher rates of college enrollment, higher grade point averages, and greater credit accumulation than did similar career-technical

students who did not take dual enrollment courses” (Hughes et al., 2012, p. 9). Goals of the program were to improve rates of high school completion, to smooth high school to college transitions, to increase college-going and completion rates, and to influence policy and practice within the state. Findings from the *Concurrent Course Initiatives* reinforced that following a specific career/technical path in dual enrollment can increase persistence in college completion—medical majors and careers showed the highest level of persistence.

In development of the programs, the creators placed a major focus on developing collaborative practices between the high schools and colleges so that appropriate programs and support would be offered. In addition to academic supports, students were assisted in clarifying their college goals, developing a commitment to college going, and developing know how on how to go to college. Sixty percent of students participated in the non-academic activities while about 42% participated in some type of academic support. Hughes et al. (2012) found that the *Concurrent Courses Initiative* left both high schools and colleges better prepared to serve a wide variety of students, and recommended that future programs create specific college offices and staff to assist dual enrollment students, establish student consent to share records between the institutions, and to offer college orientation and success courses.

#### *IUPUI-Special Programs for Academic Nurturing*

In 1984, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis Special Programs for Academic Nurturing (IUIPUI-SPAN) began offering college courses to gifted and talented students. Kronholz (2018) explained that the impetus for creating the program and other programs like it can be traced all the way back to laws that required students to stay in school and out of the workforce creating a group of high achieving and under challenged high school students. Numbers of top performing students have become even larger and less targeted

since the American students began falling behind previous years on the National Assessment of Educational Progress in math and science. The SPAN program was created to give these students more academic challenge. Most of the students taking courses through SPAN are high school seniors, but students as young as nine have been admitted and completed coursework. Dr. Johnny Russell, executive director of SPAN in 2011 said, “The upper 2 percent, they’re falling by the wayside...they’re bored...and dread school” (p.29). Students in the program were pleased to be doing “productive” work, but they were also frustrated that not all of the perks of being a college student, like joining clubs or winning awards, were not extended to them. In general, students welcomed the opportunity for the advanced work, but they ended up feeling somewhat isolated on campus.

#### *Early College Expansion Partnership*

In 2012, the Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District, the Brownsville Independent School District, and Denver Public Schools received an Investing in Innovation Fund (i3) grant from the U.S. Department of Education with the support of Jobs for the Future and Educate Texas to create and expand early college programs throughout the high schools in the three districts. A unifying factor of the districts was the high numbers of low-income, Latino and English Language Learners served (Webb & Gerwin, 2014). Hooker (2017) stated that the primary goal of the partnership was to provide “early college for all” (p. 3) and that success of the programs hinged on “leaders from both sides of the secondary-postsecondary divide who are willing to disrupt business as usual and rethink the boundaries between high school and college” (p. 2). The Early College Expansion Program found that leadership alignment and systems were the greatest challenge to the success of the program, but also yielded much information for replicability of future programs. Student outcomes included

30,000 students participating in the early college model giving them an introduction to college norms and culture. Ninety percent of the students received some college credit, and 10% more students than usual successfully completed college preparatory courses and graduated. Some of the strategies credited with boosting these outcomes included social, emotional, and academic programming and support, college advisement, instruction on successful behaviors in college students, and structures that supported personalized advisement and relationships (Murphy, 2017).

#### Dual Enrollment and Non-Academic College Readiness

An (2015) found “a positive direct effect of dual enrollment on first-year college GPA, which remains even after controlling for precollege variables” (p. 98). Two precollege variables that are likely to influence the decision to go to college and perseverance once there are socioeconomic status and parental involvement. An (2015) also discovered that participation in dual enrollment increased student engagement and motivation.

A study conducted within the South Carolina Community College system found that dual enrollment alone may not have the desired impact on “enhanc[ing] local workforce quality” (D’Amico, Morgan, Robertson, & Rivers, 2013, p. 777). However, the study did find that students enrolled in career programs, rather than transfer courses, were more likely to persist in the program. Additionally, they found that students who attended classes on campus were more likely to persist in their college education. The authors theorized that these students became more integrated in the college community, showing support of An’s (2015) findings of improved student engagement and motivation.

In a three-part blog series entitled, “Dual Enrollment: The Good, the Bad, and the Potentially Ugly,” Payne (2016) noted three major concerns regarding the system of dual

enrollment—discrepancies between opportunities for students who are members of marginalized groups, a lack of support services for dual enrollment students by both the high school and the post-secondary institution and discrepancies in course quality of dual enrollment opportunities.

Kanny (2015) conducted a small qualitative study with five dual enrollment students from a Los Angeles high school and found corroboration of An's (2015) and Karp's (2012) assertions that dual enrollment can help students learn to be better college students. Concurrently, students had "issues in credit and grades," "negative interactions with others," and "limited support systems" (pp. 64-66). Additionally, Kanny (2015) found that although most students considered "independence and freedom" (p. 63) as beneficial in their experience, that it was also associated with negative experiences particularly concerning their study habits, grades, and class attendance.

Howley et al. (2013) studied the challenges of dual enrollment and ways that the experience can be improved for all stakeholders. Their findings encourage the strengthening of relationships between secondary and postsecondary leadership including communication and alignment of resources. Most importantly, they found that ensuring face-to-face relationships between educators and students improves dual enrollment outcomes.

Drawing on his experiences as both a high school and college instructor, Zimmermann (2012) expressed concern about high school students taking college courses. One area of concern was the time high school students realistically have in their schedules to devote to college courses. High school schedules may require students to take more classes than some college schedules and to be involved in more extracurricular activities. Zimmermann was not as concerned about students' time management skills as with the idea that students who are

dually enrolled may not have the time to devote to college courses. Zimmermann also expressed concern that high school students have not developed the resiliency and sense of responsibility that often come with age. A number of additional research studies (Ferguson, Baker, & Burnett, 2015; Camp & Walters, 2016; Thelin & Taczak, 2013) have similar results finding that dual enrollment students may not have the maturity or life experience to be open to the kind of critical and analytic learning necessary for college success.

Savitz-Romer and Bouffard (2012) found that self-regulation and self-efficacy are the two most important skills leading to college success. Cohen (2012) drew on the work of Zimmermann and Bandura in defining self-regulation as a process that begins with an awareness of one's thoughts and feelings about a task, then moves to performance of the task, and finishes with self-reflection on the completed task. Students who can visualize themselves as performing and completing a task are more successful at those tasks. Additionally, students who have life experience relevant to college-going are more likely to visualize themselves succeeding. One finding from Cohen's (2012) work is that strong students typically have a higher level of accuracy in judgment about their own ability to self-regulate than students with lower academic ability. A part of self-efficacy is also concerned with managing one's emotions. Gronlund (2017) explained that the common themes of handling fears and managing anxiety emerged during a study of dual enrollment students in Vermont. Savitz-Romer and Bouffard (2012) found this lack of self-awareness to be one of the major barriers to college success but believe that with appropriate intervention, students can learn to be better self-regulators.

Also, based on Bandura's work, self-efficacy can be "defined as a student's belief that he or she can successfully achieve a goal" (Mattis, 2008, p. 32). Self-efficacy is concerned

with four primary factors: “mastery of experience, vicarious learning, social persuasion, and affective (emotional) state” (Savitz-Romer & Bouffard, 2012, p. 95). Determining whether dual enrollment improves self-efficacy or if self-efficacy already exists in students who choose to dually enroll is still, to some degree, an unanswered question. Gronlund (2017) found that dual enrollment builds confidence in students’ beliefs that they can be successful in college. In contrast, Ozmun (2013) found that student grades in dual enrollment courses did not correspond with their self-reported self-efficacy levels.

#### Adolescent Development and College Going Identity

Presumably, because dual enrollment students enter college at an earlier age than traditional college-going students, they may also be entering college at an earlier stage of adolescence and identity development. Savitz-Romer, Bouffard, and Killian (2014) stated that creating college-ready students includes much more than just preparing students academically for college ready work or advising them on program availability and access. Students must be supported in creating an identity in which they believe that college success and graduation are possible for them.

Arnett (2006) and Cote (2006) described the time between ages 18 and 25 in the United States in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as emerging adulthood which also encompasses the traditional ages of college entry and completion. Arnett identified five factors of this life stage: identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between, and the age of possibility. The greatest developmental variances are considered to happen during this time. Shifts like going away to college, getting a full-time job, or moving out of the parents’ home often characterize this phase, and it is considered one of the flexible developmental phases where a more individual self-identity begins to form. Persons in the stage of emerging

adulthood in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are also considered to be far more diverse than in any group previously studied. Students do not progress through any developmental stage at the same rate, so development should be viewed as being along a continuum.

Savitz-Romer and Bouffard (2012) emphasized that creating developmentally-appropriate support structures can support students who have already begun a college-going identity formation as well as others who are in earlier stages of development. Students with a less evolved or less stable identity may need the most support in order to create the self-efficacy needed to develop a college-going identity. School personnel may be focusing time and attention on students who have a stronger college-going identity formation because of earlier positive school experiences when it is really the students who struggle with academic achievement, social interactions, and setting future goals that could be best served by being supported in dual enrollment.

Extending the work of Erik Erikson, Marcia (1966) defined four adolescent identity statuses: identity diffusion, identity foreclosure, identity moratorium, and identity achievement. Adolescents in identity diffusion do not feel that they have a choice and are not willing to commit to a choice. Adolescents in identity foreclosure are willing to commit to choices, but the choices are usually based on some extrinsic motivator such as parents or teachers. Adolescents in identity moratorium are in an identity crisis and are willing to explore options but are not ready to make or commit to a choice. Adolescents in identity achievement have made a commitment to their identity and have made choices (David, 2014).

In a review of the literature on academic motivation and goal orientation, Arias (2003) found many intertwining and overlapping definitions and functions of academic motivation

theory and goal orientation theory and synthesized his findings into the following conclusions and considerations:

- Studies have been biased toward academic goals and overlooked social goals.
- Learning goals (considered to be connected to deep level processing) and achievement goals (considered more superficial and grade-oriented) can be considered as concurrent goals and not opposing ones.
- Contextual factors, as well as personal factors, can influence academic motivation and goal orientation.

Studies by Was (2006) and Was, Al-Harthy, Stack-Oden, and Isaacson (2009) married the constructs of academic achievement, goal orientation, and Marcia's (1966) identity statuses finding that a relationship exists between academic identity and academic goals. The academic identity measure used in the study consisted of four subscales: moratorium, foreclosed, diffuse, and achievement. The goal orientation measures were adapted from the Achievement Goal Questionnaire using three sub-scales: mastery, performance-approach, and performance-avoidant. A significant positive correlation was found between the academic identity of foreclosed and both the performance-approach and performance-avoidant goal orientation. Students on both ends of the goal spectrum can be motivated by others to achieve or not achieve. Was et al. (2009) stated that students with higher levels of self-efficacy are more likely to fall into the performance-approach goal orientation, but they have not yet tested that theory. Analysis found a negative correlation between diffuse and avoidant identity statuses and mastery goal orientation, and the authors hypothesized that these students are the least prepared to learn and view academic challenge as a threat. Moratorium identity negatively correlated with mastery goal orientation and positively correlated with

performance-avoidant goal orientation; however, because students in moratorium are still seeking their identities they may try on different ways of being a student and could ultimately still adopt a mastery goal orientation. Was et al (2009) explained that achievement identity status showed a positive correlation with mastery goal orientation and a negative correlation with performance-avoidant goal orientation. The authors believe that their findings could help develop successful student advisement and retention interventions.

Burbidge, Horton, and Murray (2018) explored the relationships among personality, academic identity formation, and college-going culture which, ultimately, lead to academic achievement. Results of the Academic Identity Measure, the Big Five Inventory (personality traits—openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism), and an adaptation of the College-Going Culture Questionnaire were compared to find these relationships. All but three of the relationships between Academic Identity Measure subscales and the Big Five Inventory traits were significant. The exceptions were conscientiousness and foreclosed identity, agreeableness and foreclosed identity, and openness and moratorium identity. When comparing identity status with college-going culture, all achieved and foreclosed identity statuses were significant and positive in relationship to college-going culture with the exception of achieved with conscientiousness (not significant). Though achieved identity status would be identified with intrinsic motivation and foreclosed identity status would be more identified with extrinsic motivators, both show a commitment to choices, specifically, college going. When all three factors were considered—personality, identity status, and college-going culture—only three significant relationships emerged. The authors stated that since identity status can potentially be more influenced by advisement and

culture than personality, there is much potential for creating interventions to influence attitudes towards college-going.

### Chapter Summary

Dual enrollment opportunities and the number of students enrolled in dual enrollment programs in the United States has been steadily on the rise for the past 30 years. Tennessee has adopted dual enrollment as a potential solution to low high school and college graduation rates and the needs of the state workforce. Dual enrollment students in Tennessee may have unique advisement and student support needs to help them prepare and succeed in their courses. The literature regarding adolescent development, college-going identity and culture, along with research in student identity and achievement goals can help school counselors and college advisors develop interventions to meet these unique needs.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODS

#### Introduction

This study examined the perceptions that high school counselors and other dual enrollment advisors in Tennessee have about dual enrollment programs and the students who enroll in them. The ways that school counselors and other advisors interact with dual enrollment students was also explored. Additionally, this study sought to identify ways in which school counselors and other advisors understand dual enrollment policies and programs and ways the programs improve college going and completion rates in Tennessee (TDOE, 2017c). Student readiness and how that readiness may be viewed through the constructs of adolescent development and college-going identity was a focus.

#### Qualitative Methodology

Dual enrollment is a particular phenomenon that has steadily increased in popularity as exemplified by a growth of 42% between the 2002-2010 school years (NCES, 2005, 2013). Phenomenological studies “gather...data [from] people who have *directly* experienced the phenomenon of interest; that is, they have lived experience as opposed to secondhand experience” (Patton, 2002, p. 104) and help us to understand “the essence of being a participant” (p. 106) as support personnel for dual enrollment students.

Qualitative research focuses on the richness of the narrative as provided by participants. Because high school counselors and dual enrollment advisors work directly with students who dually enroll and then have access to student academic progress as well as their personal stories while dually enrolled, the researcher was able to better understand the differences in student readiness as well as the impact that increased access to dual enrollment has on student readiness.

### Research Questions

RQ1: What are the academic readiness indicators for dual enrollment students?

RQ2: What are the social readiness indicators for dual enrollment students?

RQ3: What are the emotional readiness indicators for dual enrollment students?

RQ4: What factors facilitate student readiness for dual enrollment?

RQ5: What factors inhibit student readiness for dual enrollment?

### Researcher Role

In my position as a high school counselor serving as the primary dual enrollment advisor and employed in the state of Tennessee for the past 17 years, I have witnessed the expansion of the state's dual enrollment programs and the changes in eligibility requirements to enroll a wider range of students in the programs. Additionally, I hold the role of primary researcher, interviewer, and coder. Since I work in the same field as the participants in the study, I must ensure credibility and trustworthiness of the information collected and reported. I minimized potential bias that may occur through my experience in the field using the strategies of mechanically recorded, transcribed, and coded interviews to preserve the fidelity of the information reported (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

### Sampling Method

An opportunity to express initial interest in participating in the study was given to all high school counselors or other dual enrollment advisors who work in one of three Tennessee school districts via email (Appendix A). District approval to conduct research within the system was obtained prior to the email solicitation. The email contained a survey link to gather identification and contact information, but it was treated as confidential and is accessible only by the primary researcher. Informed consent information was provided in both the initial survey and

in the solicitation email. Participants for individual interviews were purposefully selected from the pool of initial respondents based on experience with advising dual enrollment students and dual enrollment programs. Contact was made by the primary researcher via email or phone call to arrange for a mutually agreeable time for a phone or internet call that would include voice recording and note taking during the interview. Further informed consent information was provided at the beginning of the interview explaining the limits of confidentiality for participation in the interviews and explaining that recording and notetaking would occur during the interviews. All participants received information regarding the purpose of the study, reasons for participating, and how the data was stored and protected (Patton, 2002).

#### Data Collection Methods

Data was collected through an initial participant survey (Appendix B) and individual interviews. Individual interviews were conducted using standardized open-ended interview questions and probes (Appendix C) to solicit additional depth to responses. Standardized open ended interviews were conducted as described in Patton (2002) so that the “exact instrument...is available for inspection” (p. 346), to focus the interview, to use time efficiently, and facilitate analysis. Interviews were voice recorded with an electronic device via phone and internet and notes were made with stringent regard to their confidentiality as outlined in the informed consent document and as required by East Tennessee State University’s Institutional Review Board.

#### Data Analysis Techniques

Initial surveys and individual interview records, transcripts, and notes were analyzed by “coding data, finding patterns, labeling themes, and developing category systems” (Patton, 2002, p. 462). As encouraged by Guba (1978), the researcher looked “for recurring regularities in the data” to impose a naturally occurring classification system to the responses (as cited in Patton,

2002, p. 465). Interview transcripts were created using the speech-to-text transcription software, Temi. Computer-assisted qualitative analysis software, MaxQDA, was used to code interview transcripts. Verbatim quotes from the interviews were also used in the result reports to add to the rich description of school counselors' experiences with dual enrollment students.

### Credibility and Trustworthiness

Creswell (2009) recommended several strategies to ensure credibility and trustworthiness in qualitative research. Most of the participants of this study were high school counselors. However, many other high school and college personnel work closely with dual enrollment students. The strategy of triangulation was used to strengthen the trustworthiness of the information collected by including interviews with two other participants who are not school counselors. Another strategy to ensure credibility was the use of mechanical recording, transcribing, and coding interview information (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Creswell (2009) recommended procedures for qualitative research such as spot-checking transcripts for the accuracy of the transcription software and avoiding "drift in the definition of codes" (p. 190). Including negative or conflicting information from the data collected increased the credibility of the work. The strategies of member checking within the interviews using rephrasing and probing and peer debriefing was used to "enhance the accuracy of the account" (p. 192).

### Ethical Considerations

Because this study included interviews of human subjects, all procedures approved by the Institutional Review Board of East Tennessee State University were followed. Appropriate informed consent procedures were followed as recommended by the Institutional Review Board. Participants were asked to grant permission to be interviewed and the interviews to be analyzed and reported in my dissertation. Participants were informed of my role and purpose as the

researcher and informed of potential benefits of the study to the advisement of dual enrollment students. Participant identity and information was protected and only accessible by the primary researcher (Creswell, 2009).

### Chapter Summary

Tennessee high school counselors and other dual enrollment advisors were surveyed and interviewed using the self-created instruments found in Appendix A, B, and C to determine ways in which school counselors and advisors understand dual enrollment programs and students. Qualitative analysis techniques were used to gather information and participants' perceptions of Tennessee's dual enrollment programs and students. Analysis of data followed best practices of qualitative research methods and ensured protection of the sample population as approved by the Institutional Review Board. Dual enrollment has been shown to have a positive effect on postsecondary enrollment and completion (Swanson, 2008), but as a wider range of students become eligible for dual enrollment, it seems likely that support and advisement of dual enrollment students must also shift. Interviews with school counselors and dual enrollment advisors allowed the researcher to view dual enrollment students through the eyes of those counselors using the lenses of adolescent development and college-going identity.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions that high school counselors and other dual enrollment advisors in Tennessee have about dual enrollment programs and the students who enroll in them. As part of a qualitative phenomenological study, 12 participants in three districts within the First Tennessee Core District were interviewed in a recorded phone call to learn more about their work with dual enrollment students and to examine their insights about dual enrollment students and policies in Tennessee. All but one of the advisors held a Tennessee school counselor license, and four of the 12 held an administrative license. Job titles included dual enrollment advisor, administrator, graduation coach, and school counselor. All participants have worked with dual enrollment students and have experience with Tennessee's dual enrollment programs and policies. Table 2 shows information about participants' years of experience and Tennessee licenses held.

Table 2  
*Participants' Tennessee Licenses Held and Years of Experience*

Counselor/Advisor	Licensed School Counselor/Administrator	Years Experience
Counselor 1	Yes/No	11-15
Counselor 2	Yes/No	11-15
Counselor 3	Yes/Yes	7-10
Counselor 4	Yes/No	7-10
Counselor 5	Yes/No	4-6
Counselor 6	Yes/No	16-20
Counselor 7	Yes/No	7-10
Counselor 8	Yes/No	7-10
Counselor 9	Yes/No	4-6
Counselor 10	Yes/Yes	7-10
Counselor 11	No/Yes	4-6
Counselor 12	Yes/No	21-30

The open-ended interview questions were designed to gather information from counselors and advisors about the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the academic readiness indicators for dual enrollment students?

RQ2: What are the social readiness indicators for dual enrollment students?

RQ3: What are the emotional readiness indicators for dual enrollment students?

RQ4: What factors facilitate student readiness for dual enrollment?

RQ5: What factors inhibit student readiness for dual enrollment?

### Academic Readiness Indicators for Dual Enrollment

#### *Counselor and Teacher Recommendations*

Of the 12 advisors who were interviewed, all agreed they would approve a dual enrollment application for any student who met the minimum academic eligibility requirements set by the state or institution and would not keep a student from enrolling in a dual enrollment course for any reason other than not completing graduation requirements. Counselor 8 stated, “I would never deny them or stand in the way of a student that was eligible... I have never denied the kids the opportunity to go and attempt a dual enrollment class. It’s not costing them anything. It’s not costing me anything, and sometimes the experience is worth more.” Counselor 12 said, “There is no reason for me not to allow it” which was echoed by Counselor 10 who said, “No, I think, uh, no.” Counselor 7 stated, “I don’t think so...unless it could put their graduation at risk...our first priority is still making sure that a student is on track for high school graduation.” Counselor 1 said, “I will not deny them that opportunity,” and Counselor 2 agreed that, “if...they have a really good ACT score, they meet the requirements, and they say ‘I want to take the class;’ I’m okay.”

The three districts seemed to have different approaches to proactively identifying students for dual enrollment. One district uses available data and teacher recommendations to identify and encourage students to enroll in college classes. Counselor 11 stated, “I help identify students who should be taking courses through their test scores including TVAAS, the SAT, ACT, Pre-ACT, and any other information, teacher recommendations and so forth.” Counselor 2 said,

We look at the recommendations...like, for example, if we have a student who's in an AP English 11 class, the teacher might say, 'hey, you know, if you're going to go in-state...here is some guaranteed credit.' We look at state, College Board information, we look at recommendations from teachers and us. So it's like a mini conference if you will--and parents and students get invited to that, but they don't have to be invited to come, but we do explicitly invite particular people who we know are likely to do well in AP and dual enrollment.

Counselor 9 added, “Our teachers that are teaching at the class level below what would be the dual enrollment class. So, let's say they are teaching math three like a[n] honors math three or something like that. We also have discussions with those teachers so that they can help facilitate the dual enrollment decisions with those students as well.” Counselor 5 concurred:

We start on the academic realm just to make sure that...they're within their proximity...of challenge, meaning that...even if challenged that they'll be able to persevere and be successful, or their academic history and their testing just to assess that... we have reason to suspect that they will be successful. And we use...a variety of indicators for that. We use the AP prediction with the TVAAS system. And I know we're talking about dual enrollment, but we use--we're pretty confident that most students who could...make it in

Advanced Placement will be able to be successful and to go to a dual enrollment class.

Um, we also use...the AP predictor, a prediction from SAT. So, we use both of those tools, but we don't limit it to just those tools. Um, you know, we also go back and look at our feeder year courses, courses that feed into Advanced Placement and dual enrollment.

Only one participating district has applied school resources to fund a position that works primarily with enrolling students in early postsecondary opportunities. The other districts indicated a desire to identify students who could be encouraged to dually enroll, but targeting specific students can be difficult with caseloads of 400:1. Counselor 12 said, "There is no way I even know their names. So, there's no way. There's no way I can look at it...I can't look at them individually and assess." Counselor 8 stated, "When we have...400 students per counselor, you know, high school students per counselor...it's really hard to sit down with each one and give them...you know, a lot of one-on-one of, hey, this would be a good choice." Counselor 10 expressed,

I think we would like to see more...put more of a focus on students earlier in the game as freshmen and sophomores so that they understand the importance of maintaining a certain grade point average and...reaching for a certain score on ACT so that they can make themselves eligible because those are the two big criteria markers so that we can maybe not so much self-identify when they're juniors and eligible, but when they're freshmen and we see that they have the potential to be.

#### *College Admissions Exam Scores, GPA, and Classroom Grades*

All interviewed counselors referred to students having a specific ACT or SAT score as a requirement for dual enrollment, and some referred to some colleges having a GPA requirement. Counselor 9 stated, that it was a "requirement that we have the ACT score," which was affirmed

by Counselor 11 who said students could not be dually enrolled if “they don’t meet the enrollment criteria.” Counselor 7 referred to students meeting “some basic restrictions that come from the colleges themselves.” Counselor 11 also pointed out that “ACT score doesn’t always translate into success in the college coursework because of the volume of writing the students have to do.” Counselor 3 agreed, saying the colleges,

Send us requirements that we place in our course catalog for students to enroll, but when we're really advising students, we want students to participate in these opportunities to probably have above the academic requirements that are listed by the organization...So, more academically motivated students, um, solid. They have to have, of course, the test scores that the college requires.

Counselor 11 mentioned concern about “the rigor of their schedule and...reading levels sometimes maybe lacking.” Counselor 1 said that it was important to target students who have “done really well in school that never attempted an honors or AP level class,” and Counselor 4 stated, “If they didn’t have the grades that would be one thing” indicating that classroom performance prior to dual enrollment was an important indicator of future success.

#### *Attendance, Balance, and Difficulty Level*

Though none of the postsecondary institutions attended by students in the three districts required good attendance to be eligible for dual enrollment, several counselors thought that it should be considered. Counselor 7 explained, “Unfortunately, because...when you missed seventeen days of class, you’re not going to be successful. And, so, attendance is definitely another factor.” Counselor 8 agreed that “I've had students in the past who were interested in dual enrollment, but their grades aren't that great. Their attendance isn't that great, and they're just overall not really reliable.”

Counselor 11 expressed much concern about students' school-to life-balance when considering dual enrollment saying,

If a student is trying to load up their entire schedule with AP and dual enrollment classes that is a member of the band and very heavily involved in whatever else might be involved outside of school... um, I would want to have the right balance of a schedule for students. I would encourage and recommend a balance... it is super important not to overload a child, push them to a breaking point.

Counselor 8 had similar concerns saying, "I don't promote it real heavily with some kids...if I see that they've got a busy after school schedule where they're involved in athletics or they're big in the theater or the orchestra or the band or whatever." Counselor 3 noted that explaining to students "how this course might be different than their high school class" was important when discussing dual enrollment. Counselor 2 said it is important to tell students:

Like this is what this class is going to look like and...to students, um...for preparedness sake for students who, okay, I have an idea of what I'm getting into...Even when that is the case, the students don't hear all of that. So, we at the high school...we have to translate that. We have to filter that and say, okay, here's what this class, here's what that really means. You're going to do a paper a week...You're going to do a five-page paper every week. And so just...describing the nuts and bolts of the classes...for preparedness.

### Social Readiness Indicators for Dual Enrollment

#### *Socioeconomic Status*

Counselor 10 pointed out that mandating early postsecondary opportunities as a graduation requirement, "they will [have to] be on campus if you're going to target a specific population or subgroup" implying that students from a certain socioeconomic level would have

barriers of finances and transportation that would need to be minimized by the school. “But I don't know that we don't [currently] operate off of a list of those things. I mean academically certainly, but not necessarily those social...keys.” Counselor 2 said:

I don't think that we have barriers with students in ethnic minority groups not having access to that kind of thing. I don't think. I'm, if it ended up being monetary, like we would find a way around that. But I do see occasionally African-American students who will, will have a sense of I don't want to do this, I'm not ready for this. What benefit is this going to be to me? Like there's a lot of questions there and so like it's a lot of doubt and so the barrier really is not on the school side. It's a social barrier, but we still try to work—we try to work through that.

While continuing to think about the above statement, Counselor 2 went on to make a future projection about how students will ultimately be affected by the state requiring Early Post-Secondary Opportunities, “It's going to draw a spotlight onto the low SES [socioeconomic status] kids who, who would meet free reduced lunch requirements, who are currently not participating in the program for whatever reason. And then all of a sudden, oh, ‘you need to do this class, this class, and this class’, and then they're going to go to whatever program, and they're not going to have money for books.”

Counselor 10 also found that a significant social barrier for some students is, “Fear, fear of stepping out and doing something that's new. Leaving campus and going somewhere where they're not comfortable. So, I think that's the fear.” Counselor 9 noted a positive trend,

Thanks to the dual enrollment grant, I think it's kind of opened up a lot less barriers than in the past for students who are interested, but maybe aren't the best candidates

because...they don't have a whole lot to lose. So, we've gotten more students from various backgrounds who are interested in dual enrollment. So, I think that's really great.

### *Adolescence and Adulthood*

Several counselors were worried about the social impact that dual enrollment and the push toward EPSOs, via the Tennessee Ready Graduate Indicators, could have on students.

Counselor 8 said,

Dual enrollment--it's not for everyone...I think a lot of times students are getting [in] too big a rush to, to graduate from college by the time they're 20 and, um, jump out into the world...soon...So, a lot of times, ...we do try to have that discussion of 'why do you want to dual enroll?'...If it's just so they can graduate sooner, then, you know, I like to have that talk with them as to... 'Hey, is that necessarily the best thing for you?'"

Counselor 8 went on to add, "A lot of these...students are already stressed enough as it is, then I'm, I'm not going to try to ever push dual enrollment on anyone. Um, because we're in, we're in a big enough hurry in this society as it is. So dual enrollment has to be a good fit.

Counselor 9 felt personally stressed about some of the online dual enrollment courses impacting the social development of students,

That kind of stresses me out because it's all online and you miss, you do miss that social part of it. So, and then what about the future? So, you have an 18-year-old, a 17-year-old graduating high school, and they're a college junior and socially, they're with students who are 21-22 and older, and that there's just a big--there's just a big gap there and that worries me. So, we'll see how that goes—if it goes. We're kind of torn in our department, we're very torn with that one.

Counselor 5 had similar concerns:

That seems to be something that we often generalize-- these big goals to individual students and without taking those individual students into account. And, while I certainly support students being ready for post-secondary work, I feel like sometimes we get in too big of a hurry that we're, we're, you know, pushing them to have an associate's degree before they go to college. That that's a great goal. And I'm sure beneficial to those students who achieve it. But, gosh, what are we racing toward? I mean, enjoy the developmental stages that you're going through. Enjoy, you know, a high school experience, enjoy the college experience. And...sometimes I think we get so caught up ...with having these opportunities and racing toward something that really doesn't have a finish line until you're 70-years-old. And that's something that...I've probably swung the other way...in that conversation in the last five or six years...I've seen students fight off so many challenges, and in the end ... successfully complete those. Don't have any examples of [a] bad story other than, gosh, they're not enjoying high school, or they're not participating in things that aren't post-secondary opportunities. It really becomes more, again, about a race to a fictitious finish line.

Counselor 5 recalled an experience with the Early College Movement that was not successful, but does see improvement in the newer models:

I was not a fan originally of, of the first initiative, like the early college initiative. I felt like kind of the vision of that didn't fit well with my personal experience as a school counselor at that time in terms of students just being really--I couldn't quite understand why we were in such a hurry for students to... have an associate's degree under their belt. Um, in my experience, a lot of students really were struggling even in senior year to have

the maturity that they needed in order to make a successful transition to freshman year of college. Having said that, I do, as we progress, as that particular initiative was not very successful, and, we moved more toward individual courses for college credit. Um, that... seemed to me to make a little bit more sense in terms of just maybe a student getting an experience, a taste of what a college course might be like, like a freshman English course or a US history course or something of that nature. And I could definitely see value in that. And, um, you know, helping a student actually be more prepared for what they were going to, to face that freshman year of college.

### Emotional Readiness Indicators for Dual Enrollment

#### *Motivation*

More than half of the counselors interviewed identified self-motivation as one of the primary emotional readiness indicators for students to be successful in dual enrollment courses. All three districts had multiple ways of marketing dual enrollment opportunities to their students including: one-on-one registration meetings, classroom registration meetings, evening meetings for parents, inviting speakers from local colleges, listing dual enrollment in the school's course catalog, holding dual enrollment courses on the high school campus, school announcements, and targeting potential dual enrollment students through the use of various data points. A few counselors also commented that word-of-mouth and having older siblings who had taken dual enrollment increased knowledge of dual enrollment opportunities. However, all of the counselors believed that the majority of students who took dual enrollment courses are motivated to self-identify and seek out information about dually enrolling.

Counselor 8 explained, “I think most of them self-identify. There's...you know, it's probably a little of both, but most of them come in with a plan, you know, and already looking to take advantage of the grants.” Counselor 12 said,

They all self-identify with me. I don't ever chase them down. I give them their options when I meet with them individually, [and] I give them their options whenever I'm doing classroom registration meetings. But you know, as far as me looking at [the student] and saying, ‘Hey, you need to, you need to do a dual enrollment classes, there's no way. Not with everything we have.

Counselor 2 concurred saying, “If we have kids who can do dual enrollment courses as junior, they, usually, will self-select to do that.”

### *Self-Advocacy Skills*

Counselors believed that students who could self-advocate had a greater chance of being successful in dual enrollment courses. Counselor 6 posited, “Some kids are never going to...take the initiative to email [the college] and, say, ‘Hey, I want to do...dual enrollment in the fall’...They’ll just say, ‘Okay, I’m not going to do that because they don’t want to make that inquiry.’”

Counselor 3 articulated,

If they have not shown good skills about being able to advocate for themselves, and to complete work outside of school in a self-paced environment, if that has proven difficult for them in the past, then we probably would steer them away from dual enrollment.

Counselor 3 emphasized that if required to choose one emotional indicator,

It would be the one, the self-advocacy skills. So, if they have a problem, do I really think they're going to come and ask for help? Will they communicate with the professor

effectively or have they used their parents, you know, to be their communication piece...for things. So, do they have those good skills?

Counselor 2 reinforced the importance of self-advocacy skills saying,

And so there's, there's a piece that has nothing to do...with the material...it's knowing how to navigate that whole separate world that this is a whole different level of freedom that they don't have. So self-advocacy is important. So, if they can't make a decision on...what they want to wear to school that day, they'll have a really, really hard time on making a good choice on whether or not to do dual enrollment...So that's why the other world is important for them to know about. And, and your professor is not a god or goddess. They don't have super powers and they're approachable. You need to talk to them, if you don't, you're not likely to do well.

#### *Confidence and Self-Doubt*

Counselor 10 also found that a significant emotional barrier for some students is, “Fear, fear of stepping out and doing something that's new. Leaving campus and going somewhere where they're not comfortable. So, I think that's the fear.” Counselor 2 added, “Students who are afraid that they're not adequate, really prepared and they're not ready for the college level course work even though there might be a recommendation to do so.” Counselor 8 queried students’ confidence, “Are they emotionally ready to, to, to step onto a college campus and find where to park. Where do you get your parking id? Where you know, what about getting the book for the class and you know, that takes a, that takes a different student...”

#### *Responsibility, Maturity, and Work Ethic*

Counselor 8 described the importance of students “doing things the right way, following the rules, what have you...also that discipline that goes into, you know, organization, and being

able to keep a schedule and not have, you know, of course, their hands are not going to be held.”

Counselor 4 added,

I tell them they're responsible for making sure that they leave on time, making sure they get back on time, you know, things like that. Having that extra time on the day when they don't have class, what are they going to do with that time? So, they do need to be a little more mature probably than the regular a student if they're going to do dual enrollment.

Counselor 9 expressed, “The biggest social and emotional indicator that I'm looking for...whenever I talk to students...about...whether or not they should or shouldn't participate in dual enrollment is mainly just if they are responsible.” Counselor 4 had a similar sentiment,

So, do they have those good skills and...that time management piece? Some of our dual enrollment here, some of it is online, a lot of it is online. So, do they have the ability to stay on task with their work in that independent learning component? Do they have that ability to do that? And have they shown me that throughout their work as a student...?

You know, can they handle that? Okay. I think that's a big thing.

Counselor 12 jokingly contributed, “I look at them and I go, you know, I know he has a man body, but he has a peanut brain. You know, he is not ready.” Counselor 2 added that students ‘are not good decision makers when they’re 16.”

Counselor 2 posited,

Besides the academic pieces to it, if a student, let's say a student has been...this occasionally happens...they've been a really good academic student, but they've done some, some really, uh, idiotic things...they've gotten in trouble in some form or another, um, that, that might be something that I would consider and say, hey, you know, let's, let's look at an alternative route...And, I can't speak for my colleagues. I, my, my approach to that is, is more let's focus on, on where we know you can be successful and

have time to grow and mature rather than, oh no, you'll flunk this class. So, the conversation really is oriented around, 'Let's make a plan for success right now'. Hoping that you'll mature before you try to go out in the college world because it, you know, I don't want to hurt somebody. I don't proactively tell the kid this, I don't want to hurt a college GPA, but then they're going to make teenage mistakes.

### *Mental Health*

A few of the counselors also noted an anecdotal increase in mental health issues within their student populations. Counselor 8 said, "It seems like anxiety is taking over...such a large proportion...percentage of our students. And, a lot of times I can just add this to their anxiety and worries and fear. Um, so I guess that would be the biggest things." Counselor 2 recalled,

A particular student that was, like, a 34 ACT...and high GPA, well above 3.6 GPA, but had multiple, diagnosed psychological issues...attendance was really the issue of not being at school on a regular basis...That was an instance student wasn't, was not ready for, it wasn't about the coursework.

Counselor 12 described a situation this "spring and...because of his emotional disorders, it just so happened that he couldn't...do, what he wanted to do it... he couldn't do it because he failed classes and it was all an emotional thing. It was all about his addiction to video games.

### Factors that Facilitate Student Readiness for Dual Enrollment

#### *Increased Opportunity and Awareness*

Overwhelmingly, the counselors agreed that dual enrollment opportunities and awareness of those opportunities has increased during their careers. Counselor 8 also noted, "I think you're starting to see more middle, maybe slightly above average students, you know, take advantage of dual enrollment to where before I think, you know, it was uh, it seen as something just for your

elite.” Counselor 10 remembered “When...started offering online dual enrollment courses and that was...relatively new to our region...now you just kind of have a menu of options.”

Counselor 3 stated that there are “so many more opportunities now than there were ten years ago for students.” Similar to Counselor 8’s statement, Counselor 2 expressed:

Now we have kids, and I don't know for the rest of the region, but we have kids who ten years ago would have been told flat out, no, you can't do this...that do dual enrollment. And they do well. Um, and they would have been told no, but either because of finances or they didn't, they didn't look the part, Oh, you can't do this, you can't do college coursework yet. And that really has changed. It's really transitioned to, hey, here's an early postsecondary opportunity. This is a good idea for you to do because let's give it a shot. So, it really has changed hugely and it's really probably been the last five or six years.

Counselor 7 added:

My first experience with dual enrollment was many years ago when we first started. There was the movement, I'm not sure how many years ago, but probably 10 years ago, a real push towards—maybe even longer, um, towards students taking dual enrollment courses or graduating early. Really ...we started an early college movement. Um, so it was a lot of talk about [a community college] partnering with us and us doing kind of an early college and the vision was that students were going to take college credit, and you know, could graduate high school and have enough...credits to almost have a year or more of college under their belt. And so, this was a big push, um, that wasn't very successful, that particular initiative. Um, but after that came other initiatives...to have a dual enrollment...offered on [the high school] campus and to have other dual enrollment

classes [with] colleges in our area, um, and how students could earn specific credits. And then that's really just continued to open up over the last 10 to 12 years.

Dual enrollment has grown to the point that it has become a part of school culture in the three participating districts. Counselor 6 reported, "Probably 80% of our kids are going to go to a two-year or four-year college...so dual enrollment is a real popular option for kids." Counselor 11 described having "a culture where we push our students to do better, take higher level courses, and, that is just throughout our entire high school and probably middle school." Counselor 12 agreed, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. And that is exactly what's important. It's the culture. Cause each school has its own little culture."

All three districts have been working toward creating a college-going culture that encourages students to take advantage of dual enrollment opportunities. Counselor 12 described seeing,

Students taking every opportunity to do this kind of thing. It increases every year...and I think it will continue to increase because uh, students are beginning to see the benefits of the fact that they're gonna earn their college credits and their high school credits [as] a high school student. And I, I just see it getting better and better...they are offering so many options for our kids. Um, we're just very fortunate.

### *Financial Support*

"The state coming in with the dual enrollment grant was a huge, you know, that was a huge, huge, huge boost to dual enrollment...that changed everything. It made it so, you know, kids could afford it," declared Counselor 12. Counselor 9 said, "Thanks to the dual enrollment grant, I think it's kind of opened up a lot less barriers...they don't have a whole lot to lose...the

risk isn't there because there's not a financial tie to a lot of students here. The first two dual enrollment classes are free." Counselor 3 agreed,

At the beginning of my career there was no dual enrollment grant and you just paid money out of pocket. And so now the funding from the state has allowed for several more opportunities for students. So, you know, students can take the two classes for free... I do think in Tennessee we are incredibly blessed to have the structure for at least the lottery, the dual enrollment grant.

### *Online Programs*

Part of the increasing availability of dual enrollment courses can be attributed to online courses. Counselor 7 said,

We have opened up so many new opportunities in terms of dual enrollment. I mean, online dual enrollment going on...and all these different shapes, forms, professional... we've had a lot of expansion in terms of just, you know, people seeking an opportunity. Yes, can we do this online? The health science field, those kinds of things... we offer this online medical terminology course [to] supplement even our traditional models. Um, so that we are, are able to, you know, have more opportunities available for students on a regular basis.

### *Ready Graduate Indicators*

Counselor 9 predicted:

I think right now we're not seeing a whole, whole lot of those effects, primarily because it's so new. But I do think that as time goes on and the Ready Graduate Indicators and early post-secondary opportunities become more widespread knowledge through this student population, I think that we'll see a lot of increases in dual enrollment and in

industry certifications, the CTE courses. I think that the more students really start to know and understand what that means, the greater that increase will be. I think we have noticed a positive, a positive shift because I know I've got more students who are, they're talking about being what does it take to be a Ready Grad and how many EPSOs do I have? Um, so I know that conversation is being started, but I do think that since this is kind of the first...real year of implementation. Um, the first full real year. Um, yeah, I've seen some positive, some positive growth from it, but I do think that we're going to continue to see, see more substantial growth as time goes on.

Counselor 11 also saw positive improvements in the state and said:

I will say that I'm happy what Tennessee is looking at with the Ready Graduate Indicator, and I'm glad that they are looking at more than one method. [Not just that] final score. Um, I do believe, you know, that that kid that has the grit that has the 19 or whatever and can pass the certifications is they may not even get in at 19. You know, they might have an 18, um, that they can pass all these certifications and make that ready graduate indicator by those types of opportunities mean that that child can still be successful. So, I, I like it. I'm happy to see that they are considering more than just a 21 ACT [as a] Ready Graduate. I think it's evening the playing field much, much that you know, to where more have an opportunity.

### *Outcomes*

Counselor 9 was optimistic about the outcomes of more students being dually enrolled, I think we're gonna see more and more students who are enrolled. I think we're going to see more options from colleges to help us meet that requirement...I think overall that's going to increase college going rates among high school students in Tennessee

immediately after high school. Um, cause I mean we have all sorts of research that shows that even if you have, you know, one semester of dual enrollment that that's going to increase your likelihood that you go to college. So, I think we're going to see a positive trend with dual enrollment students.

Counselor 11 concurred saying,

There's been so many studies out there showing that if you capture that kid in high school and, and give them that opportunity in high school and they do well in that first class, believe in themselves and so they'll continue on and they'll continue on. Um, post high school.

Counselor 1 also saw dual enrollment, “changing things in a positive way for students’ opportunities and um, and get to increase how many, how much they're coming to colleges with after high school.” Counselor 2 said that:

A big topic of discussion now is what do colleges prefer? Do they prefer an AP class? Do they prefer a dual enrollment class? So, I think that's going to influence a lot of the college’s telling us what, how we should be advising those students. So that's obviously going to be, um, you know, that's obviously going to be, um, a big factor in it. And I think a lot of times the, the fact that, you know, for an AP class, in order to earn the credit, you've got to score a certain, you know, number on the test. That always, um, intimidates some students, you know, they like that guarantee of a, all I have to do is pass the class right, and I've got college credit.

### *High School Advisement*

Counselor 12 described advisement as:

Letting them know what's available over there at... different colleges and...and I think that's the most important thing. Just giving them their options because lots of times it gives kids a goal, you know, 'oh, I'd really like to do that'. Well if you'd like to do this then you've got to do this, this, this, this, which means your grade has to be this, this, and this...I think that's the thing you do for the readiness is just you just make them aware of it and then if they're motivated to do it, to me that's it. Gosh, at least 90% of the battle of making sure you have the right kids going there if they're motivated to jump through the hoops that have to be jumped through in order to do it as a junior or a senior.

Most of the other counselors concurred. Counselor 4 said that part of advisement was to, Explain the procedure to and give them the forms, make sure they fill them out on time, make sure they do the dual enrollment grant, um, help them pick out what classes they're going to take, what they need for graduation and how that will fit with their dual enrollment class.

Counselor 11 gave an outline of a mock advisement session:

You can advise a student at the high school level at let's say for example they're coming in at ninth grade and they are um, taking a regular... English that their scores are pointing that they could potentially move, you know, to harder courses. And let's just say English for example. So, a counselor during advisement and making that four to six-year plan with that rising ninth graders say, 'You know, right now you're, you're enrolling in that regular CP class, but your scores are indicating that you probably should be looking at an honors course this year. And if you're not willing to do the honors course now then, maybe we do CP at your ninth-grade year, we put you, if you continue to do well in CP then we've put you in that honors English level in 10th grade. And then in 10th grade you

could possibly move. If you do well...and your scores are continuing to rise and your performance and teacher recommendation is good, then we put you in an AP course in your junior year and then maybe you would want to consider dual enrollment in your senior year'. So, advisement is everything. If you don't have somebody advocating for you to move to that higher level and take on that opportunity, then a lot of students are just going to do the status quo.

Counselor 10 went a step further than saying that advisement could influence readiness, and said that it is "our duty":

Timeliness is important. But making sure that people, not just to students but families are well educated on opportunities that are, that are out there. Um, I think that's the single biggest factor. I think too often we assume that putting information on our website...then forget...about it. That's our duty. We've fulfilled our duty and there's, there's just much more to the responsibility of making sure people know that's a challenge. It's tough to do. ...I don't know if that answers in terms of student readiness, but I certainly don't think that anyone would be ready. If they're not aware then they don't know exactly what ahead of them. So I think timeliness and making people aware and doing it as early as possible and as early as is reasonable.

### *College Advisement*

The role of the college advisor seemed less clear to most of the counselors. Most felt that colleges tried to reach out to assist with marketing, enrollment, registration, and paperwork.

Counselor 7 said,

They will come and have sessions where they meet with their students, help them do the applications...for dual enrollment, help them do the dual enrollment grant. They'll have

makeup sessions for that, and that's tremendously helpful I think in terms of um, helping students, families, uh, navigate and supporting the high school counseling department in those initiatives.

Counselor 6 queried:

I'm just not quite understanding how a college level advisor would have an impact on a dual enrollment decision. Cause I don't think your kid would, and maybe I'm not understanding your question, I don't think your kid would meet with the college advisor at any point during the dual enrollment process. Well, maybe a college advisor in terms of helping them with the process...will come and help them with process...I'm not sure if that's exactly what you mean by college. Is that, are you talking about those folks? I think it is good if college advisors come and assist with the process of getting them in the classes, getting the dual enrollment grant, uh, applied toward doing the college admission. I think, I think that it's more beneficial if the college advisor does come and help with that because it, it makes that class seem something different than a high school class. So, they see that, hey, there's different people that I'm accountable to, not...you know that are at my high school. So, I do think that the college advisor, being, uh, being involved in that process. So when [a college advisor] sets meetings with our...kids and they come over and they help kids with the process, I think that's super essential. Yeah. Making that course feel different than a high school.

Counselor 4 experienced a similar level of interaction with college advisors,

The folks that do the dual enrollment have been very gracious to help ours, because they know it's the first time they'd done it. So, they've helped as far as reminding them again or helping them fill out the stuff when they get there.

## Factors that Inhibit Student Readiness for Dual Enrollment

### *Lack of Financing*

All of the counselors had positive things to say about Tennessee's implementation of the Dual Enrollment Grant to fund two dual enrollment courses for high school students who demonstrated eligibility at the institution of their choice. However, three recurring themes showed up in the interviews—full funding ending after two courses, the convoluted funding model that is confusing to counselors, students, and parents, and other costs associated with dual enrollment in addition to tuition. Counselor 6 was concerned,

They've chosen to give all this money to Tennessee Promise recipients and a vast number of those kids aren't ready. And, granted, they've gone with the mentoring and all that kind of stuff to try to help kids that might not be ready be more successful. I think they could choose to give additional dual enrollment grant monies to kids that have obviously proved that they're college ready, helping them get in and, and uh, and get those college credits sooner. So, I would change the funding for that reason.

Counselor 10 said, “Wow. My mind always goes to money. I mean there's not that many scenarios now... the dual enrollment grant has really accelerated the movement, [but] there are students on a faster pace that the dual enrollment grant doesn't really help.”

Counselor 3 noted:

Just across our [state] border...students can take those classes for \$50, all dual enrollment classes, um, through a partnership that they have. So, I wish that we would be able to lower the cost even more for our students. And I think that we would see numbers increase dramatically in those opportunities for students who cannot afford [dual enrollment]. I mean, it's just a really good deal when parents hear that, you know, \$50 to

take a dual enrollment class...If the postsecondary institutions will look for other funding opportunities for students. And there are some that do those continuation, you know, as long as you're maintaining, you're not paying, I think that's great, but still students out of pocket are paying maybe \$500 or a \$1000 for, for classes and that's still a burden to family. So, if we were moved to that, I think we would see more of our students who do meet their criteria and who do have the academic ability to participate. I think we would see a greater involvement if we could do that.

Counselor 11 added:

I love the idea of Tennessee Promise...I think it's a great opportunity for students to be able to...continue their education post-secondary..., and remove barriers that, at the moment, we only offer six credit hours at the high school level where students can participate, and...dual enrollment courses at no cost. Um, and so in my opinion, what's the difference between using your Tennessee Promise money or your HOPE scholarship money, which is, you know, at a four-year school, um, at the high school level or post-secondary? Why, why, why can't we use it now versus later? ...My point is, is that it... shouldn't matter whether we access this...now...this kid is high school under age, under the age of 18 or whether they enter the college. Um, if, if the kid is willing and able then then that money should be available I think to them at that moment. So yeah, money is the barrier.

Counselor 12 said, "I'm not real crazy about the way they dole out dual enrollment grant money. I'm not...I didn't like it, and whenever they went to this new 500, 500, 200, 0, um, I don't like that. I wish the state would look at that differently."

Counselor 2 explained,

The funding model is convoluted, and that's something else that we have to constantly explain to people. Um, if you're on class number three, you're only going to get \$200. If you qualify for dual enrollment class number four, you're paying for it in the pocket.

What's, what, what does that mean? How much is that going to cost?

Counselor 2 added,

The other thing that's going to happen with...this is...right now when you do class one and two and three, you're getting some money. You're paying for four, and then when you get to five and six it is coming out of...your HOPE scholarship money in the first year. And I think that a whole lot of people are going to be really surprised, especially parents, when their students go down to the local university or community college, and they're \$1,200 short the first semester because it's all coming out of the first semester.

Counselor 2 pointed out, "There should be absolutely no cost whatsoever. If we're going to tell kids, 'Hey, here's an opportunity', and we're going to make finances a roadblock even for books that should go away. That's the, A number one problem."

Counselor 12 has encountered similar problems,

I'm kind of trying to figure it out, how to get them tools and things like that. You know, um, local scholarships don't touch that stuff. State scholarships don't touch that stuff.

What do they need before they even show up at the door? It's a welding helmet, you know, and there's no money for that kind of thing. So, you know, I wish the state would look at things beyond, um, going to community college for two-years free."

Counselor 10 added, "Some of the burden falls on the family for finances, for supplies, and books that doesn't have...discretionary funding sources out there that are available."

## *Outcomes*

Though each institution sets the eligibility requirements for students to dual enroll, counselors were more concerned about students' academic performance in dual enrollment courses negatively impacting the students' future.

Counselor 3 explained,

Some of them are not super successful. It takes a while for them to get used to being enrolled in a college class. And, so for many students, especially when we offer the two that are tethered together [by the dual enrollment grant], their first grade might be a C, second an A, and so they do not qualify for dual enrollment grant past those two classes. So, they don't continue in the work. So if they're not academically successful, once they get in there, and not [successful] meaning...they don't qualify for more funding sources then that would limit.

Additionally, Counselor 12 noted,

Good grades are important because those grades follow them. So, it will be part of their college GPA, and they need to remember that if they go in with a 2.0 that's not a good thing. If they go in with 4.0 that's a really good thing. So, I'm constantly doing that. And, of course, in order to keep the dual enrollment grant, they have to do [a specific GPA], but I have some kids that screw up in the fall, and can't do the spring class.”

Counselor 9 described worry:

“Not because they don't feel like they can't be successful in dual enrollment, but that their, their future, whatever plans that may be, that if they decide to transfer out-of-state, or if they decide to go to a specific school, how those dual enrollment credits will

transfer. That's been the biggest worry that I've experienced in working with students who were considering dual enrollment.

Counselor 2 said, “There’s a lot of conversation that goes on at our level of ‘what is...college credit, how does that transfer? Does it transfer everywhere? No, we don't know that. That can change between the time you graduate from high school until you actually start.”

### *Lack of Transportation*

Despite numerous offerings on the high school campuses and online courses, 10 of the 12 counselors identified transportation as one of the biggest inhibiting factors in students taking dual enrollment courses. Counselor 4 “[had] a student this year who had signed up to do dual enrollment, and then, of course, his car broke down and he said, ‘I have no way. I have no transportation.’” Counselor 10 reported, “There's really travel restraints placed on some that don't have the vehicle... may be in a rural area. There's no public transportation outside of just the normal day school bus.” There could be, “transportation needs too, if it's off campus, you know, if they cannot get themselves there...that would be a reason we would not enroll” said Counselor 3. Counselor 2 put it into simple terms, “Do they have a car”?

### *Ready Graduate Indicators*

When asked how the Ready Graduate Indicators would impact dual enrollment numbers Counselor 10 asserted,

Well not much, and you think it'd be the other way around? But we had a lot of, we have a lot of kids, traditionally, that take advantage of dual enrollment opportunities that are [already a] ready graduate...especially with 21 on the ACT being the...marker that this checks all the boxes.

Counselor 4 agreed,

I would imagine more students, if they start holding to [requiring Ready Graduate Indicators] you're going to have to have some of these EPSOs. I would imagine that might be a way, but again, it's probably the same kids because in order to do dual enrollment you're going to still have to have that 3.0 GPA. And if they have a 3.0 they probably already have a 21.

Counselors 10 and 12 had strong negative opinions about how the Ready Graduate Indicators will affect dual enrollment. Counselor 12 said,

I think it'll hurt dual enrollment greatly. There's no question, because they can't do dual enrollment until their junior year...so...just in the whole EPSO thing, and dual enrollment is a good thing for that. But those kids are already, they already got a 21 probably.

Counselor 10 agreed saying:

[We are] cutting off our nose to spite our face as it were. We're going to hurt dual enrollment as a program because it is a really good program for students to be able to access. And we have confused, uh, the, the, the research is saying, oh, we know if kids do EPSOs, they're more likely to be successful in post-secondary education. That's true. But is it because they did the EPSOs or do kids do EPSOs because they're motivated and they were going to do well in college anyway? And, so we're assuming it's because they are doing the EPSO. So, I think we're going to end up watering down and hurting programs.

### *Online Courses*

Even though online courses could ease the burden of students who do not have transportation to take advantage of on-campus dual enrollment opportunities, most of the counselors had reservations about online programs. Counselor 8 stated,

I'm not a big fan of online dual enrollment courses at all. Um, I think it kinda defeats the purpose. All you're doing then is just kind of checking off boxes...you know, getting closer...try to knock out, you know, prereqs or general ed requirements. And while I appreciate that, if you're going to dual enroll, let's dual enroll and get you on the campus and actually be a part of campus life.

Counselor 4 worried,

I've had several that do an online class, and then, when I really stress to them, you got to make sure that you are ready to keep up with it on your own because nobody's going to tell you assignment four is due tomorrow at two o'clock. It's, it's up to you. The online ones kinda scares me.

Counselor 9 discussed:

In...some of the dual enrollment classes that we offer, they're online, and they don't really have that college community that, you know, most students do who aren't online students. So, I guess just making sure that they're kind of, that they feel connected and plugged in to the class and the other students with them... a lot of those dual enrollment classes that they're wanting to bring are taking the place of the high school experience; and they're online and that would mean that the students in this cohort would take online dual enrollment classes like four or five of them a semester. And that part worries me because they're freshmen and sophomores starting out in this cohort, and an online class is really hard, much less five of them while managing their regular high school courses as well. So, I think finding an alternative to, to things like that would, would ease some of my worries.

Counselor 3 expressed concern, “Even just navigating the platform. So, we've had to put students like in our library with our librarian just to figure out what is acceptable in terms of how to navigate, you know, they just need some help with the procedural aspects I think of college life”. Counselor 2 added, “With their...online offerings, which scares the crap out of me, to tell you the truth, because online college courses are harder than in-class college courses, but not because the contents are because of the, they have to self-regulate. Are they mentally ready? And that's a case by case answer for that, for each kid.”

### Chapter Summary

Twelve dual enrollment advisors were interviewed via a recorded phone call for this study. All but one of the participants held a Tennessee school counseling license and four hold administrative licenses. Participants shared their ideas, opinions, and experiences in response to the 12 interview questions shown in Appendix C in an attempt to explore the academic, social, and emotional readiness indicators of dual enrollment. Additionally, participants discussed factors that facilitate or inhibit student readiness for dual enrollment.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions that high school counselors and other dual enrollment advisors in Tennessee have about dual enrollment programs and the students who enroll in them. Twelve participants were purposefully sampled from three school districts in the First Tennessee Core Region. The participants' job titles included counselors, advisors, administrators, and graduation coaches, and all participants worked directly with both dual enrollment students and administering dual enrollment policies at the school level. All participants were familiar with local institutional programs and policies and with state policies-- though their interpretations sometimes varied.

#### Statement of the Problem

With the most recent research showing that 34% of the 2009 national ninth grade cohort (2013 graduates) took dual enrollment courses (NCES, 2019, February), it is easy to imagine that the number has already grown and will continue to grow. It is expected that growing numbers of students seeking dual enrollment opportunities will create parallel growth in service needs for those students. Students who take dual enrollment courses fall within a wide range of academic ability and do not enter programs with the same level of readiness. Studying a group of school personnel who have daily interaction with dual enrollment students and advise them on program and course selection, track their progress toward graduation, and apply policies created by the schools, the institutions, and the state can help advisors gain insight into creating and improving support structures to increase readiness.

## Discussion and Conclusions

### *Academic Readiness Indicators*

Entry into dual enrollment programs usually requires a recommendation from the counselor or at least permission to enroll from the high school. All 12 counselors agreed that if students met the academic requirements for admission to a dual enrollment program, then they would approve the student's application even if there were reservations about the student's ability to be successful. However, several of the participants felt that this presented an opportunity for advisement. Particularly for students who do not quite meet the eligibility requirements. Counselor 11 explained a scenario where:

Even though they might have that 18 on that ACT, they can't enroll. But, I'm going to encourage them to do very good and retake the ACT and get some tutoring to get that 19 so they can get in there and then encourage them the best I can to, you know, stay motivated and, and do everything that is possible to, to be successful.

The participants' experiences aligned with the body of research (Crouse & Allen, 2014; Khazem & Khazem, 2014; Swanson, 2008) that shows that dual enrollment participation increases college going rates. Counselor 9 commented,

I think overall that's going to increase college going rates among high school students in Tennessee immediately after high school. Um, because I mean we have all sorts of research that shows that even if you have, you know, one semester of dual enrollment that that's going to increase your likelihood that you go to college. So, I think we're going to see a positive trend with dual enrollment students. And then I also think that we're going to see a positive trend in the moving upward with, um, with college enrollment right after high school too

Counselor 11 experienced a similar upward trend in college-going rates, “if you capture that kid in high school and and give them that opportunity in high school, and they do well in that first class, believe in themselves and so they'll continue on and they'll continue on...post high school.”

### *Social Readiness Indicators*

The majority of the participants identified financial and transportation issues as inhibiting factors to student readiness for dual enrollment which can be tied to socioeconomic status citing limited funding after the first two free classes and no funding for books and other required materials. Karp’s (2013) recommendation for improving Tennessee’s college-going rate included implementing a free dual enrollment program that included tuition and all other costs and fees. Some research links socioeconomic status to family background and racial/ethnic identity, but neither emerged as major concerns for these participants.

Four of the counselors, representing all three districts, expressed concern about rushing students into adulthood and questioned the appropriateness of too many dual enrollment courses too soon. All acknowledged that there will always be some students ready to move beyond high school at an earlier rate, but they questioned the societal cost of too much college too soon. Savitz-Romer and Bouffard (2012) asserted that targeted developmental advisement and support to students in earlier stages of college-going identity formation can help them to strengthen that identity. Those students would most likely be identified as being in Marcia’s (1966) identity diffusion, identity foreclosure, or identity moratorium statuses. Ideally, students would evolve to the identity achievement status in which they are able to make their own choices and to commit to those choices. If pushed too far, too fast, or forced to take a pre-determined path it would logically follow that these students might become stuck in the identity diffusion or identity

foreclosure status of development. Students who would be identified as being in the identity diffusion stage do not feel that they have choices and are not willing to commit to a choice. Identity foreclosed students would likely enroll in and complete dual enrollment courses based on encouragement from others rather than by independent choice.

Dual enrollment is considered to be a viable college completion strategy in Tennessee (Karp, Hughes, & Cormier, 2012) and is a pillar of Tennessee's *Drive to 55* initiative which was designed to push the college completion rate to 55% by the year 2025 in order to meet predicted workforce demands (TDOE, 2017, August). The *Every Student Succeeds Act* implemented the *Ready Graduate* indicators in Tennessee intended to further Tennessee's college completion goals (TDOE, 2018, April). However, one counselor noted a serious concern for recent graduates in one district. Counselor 5 stated:

And what I'm finding out now, interestingly, even the kids that graduate at age 17 from high school or 18 from high school with an associate's degree or within a semester of an associate's degree, what I'm finding is some of our bigger corporations in my community right now won't hire those students at 18 years old. So, they have the credentials to get those jobs, but they won't hire them until they're 21 years old and so, well, what did we just do all this for? You know, what, what are they going to do until they're old enough to actually turn in an application that you're willing to accept. And so sometimes our policies and state policies or federal policies aren't aligned very well. You know, we, we tell these kids, you're going to walk out getting a job, making as much as your teachers do, but we don't tell them that...you know, that that's incumbent on you being a certain age. And that was a wakeup call for me this past semester, that when a parent says "well,

yeah, they finished, but you know, they're working at a local restaurant because they're not old enough to apply yet.

### *Emotional Readiness Indicators*

Only one district took direct measures within a fully articulated plan and with partial funding to actively identify students to participate in EPSOs which included dual enrollment. The other two districts were moving in the direction of earlier identification, but most students in all three districts self-identified as being interested in dual enrollment. Most of the counselors labeled this tendency to self-identify for participation in dual enrollment as motivation. In this context we can view students' self-motivation as being similar to Bandura's definition of self-efficacy "defined as a student's belief that he or she can successfully achieve a goal" (Mattis, 2008, p. 32). The findings of this particular study would lend credence to the idea that students already had high levels of self-efficacy before enrolling in dual enrollment programs.

Secondly, self-advocacy emerged as a skill that several counselors felt was imperative to the success of dual enrollment students. Was, Al-Harthy, Stack-Oden, and Isaacson (2009) found a negative correlation between diffuse and avoidant identity statuses and mastery goal orientation as well as a positive correlation between moratorium identity status and performance-avoidant goal orientation. It is unlikely that students found to exhibit these identity statuses and goal orientations would have strong self-advocacy skills in an academic setting. In a study of the *Early College Expansion Partnership*, Murphy (2017) found that dual enrollment outcomes could be improved with direct instruction on the skills needed to be a successful college student.

Counselors also identified responsibility, maturity, work ethic, and confidence as indicators of potential success in dual enrollment students. Adolescence can be a time of great change for students. Arnett (2006) and Cote (2006) defined the stage of human development

between the ages of 18 and 25 as emerging adulthood. Going to college is considered one of the developmental tasks of this stage. However, most students taking dual enrollment courses would not yet be 18 years old. Savitz-Romer, Bouffard, and Killian (2014) emphasized the importance of providing support structures appropriate to developmental stage beyond academic preparation and marketing.

#### *Factors that Facilitate/Inhibit Student Readiness*

*Increased Opportunity and Awareness.* The counselors interviewed unanimously agreed that increased dual enrollment opportunities and awareness of those opportunities either by word-of-mouth or improved access of information to students from both schools and colleges has grown exponentially over the past decade. All the participating districts had partnerships with local public four-year universities and community colleges as well as several private four-year colleges with new opportunities still on the horizon. Several of the counselors pointed out that dual enrollment was no longer just for the “elite” student. Counselors 11 and 12 spoke about how their school culture has come to include dual enrollment as an available—almost expected—opportunity.

*Ready Graduate Indicators.* It was presumed that the implementation of the Ready Graduate indicators in Tennessee, which should be fully operational in the 2019-2020 school year, would have already shown increased participation in dual enrollment among the districts included in the study. However, a majority of the counselors had not noticed any shift in their dual enrollment populations. Counselor 12 said, “Dual enrollment is a good thing for that. But those kids are already, they already [have] a 21 probably.” A score of a 21 on the ACT satisfies the Ready Graduate requirement without taking EPSOs. A 19 on the ACT is a common requirement for admission to dual enrollment programs. However, Counselor 3 predicted that, “I

think that some schools that do not have dual enrollment programs--strong or very little enrollment. I think they will use that as a tool because it doesn't require more staffing at your school.”

*Dual Enrollment Grant and Financial Aid.* “The dual enrollment grant...that changed everything,” enthused Counselor 12. The 11 other counselors were very positive about students having access to at least two free classes, and several of them cited the research on dual enrollment improving the college-going rate and in improving college readiness. However, as school personnel working directly with dual enrollment students they also reported several concerns about dual enrollment students who experienced poor outcomes, limits to and confusion over the funding model, and the impact on future financial aid. Counselor 9 was excited to see “a lot less barriers” keeping students from taking dual enrollment courses.

However, four major concerns emerged from the school perspective about the funding model. First, the dual enrollment grant only covers tuition for the course. Additional fees, books, materials, special equipment (from welding helmets to statistical software), and transportation are not covered by the dual enrollment grant. Second, some students would like to continue dual enrollment beyond the two free classes, but funding becomes limited after that. The three districts, the schools, and the counselors who participated in the study have been scrambling to make up the shortfalls for students by borrowing materials, paying for materials out of their own pockets, begging for donations from local organizations who rarely have any help to offer, and in some special cases advocating for money directly from the school budget because they believe that this one opportunity could change the course of a student’s life.

The Dual Enrollment funding model can be convoluted and difficult to explain to students and parents. Counselor 8 shared a typical scenario:

Dual enrollment grants are wonderful. I think, you know, being able to...promote those and even those get really confusing...you know, and I think a lot of times every counselor has found themselves trying to help students and then all of a sudden the college they go-- no wait a minute it--because you got two grants this semester and then one grant this semester Then you can only, and you know, you start really, you don't want to give false information. So, um, you know, I think how... the grant amounts work from semester to semester...having some simplification there.

Counselor 6 will not provide dual enrollment grant information to students at all and said:

Well, last year they gave us a print out that said, you know, the first dual enrollment class is free. The second dual enrollment class is free, and the third dual enrollment class, you get \$200 for the grant and then [they] will match it if you've got a 3.4 GPA and stuff like that. And then [they] gave us this information basically showing that all of the classes at [the college] can be taken for \$75. For the longest time, that's what I've been telling kids. And then last year I got a kid, or this year I actually got a kid who said, 'Hey, I'm doing my fourth dual enrollment class or whatever, and they're telling me that it's going to cost me five or \$600.' And I'm like, man, that doesn't make any sense. I had no idea. So, I emailed [the college] and I said, 'Hey, explain this to me. Because...this kid was graduating early and was taking senior English in the fall.' And they, they were saying, 'Hey, we're going to hold your grades because you owe us \$500'...she was taking senior English and a couple others, 'you're going to owe us 500 and some dollars.' And she's like, 'I thought it was 75 bucks.' I said, 'Well, that's what I thought it was too.' Um, and so we emailed...I think...And [they] said, 'Well, we'll give, we'll give one of their matching dual enrollment grants per semester is all that they'll give.' And I'm like, well,

that's not what you gave us in writing on your letterhead. And I go, no, no, that's the way that it is. And so, uh, you know, the three of us... are advising, well actually all six of us, have now gotten to the point where we say, 'Hey, you got to work the money out with the college.'

(Note: The making money to which Counselor 6 refers is an institutional scholarship at a specific college that is tied to cumulative grade point average and only available at specified points in the student's enrollment.)

Several counselors also expressed concern that students who would like to continue dual enrollment beyond the two free courses were frequently limited by finances. A few proposed changes to the legislation that funds the dual enrollment grant, the Tennessee Promise, and the HOPE scholarship so that students could access some of that money prior to enrolling at a college full time. Currently, dual enrollment students can access \$1200 from their future HOPE funds, but using that money reduces the student's first semester HOPE scholarship by \$1200. Counselor 11 explained it this way,

I love the idea of Tennessee Promise. Um, I think it's a great opportunity for students to be able to...continue their education post-secondary..., and remove barriers that at the moment we only offer six credit hours at the high school level where students can participate in dual enrollment courses at no cost. And, so in my opinion, what's the difference between using your Tennessee Promise money or your HOPE scholarship money, which is, you know, at a four-year school, um, at the high school level or post-secondary. Why, why, why can't we use it now versus later? ...So, my, my point is, is that it, it, it shouldn't matter... when we access this...now this kid is high school, under age, under the age of 18 or whether they enter the college. Um, if, if the kid is willing and

able then then that money should be available, I think, to them at that moment. So yeah, money is the barrier.

The lack of transportation emerged as a concern for the participating counselors. Teaching dual enrollment courses on the high school campus and/or offering online dual enrollment are one solution to solving the issue of transportation. However, the counselors tended to have more negative opinions about dual enrollment courses taught on the high school campus or online. All three districts did offer at least one dual enrollment class at the high school and online, but some schools had much stronger partnerships than others. Among the three districts there was very limited availability of public transportation, and none of the districts were able to offer any type of transportation to college campuses.

Teachers in one district had issues with college faculty coming onto the high school campus who did not uphold the rules, regulations, and policies with the schools and district so, the high school based program was phased out with the exception of one course. Some counselors felt that one of the best reasons to take dual enrollment courses was to be able to practice on a college campus before enrolling full-time. If students never leave their high school campus, they are unlikely to gain skills for college-going outside of academic ones. The work of Burbridge, Horton, and Murray (2018) found that college-going identity status could be most influenced by advisement and culture--supporting counselors' observations that more college-going skills would be gained on a college campus. Neither courses taught on the high school campus, nor online courses address the importance of taking courses within a college community.

## Emergent Themes

### *Career and Technical Education (CTE) Dual Enrollment*

Nine of the 12 counselors spontaneously expressed a need for more dual enrollment opportunities in CTE areas. Counselor 6 said,

I'm a big proponent of technical education. I mean, I get, I get kids in here all the time that are poor as dirt, and they're working at [a fast food restaurant] for \$8 an hour. And they're supporting their mama, or they're dying to leave home. And they go, yeah, I want to go to [expensive out-of-state school] and be a computer engineer. I'm like, okay. Well, have you ever thought about going to TCAT and getting a computer degree in 12 months and making \$25 an hour instead of \$8 an hour for the next four years? And you know, so I, I'm a big proponent of that. So, if we could get some dual enrollment opportunities at the technical schools.

As the interviews for this study were being conducted, newly inaugurated Tennessee Governor Bill Lee announced that his first proposal to the Tennessee legislature would include the Governor's Investment in Vocational Education (GIVE) grant to fund four trade or technical dual enrollment courses (TDOE, 2019b, February). In the study of the *Concurrent Course Initiatives*, Hughes, Rodriguez, Edwards, and Belfield (2012) found that following a career/technical path of dual enrollment showed higher rates of success. Though none of the counselors noticed recent growth in the dual enrollment populations, Counselor 5 mentioned "So we are encouraging students more through our CTE program for industry certification. That's where we've seen the greatest spike in participation and in the post-secondary opportunities." Counselor 3 added,

I think an expansion in the CTE domain for us I think would be helpful if we had more skills-based areas. Even a better partnership with our TCAT to allow students to begin that work now. And maybe even on campus we just need better relationships...maybe articulation agreements so that we can get you started in the work earlier.

Counselor 9 hoped that dual enrollment growth would include,

More certifications [to] come out of it. Like more um, like welding. Like if we have a student who is interested in welding, and they want to get that certification through a community college. I think we're going to see that population increase. Um, I'd like to see more of those types of certifications come up through TCAT. I would love for TCAT to be a little bit more involved with the high school. So, but I think, I think we're going to see overall positive trends as dual enrollment growth statewide.

#### *Advisement and Personnel*

A portion of this study was concerned with learning more about current dual enrollment advisement at both the high school and college levels. With the exception of some schools that more directly targeted specific students for dual enrollment based on available academic data, none of the districts had active advisement programs for dual enrollment students beyond advertising dual enrollment programs to their students in a variety of ways and students coming in to the counselor to ask for help. The assistance offered to students by the colleges seemed very similar. College personnel frequently attended parent nights and special events at the schools to discuss the dual enrollment options at their institution and would often come back to assist with collecting paperwork from students, but there was no advisement on course selection from the college level.

The community college personnel were reported to have the most interaction with the high schools and the students, but, again, the focus was enrollment and registration—not in supporting students in becoming successful college students. Counselors reported that each post-secondary institution has applications and requirements specific to only that institution. The only commonality in paperwork for the post-secondary institutions was a state-wide dual enrollment grant application. Counselor 7 described the process as,

Getting signed up to take a dual enrollment class can be a nightmare. I mean just hours and hours spent...I had a counselor tell me that she spent hours and hours with this one student trying to navigate...getting them through all the paperwork. I think we would see better participation if, if all of [that] paperwork [could be] navigated a little bit better or maybe weren't there in the first place. I wish we could make it easier for students who are in high school to, to navigate that or to not have to navigate all of that in order to, to take a college course.

The bureaucracy that students, parents, high school personnel, and college personnel face could result in some students just giving up on the process entirely and maybe even forming a negative attitude toward college-going. Howley, Howley, Howley and Duncan (2013) and Karp (2013) both stressed the importance of strong two-way communication between post-secondary institutions and high schools in order for dual enrollment programs to be successful. Based on the findings from this study communication seems to be stronger between some schools than others and the communication that does take place is more concerned with completing and submitting forms signed by the appropriate parties by certain deadlines. There was no evidence of any formalized advisement or supports beyond enrollment.

Lack of support for the students could be caused by the need to increase the number of positions at both the high school and post-secondary level. Counselors interviewed for this study felt the pressure of trying to fill a role for which they were not prepared and for which they had no additional time. Counselor 2 said,

[Is] the long-term implication of this [that] are we going to have to have a dual enrollment coordinator on [the high school} campus who deals with nothing but EPSOs? So, related things and dual enrollment would be the primary focus because right now it's just a duty assigned to a counselor.

Counselor 11 had this to say,

Districts have to track this information and data ourselves and um, so that is becoming a little cumbersome. Um, and so manpower I see is, is an issue as it's going to continue to grow. Um, so, it has become so large in just a year that we really have about three or four people with their fingers in the pie, and those fingers can't see each other all the time.

#### Implications for Practice

The state requirement for *Ready Graduates* is largely an unfunded mandate with some exceptions like the state's support of college admissions exams for high school juniors and seniors, and the funding available to students through the dual enrollment grant. The growth of dual enrollment and successful completion of the *Ready Graduate* requirements will require more financial support at both the school and institutional level primarily in the form of specialized personnel to deal with EPSOs at the school level and dual enrollment students at the institutional level. People who already have full-time work are being overburdened by absorbing additional duties. For the survival of dual enrollment programs, the communication lines

between schools and institutions will need to be strengthened and streamlined, and state intervention in creating and clarifying those lines of communication will likely be required.

The focus of the *Ready Graduate* program and dual enrollment should be the success of the student. As schools work to earn the highest possible grade on the *Ready Graduate* indicator from the state they will need to keep the best interests of the student in mind. Pushing students to enroll in programs for which they are not ready and that currently lack advisory components will only set students up for failure. And that failure could cost them subsequent funding from the dual enrollment grant, but it could also mean that students start their freshman year in college with such a GPA deficit that they will never receive the full benefit of the Tennessee Promise or the HOPE Scholarship. Students may also become so discouraged by failure that they write college off as an option in the future.

Advisement for dual enrollment students should include a developmental component that helps students learn the skills necessary to be a successful college student. The skills of successful dual enrollment students include being self-motivated, possessing self-advocacy skills, being confident, being responsible, possessing maturity, and having a strong work ethic. Some students learn these skills at an earlier age, others already possess them, but with instruction, support, and responsive resources students can develop these skills during their dual enrollment experience.

#### Implications for Future Research

Because the *Ready Graduate* requirement is so new to Tennessee there are many opportunities for future research including replication of this study across the state and to consider inclusion of multiple types of ETSOs. There is opportunity for quantitative research across the state once longitudinal data is more readily available for students completing dual

enrollment courses. This study was limited to the opinions of adults who work in a high school setting with dual enrollment students, but the students themselves have a story to tell. Previous research tells us that academic success and experience as a dual enrollment student leads to increased likelihood of college enrollment and completion, but there is much opportunity for additional research on the non-academic readiness of dual enrollment students and how much that can be influenced through advisement.

### Chapter Summary

State funding and policy have boosted the momentum of dual enrollment in Tennessee and in the First Tennessee Core Region and the number of enrolled students grows every semester. Dual enrollment is a research-based, proven strategy to increase college enrollment and college completion numbers. Counselors interviewed for this study have identified areas for improvement in dual enrollment programs including strengthening communication lines among and between students, parents, schools, and institutions, increasing support personnel to strengthen the likelihood of success of dual enrollment students, and increasing the opportunity for career, technical, and vocational dual enrollment.

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## APPENDIX A

### Solicitation Email

October, 2018

Dear Participant:

My name is Aleeta Shaw, and I am a graduate student at East Tennessee State University. I am working on my doctoral degree in Educational Leadership. In order to finish my studies, I need to complete a research project. The name of my research study is *Tennessee High School Counselors' and Dual Enrollment Advisors' Perceptions of Student Readiness for Dual Enrollment*.

The purpose of this study is to explore Tennessee high school counselors' (or dual enrollment advisors) perceptions of dual enrollment students' readiness. I would like to give a brief initial survey questionnaire to Tennessee high school counselors who would be willing to be further interviewed by phone or internet regarding dual enrollment and dual enrollment students. The initial survey should only take about 5 minutes to complete and the phone interview will take about 30-45 minutes. You will be asked questions about yourself and your experience as a school counselor or advisor working with dual enrollment students.

Since this project deals with discussing interactions with others and with perceptions about dual enrollment students, programs, and policies it might cause some minor stress. However, you may also feel better after you have had the opportunity to express yourself about dual enrollment. This study may provide benefit by providing more information about serving and advising dual enrollment students and allowing you to reflect on your own practice.

There will be precautions taken to prevent connecting your name with your responses by anyone other than the primary researcher. Direct quotations from your interview may be used in the research report, but precautions will be taken to protect your identity (ex. your school will not be named, a pseudonym will used to attribute the quote). Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the ETSU IRB and the researcher's dissertation chair could request access to the study records. Interview recordings and transcripts will be destroyed six years after the research completion date. The only other known risks of participating in this research would be the normal risks associated with the password protected storage of online information.

If you do not want to fill out the survey or be interviewed for the study, it will not affect you in any way. There are no alternative procedures except to choose not to participate in the study.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate. You can quit at any time. If you quit or refuse to participate, the benefits or treatment to which you are otherwise entitled will not be affected.

If you have any research-related questions or problems, you may contact me, Aleeta Shaw, at 423-747-8753. I am working on this project under the supervision of Dr. Pamela Scott. You may reach her at [scottp@etsu.edu](mailto:scottp@etsu.edu). Also, the chairperson of the Institutional Review Board at East Tennessee State University is available at (423) 439-6054 if you have questions about your rights as a research subject. If you have any questions or concerns about the research and want to talk to someone independent of the research team or you can't reach the study staff, you may call an IRB Coordinator at 423-439-6055 or 423-439-6002.

Please complete the initial survey here: [Dual Enrollment Study Interest Survey](#)

Sincerely,

Aleeta Shaw

## APPENDIX B

### Dual Enrollment Survey

This survey is to allow you to express your initial willingness and interest in participating in this study to explore Tennessee high school counselors' and dual enrollment advisors' perceptions of dual enrollment students and their readiness for dual enrollment. The Tennessee High School counselors and dual enrollment advisors who complete this brief initial survey should be willing to be further interviewed and voice recorded by phone or internet regarding dual enrollment and dual enrollment students. It should only take about 5 minutes to complete this initial survey. The interview portion will take approximately 30-45 minutes. You will be asked questions about yourself and your experience as a school counselor or advisor working with dual enrollment students. The information you give will be used to choose a purposeful sample for further interview about dual enrollment. Your participation in any part of this study is completely voluntary and may be terminated at any time. Information from this survey and the subsequent interview will be securely protected as mandated by the ETSU Institutional Review Board.

\* Required

Clicking the AGREE button below indicates that you have read the above information as well as the full content of the solicitation email, agree to volunteer, and are at least 18 years old. \*

I agree (continue survey)

I do not agree (do not continue survey)

Full Name \*

Your answer

Please give the best email address where you may be contacted. \*

Your answer

Please re-type the best email address where you may be contacted. \*

Your answer

Please give a phone number where you may be contacted. \*

Your answer

Are you a licensed school counselor in TN? \*

Yes

No

Do you currently work as a high school counselor in a high school in Tennessee? \*

Yes

No

How long have you worked as a high school counselor?

Less than 1 year

1-3 years

4-6 years

7-10 years

11-15 years

16-20 years

21-30 years

31+ years

Have you held a position other than "high school counselor" that worked with dual enrollment students or dual enrollment programs? \*

Yes

No

If you answered yes to the above question, please briefly explain your position and length of the work.

Your answer

Give a brief description of your work with dual enrollment students and programs. \*

Your answer

Would you be willing to participate in a voice recorded phone interview regarding dual enrollment for use in my dissertation? \*

Yes

No

I would like to receive a phone call to further explain what would be expected.

I have read and understand the informed consent information provided in the participant solicitation email. I understand that I will give my verbal informed consent to be interviewed at the beginning of the interview. \*

Yes

No

## APPENDIX C

### Interview Questions

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview about your work with dual enrollment students. As you had previously agreed in the participation survey, this interview will be recorded and analyzed for use in my dissertation. Is it okay to continue with the interview at this time?

For the tape, are you still willing to participate in the interview? Do you have any questions about the informed consent for this study? Do you have any questions or concerns about how your identity and private information will be protected during and after the study?

Are you ready to begin?

1. Tell me about your work with students who are considered for dual enrollment. (RQ1,2,3)

Probes: How often? Academic indicators? Data? Social indicators?  
Emotional indicators?

2. What factors might keep a student from being dually enrolled? (RQ1,2,3)
3. Does your school have any eligibility requirements for dual enrollment above and beyond the institutional or state eligibility requirements? (RQ4,5)

Probes: What are they?

4. Would you ever deny a student admission or a recommendation (completed form) to a dual enrollment opportunity who met the academic requirements? (RQ4,5)

Probes: What would cause you to deny access?

5. How do your students know about dual enrollment programs and decide to apply? (RQ4,5)

Probes: Do students self-identify for dual enrollment or do you (or someone in your school) encourage dual enrollment?

6. How has dual enrollment changed during the course of your career? (RQ4,5)
7. Are there circumstances that might prohibit a student from a dual enrollment opportunity? (RQ4)
8. How can student readiness for dual enrollment be influenced through advisement at the high school level and the college level? (RQ4,5)

9. What would you change about dual enrollment **programs and policies** if you could?  
(RQ4,5)

Probes: Federal? State? Institutional? Your school?

10. How has the implementation of the Ready Graduate Indicators in Tennessee affected dual enrollment at your school and in the state? (RQ4,5)

-Skip to end if unaware of Ready Graduate Indicators

11. How do you think the implementation of the Ready Graduate Indicators in Tennessee will affect dual enrollment throughout the state? (RQ4,5)

12. Any final thoughts about dual enrollment or Tennessee's policies that you would like to add? (Wrap Up)

Thank you for participating in my study! My dissertation will be available online through Sherrod Library after publication.

VITA

ALEETA LYNN SHAW

Education: Ed.D., Educational Leadership  
East Tennessee State University  
Johnson City, TN 2019

Coursework for School Counseling License  
East Tennessee State University  
Johnson City, TN 1999

Master of Education, Counseling  
East Tennessee State University  
Johnson City, TN 1991

Bachelor of Arts, English  
East Tennessee State University  
Johnson City, TN 1990

Licensure: Professional School Counseling License  
State of Tennessee 2004

Apprentice School Counseling License  
State of Tennessee 2000

Employment: University School, East Tennessee State University  
School Counselor  
Johnson City, TN 2001-Present

John Sevier Middle School, Kingsport City Schools  
Director, After-School and Summer Programs  
Kingsport, TN 2000 - 2001

University School, East Tennessee State University  
Assistant School Counselor  
Johnson City, TN 1999