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Statutory Changes Impacting Course Eligibility through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program

Legislation was passed during the 2016 legislative session which clarifies the roles of Senior Year Plus programs and impacts the eligibility of community college courses for Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) where concurrent enrollment agreements are in place.

The revision to Iowa Code chapter 261E (Senior Year Plus), section 6, subsection 3, limits the use of PSEO as a means to enroll students in a course when it is possible for such enrollment to be handled through a contracted course offered through the concurrent enrollment program. The revision reads:

...a course is ineligible [*to be offered through PSEO*] if the school district has a contractual agreement with the eligible postsecondary institution under [*the concurrent enrollment program*] that meets the requirements [*for supplementary weighting*], and the course may be delivered through such an agreement...

Iowa Acts 86 (2016 Regular GA), chapter 1108, sec. 61

In practice, this means that the vast majority of high school student enrollment in community college coursework will be through the concurrent enrollment program, as the concurrent enrollment program has the flexibility to accommodate and handle all forms of student enrollment, including those enrollments previously handled through PSEO. Only in rare circumstances (e.g., a district without any concurrent enrollment agreement) is enrollment in a community college course through PSEO permissible.

In no way does this change usurp a school district's authority and responsibility to determine which community college courses will be made available to its students through concurrent enrollment. A school district must continue to determine, first, whether it is desirable to contract for a given community college course and, second, whether the course is comparable to one already offered by the school district. These decisions should be made on a course-by-course basis, and the contract with a community college should delineate the specific courses for which the district is contracting.

Lastly, please note that this change only impacts courses offered by a community college – a school district may continue to enroll students through PSEO in coursework offered by other eligible postsecondary institutions, including Iowa's public universities, private colleges and universities, and eligible proprietary institutions.

These statutory changes will be enforced starting the 2017-18 academic year. Please contact Eric St Clair at eric.stclair@iowa.gov or 515-725-0127 with questions or comments.