Introduction
As the consensus that every school student should be prepared for postsecondary education grows, educational programs that aim to bridge the gap between high school and college have increased dramatically over the last 10 years. One of these programs is concurrent enrollment, also referred to as "dual enrollment" and "dual credit." These programs allow public high school students to enroll in college courses to earn high school and college credits simultaneously. As these programs become more prevalent across the nation, there is increasing concern about who has access to the programs and about the quality of the curriculum. Those states with concurrent enrollment programs have taken a variety of approaches to address access and quality. Some states have detailed policies guiding the types of courses offered, instructor qualifications, admissions requirements, and course content, while other states provide little or no guidance.

Growth of Concurrent Enrollment across the Nation
Concurrent enrollment programs date back to the 1950s, but in the past 7-10 years, concurrent enrollment courses “have taken hold across the country” (Marshall and Andrews 2002, 238). As of 2005, forty states offer these programs, including Utah (U.S. Department of Education 2004; 2005).

There has been significant growth in enrollment and credits earned over the past decade in Utah. Initially, Utah’s program had approximately 11,000 students in the 1995-1996 school year. By the 2005-2006 school year, 27,396 students were enrolled in concurrent courses throughout the state (Utah State Office of Education 2007a). The number of credit hours taken by students has also increased since the 1995-1996 school year from 117,438 (quarter hours) to 189,838 (semester hours) in the 2005-2006 school year (Utah State Office of Education 2007a).

Concerns about Concurrent Enrollment
Scholars, education officials, and policy makers across the nation have become increasingly concerned about the two aspects of concurrent enrollment programs: access and quality. Studies have explored whether programs are enrolling a broad range of students and the policies in place that affect enrollment. Equally important is whether the concurrent enrollment programs are offering a college-level educational experience. Full details about access and the quality of Utah’s program are available in the Center for Public Policy and Administration’s in-depth report “Concurrent Enrollment in Utah: Access and Quality.” A brief summary regarding both access and quality is provided below.

Access: Do Concurrent Enrollment Programs enroll a broad range of students?
Studies suggest a variety of factors impact who enrolls in courses, including the location of the high school, the cost, admissions requirements, and how much information is available to students. [1] Table 1 briefly summarizes access policies for Utah’s program.

| Locations | Program exists in all Utah school districts and all of Utah’s public colleges and universities |
Quality: Are Concurrent Enrollment Programs offering a college-level experience?
As noted in the U.S. Department of Education’s 2004 report “State Dual Enrollment Policies: Addressing Access and Quality,” many scholars and policy makers are also concerned about instructor qualifications, the quality of courses, and state oversight (see Bailey and Karp 2003; Boswell 2001; Krueger 2006).

Utah requires that concurrent enrollment courses are taught by college or university faculty or public school educators. Public school teachers must first be approved as adjunct faculty and supervised by a state institution of higher education (R277-713-7).

Course content is another area that has implications for the quality of concurrent programs. However, policies differ from state to state. Utah requires that “course content, procedures, and teaching materials in concurrent enrollment programs are approved by the appropriate department or program at an institution of higher education in order to ensure quality and comparability with courses offered on college and university campuses” (Utah State Code 53A-15-101 2 (b)). Finally, the State of Utah has instituted assessment tools to measure whether students are receiving a quality, college-level education when enrolled in these programs.

Conclusion
The growing number of concurrent enrollment programs across the nation demonstrates the popularity of students earning college credits while in high school. Utah has certainly been part of the trend. Since the 1995-1996 school year, the number of students enrolling in Utah’s program has more than doubled. The number of credit hours achieved has also increased steadily over the years and it appears that students welcome the chance to get a “head start” on college. However, concerns about access and quality of concurrent enrollment across the country are prevalent. Some of these concerns have been briefly examined in this executive summary. More detailed information about Utah’s concurrent enrollment program can be found in the full report by the Center for Public Policy and Administration.

See the full in-depth report.
[1] There is no cost to high school students taking concurrent enrollment classes, but there may be a one-time admissions fee and other costs related to the course, such as lab fees, at a higher education institution (R277-716-6).

[2] Utah Board of Regents R165-2-2-1 and R165-2-2-4 also apply to quality issues.