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CREED SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM HELPS DUAL CREDIT ENROLLMENT SOAR TO 53 PERCENT IN EL PASO HIGH SCHOOLS

*CREED scholarship program has supported the advanced certification of
75 teachers since 2015*

(EL PASO, Texas) - Since 2015, the Council on Regional Economic Expansion and Educational Development (CREED) has awarded \$259,000 through its Accelerated Certification of Teachers (ACT El Paso) Scholarship Program to help area high school teachers attain dual credit certifications. To date, the program has funded 75 high school teachers who have completed certification or are currently studying to teach dual credit or early college courses in our region's high schools.

Dual credit courses give high school students the opportunity to become acclimated to college coursework and to enroll in courses that earn them college credit while still in high school. CREED has earmarked a total of \$1M for the scholarship program, which aims to increase higher education attainment for El Paso students.

"We know that college-readiness is a clear indicator of whether our students will pursue and successfully obtain a postsecondary degree or certificate. The goal of this scholarship program is to increase college-readiness across the region by exposing more students to the rigor and idea of a college education," said Richard A. Castro, Chairman of CREED. "By investing in our teachers to deliver high-quality dual credit courses, we are not only providing professional development opportunities to our educators, but giving our students a head-start at college coursework and ensuring our region is able to see economic prosperity in the future."

ACT El Paso scholarships have been awarded to a total of 75 teachers in five El Paso County school districts: Canutillo Independent School District, Clint Independent School District, El Paso Independent School District, Socorro Independent School District and Ysleta Independent School District. The scholarship funds were used by teachers to help pay for their credentialing process, which requires them to complete 18 graduate semester credit hours in the content area they will teach and successfully obtain a master's degree.

Thanks to the scholarship program, Clint ISD will have a dual-credit credentialed Spanish teacher at every high school in its district by the end of this year.

"The scholarships help us address our school's need for more dual credit certified teachers," Clint High School Principal, Garrett Ritchey. "Although the scholarships go to the teachers, the students are the true beneficiaries."

Currently, only one in six El Paso students who starts 8th grade earns a postsecondary credential within 11 years, which places El Paso as the second lowest performing of all Texas regions. Additionally, only 70 percent of students who enter The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) and 34 percent who enter El Paso Community College (EPCC) are fully prepared for college-level work. CREEED is working to improve these numbers by investing in initiatives that increase college readiness in our region.

Since 2014, there has been a significant increase (53%) of students taking dual credit or early college courses throughout El Paso County. While only 4,750 students enrolled in these courses at the start of 2014, that number jumped to 7,250 in 2017.

“The Ysleta Independent School District is appreciative of the funding that CREEED has dedicated toward THE MASTERS program, which offers our teachers a convenient, affordable, and supportive path for pursuing their master’s degrees and advanced certifications,” said Dr. Xavier De La Torre, YISD Superintendent of Schools.

“As of this spring, we will have 20 YISD teachers successfully complete their master’s degrees and advanced certifications through the program in either math, science, social studies, or language arts,” Dr. De La Torre said. “We firmly believe this will help our teachers significantly enhance their classroom instructional practices while positively impacting student achievement.”

Research shows that students who successfully complete 18 hours of dual credit courses are four times more likely to complete a college credential or degree program on time. College credits earned through high school dual credit courses are at no cost to the student, thereby lowering the overall cost of college tuition.

“We are proud of EPCC’s Dual Credit & Early College High School partnerships with our local Independent School Districts,” said El Paso Community College President Dr. William Serrata. “CREEED’s scholarships for educators have increased the number of high school faculty teaching college courses, helping our students earn credit towards college degrees even before while they graduate high school.”

CREEED aims to place teachers certified to offer dual credit courses in every high school in El Paso County. ACT El Paso is part of the non-profit group’s larger plan to improve educational parity, enhance the quality of instruction, and see more students complete post-high-school degree or certificate programs throughout the El Paso region.

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About the Council on Regional Economic Expansion and Educational Development (CREEED):

CREEED is a not-for-profit education policy and advocacy group focused on creating measurable outcomes and dedicated to closing the achievement gap for El Paso County students. We accomplish this goal by investing in policies, programs, and metrics that prepare students to succeed in college and our future workforce.