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## **Advanced opportunities saved Idaho families \$55 million last year**

(BOISE) – With a \$13.4 million state investment in providing college-level courses to high school students across Idaho, the State Department of Education’s Fast Forward program saved students’ families more than four times that amount -- \$55 million -- in college costs.

The SDE’s newly released Advanced Opportunities report for the 2017-18 school year shows a sharp increase in the number of Idaho high school students taking dual-credit courses through the state’s colleges and universities – 25,085 students, up from 21,333 the previous year.

“Idaho students, and the teachers who guide them, are embracing their opportunities to fast-forward on their path to post-secondary success,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra said.

“When given the access, our students rise to the challenge, yielding great return for our investment.”

Even in 2015-16, when state funding for dual credit courses was a fraction of the \$4,125 per student allowance that the Idaho Legislature approved starting in 2016-17, Idaho was a national leader in offering dual enrollment. According to the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships, Idaho had the nation’s third-highest percentage of student participation in dual enrollment in fiscal 2016, and it ranked 10th for highest percentage of high schools offering dual enrollment.

“Since that time our dual credit rates have skyrocketed,” said Advanced Opportunities Coordinator Tina Polishchuk. “This has gone from an innovative idea to being a staple of the high school experience.”

The \$4,125 per-student allocation is enough to allow students to earn a two-year associate’s degree, she said, and many students are doing just that. In fiscal 2017, Idaho students earned 126 associate’s degrees, and that number has been going up every year, she said.

Last year’s top two providers of dual credit in Idaho are two-year colleges: College of Western Idaho in Nampa, with 57,096 credits earned by high school students, and the College of Southern Idaho in Twin Falls, with 31,372 credits. Boise State University came in third with 22,407 credits.

The dual-credit program makes up the lion's share of Idaho's Fast Forward Program, which totals \$15.9 million for fiscal 2018, including funding for Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exams as well as overload courses.

The latest Advanced Opportunities report shows encouraging trends in demographics, with Hispanic students representing 14.26 percent of participating students, up from 13.07 percent in 2016-17. That comes closer to their overall representation in the state's population (17.53 percent).

The number of low-income students (qualifying for free and reduced-price lunches) earning advanced opportunities also increased in the past school year, representing a greater share of low-income students statewide. Low-income students represent 27.74 percent of students in advanced opportunities programs, compared to 32.09 percent of students overall. That's a much narrower margin than in 2016-17, when low-income students represented 29.66 percent of advanced opportunities participants compared to 43.27 percent overall.

Participation in Idaho's dual credit program is strong throughout the state, in charter schools and districts large and small, rural and urban. The college courses most sought after by high school students are general education courses that are easily transferable and meet requirements across a variety of disciplines.

"Most participating students are focused on a trajectory to college," Polishchuk said.

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**Attachment:** Advanced Opportunities program summary for fiscal 2018.