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*Chris Rogers, Jennifer Harper & Lauren Markle, CCCC Students  
photo provided by Mark Robinson*

## Dualing Students

By Mark Robinson

WHEN IT COMES TO EDUCATION, Frisco residents have some terrific resources available to get ahead on college credits through the dual credit and dual admissions programs available at Collin County Community College District (Collin).

It is first important to distinguish the two programs because although they are similar in name, they are very different in substance.

The dual credit program allows current high school students to take college classes and earn both high school and college credit simultaneously.

The dual admissions program, however, allows college freshman and sophomore students to complete the first two years at the community college and have automatic admission to complete their degree at a participating university. This clears the path for

students who are working toward bachelor's degrees. In addition to a less complex transfer, dual admissions students often enjoy many of the perks a university has to offer such as library facilities and student activities.

The difference between the programs, however, does not take away from the fact that they both facilitate a bright future for students.

Frisco High School senior Chris Rogers completed six hours of high school and college credit at Collin Preston Ridge Campus in the fall and he will finish six more hours this spring. When he starts college next fall, he will have 12 credit hours under his belt.

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Rogers is not alone in his foresight. As of last fall, 782 area high school students were enrolled in the dual credit program – Frisco leads the way with 206 students.

Lauren Markle and fellow Frisco senior Jennifer Harper, along with Rogers, are also taking 12 hours over two semesters. Markle plans to attend Texas A&M in the fall and study marketing, and Harper plans to attend the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor and study early childhood development.

"I think it is practical to get an early start in high school for college," Harper, 18, said.

The practical purpose of finishing credits for high school and college is not the only advantage of the program. It also allows university-bound students to complete college credits at a lower

tuition rate. Students also get a little taste of higher education in and outside the classroom. Harper cited the discussion-based teaching style in the college classrooms as a difference between Collin and her high school classes.

All three students said the main difference between a high school class and a college class is the “freedom.” Of course, this “freedom” is a cloaked version of responsibility and time and energy management on the part of the students.

Professors may or may not take attendance. Books, assignments, studying, taking notes—is all the responsibility of the students. There are no notes to their parents if their grades falter. No truancy officers will track them down if they do not show up.

“I like the freedom and responsibility of it,” Rogers said. “If you want to learn, you come to class wanting to learn. It is a better learning environment because people do not have to be there. They get more into it and care more.”

Markle said she feels the program has prepared her for the university experience and has opened her eyes to the nuances of the college classroom.

“I like the classes to be organized,” she said. “In college, you get your syllabus, and you know what to read and when to read it. You know when the tests are scheduled. It is nice to know you have more freedom, even if you do not use it.”

Rogers said dual credit has benefited him significantly. One of the courses he is taking in the spring is economics – the very thing he wants to study once he transfers to a university.

“The class helps out a lot because it is cool to see why things happen and why they happen from the theories,” Rogers



Founders Hall, Collin County Community College-Preston Ridge Campus  
photo by Leah Beckham

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said of his economics class. “It gives you a good background. It is a lot of learning on your own. It is a good foundation.”

Likewise, the dual admissions

program provides a venue for Collin students to get an early taste of the university of their choice. Dual admissions started in the summer of 2000, when Collin and the University of North Texas (UNT) came to an agreement to accept students and their credit hours. Since then, the University of Texas–Dallas, Southern Methodist University (SMU), Texas Woman’s University (TWU) and Texas A&M University-Commerce have joined the fold.

Every university’s agreement is unique, but one constant is that dual admissions students complete freshman and sophomore courses at Collin while being advised as to how to make sure their courses transfer seamlessly to the university.

Other amenities depend on the campus. SMU, for example, selects 20 students annually to receive an SMU ID card, access to

the SMU Distinguished Lecture Series, a DART pass and tickets to athletic events.

The “TWU bound” student gets a student ID card; access to the library and 10 complimentary passes to the wellness center among other benefits.

“The dual admissions program is another way for our students to learn to work in the education system,” said Stephanie Hanson, Collin’s coordinator of transfer programs. “It takes it one step further to get them ready to transfer.”

“One of the benefits is that we sit down one-on-one with the students and complete a degree plan, so they know exactly what classes they need to take at Collin,” UNT Assistant

Director of Admissions Myra Hafer said. "It is a positive thing for both (Collin and UNT). We have had more than 300 students sign up and go through the dual admissions program."

Christina Garcia, 22, currently attends TWU after participating in the program while at Collin. She said the step-by-step process in which she was able to enroll at TWU eased the transfer process for her hours taken at Collin.

In total, 427 Collin students have been involved in dual admissions with six former students already completing their bachelor's degrees at UNT alone.

However, one of the main advantages of the dual admissions program is for students to get a glimpse of university life. It is sort of a semester-long orientation.

Garcia is majoring in kinesiology and plans to go into corporate fitness and cardiac rehabilitation.

"It was a great experience," Garcia said. "I got a taste of TWU and was able to make sure that was the school I wanted to go to. Both schools, however, are great."

"When the students find the dual admissions program, it enables them to get a close look at what programs we offer and get to know the professors," said Teresa Mauk, the TWU executive director of enrollment management. "It is an opportunity to get involved in campus life before they take that jump."

Both programs were established to expedite and enhance the journey through higher academia for current high school and college students. And Frisco students seem to be taking advantage of the opportunity in large numbers.

The accomplishments of those students, no matter where they chose to attend college, legitimize the two programs and serve as testimonials for the programs' success.

*Mark Robinson is a public relations associate at Collin County Community College District.*

The logo for Frisco Style Magazine features a red square on the left containing the letters 'FSM' in a white, stylized, cursive font. To the right of the square, the word 'frisco' is written in a lowercase, cursive font, and 'STYLE MAGAZINE' is written in a bold, uppercase, serif font.

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