

Dual enrollment program is twice as nice for 17-year-old



Georgia Perimeter College

By Clare Morris

For EDU Atlanta

By the time spring semester ends, Bharat Sanders will have two graduations to celebrate. The 17-year-old will not only graduate from Johns Creek High School with honors, he'll also earn an associate degree in mathematics from Georgia Perimeter College (GPC).

The dual degrees are the result of hard work and savvy planning for Sanders, who dreams of heading to Georgia Tech and, eventually, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to study brain sciences. Sanders first got the idea of dual enrollment when he realized that the Advanced Placement courses he wanted to take at Johns Creek were the same ones he could study at GPC without taking the rigorous AP exams.

"After taking AP classes, you have to study for this big test to see whether or not you get credit," Sanders said. "I'm doing the same work that's even a little more advanced, and then I take the final exam. It's not nearly as stressful."

Sanders enrolled at GPC through two programs: the Accel program that pays for the tuition and some fees, and the Move on When Ready program. Both have specific requirements for eligible high school students. Sanders first learned about the options from a neighbor, and after applying and being accepted last year, he took only one class at Johns Creek High School. This year, all of his classes are at GPC's Dunwoody campus or online.

"I've taken what a normal high schooler would take: English 1 and 2, chemistry, physics and math," he said.

Juggling the demands of dual enrollment can be daunting for teens, Sanders admits, and takes some getting used to.

"When I started, I was still in high-school mode," he said. "But I learned you have to be self-motivated and realize [that] teachers aren't willing to baby you anymore. You really have to put work into it."

Though the challenges are greater, Sanders said there are benefits beyond accelerating his college career.

"I really like that GPC has such a diverse population of students; I've had people in my classes who have grandkids and others who are just a year older than I am," he said. "So it's more of a real-world environment. I've learned things from them; they've learned things from me. In the real world, you're not just with people your own age all time."

Going to GPC hasn't kept Sanders from enjoying being a high school senior.

"I can still be in clubs at Johns Creek and even audition for a play, if I want," he said. "I still have a lot of activities that I love. I've been playing classical piano for 14 years, and I really enjoy that. I'm president of a book club and biology club. And I work at a tutoring center here in north Fulton twice a week. It's hard sometimes to keep it all in check, but I love it."

Perhaps the biggest advantage of the dual enrollment program is how it enhances his college applications, Sanders said. He's already been accepted to the University of Georgia.

"Right now, I'm looking really attractive to the four-year colleges," he said with a laugh.

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