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DRIVING INNOVATION: HOW SIX STATES ARE ORGANIZING TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES IN DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION

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Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count is a national nonprofit dedicated to helping more community college students, particularly low-income students and students of color, stay in school and earn a college certificate or degree. Data-driven, student-centered, and built on the values of equity and excellence, *Achieving the Dream* is closing achievement gaps and accelerating student success nationwide by: 1) transforming community college practices; 2) leading policy change; 3) generating knowledge; and 4) engaging the public. Launched as an initiative in 2004 with funding from Lumina Foundation, *Achieving the Dream* is today the largest non-governmental reform movement for student success in community college history. With more than 160 community colleges and institutions, more than 100 coaches and advisors, and 16 state policy teams—working throughout 30 states and the District of Columbia—*Achieving the Dream* helps 3.5 million community college students have a better chance of realizing greater economic opportunity and achieving their dreams.

The Developmental Education Initiative consists of 15 *Achieving the Dream* community colleges that are building on demonstrated results to scale up developmental education innovations at their institutions. Six states are committed to further advancement of their *Achieving the Dream* state policy work in the developmental education realm. Managed by MDC with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Lumina Foundation, the initiative aims to expand groundbreaking remedial education programs that experts say are key to dramatically boosting the college completion rates of low-income students and students of color. The innovations developed by the colleges and states participating in the *Developmental Education Initiative* will help community colleges understand what programs are effective in helping students needing developmental education succeed and how to deliver these results to even more students.



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JOBS FOR THE FUTURE develops, implements, and promotes new education and workforce strategies that help communities, states, and the nation compete in a global economy. In 200 communities in 41 states, JFF improves the pathways leading from high school to college to family-sustaining careers. JFF leads the state policy and capacity building efforts for both *Achieving the Dream* and the *Developmental Education Initiative*.

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MDC's mission is to help organizations and communities close the gaps that separate people from opportunity. It has been publishing research and developing programs in education, government policy, workforce development, and asset building for more than 40 years. MDC was the managing partner of *Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count* for six years and was responsible for its incubation as a national nonprofit.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

More and more young people are enrolling in postsecondary education, particularly in community colleges, with the goal of preparing for jobs that provide access to middle-class wages. Unfortunately, too few students succeed. There are many reasons for this, but one of the biggest is the large number of students who lack the academic skills to do college-level work upon enrolling—and the dearth of tested, effective ways to help them catch up. A significant redesign of remedial education—how it is organized, delivered, and taught—is required if the nation’s community colleges are to achieve more than incremental progress in increasing student success. The vast majority of our nation’s community colleges need substantial ongoing supports to do so.

The most logical and efficient locus of such support is on the state level, through policies and capacity-building efforts that identify promising practices, test program outcomes, and disseminate proven models quickly and effectively. States are emerging as key drivers of—and support systems for—broad and deep innovation in developmental education. One important vehicle for their work is the *Developmental Education Initiative*, launched in 2009 by MDC and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Lumina Foundation. The three-year initiative supports the efforts of fifteen colleges and six states to strengthen and scale up promising strategies for increasing the persistence and success of students who start college in need of remedial coursework. Guided by technical assistance and consulting marshaled by MDC, DEI colleges are expanding innovations in curriculum, acceleration, institutional policies, and student services to help more students move more quickly into credit courses. The DEI states are committed to advancing state policy efforts they began as partners in *Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count*.

To strengthen the capacity of DEI states to drive institutional progress and to help more students earn credentials with labor market value, the initiative is pursuing a research-based three-part policy strategy:

- > A **data-driven improvement process** that strengthens state capacity to collect, assess, and use longitudinal student data in support of institutional innovation;
- > A state-level **innovation investment strategy** that provides incentives for the development, testing, and scaling up of effective models; and
- > State-level **policy supports** that facilitate the implementation of new models and encourage the spread of practices that can improve progress and completion for students in need of developmental education.

Six DEI states—Connecticut, Florida, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas, and Virginia—are putting the state policy strategy into action. *Driving Innovation* describes what they have set out to do and why, the momentum they have developed, and next steps in their efforts to overcome obstacles to better results. While these states are in the early stages of testing and implementing strategies to accelerate the identification, implementation, and scale-up of new approaches, they have made impressive strides, and their experience has important implications for community colleges, for states, and for the national conversation on developmental education redesign.

DATA-DRIVEN IMPROVEMENT

The DEI states are committed to collecting and analyzing data for the specific purpose of increasing the success of community college students who require developmental education. The states are collaborating to create and implement

a systemic, three-part process of using student-outcomes data to accelerate the creation, adoption, scale-up, and evaluation of new programs that can dramatically raise completion rates for academically underprepared students:

- > Identify and define common indicators that measure student progression through developmental education.
- > Set measurable goals by which to evaluate student and institutional improvement in developmental education.
- > Compare outcomes and publicize the results to key stakeholders to focus and accelerate improvement efforts.

INVESTING IN INNOVATION

The second priority is to develop and deepen state-level strategies to invest in innovation. Even in this difficult fiscal environment, DEI participants have worked diligently to help states secure, allocate, and bundle state, federal, and private funding for strategic investments to support institutional innovation. These states have made a commitment to help leading community colleges test and refine research-based program interventions that can dramatically improve outcomes for students who enter college underprepared. They are committed to investing in institutional innovation through:

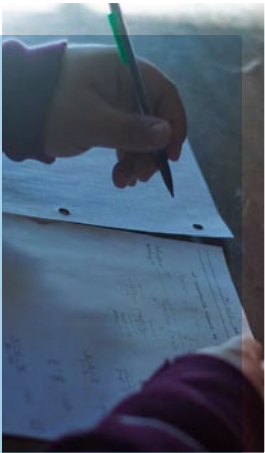
- > Identifying and targeting resources for implementing and testing developmental education innovations in colleges with potential for success; and
- > Building state-level capacity to support institutional innovation through diffusing research and knowledge.

POLICY SUPPORTS

The third component of the DEI state policy strategy is the implementation of policy supports that add momentum to institutional efforts to improve outcomes for underprepared students. Thoughtful policy action can remove barriers to innovation, improve incentives driving decision making, and address challenges that are beyond the purview of individual institutions or even of the community college sector as a whole. When policymakers listen to the concerns of college leaders and do their best to anticipate unintended consequences, they can help to accelerate innovation and improvement.

In addition to policies around data use and investment in innovation, the DEI states have identified and are pursuing three other high-priority policy targets:

- > **Preventative strategies:** To reduce the need for developmental education, states can set and broadly communicate college-readiness standards, provide early assessment opportunities for high school students, and ensure that college expectations are aligned with both high school and adult education systems.
- > **Assessment and placement:** A state's assessment and placement policies can affect whether institutional approaches to selecting tests and placing students into developmental courses are consistent yet flexible.
- > **Performance funding:** Shifting at least a segment of state funding from rewarding enrollment to rewarding success can be a huge spur to institutional innovation. It also can focus institutional energy on carefully redesigning programs and courses to help students move quickly and effectively through requirements. DEI states focus on ensuring that performance funding approaches address the particular needs and interests of students who enroll in college underprepared for college-level work.



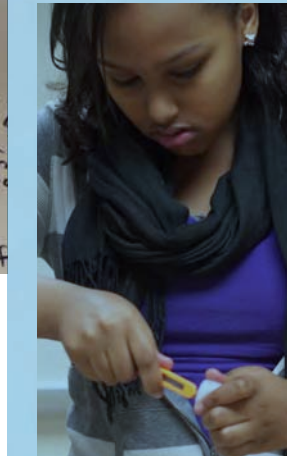
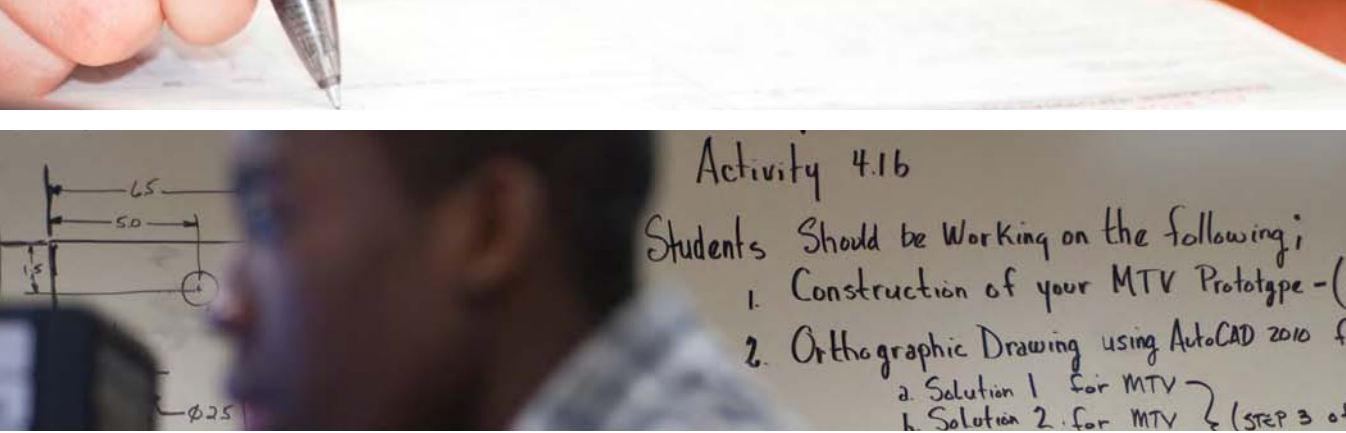
THE DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION INITIATIVE'S STATE STRATEGY

ASPIRATIONS FOR A COLLEGE CREDENTIAL ARE GROWING AS THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA DECLINES. MORE AND MORE YOUNG PEOPLE ARE ENROLLING IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, PARTICULARLY IN THE NATION'S MORE AFFORDABLE COMMUNITY COLLEGES, WITH THE GOAL OF PREPARING FOR JOBS THAT PROVIDE ACCESS TO MIDDLE-CLASS WAGES. UNFORTUNATELY, TOO FEW STUDENTS FIND THE SUCCESS THEY SEEK. SIX YEARS AFTER ENROLLING IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE, ONLY 23 PERCENT OF DEGREE-SEEKING STUDENTS HAD COMPLETED AN ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE AND 13 PERCENT HAD COMPLETED A BACHELOR'S DEGREE (SNYDER & DILLOW 2010).

THERE ARE MANY REASONS FOR LOW COMPLETION RATES AMONG COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS. ONE OF THE BIGGEST IS THE LARGE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO LACK THE ACADEMIC SKILLS TO DO COLLEGE-LEVEL WORK UPON ENROLLING—AND THE DEARTH OF TESTED, EFFECTIVE WAYS TO HELP THEM CATCH UP. CLOSE TO 60 PERCENT OF STUDENTS WHO ATTEND COMMUNITY COLLEGE TAKE AT LEAST ONE REMEDIAL COURSE.¹ THESE STUDENTS RARELY EARN CREDENTIALS OR COMPLETE DEGREES. ACCORDING TO THE NATIONAL EDUCATION LONGITUDINAL STUDY, FEWER THAN 25 PERCENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION STUDENTS COMPLETED A CERTIFICATE OR A DEGREE WITHIN EIGHT YEARS OF ENROLLMENT (BAILEY 2009).

A significant redesign of remedial education—how it is organized, delivered, and taught—is required if any of the nation's almost 1,200 community colleges are to achieve more than incremental progress in increasing student success. All but the largest and best-resourced colleges lack the capacity to design, execute, and sustain the systemic research and evaluation necessary to identify promising models and pathways for improving developmental education outcomes (Jenkins & Morest 2007). The vast majority of our nation's community colleges need substantial ongoing supports to do so.

The most logical and efficient locus such support is on the state level, through policies and capacity-building efforts that identify promising practices, test program outcomes, and disseminate proven models quickly and effectively. An essential state role is providing incentives for colleges to adopt the most effective methods and to jettison strategies that do not work.



States are emerging as key drivers of—and support systems for—broad and deep innovation in developmental education. One important vehicle is the *Developmental Education Initiative*, launched in 2009 by MDC and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Lumina Foundation. The initiative supports the efforts of fifteen colleges in six states to strengthen and scale up promising strategies for increasing the persistence and success of students who start college in need of remedial coursework. The states are committing to advancing state policy efforts in the developmental education realm that they began as partners in *Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count*.² In addition, the *Developmental Education Initiative* funds work with the leaders of community college systems and associations in those states to accelerate the adoption of solutions across all of their member colleges to dramatically improve outcomes for developmental education students.

At the heart of the *Developmental Education Initiative's* state-level strategy is the principle that improving results requires a shift in focus: State agencies and governance bodies must be proactive partners with their community colleges, placing a priority on continuous improvement. To strengthen the capacity of DEI states to drive institutional progress and to help more students earn credentials with labor market value, the initiative is pursuing a research-based three-part strategy:

- > A **data-driven improvement process** that strengthens state capacity to collect, assess, and use longitudinal student data in support of institutional innovation;
- > A state-level **innovation investment strategy** that provides incentives for the development, testing, and scaling up of effective models; and
- > State-level **policy supports** that facilitate the implementation of new models and encourage the spread of practices that can improve progress and completion for students in need of developmental education.

Six states—Connecticut, Florida, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas, and Virginia—are putting the DEI state policy strategy into action (see box, “*The Developmental Education Initiative State Policy Strategy*”). This report describes what the states have set out to do and why, the momentum they have developed so far, and next steps in their efforts to overcome obstacles to better results. It is organized around the three components of the DEI policy improvement strategy, which participating states are committed to implementing by the end of 2012.

DEI states believe that intentional and coordinated implementation of this strategy will create conditions, supports, and incentives required to grow, and sustain innovation that fundamentally changes the way community colleges serve academically underprepared students. As a result, many more students will earn the credentials they seek.

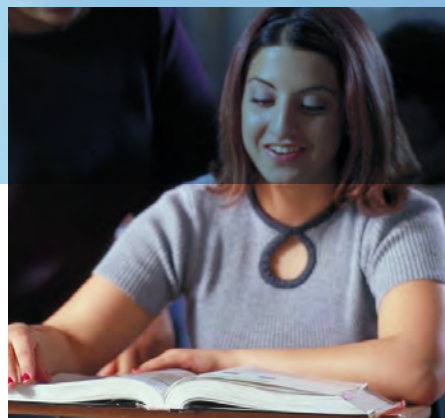
The commitment of DEI states to improving outcomes for students in need of remediation is significant. Community college system offices, departments of higher education, legislatures, and other policymaking or policy-implementing entities are taking on the redesign of developmental education with a deep seriousness of purpose. They have engaged key stakeholder groups and launched careful reviews of community college programming to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of current practices and policies—and to identify areas where institutional innovation is critical. They have invested time, funds, and attention to help drive their community colleges toward better strategies and improved developmental education outcomes.

The Virginia Community College System, for example, established a formal process for identifying high-leverage developmental education innovations. The Developmental Education Task Force—whose members include system staff, college academic and student services representatives, and K-12 leaders—was charged with identifying ways in which Virginia’s community colleges can improve success rates for students who test into developmental education. The resulting report, *The Turning Point*, has been the blueprint for ambitious efforts to redesign state assessment policies and to reorganize the developmental education sequence into shorter, specific instructional modules.

As part of its DEI work, the North Carolina Community College System created four committees: Data and Performance Measurement; Assessment and Placement; Developmental Education Redesign; and Finance. These committees are made up of institution-level academic and student services representatives, North Carolina Community Colleges System staff and board, and representatives from the K-12 Department of Public Instruction. They are guiding the system’s efforts to redesign and better align policies to support college strategies and improve developmental education outcomes.

The Connecticut Community College System recommended that the state General Assembly create a task force on developmental education, comprising the CCCS, the state Department of Education, and the Connecticut State University System. The legislature’s Higher Education & Employment Advancement Committee considered a bill (Senate Bill 45) to create the task force, but it did not move forward. The committee remains interested in improving developmental education outcomes and continues to engage the CCCS as it considers legislative options.

Across the DEI states, policymakers and practitioners are implementing ambitious and creative strategies to tackle the longstanding challenge of low completion rates for underprepared community college students. Early signs are encouraging that the Initiative will help more students to move quickly and successfully into college programs that pay off for them—in good jobs at family-supporting wages—when they graduate.



THE DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION INITIATIVE STATE POLICY STRATEGY

States participating in the *Developmental Education Initiative* have signed onto a three-part strategy to dramatically improve the success rates of college students who require remediation. The Initiative specifies how state policy can better support postsecondary institutions to change the organization and delivery of developmental education. Building on the foundation of their work in *Achieving the Dream*, Connecticut, Florida, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas, and Virginia have collaborated with Jobs for the Future to develop the DEI strategy and are committed to fleshing it out and implementing it by 2012. The DEI approach calls for implementing a continuous improvement process based on thoughtful research and development and on effective collaboration between the state and its community colleges.

1. A DATA-DRIVEN IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

Understanding what works best in developmental education—and for which populations—is the key to designing more effective programs and improving outcomes. But quality data on successful practices, and even on student progression, are limited; and clear, simple approaches to using data for improvement are in their early stages of development. The DEI strategy addresses these challenges head on. DEI states have agreed to implement the following set of actions to make data the foundation of their improvement efforts:

- > **Establish common success indicators.** States are identifying key success indicators to better measure student and institutional performance in developmental education, including key intermediate milestones along the way to credential completion (e.g., completion of developmental education requirements, passing gatekeeper courses) in addition to final measures like graduation.³
- > **Set performance improvement goals.** States are establishing a baseline for current performance in developmental education and are using that data to set realistic improvement goals.
- > **Compare outcomes across institutions and publicize statewide and institutional results.** States are making outcomes data collected and reported by their colleges visible to stakeholders, including peer colleges, policymakers, students, parents, and the public. This keeps pressure on institutions to continuously improve, gets them more acclimated to learning from one another, and creates an environment in which the use of data for both improvement and accountability becomes more routine and effective.

2. A STATE-LEVEL INNOVATION INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The most common strategy to remediate weak academic preparation—prerequisite-driven, semester-length course sequences—has been ineffective in increasing student completion.⁴ Unfortunately, few community colleges have the resources they need to create and test alternative delivery approaches.⁵ States need to significantly expand research and development in order to analyze and use their new data effectively. The DEI states have taken steps to identify and secure state, federal, and private funding to support R&D and strategic institutional innovation. Recognizing that much more experimentation, learning, and diffusion of promising practices is needed across a state's colleges, DEI participants have found ways, even in this difficult fiscal environment, to help carefully selected institutions test and refine “big bets” that research evidence suggests have the potential to dramatically improve outcomes. DEI states are supporting efforts to:

- > **Target resources to developmental education innovations.** The *Developmental Education Initiative* recognizes the need for programs and approaches that reduce the time students spend in developmental education, accelerate college readiness, and speed the time to a credential or degree with labor market value. States are encouraging colleges to innovate in these areas. Examples include breaking up semester-length courses into short modules so students access only the specific content they need, collapsing two semester-length courses into one, and contextualizing developmental education so that remedial content is taught in tandem with career-related skills.
- > **Disseminate best practices.** DEI states are building state-level capacity to support institutional innovation through the diffusion of quality research and knowledge about the impact of the developmental education interventions.

3. STATE-LEVEL POLICY SUPPORTS

Strong state policy supports are essential both for identifying successful developmental education innovations and for scaling them up to serve large numbers of students. Policy supports add momentum to institutional efforts to improve outcomes for underprepared students through changing incentives that guide institutional decisions, accelerating the diffusion of “best practice” and “best process” research, and institutionalizing state-level forums for planning and certifying priorities.

A framework that features four high-priority policy targets guides the *Developmental Education Initiative* and its state teams. One of these—policies to promote innovation and learning from strategic research on promising practices—is highlighted in Part II and is a significant component of the DEI strategy. The three other high-priority policy targets are:

- > **Preventative strategies:** States have an important role to play in reducing the need for developmental education by broadly communicating college-readiness standards, providing early assessment opportunities for high school students, and ensuring that college expectations are aligned with both high school and adult education systems.
- > **Assessment and placement:** A state’s assessment and placement policies can affect whether institutional approaches to selecting tests and placing students into developmental courses are coherent, consistent, and flexible enough to place students in ways that maximize the probability of success.
- > **Performance funding:** Institutions and individuals respond to incentives. Shifting funding to reward success can be a huge spur to institutional innovation. It also can focus institutional energy on carefully redesigning programs and courses to help students move quickly and effectively through requirements.

I. DATA-DRIVEN IMPROVEMENT

Every state collects a variety of higher education data in order to comply with federal and state reporting requirements. However, few states use this information in a comprehensive way to help drive improved outcomes for students in public higher education institutions.

The six states participating in the *Developmental Education Initiative* have committed to collecting and analyzing data for the specific purpose of increasing the success of community college students who require developmental education. These states are collaborating to create and implement a data-driven improvement process that can be replicated by other states. To accomplish this, they are implementing a systemic approach to using student outcomes data to accelerate the creation, adoption, scale-up, and evaluation of new programs that can dramatically raise completion rates for academically underprepared students.

The states are working to implement a three-step process:

1. Identify and define common indicators that measure student progression through developmental education.
2. Set measurable improvement goals by which to evaluate student and institutional performance in developmental education.
3. Compare outcomes and publicize the results to key stakeholders to focus and accelerate improvement efforts.

At present, few state performance measurement systems incorporate success rates for students in developmental education. Even fewer states have set performance improvement goals for developmental education. As a result, when it comes to higher education accountability, performance of students in need of remediation and of the institutions responsible for their learning are largely invisible.

The DEI states are designing and implementing a process for identifying, collecting, analyzing, and using high-quality longitudinal data on educational outcomes for community college students who need remediation. The states and the initiative's partners believe that transparent institutional success rates for students who test into developmental education—and systematic ways of sharing and disseminating key outcomes data—can bring attention, strategic focus, and ultimately resources to the urgent need for more and more effective innovation in developmental education. Their model draws on lessons from health care and other industries regarding the combination of incentives and supports that can break longstanding traditions of underperformance.

1. IDENTIFY AND DEFINE KEY INDICATORS OF STUDENT SUCCESS

THE STRATEGY

Few states track developmental education outcomes, because they are not required to do so. The primary driver of measurement of higher education performance is the federal Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. IPEDS ties institutional eligibility for federal financial aid to reporting on a range of information about the school, including a very limited set of student outcome data. IPEDS requires reporting on only two indicators of persistence and success per institution—first-year retention rates and three-year graduation rates—and only for first-time, full-time students. IPEDS does not account for part-time students, although they comprise the majority of community college students. Other potentially

useful data, such as information about progression through remedial coursework, are neither requested nor reported.

The DEI states are committed to addressing these data limitations, building upon their experience in the *Achieving the Dream* Cross-State Data Work Group, managed by Jobs for the Future.⁶ They have agreed to identify and define a set of indicators, to be used across all six states, that will make possible the reporting of both final outcomes (e.g., graduation, transfer, employment) and intermediate measures of progress correlated with successful outcomes for all students who place into developmental courses.

Rich longitudinal data on student performance over time can inform improvement efforts in many ways. First, they can establish a baseline of performance and make student and institutional performance in developmental education visible. Moreover, it can be the foundation for performance reporting and funding. Finally, it can ground institutional and state decisions about high-leverage programmatic and curricular changes. For example, if many students pass one course in the developmental sequence only to fail the next, a college might need to improve the alignment of its curriculum from one level to another. If many students pass their first course but never sign up for the next, or for the “gatekeeper” credit-bearing course in that subject, a college might need to revisit other retention-related policies and practices.

PROGRESS AMONG DEI STATES

In 2008-09, the DEI states, expanding on work they did as members of the Cross-State Data Work Group, designed a set of intermediate and final success indicators for students who enroll in college underprepared for college-level learning. Participants felt that the indicators were economical enough to be manageable, yet robust enough to provide a strong foundation of longitudinal data to track for helping guide continuous improvement efforts.

The intermediate success indicators were derived from an analysis of several cohorts of Florida community college students followed over six years. Students who met these benchmarks were more likely to achieve a successful final outcome, such as earning an Associate’s degree or transferring to a four-year school.⁷ (For example, students who completed developmental education math requirements by the end of their second year had a higher probability of attaining a successful final outcome than students who did not.) Data were disaggregated to show results for younger versus older students and full-time versus part-time students, as well as by race, gender, and other important characteristics.

The DEI states worked with Jobs for the Future to develop common definitions of key indicators of student success.⁸ The states then shared these metrics and definitions with other organized efforts to develop similar sets of data indicators for national use, including those of Complete College America, the National

“THE DEI STATES ARE IDENTIFYING, COLLECTING, ANALYZING, AND USING HIGH-QUALITY LONGITUDINAL DATA ON EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS WHO NEED REMEDIATION.”

Governors Association, the Voluntary Framework for Accountability managed by the American Association of Community Colleges, and the U.S. Department of Education's new Committee on Measures of Student Success. Many are incorporated into the set of metrics on which Complete College America's Alliance of States will report in 2011 and which the National Governors Association has recommended all states should adopt for collection and reporting.⁹

In 2010, the DEI states undertook a collective process for determining the predictive power of the metrics they selected, particularly the intermediate measures intended for common collection and reporting. The states ran student cohort data from 2002 and 2003 for all of their community colleges, delivered aggregated statewide results for analysis, and are engaged in an initial discussion of cross-state similarities and differences. This is one of the first times that apples-to-apples comparisons of state-level performance have been produced across multiple states on intermediate measures of success that research indicates correlate with college completion.

First-year DEI states are reporting on the proportion and number of first-year students in the research cohorts achieving the following intermediate indicators:

- > Persistence from fall to spring semesters;
- > Passing 80 percent or more of attempted credit hours; and
- > Earning 24 or more credit hours.

In the second and third years of following the cohorts, the states will report on these indicators as well:

- > Persistence from the fall semester of the first year to the fall semester of the second year;
- > Completion of developmental math by the end of the second year;
- > Completion of a math or English gatekeeper course by the end of the second year;
- > Completion of a math and English gatekeeper course by the end of the third year; and
- > Achievement of a two-year milestone of 24 credit hours earned (part-time students) or 42 credit hours earned (full-time students).

The states are tracking cohorts over four- and six-year timeframes by the level of college readiness—ranging from students prepared for college work to students at each level of developmental education need (determined by placement test scores). The analysis will be disaggregated by older versus younger students and full-time versus part-time students, as well as by race and by gender.

NEXT STEPS

When the *Developmental Education Initiative* releases statewide performance data for the 2002 and 2003 cohorts in 2011, three next steps are planned:

- > State participants will analyze and discuss the data based on initial hypotheses regarding observed variations and their possible explanation. The discussions will also focus on the range of variations across states and seek potentially useful benchmarks of quality or effective performance.¹⁰

- > Participants will be encouraged and supported in conducting similar conversations in their own states with key state-level and institutional leaders and other stakeholders in the improvement of outcomes for underprepared community college students. Each state will receive information and tools to help lead these discussions and learn from the data.
- > The *Developmental Education Initiative* will disseminate initial results to national audiences, particularly to national efforts that are assessing the usefulness of particular intermediate indicators to predict success for community college students.

2. ESTABLISH PERFORMANCE GOALS

THE STRATEGY

Establishing guiding indicators for student progress through developmental education is critical to improving individual and institutional performance. However, states and institutions also need to set clear, measurable improvement goals to help them focus on day-to-day and year-to-year priorities. They need to be able to answer a number of key questions for themselves and for the public:

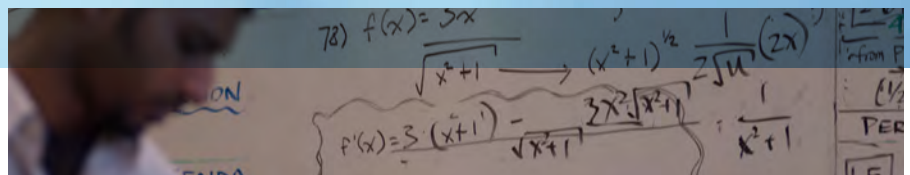
- > What constitute good results for different population groups who enter community college in need of remediation?
- > What benchmarks of performance are appropriate for different institutions?
- > Do institutional and state leaders regard these benchmarks as reliable?

States also need guidelines for designing a process for setting goals and benchmarks. In the context of the *Developmental Education Initiative*, these goals should specify progress expectations for each institution, for the state as a whole, and for students in need of remediation upon enrollment (disaggregated by level of preparation, as well as by demographic characteristics such as age, race, gender, and income).

PROGRESS AMONG DEI STATES

At the outset of the *Developmental Education Initiative*, participating states were asked to submit a set of improvement goals for the duration of a three-year effort, culminating in 2012. In hindsight, this may have been premature: it preceded the states' careful data analysis, discussions, and comparisons on the progression challenges facing developmental education students. As a result, states did not define improvement goals in a common format, such as "increase the completion rate of first-time developmental math students from x percent to y percent by 2012."

Instead, the DEI states had leeway to establish measurable, time-limited improvement goals (or to report existing goals) that reflected short-term aspirations for their state (see *Table 1 on page 10*). These goals varied greatly. For example, Virginia set a goal that all community college students who test into developmental education will complete their remedial requirements in one year or less. Several other states also set time limits for the completion of developmental education



requirements, reflecting a priority on moving students more quickly to college-level work. But other states took a different approach. Some focused only on math, where research shows the obstacles to student success are the greatest. Some targeted increases in course-completion rates or in completion of developmental sequences. North Carolina targeted the alignment between high school and college expectations, setting a goal of reducing the number of recent high school graduates placed in developmental education to 15 percent from a 2008 baseline of 36 percent.

TABLE 1.
SAMPLE OF STATE-SPECIFIC PERFORMANCE GOALS SET BY DEI STATES

CONNECTICUT	Increase passing rate for developmental education math from 47%-51% to an average of 60% by 2012.
FLORIDA	For students not ready for college math, increase completion of developmental math to 67% by the end of their second year of college by 2012.
NORTH CAROLINA	Reduce the number of recent high school graduates placed in developmental education to 15 percent by 2012.
OHIO	Increase the annual proportion of students completing their first developmental course from 75% in 2009 to 85% in 2012.
TEXAS	Students should complete developmental education requirements in one year or less by 2012.
VIRGINIA	Students whose assessment scores indicate high remedial need should achieve college readiness within two years by 2012.

Some states set goals intended to signal the need for dramatic performance improvement overall, while others highlighted only the greatest problems or the most easily remedied. The DEI states saw setting improvement goals as a critical starting point rather than an end in itself.

As states were defining their goals for the *Developmental Education Initiative*, an important new effort was taking shape as the launch of Complete College America changed the landscape. This national organization is focusing state policymakers on strategies to dramatically increase two- and four-year college completion. Members of CCA's Alliance of States, now numbering two dozen, will report annually on a common set of intermediate and completion measures developed through discussions with many national initiatives and organizations, including partners in *Achieving the Dream* and the *Developmental Education Initiative*. Working closely with CCA, the National Governors Association has incorporated these metrics into its Complete to Compete initiative, advocating that all states adopt and report on the same set of indicators. Over time, this will be a boon to state-level and national policy discussions and development.¹¹

In addition, states in CCA's Alliance are expected to set clear, measurable, time-limited statewide improvement goals for credential completion. They will disaggregate the goals for two- and four-year sectors and institutions and report annually on progress toward them. The CCA goals will specify targets for increased attainment of degrees and certificates. States will also report on intermediate measures that are associated with ultimate completion, but their efforts will not focus on improving these specific areas.

The national reach of Complete College America and the NGA's Complete to Compete initiative should accelerate the process under way in the *Developmental Education Initiative*. It is certainly likely to speed reporting and goal-setting efforts in the four DEI states that are also members of CCA: Connecticut, Florida, Ohio, and Texas.

At the same time, DEI and other states may want to set goals for certain intermediate indicators of success that focus explicitly on progress through developmental education. For example, states may wish to track the progress of students starting at different developmental education levels as they move through their remedial course sequence and college completion. They may also decide to focus on reducing the percentage of high school graduates who enter community college in need of remediation. For their own priorities and needs, DEI states are considering which developmental education measures should be attached to explicit improvement goals and which should simply be reported annually.

NEXT STEPS

In 2011, the DEI states will refine their goals and determine the most effective way to track and report progress through 2012. DEI partners will keep national goal-setting efforts informed of the states' progress.

- > The states will analyze cohort data on intermediate and final success measures within each college and within each respective state and establish a baseline of current performance.
- > The states will use the results to help shape state-level goal setting.
- > The DEI states that participate in CCA and NGA efforts will determine the best way to use their analyses to inform national efforts to set goals for postsecondary completion.

3. COMPARE OUTCOMES AND PUBLICIZE RESULTS

THE STRATEGY

When the DEI states joined the initiative, each agreed to compare institutional data—across all of the state's community colleges—on the success over time of students who enrolled in need of remediation. They agreed to use common intermediate and final metrics of success and to collect and “clean up” institutional data so that valid comparisons could be made of how developmental education students with the same level of remedial need fare in different peer colleges. They also agreed to use the institution-level data to stimulate important conversations at the state level—among state community college officials and institutional leaders—on the meaning of the data and the implications for state policies and practices to improve developmental education outcomes.

This state-level activity has three components:

- > Benchmark the performance of each community college to determine the range of variation across the state's institutions in serving different population subgroups and to establish a clear picture of “best in class” performance.
- > Undertake analyses of the characteristics and strategies of state institutions that perform particularly well over time to assess what might be responsible for their strong performance.
- > By the end of 2012, report to key stakeholders and the public on the performance of the state's colleges on the key interim and final success measures in formats, and to do so in ways that are transparent, easy to understand, and designed to support improvement.

PROGRESS AMONG DEI STATES

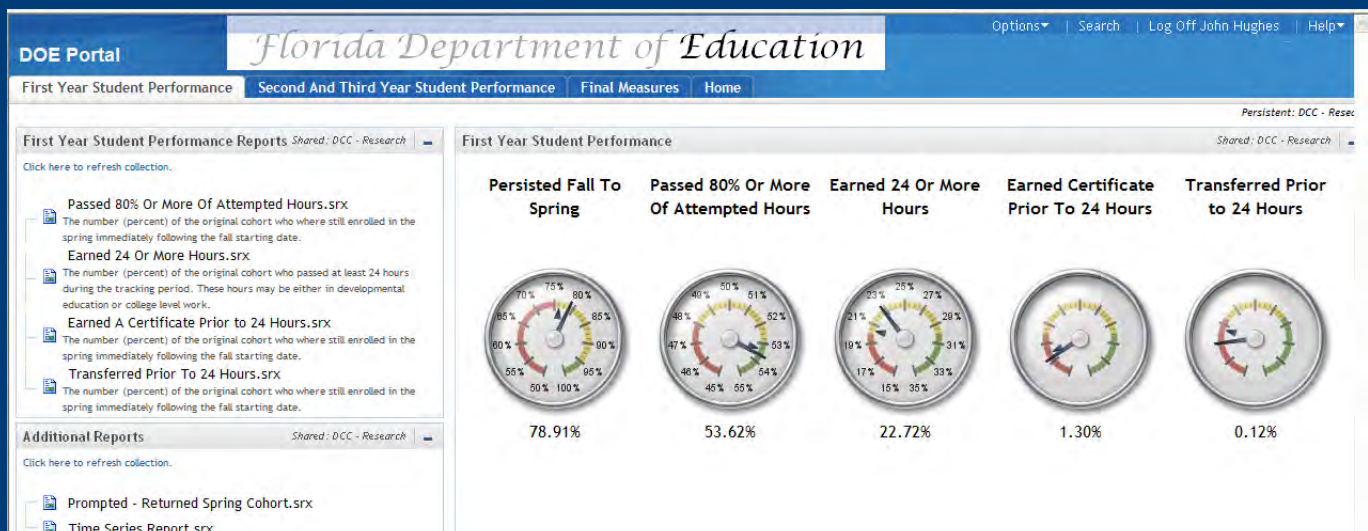
In 2009 and 2010, the DEI states focused on collecting longitudinal data from 2002 and 2003 and checking the data for completeness and quality. In 2010, they prepared, and delivered to JFF for analysis, aggregated state-level data on the intermediate and final measures they had agreed to track. An initial internal presentation and discussion of the data took place at the DEI State Policy Meeting in February 2011. This analysis—the first time a group of states reported and compared a common set of intermediate indicators of success—will be published later in 2011. Disaggregation and reporting by institution will follow.

At present, there is no broad agreement on what would constitute quality results in student progression through developmental education and into for-credit programs. What benchmarks should institutions strive for in their efforts to improve developmental education outcomes? Different community colleges produce substantially different results for students with effectively identical backgrounds. Some institutions are better than others at getting students through developmental education, while others are better at helping students pass gatekeeper courses. Colleges vary markedly in their ability to graduate students.¹² Much research and analysis are needed to help states and their institutions set progress benchmarks that are realistic, based on data, and worth achieving. That work begins with carefully constructing longitudinal data sets that compare institutions using the same data elements and data definitions.

DEI states are moving forward on a benchmarking effort that will help them answer questions about effectiveness and quality across their community colleges (see table 2 on page 14). Initial data to guide this process were generated by the Florida community college office, using a so-called dashboard format codeveloped with Jobs for the Future.¹³ Florida aggregated institutions into quartiles based on their performance in advancing students at different levels of developmental education need. This made it possible to identify the extent of variation in institutional performance and to gain an initial sense of what “best in class” results might look like. When states report performance by institution later in 2011, in-state discussions of appropriate benchmarks will be an important part of how states will initially use institutional data. See below for a sample screen from the Florida Department of Education’s dashboard.

A DASHBOARD ON INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCE

Critical Indicators For First-Year Student Performance In The Florida Department Of Education Dashboard



Formalizing a benchmarking process that compares results for students across institutions is an important element of any continuous improvement program. Of course, benchmarking must be done with sensitivity—comparisons should not become a game of “gotcha”—and must be used as the basis for careful inquiry and planning for improvement. State teams are discussing how to structure and support a process that stakeholders trust.

To gain traction, benchmarking should also be packaged with another process: one that tests hypotheses about why certain schools outperform others and that tries to identify practices and policies associated with the success of the highest-performing institutions. Combining this kind of “comparative effectiveness” analysis with a statewide benchmarking process can help colleges set defensible stretch targets for improvement and can also suggest strategies that can drive colleges to meet those targets.

Comparative effectiveness analysis highlights questions about differential performance of similar students across similar institutions. If structured carefully, this can lead to pivotal conversations about what might be causing differences in results and on what can be done to improve performance. Such conversations can help convince institutions to abandon practices that are less effective in favor of those that appear to be associated with superior results.

DEI states are embarked upon this journey. In 2010, JFF commissioned BTW Consultants, Inc., to study three colleges in Florida that are consistently high performers in helping developmental education students persist in their coursework, move into credit programs, and complete degrees.¹⁴ The inquiry, based upon case studies, is testing various hypotheses as to *why* these institutions appear to be high performers. The resulting report, to be released in 2011, will be the subject of in-state and cross-state discussions of implications for policy and practice. If this method proves effective, three Texas colleges will be studied the same way. The resulting reports and associated tasks will be made available to any interested state.

The final component of the DEI states’ efforts to “get behind” the data on institutional performance and help states and their colleges move toward high-leverage changes in practice and policy consists of transparency and the public dissemination of progression data for students who place into developmental education. The states have made progress in designing and implementing formats and methods for the dissemination of statewide and institutional data. They are targeting audiences that can use the information to build support for particular change strategies and for resources needed to tackle performance challenges.

Several states have instituted innovative approaches to making the presentation and discussion of performance data—on developmental education and other community college success metrics—part of the routine work of institutional and state-level leadership. Florida routinely provides data to multiple audiences through the Department of Education’s *Fast Fact* series, which provides a succinct comparative summary of community college performance on selected measures. Following Florida’s lead, the Virginia Community College System now publishes *Success Snapshots*, which feature similar comparative information. North Carolina is revamping its *Critical Success Factors* annual report to focus more systematically on measures that are most meaningful to policymakers and the public regarding system and institutional effectiveness and efficiency.

A significant element of this commitment to transparency takes the form of developing computer dashboards that can summarize and distill complex data in ways that are actionable. Florida, Ohio, and other DEI states have been experimenting with different ways to make data more manageable and visually compelling to different audiences. Florida has invested in a partnership with the for-profit software company SAS to develop an interactive online platform for displaying and manipulating community college data for state leaders, college leaders, and faculty. A prototype has been presented to DEI state team leaders. Florida has specified a well-developed, multifaceted approach to publicly reporting key data on developmental education students and their outcomes. These efforts recognize that the greatest challenge in our

information-rich world is to present data in formats and at times that focus the attention of people who can make a difference, so that data can lead to action. The Division of Florida Colleges is developing a stratified approach to disseminating student and institutional performance results to different user groups, from policymakers to institutional leaders to the public at large.

- > The division will track and report outcomes to the Council of Presidents on a quarterly basis. These reports will spotlight a particular aspect of student performance in developmental education (e.g., the percentage of developmental education students completing math and English gatekeeper courses; the percentage of students completing their developmental education requirements within three years).
- > More detailed comparative reports on student and institutional performance will be generated for the college administrators who are members of the Council of Instructional Affairs and Council of Student Affairs. This will enable institutional leaders to grapple with their data and address major challenges.
- > Feedback on the performance in the state university system of students who began their studies in a community college is generated in collaboration with the Division of Accountability, Research, and Measurement and the State University System of Florida Board of Governors.

TABLE 2.
SAMPLE OF STATE-SPECIFIC PERFORMANCE GOALS FOR COMPARING
OUTCOMES AND PUBLICIZING RESULTS

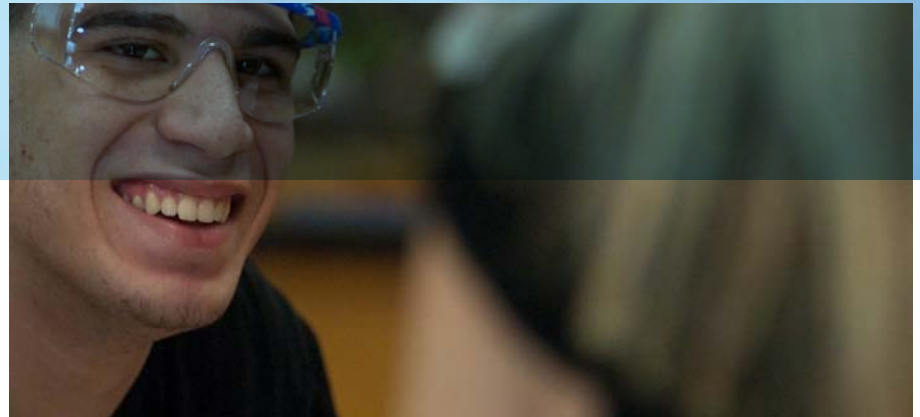
CONNECTICUT	Collect, share, and publish data related to student success from <i>Achieving the Dream</i> , particularly within the area of developmental education. Make expanded data, findings, and recommendations available to various stakeholder audiences—ranging from the General Assembly and state policy leaders to workforce and economic development agencies, as well as for system-wide leaders, councils, and faculty organizations—to drive change and build support for student success.
FLORIDA	Share state and institutional results for the <i>Achieving the Dream</i> intermediate and final measures with the Council of Presidents, Council of Student Affairs, and Council of Instructional Affairs.
NORTH CAROLINA	Publish Data Trends and Briefings reports on DEI student success measures.
OHIO	Produce an annual report detailing the performance by each community college on developmental education success points and <i>Achieving the Dream</i> metrics. The report will disaggregate developmental education courses for each community college and detail the number and percentage of developmental education students who achieve the success points by subject and level of developmental education class in which the student enrolled, and by student gender, ethnic group, age category, and financial aid status.
TEXAS	Create annual public reporting of state and institutional progress toward momentum points and academic milestones that close the success gaps for underprepared students.
VIRGINIA	Begin producing annual developmental education reports in 2010.

SOURCE: DEI State Policy Work Plans

- > Two regular reports to the legislature include information on performance in developmental education: the Long-Range Program Plan and an accountability report on student progression toward completion.

NEXT STEPS

- > Upon completing cohort-data analyses on intermediate and final measures of success by institution, the states will begin discussing the most efficient and thoughtful ways to increase transparency on outcomes for developmental education in order to focus attention on and drive resources toward improving outcomes.
- > The states will develop data dashboards and other tools customized for relevant audiences (e.g., legislatures, college presidents, institutional administrators, faculty).
- > In late 2011, the states will discuss the implications of a benchmarking process designed by BTW Consultants, Inc., to identify institutional practices that produce high success rates.



II. INVESTING IN INNOVATION

The first part of the DEI strategy revolves around using student data and improving the collection, reporting, and analysis of data to help identify developmental education challenges in a college, a group of colleges, or statewide. This phase is critical to improving developmental education outcomes—but knowing what needs to be fixed is just the beginning. Institutions need proven, research-based approaches to delivering developmental education differently if they are to better support their underprepared students in moving efficiently toward credentials and if they are to design policy and practice changes that will foster permanent improvement.

State entities and policymakers can help financially constrained institutions identify potentially fruitful targets for innovation and implement significant changes in practice. States can aggregate research and knowledge relevant to innovation and disseminate it efficiently to institutional leaders and faculty. When economic circumstances permit, states can do the vital work of supporting innovation through funding and allocating staff.

The second DEI strategic priority is the development and deepening of state-level innovation investment strategies. Even in this difficult fiscal environment, DEI participants have worked diligently to help their states secure, allocate, and bundle state, federal, and private funding for strategic investments to support institutional innovation. These states have made a commitment to help leading community colleges test and refine research-based program interventions that can dramatically improve outcomes for students who enter college underprepared. They have committed to investing in institutional innovation through:

1. Identifying and targeting resources for implementing and testing developmental education innovations in colleges with potential for success; and
2. Building state-level capacity to support institutional innovation through diffusing research and knowledge.

1. TARGET INCENTIVE FUNDS FOR DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION INNOVATION

THE STRATEGY

Each of the six DEI states has committed to mobilizing new resources and providing incentives for testing and scaling up alternatives to the traditional course-based developmental education delivery model. Clearly, this is a tall order in today's economy. Yet DEI states have sought funds from their own budgets and assets while also trying to leverage private and federal dollars.

The original DEI strategy was designed to take advantage of momentum that was building within federal and foundation offices to promote evidence-based innovation through highly structured and competitive grant making. This emphasis recognized that, whether in K-12 or in higher education, the number of promising innovations with strong evidence of success is limited, particularly in the area of helping underprepared and low-income students advance to and through college. A consensus emerged on the need to develop, test, and refine many more good ideas, models, and scale-up strategies. Without these, the push for higher standards and stronger accountability would shine a light on problems but fail to provide practitioners with tools to improve outcomes. This view was explicit in federally funded innovation investment opportunities (e.g., Race to the Top and Investing in Innovation—i3—in K-12 education). It also was clear in proposals for an innovation fund for youth and adult workforce development services included in President Obama's 2010 budget.

For DEI states and colleges, the primary focus was President Obama's proposal for a \$10 billion American Graduation Initiative that would fund innovation in the two-year sector, tied to the goal of dramatically increasing the number of college credentials earned in the United States.¹⁵ A potentially huge lever for investment in innovation was lost when this initiative died during the final negotiations over the health care reform bill in March 2010, just as the DEI states and colleges were looking for new ways to improve developmental education results.

To replace the American Graduation Initiative, Congress authorized a \$2 billion, four-year program of Community College and Career Training grants. The first round of these competitive grants will be made this year. These funds may help DEI states and colleges pursue innovation investment strategies. For the near future, they are the largest source of new dollars institutions are likely to see that target building their capacity to help more students move more quickly and effectively toward credentials and jobs.

PROGRESS AMONG DEI STATES

Given two years of deep recession, it is not surprising that DEI states have experienced varying levels of success in their efforts to identify, create, and sustain innovation funds. What is surprising is that at least half of the DEI states have found creative ways to finance and structure modest innovation funds. They are propelling motivated institutions to try new approaches to improve developmental education delivery and instruction—and focusing institutional and state conversations on reform strategies that appear most promising.

Among DEI states, Texas has had the most ambitious state-level strategy for investing in developmental education innovation. In 2009, the Texas legislature appropriated \$5 million to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board for "Developmental Education Demonstration Projects." The purpose is to spur systemic restructuring of developmental education programming statewide. Five community colleges won competitive grants of \$750,000 per year for up to two years to redesign developmental education at their institutions in efforts to make dramatic improvements in success outcomes.¹⁶ Ten Texas community colleges received smaller, competitive grants of up to \$100,000 for implementing innovative developmental education programs.

To promote the implementation of best practices, Texas designed its Request for Applications around a set of nonnegotiable criteria. The state required competing colleges to adhere to best practices in the following areas:

- > Assessment and placement;
- > Student support services;
- > Innovative curriculum options (e.g., strategies that are not course-based, paired courses, modular designs);
- > Performance indicators;
- > Data quality; and
- > Mentoring, and counseling.¹⁷

"IN 2009, THE TEXAS LEGISLATURE APPROPRIATED \$5 MILLION TO THE TEXAS HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD FOR 'DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS.' THE PURPOSE IS TO SPUR SYSTEMIC RESTRUCTURING OF DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMING STATEWIDE."

The Texas demonstration projects have funding through 2011. However, the state and national fiscal crises threaten robust support for innovation in future years.

Few DEI states have made as sizable an investment in redesigning developmental education, but they all recognize the need. Despite the dearth of significant funding, they are doing what they can to prepare for future opportunities. For example, North Carolina community colleges can compete for funds to test new ways of teaching and learning through the existing mechanism of Curriculum Improvement Projects. Unfortunately, such current projects have been zeroed out.

Other states face similar funding challenges, but some have leveraged smaller amounts of money to promote innovation (see *Table 3 on page 19*). For example, Connecticut and Florida created small competitive grant programs to focus institutional attention and activity. The Connecticut Community College System secured \$600,000 (\$50,000 per college) for developmental education innovation in 2011.¹⁸ The Division of Florida Colleges distributed competitive minigrants to six colleges to provide collaborative planning time for redesigning developmental education at a regularly scheduled innovation-sharing meeting known as the Connections Conference.¹⁹

The efforts of DEI states to encourage innovation provide a window into the kinds of strategies and programs that appear to be gaining traction among college and state-level leaders. The trends conform with the priorities emerging from rigorous research .

In general, the emphasis across DEI states is on experimenting with and expanding models to reduce the amount of time students take to progress and complete a credential. The focus is on helping students finish precollege requirements and enter college credential programs more quickly. State policymakers view this approach—which, ultimately, will speed the path to a credential or degree—as a clear “win-win” for students, institutions, and taxpayers.

State strategies are acknowledging the different challenges facing students who enter college at three distinct levels of remedial need (see *Table 4 on page 20*):

- > Students who test just below college proficiency;
- > Students who test more than one level below college proficiency; and
- > “Out-of-range” students, whose test scores indicate they are unlikely to reach college proficiency within two years and whose odds of completing remediation and succeeding in for-credit programs are low.

Research provides the richest guidance on strategies to help students who are close to college readiness. Strategies for students who start with reading and math skills below the eighth-grade level are only now being developed and tested. This population is fast becoming a critical target for new program design and development and for careful research.



**TABLE 3.
STATE INVESTMENTS IN INNOVATION**

CONNECTICUT	The Connecticut Community College system provided each of its 12 colleges with \$50,000 as incentive seed money to continue working to increase student success, with a particular focus on developmental education. College leaders determined what intervention or initiative would address the needs of their student populations most effectively and prepared a funding plan for the 2010-11 academic year.
FLORIDA	The Florida Division of Colleges offered minigrants to colleges that demonstrated an interest in trying new methods of delivering developmental education courses, especially a modularized instruction system. The division identified six colleges of varying demographics to implement pilot programs using a modularized format.
NORTH CAROLINA	In 2011 the North Carolina Community College System will develop an RFP for a statewide Curriculum Improvement Project for developmental math and academic support services. The system office will use the findings to make recommendations on improving organizational structure and curricular and academic support services for developmental math courses. North Carolina then will identify elements of the project that can be applied to other developmental education disciplines.
OHIO	To better align funding and programming between Adult Basic Education and community college developmental education, the Ohio Board of Regents is studying innovative partnerships between the two remedial sectors. The board invited all community colleges and 68 ABE programs to participate. Recommendations will address modifying placement thresholds, which determine whether students need ABE before enrolling in community college. The board is also seeking to identify which programmatic supports appear most effective in helping students accelerate their advancement into credit-bearing classes.
TEXAS	Texas has invested \$5 million in developmental education innovation and \$10 million to align ABE to postsecondary standards. The Developmental Education Demonstration Project grants provide \$1.5 million over two years to five colleges for comprehensive developmental education redesign. The ABE innovation funding provides incentives to increase the number of partnerships between community colleges and ABE providers to promote program alignment and smoother transitions among ABE, developmental, and college-level programming. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the Texas Association of Community Colleges are collaborating to support the new developmental education demonstration colleges and the four DEI colleges that are in the second year of implementing their innovations.
VIRGINIA	In 2010, community colleges used the Chancellor's Program Innovation Fund for accelerating the statewide implementation of a redesign of developmental math. The Virginia Community College System also is in the process of redesigning developmental English and reading, with a focus on increasing student success and helping students complete all developmental requirements within one year.

SOURCE: DEI state lead organizations

**TABLE 4.
PROMISING DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION INTERVENTIONS TARGETED
BY DEI STATES**

LEVEL OF REMEDIAL NEED	STRATEGIES	RATIONALE
<p>LOW</p> <p>Just below college proficiency</p>	<p>Avoidance of developmental education</p> <p>Early assessment</p> <p>Remediation in high school</p> <p>Dual enrollment</p> <p>Placement-test preparation</p> <p>Supplemental instruction</p> <p>Academic Summer bridge programs</p>	<p>Rigorous research shows that students who test just under the cut score for college-level work and are referred to remedial courses are as successful in college as students who score just above the cut score and enroll immediately in college-credit classes. Thus, students just below the cut score should avoid developmental education.</p>
<p>MODERATE TO HIGH</p> <p>Between one and three levels below college proficiency</p>	<p>Acceleration</p> <p>Modularization of course delivery</p> <p>Fast-track programs that compress course duration</p> <p>Open entry-open exit policies</p> <p>Paired courses of remedial with college-level</p>	<p>Few students who begin multiple levels below college proficiency ever complete their remedial requirements. The current prerequisite-driven remedial model presents too many opportunities for students to drop out. Alternative models that reduce time in developmental education are needed.</p>
<p>HIGHEST</p> <p>More than three levels below college proficiency</p>	<p>Contextualization/integration</p> <p>ABE-to-college models</p> <p>I-BEST</p> <p>I-BEST-like designs</p>	<p>Results from Washington State’s I-BEST model suggest that integrating basic skills and professional technical content that leads to a credential with labor market value is a promising strategy for students with very low academic skill levels for whom a recognized industry certificate is the best option.</p>

**FOR STUDENTS WITH MINIMAL REMEDIAL NEED:
AVOID DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION**

The most effective remediation is no remediation. If students can be prepared for college work when they enroll, their odds of success are greatest. And if they can succeed in college courses without first taking traditional developmental courses, it is a win for the student, the institution, and state taxpayers. It is not surprising, then, that innovations targeted to those

with modest remedial needs focus on providing adequate academic and social supports, sometimes while students are still in high school, and on avoiding placement into developmental education. DEI states are investing in a number of program innovations designed to reduce the need for developmental education. They include:

Dual enrollment and early college for high school students: North Carolina and Texas have made significant investments in dual enrollment and in early college programs that blend high school and college and expose high school students to the rigors of college-level work before they actually enroll in higher education. Other DEI states, including Connecticut, Virginia, and Florida, also employ college-credit-in-high-school models to reduce the number of high school graduates who test into developmental education.

Academic bridge programs: Several DEI states are supporting academic bridge models for high school students whose assessment scores indicate they need more than a quick refresher before entering college-level courses. These intensive interventions, often held during the summer, are designed to eliminate academic weaknesses before a student enrolls in college-level classes. North Carolina's community college system has been an advocate in the legislature for funding for more developmental education courses to be held over the summer. Texas's summer bridge program is undergoing rigorous evaluation.

Placement-test preparation and refresher courses: Acknowledging the high-stakes nature of community college placement tests, some DEI colleges in Connecticut, Ohio, Texas, and Virginia are implementing strategies that hedge against placing students into developmental education on the basis of a test score that may not indicate true ability. They are offering students opportunities to study before taking the placement test. Some institutions are experimenting with refresher courses for students who just need to brush up on content they once knew. The states are evaluating these assessment-related strategies for their effectiveness and implications for scale.

FOR STUDENTS WITH MODERATE TO HIGH REMEDIAL NEED: ACCELERATE DEVELOPMENTAL COURSEWORK

A significant number of students require stronger basic skills. For them, states are encouraging colleges to explore and test alternatives to the ways developmental education is traditionally delivered. Two emerging strategies are modular delivery and fast-track (or compressed) courses that speed students' advance into college-level courses.

Modular delivery: Most DEI states are supporting the implementation of some form of modular delivery of developmental math. Innovating colleges are creating short-duration instructional modules, each of which covers a portion of a full semester course. Students enroll only in the modules they need to fill their individual skill gaps. Students with more needs take more modules. Most can learn more quickly through modules than in the usual semester-length developmental courses.

Compressed courses: States are monitoring the implications of institutional innovations that compress two or more semester courses into one (sometimes called fast-track courses). In an "open entry-open exit" model, another type of compressed course, students complete levels of developmental education at their own pace. Texas, Connecticut, and North Carolina are among the states supporting DEI colleges implementing compressed-course innovations.

FOR STUDENTS WITH HIGHEST REMEDIAL NEED: INTEGRATE AND CONTEXTUALIZE BASIC SKILLS IN TECHNICAL CREDENTIAL PROGRAMS

Credential completion rates are dismal for students who enroll in college in need of extensive remediation (e.g., students who need two years of remedial math and reading to become college ready). DEI states, like others around the country, have been influenced by the promising outcomes of the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges' Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) Program. I-BEST accelerates the progress of adult basic skills students by combining basic skills instruction with college-level career-technical instruction, cotaught by an adult basic skills instructor and a career and technical education instructor. I-BEST students are more likely to continue on to credit-level courses that count toward credentials, to earn occupational certificates, and to make gains on basic skills tests than basic skills students who did not enroll in I-BEST but who took at least one professional-technical course (Wachen, Jenkins, & Van Noy 2010).²⁰

DEI states are supporting I-BEST variations that integrate basic skills, college-credit, and relevant career content. These programs contrast with the traditional delivery model that forces students to address basic skills before enrolling in developmental education, college-level, or career-related courses. The new strategy, known as contextualization, reduces completion time for students otherwise unlikely to reach college-level proficiency within a reasonable period.

The Connecticut Community Colleges system is using funding from the U.S. Department of Labor to implement pilot programs that infuse developmental education content with career-related content and result in a certificate valued in the labor market. Two of these programs, *Bridges to Health Careers and Skills for Manufacturing and Related Technology*, each use a combination of credit and noncredit work and infuse developmental education content within occupational content (see box, “Contextualizing Basic Skills Content in Occupational Programs”).

CONTEXTUALIZING BASIC SKILLS CONTENT IN OCCUPATIONAL PROGRAMS

Bridges to Health Careers: Short-term, noncredit training programs in health care lead to an industry-recognized certificate and a job, while students simultaneously create longer-term plans toward further education and a higher-wage career. All 12 of Connecticut’s community colleges use KeyTrain, a computer-based program that provides career profiles, skill assessments, and skill training in math, reading, health care, and job readiness (e.g., interviewing, workplace communication). For example, students can explore which math skills are required to be a certified nurse aide and then work independently on self-paced modules to accomplish that goal. They also can begin work on gaining the math skills needed to pursue nursing degrees. Online medical terminology and cultural diversity modules also have been incorporated into each of the targeted programs (certified nurse aide, medical coding and billing, patient care technician, EKG technician, EMT, phlebotomy technician, pharmacy technician, and dental assistant). Health Career Advisors, cofunded by U.S. Department of Labor Community-Based Job Training Grants, provided assessment, advising, and a personalized college and career success plans for more than 2,000 students. (For additional information, see <http://www.commnet.edu/healthcare>.)

Skills for Manufacturing and Related Technology: SMART includes a noncredit Pre-Manufacturing Certificate program, a Level 1 Certificate that includes credit and noncredit courses, and a Level II Precision Manufacturing Certificate. The Pre-Manufacturing Certificate is based on a 300-hour curriculum that includes course work in manufacturing math, blueprint reading, computer applications, and workplace communication, as well as an introduction to lean manufacturing. The majority of students completing the Pre-Manufacturing certificate move on to further education. Level 1 Certificates include credit courses in algebra, manufacturing math, blueprint reading, and computer-aided design.

SOURCE: Connecticut Community Colleges

NEXT STEPS

DEI states will support the innovation agenda as follows:

- > Continue advocating for incentives that aid private developmental support and drive educational innovation.
- > Seek to leverage federal funding opportunities relevant for developmental education innovation (e.g., Community College and Career Training grants; Complete College America’s Completion Innovation Competition).
- > Monitor outcomes from investments in innovation, disseminate results, and structure systematic ways to share lessons on effective practices.

2. INVEST IN STATE CAPACITY TO SUPPORT INNOVATION

THE STRATEGY

An innovation investment strategy requires incentives that drive institutions to compete for flexible funds that can help them advance their improvement agendas. As noted above, this is not easy to accomplish in the current fiscal environment. Ultimately, ambitious policy approaches to refashioning institutional incentives—such as performance funding strategies under consideration or being implemented in a growing number of states—will likely be needed (see *Part III. Policy Supports*).

However, a state strategy to support innovation and continuous improvement—and to institutionalize that support—is about more than funding. To gain traction and spur improvement, colleges and state administrative agencies must strengthen their capacities to learn from the implementation of new interventions and to spread those lessons to colleges statewide. The ability to scale up effective approaches requires a proactive commitment at the state level—and the creative use of existing vehicles and resources—to:

- > Strengthen the capacity for data use;
- > Undertake strategic research on college performance and the implications for policy and practice; and
- > Convene institutional innovators for structured opportunities for inter-institutional learning and for deliberations among state and college leaders and program implementers on priorities for future investment and ways to overcome obstacles to scale and sustainability.

PROGRESS AMONG DEI STATES

Strengthen data capacity: As noted, DEI states have significantly improved their capacity to collect, analyze, report, and help colleges use state- and institution-level longitudinal data to support innovation in developmental education. In addition to their own state-level efforts, DEI states have secured competitive federal resources from the State Longitudinal Data Systems grant program to increase their capacity to track student data. In the most recent round of funding, in May 2010, four DEI states—Florida, Ohio, Texas, and Virginia—won grants ranging from \$5 million to \$18 million.²¹ While most of the funding targets K-12 education, some resources are dedicated to postsecondary education and targeted toward improvements in the ability of states to track student outcomes across K-12 and postsecondary education and in the workforce.

With these federal investments, states will be able to provide information on course-taking patterns that are more or less likely to keep a student on track to graduate from high school ready for college, making it easier for states to develop early assessment and remediation-in-high-school strategies. The increase in data capacity will also improve the ability of states to link student outcomes with particular institutional programs, making it easier to analyze and understand the effectiveness of individual programs. The links to workforce and employment data will shed light not just on educational progress but also on progress in the labor market. These grants will add significantly to colleges' ability to act on data to adjust programs and practices to improve success outcomes.

Expand strategic research capability: Campaigns to change policies or practices typically meet with resistance from those who are invested in the status quo. One important component of efforts to overcome this natural resistance and mobilize key groups is to use new research evidence that dramatizes what is wrong—and how change can deliver better results. A state's capacity to conduct or commission studies that advance public debate is critical. DEI states are investing in this kind of strategic research, which can reinforce or temper enthusiasm for both state- and college-level policies.

Assessment and placement are two areas in which states have routinely commissioned research but are exploring new questions related to student progress and success. Most DEI states have worked with national testing companies on assessment and placement validity studies. This kind of study begins by analyzing the validity of a particular cut score below which students would be placed in developmental education. It also seeks to clarify the relationship of assessment and placement policies to success outcomes.

Vexing questions about the fate of students who are far from college ready when they enroll in community college have led Ohio, Texas, and Virginia to study whether there should be a basic skills “floor” for placement into developmental education. Below this level, students would be required to pass adult basic skills classes before enrolling in the college.

Ohio, for example, is conducting a study of colleges that have established partnerships with the state’s Adult Basic and Literacy Education programs to better understand the evidence and rationale for placing students into adult basic skills programs versus developmental education. The results will inform the Ohio Board of Regents efforts to align ABLE, developmental education, and college-level entrance standards. Twenty-one of the state’s twenty-three community colleges have agreed to participate beginning in winter 2010-11. An extensive evaluation of the project is scheduled for 2012.

North Carolina is examining placement policies as they relate to students whose ACCUPLACER, ASSET, or COMPASS assessment scores indicate that their skill level is too low for developmental education. These validation studies will be completed in spring 2011. In addition, the Community College Research Center is conducting a study for North Carolina of multiple assessment measures, to be completed in summer 2011. Other DEI states are also studying the impact of placement assessment policies on student success outcomes. Connecticut, Florida, Texas, and Virginia are working with testing organizations to review state-level assessment and placement policies.

“AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT TREND OF STRATEGIC RESEARCH FOCUSES ON STUDENT PROGRESSION THROUGH CRITICAL ‘LOSS’ OR ‘MOMENTUM’ POINTS.”

An increasingly important kind of strategic research focuses on student progression through critical “loss” or “momentum” points, such as the intermediate indicators of success that correlate with college completion and earning of a credential. An example is the recent study by the Community College Research Center for the Virginia Community College System on the developmental and gatekeeper math and English course-taking patterns of Virginia students (Jenkins, Jaggars, & Roska 2009).

The findings from that study have far-reaching implications for systemwide policy. First, the study demonstrates that some students whose placement test scores indicate a need for developmental education but who avoid it and instead enroll in a college-level course do as well as students who test college ready. This explosive finding calls the very function of developmental education into question. Second, some colleges do better than others in getting students to take and pass so-called gatekeeper courses—a clear argument for cross-institutional sharing and robust dissemination of results-based practices. Last, the research suggests that state policy must fundamentally rethink the sequential, semester-length, course-based delivery model and pay greater attention to the many “leaks” where students fall out of the system. Without this type of strategic research, community colleges will lack the most important information they need to make good decisions about improving developmental education outcomes.

Convening innovators: Any continuous improvement process depends upon formal mechanisms for people to learn from one another. In the case of developmental education, college leaders must continually share their ideas for innovation with peer institutions and accelerate the adoption of promising practices through the dissemination of information about models, outcomes, implementation specifics, and costs. States have recently begun to grapple with the best ways to use existing leadership councils, professional development opportunities, online interactions, and face-to-face meetings for this purpose. One of the most important contributions of the *Developmental Education Initiative* is its work to strengthen systemic supports for routinely convening colleges for sharing knowledge and disseminating effective practices. Acknowledging that colleges lack the capacity or resources to convene themselves, the DEI states—through state systems, coordinating boards, higher education departments, and community college associations—are bringing their respective colleges together in ways that promote careful analyses of improvement strategies and that fight against “data-free” boosterism for any new project a college implements.

DEI states are using their convening capacity and authority to bring college leaders and faculty together in student success conferences that typically focus on improving developmental education outcomes. These meetings, like the Florida Division of Colleges’ annual Connections Conference, are becoming routine professional development activities that emphasize the sharing of the experiences of colleges as they seek to implement and expand promising practices on their campuses.

These student success “summits,” many of which were created when these states were participants in *Achieving the Dream*, typically feature presentations about outcome data, in-state best practices, and best practices from other states. They also serve as important venues for sharing information among institutions and with state policymakers about obstacles to innovation that colleges encounter. Florida’s conference has become an annual opportunity for the state community college division to leverage multiple state, federal, and foundation resources to provide colleges with structured technical assistance and professional development support.

Texas is institutionalizing its own learning network among innovator colleges not only to strengthen the work of participants but also to inform peers and guide state policymakers. A May 2010 Developmental Education Colloquium inaugurated a conversation among state and institutional leaders about the supports needed to spur and sustain quality innovation. The state convened a select group of colleges—each receiving public support for its developmental education innovation efforts—and invited state and national policy organizations (the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Texas Association of Community Colleges, Community College Research Center, MDRC, University of Texas Community College Leadership Program, and Jobs for the Future) for a daylong discussion of the core components required for a state process to support continuous improvement in developmental education. One recommendation was that the state develop and regularly convene a data-research group whose purpose would be to identify strategic research needs (Couturier 2010).

NEXT STEPS

In 2011 and 2012, the *Developmental Education Initiative* and participating states will:

- > Deepen state capacity to use data and research to identify and spread successful programs and practices.
- > Identify ways to facilitate the structured dissemination of knowledge within each state—including the use of technology—given limited financial resources.
- > Publish tools that can help states structure and sustain robust knowledge sharing using in-person and virtual-learning networks.

III. POLICY SUPPORTS

The third component of the DEI state strategy is the implementation of policy supports that add momentum to institutional efforts to improve outcomes for underprepared students. States control policy levers that can dramatically change the context within which institutions committed to data-driven improvement operate. Thoughtful policy action can remove barriers to innovation, improve incentives driving decision making, and address challenges that are well beyond the purview of individual institutions or the community college sector as a whole. When policymakers listen carefully to the concerns of college leaders and do their best to anticipate unintended consequences, they can help to accelerate innovation and improvement.

The DEI and its state teams have been guided from the outset by a framework that identifies four high-priority policy targets (Collins 2009). Section II highlighted one of these: policies to promote innovation and learning from strategic research on promising practices. The three other high-priority policy targets are:

- 1. Pursue preventative strategies:** States have an important role to play in reducing the need for developmental education. They can set and broadly communicate college-readiness standards, provide early assessment opportunities for high school students, and ensure that college expectations are aligned with both high school and adult education systems.
- 2. Strengthen assessment and placement:** A state's assessment and placement policies can affect whether institutional approaches to selecting tests and placing students into developmental courses are consistent yet flexible. Are testing and placement policies similar across institutions in a state? Is the process transparent to students? Do institutions provide students with the information and support they need to prepare for and succeed in the credential program of their choice?
- 3. Implement performance funding:** Institutions and individuals respond to incentives. In most states, funding formulas are tied to enrollments early in the semester rather than to the completion of courses or credentials. Shifting at least a segment of state funding from rewarding enrollment to rewarding success can be a huge spur to institutional innovation. It also can focus institutional energy on carefully redesigning programs and courses to help students move quickly and effectively through requirements. The DEI strategy focuses on making sure that performance funding approaches address the particular needs and interests of students who enroll in college underprepared for college-level work.



1. PURSUE PREVENTATIVE STRATEGIES

THE STRATEGY

The DEI state strategy emphasizes the importance of reducing the need for developmental education before students enroll in college. State efforts to align K-12 and college expectations have been significantly altered by the traction that the voluntary Common Core State Standards of college and career readiness already have achieved. The Common Core has been embraced by almost all states nationally, and federal funding of two consortia to develop aligned assessments will help ensure that the standards are embedded in sophisticated tests.²² The potential to reduce the need for remediation is evident in Florida's launch of a common assessment for college readiness, college-level placement, and exit from developmental education (see page 28, "Assessment and Placement").

A second development is the growing recognition by states of the need for better alignment between Adult Basic Education and developmental education and for clearer definitions of the role of each. As more data become available on the poor outcomes of students who start in the lowest levels of developmental education and in adult basic skills courses, pressure is mounting for effective alternatives to traditional developmental education courses. To this end, states are analyzing the alignment of Adult Basic Education and developmental education and creating opportunities for better integration of services and funding. They also are assessing whether financial aid or other policies create incentives that lead to ineffective placement decisions for students with serious basic skills deficiencies.

DEI state strategies to reduce the need for developmental education address both kinds of misalignment across educational systems: disconnects between K-12 and community colleges on what constitutes college readiness; and disconnects between adult education and community colleges on the best way to prepare low-skilled adults for college-level success. Relative to K-12 alignment, the *Developmental Education Initiative* focuses on ways that high schools and colleges can work together to provide high school students with an early assessment of specific college competencies for which they are underprepared, as well as with early experiences with college expectations.

PROGRESS AMONG DEI STATES

Aligning K-12 and college expectations: States have placed a higher priority on cross-state collaborations to define and align standards and expectations. For example, the top education priority for North Carolina Governor Beverly Perdue is alignment to reduce the need for college remediation. The North Carolina Community College System, the Department of Public Instruction, and the University of North Carolina are collaborating with the governor's office on strategies to significantly lower the number of high school graduates requiring developmental education. The centerpiece of this cross-sector collaboration is a plan for using diagnostic assessments that identify students' academic weaknesses in high school and that support opportunities for students to catch up and graduate with the skills they need for college and work.

Efforts to align K-12 and college-level standards, assessments, and expectations are underway in the other DEI states as well. Most are aligning their K-12 standards with the national Common Core Standards. The exceptions are Texas and Virginia, both of which are aligning their respective K-12 standards with locally developed college-readiness standards.

Each DEI state is exploring some form of early assessment to identify and address high school students' academic weaknesses before graduation. Florida's early assessment policy is one of the more developed efforts. Florida Senate Bill 1908, enacted in 2008, allows the state postsecondary readiness test to be given to high school juniors with an interest in attending college. Students whose scores indicate the need for remediation can take a high school course that mirrors the postsecondary readiness curriculum offered in community colleges. Other states (e.g., Connecticut, North Carolina)

are studying the scale-up potential of institution-based early assessment pilots. Texas and Virginia are exploring securing services from third-party testing vendors to develop early assessments and preparation materials for students who are not on track to be college ready.

Aligning ABE and postsecondary routes to college readiness: DEI states have broadened the scope of their alignment work to include precollege adult education. Several states, including Ohio, Texas, and Virginia, are reviewing assessment policies to determine if there should be minimum standards for placement into developmental education, establishing a floor below which students would be referred to Adult Basic Education. Currently, students with very low skill levels are placed in developmental education with little chance of significant progress within a reasonable amount of time. Establishing a cut score to indicate which students might be served better in precollege adult education may increase the probability of success.

Several states are working to improve collaboration between precollege adult education providers and community colleges. One example is the Texas legislature's requirement that the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the Texas Education Agency align adult basic and postsecondary education, using \$10 million in grant funding to increase the number and quality of partnerships between community colleges and adult education providers. With a similar goal of encouraging better integration of Adult Basic Education and community college programming, the North Carolina legislature has allowed a percentage of the state funds for Adult Basic Education to be used to support students in innovative short-term technical credential programs at community colleges.

NEXT STEPS

In the coming year, a number of DEI states will take steps to:

- > Deepen cross-sector collaboration to fully align standards, assessments, and expectations across K-12, ABE, and postsecondary education.
- > Refine and implement early assessment instruments and measure their impact on reducing the need for developmental education.
- > Assess and determine the appropriate cut score for ABE to improve the effectiveness of placement decisions and increase the chances of success for the highest-need students.

2. STRENGTHEN ASSESSMENT AND PLACEMENT

THE STRATEGY

There is growing evidence that policies surrounding the tests used for placement into developmental education or college courses present a range of obstacles to many students. New research argues that there is a weak relationship between placement test scores and subsequent success in both developmental and college-level classes. As Thomas Bailey of the Community College Research Center notes, two students with the same test score may need very different supports to succeed. At the same time, students scoring just above and just below a cutoff level probably need fairly similar supports—and the attrition rate among developmental education students might argue for more routine provision of academic support in the context of for-credit academic courses (Hughes & Scott-Clayton 2010).

Part of the challenge is the bewildering variation in assessment tests and cut scores used in different states or even in the same state. States need to make their assessment, testing, and placement policies more consistent across institutions. As noted, the engagement of community colleges and their system offices in the development of Common Core standards and assessments should ultimately reduce the variability by generating a more shared understanding of “college readiness.”

A significant trend nationally and within the DEI states emphasizes making initial student assessments more diagnostic and actionable. This requires redesigning tests and rethinking how results are used. Several DEI states are doing groundbreaking work to develop actionable assessment policies that will be instructive to other states and colleges. They aim to improve the diagnostic capability of assessments and strengthen institutional capacity to incorporate these diagnostics into a system of multiple indicators of student skills that can point people toward a credential that best suits their individual needs.

PROGRESS AMONG DEI STATES

DEI states are taking a close look at their assessment policies with the goal of greater consistency and transparency and more flexible use of testing for student placement. North Carolina’s placement committee is examining the state’s assessment policy for its impact on success outcomes to determine if the statewide cut score for developmental education needs revising. Acknowledging the importance of alignment across sectors, the North Carolina Community College System has recommended to the State Board of Community Colleges that the composition of the placement committee be expanded to include representation from the fields of basic skills, English as a Second Language, and career and technical training. The Connecticut Community College System is also examining its placement policies. This work includes validation studies to identify the precise relationship between assessment scores and success outcomes. Ohio is analyzing the cut scores established by Adult Basic Education providers and community colleges in order to determine the impact of placement test scores on student success.

Florida has taken advantage of the Common Core standards movement—and the expiration of the state’s contract with its assessment exam vendor—to develop a diagnostic assessment that will enable colleges to pinpoint students’ strengths and weaknesses and improve the accuracy of student placements. In October 2010, the Florida Division of Colleges rolled out one of the first customized college placement tests, developed from a blueprint created by a team of K-12, college, and university faculty. The journey to this new assessment began in 2008, as the state began working toward a common definition of college readiness—specifically, what students need to know and be able to do to succeed in their first college-level math and English classes—with the help of Achieve’s American Diploma Project. Because Florida community colleges have common course numbering, it was relatively easy to identify the first college-level math and English courses statewide. A set of Postsecondary Readiness Competencies was defined through a collaborative cross-sector process, based on the competencies needed to succeed in those gatekeeper courses. The state then hired McCann Associates to design an assessment test that would align with the identified competencies and that would be constructed with the capability to diagnose student deficiencies in specific areas. The Postsecondary Readiness Competencies were revised to align with the new Common Core standards after their release in 2010.

Florida started using the new Postsecondary Education Readiness Test in October 2010, and colleges are transitioning to the new customized test. When the diagnostic capabilities of the PERT system (scheduled for early 2011) are ready, colleges will have the ability to identify specific competencies that students need to master in order to be prepared for college-level coursework. According to the Florida Division of Colleges, “This will enable colleges to tailor instruction and reduce the time needed for remediation while enhancing the probability of success.” It also means that college- and career-ready standards for high school students will align with community college placement policies and with the colleges’ basic skills exit criteria, all based upon the same diagnostic assessment instrument.²³

NEXT STEPS

In 2011 and 2012, DEI states will work to improve assessment and placement policies through three activities:

- > Continue efforts to bring consistency and coherence to assessment and placement policies across all colleges in each state system.
- > Share results of validity studies and improve knowledge of the connection between assessment scores and student success outcomes.
- > Improve system capacity to implement actionable assessments featuring a diagnostic component that pinpoints students' academic weaknesses and facilitates better targeted interventions.

3. IMPLEMENT PERFORMANCE INCENTIVES

THE STRATEGY

When enrollment is the primary driver of state appropriations to community colleges, institutional leaders focus on enrollment levels more than on outcomes. An increasing number of states are moving to tie at least some part of state institutional and sector appropriations to student outcomes. In the past, performance funding has risen and fallen with changing political and fiscal winds (Dougherty et al. 2010). In the current fiscal environment, though, interest and momentum are remarkably strong.

New performance funding policy efforts seek to learn from past designs and their implementation challenges. For example, some states rewarded only graduation, providing unintended incentives for institutions to not serve underprepared students. Other states moved too dramatically and too quickly, without testing and vetting ideas with institutional leaders. In many states, the legislature implemented performance funding bonuses but then eliminated them when budgets tightened.

Current efforts to shift some state funding to reward outcomes have been sparked by the thoughtful approach of the Washington State Board of Community and Technical College's Student Achievement Initiative, developed and implemented during the state's involvement with the Ford Foundation Bridges to Opportunity Initiative and then with *Achieving the Dream*. Many states have taken a close look at Washington's design and experience and learned important lessons in several areas, including the value of: rewarding institutions for helping students reach intermediate momentum points, structured to encourage schools to help more underprepared students advance; rolling out policy change in a deliberate and inclusive fashion so that college leaders and faculty have time to consider ways to adapt instruction to meet new expectations; and structuring the incentives so institutions compete against their past performance rather than against one another.

PROGRESS AMONG DEI STATES

Since their involvement in *Achieving the Dream*, DEI states have followed the progress of Washington's Student Achievement Initiative and have had opportunities to learn from its architects and implementers. They also have been exposed to other state approaches to performance funding, including new policies in Tennessee and Indiana.

Ohio is in the first months of implementing a new performance funding system, based to some extent upon Washington's. However, Ohio is perhaps more ambitious about how quickly to shift funding to reward outcomes and how much of total appropriations should be tied to progression and completion measures. As part of its FY 2010-11 budget, the Ohio legislature

approved a performance funding system for the state's community colleges that includes student success as part of the funding formula, and it required the chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents in conjunction with the state's community colleges to develop the new formula. The Ohio Association of Community Colleges worked closely with the Regents, both lead partners in Ohio's *Developmental Education Initiative*, to design the funding shift. The Ohio Association of Community Colleges submitted recommendations to the chancellor to allocate 5 percent of FY 2011 state funding for community colleges to "success points." Under the association's recommendations, the proportion of public funding allocated according to these factors will increase to 20 percent by FY 2015, with the allocation of an additional 10 percent of public funding based on an institution-specific goal negotiated with the chancellor's office.

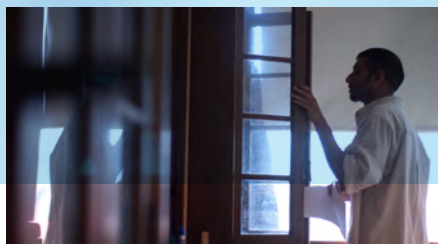
Texas is considering a similar approach. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has recommended to the legislature that two-year colleges be funded partly on their performance in getting students through "momentum points" or academic milestones that demonstrate progress toward completing credentials or transferring to four-year institutions. According to the board, the fiscal environment prevents the performance funding from being above the base formula appropriation. Thus, the recommendation is that funding be generated from a portion of 10 percent of the community college formula appropriation for the second year of the 2012-2013 biennium. The Coordinating Board's rationale for using the second year of the biennium is to allow time for institutions to adjust to the new performance-based system.

Among the DEI states, Ohio is furthest along in developing a "momentum points"-based performance funding approach. In Texas, the legislature is now considering the Coordinating Board's recommendations for performance-based funding.

NEXT STEPS

DEI states will continue to implement, explore, and assess the effects of performance funding systems that support better outcomes for students who place into developmental education. DEI states will:

- > Develop peer learning opportunities with DEI and other states to share experiences implementing performance funding, including interaction with Complete College America and the Education Commission of the States Getting Past Go initiative.
- > Document the implementation of performance funding in Ohio.
- > Identify student progression patterns associated with intermediate milestones that correlate with credentials completion.



CONCLUSION

Improving outcomes in developmental education is critical to reaching the ambitious postsecondary education attainment goals set by the Obama Administration and shared by major philanthropic organizations, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Lumina Foundation for Education. To increase the odds that more students in community colleges earn credentials and degrees that have value in the labor market, new solutions are needed that help academically underprepared youth and adults succeed in college.

Community colleges need to move beyond the traditional prerequisite-driven, semester-length approach to course delivery and to invent new approaches to delivering developmental education that are shorter and more targeted on each student's level of remedial need. This is no small task. Individual colleges, although willing and eager, need support, assistance, and incentives if they are to succeed in redesigning developmental education.

DEI states have set out to demonstrate the power of a coordinated, state-level, data-driven approach to supporting and accelerating institutional innovation that features three components interacting to accelerate innovation and change:

- > A **data-driven improvement** process that strengthens state capacity to collect, assess, and use longitudinal student data in support of institutional innovation;
- > A state-level **innovation investment strategy** that provides incentives for the development, testing, and scaling up of effective models; and
- > State-level **policy supports** that facilitate the implementation of new models and encourage the spread of practices that can improve progress and completion for students in need of developmental education.

These states are testing and implementing strategies to accelerate the identification, implementation, and scale-up of new approaches. They have already made impressive strides, and their experience has important implications for community colleges, states, and the national conversation on developmental education redesign.

First, the DEI states understand the importance of performance indicators and a robust performance measurement system to a strong developmental education improvement process. The progress they have made in establishing success measures, including intermediate milestones, can be further leveraged by making momentum and loss points visible and by agreeing on performance goals and incentives based on these success indicators.

Second, incentives for developmental education innovation—although difficult to pursue in the current fiscal environment—are critical. Despite severe budgetary challenges, DEI states are nonetheless securing and aligning resources for the development of pathways and models that decrease the time students spend in developmental education and that increase the pace at which they enter and complete college-level programs of study. Collaboration among the public, private, and philanthropic sectors will be critical to innovation in the years ahead.

Third, the states have found that in addition to the right performance indicators and support for innovative programs, they need supportive policies that align standards, assessments, and expectations, and that promote the consistent implementation of programs and policies across all of their community colleges. In addition, policymakers can provide rewards and create pressure for institutional innovation and change.

At the end of the *Developmental Education Initiative's* three years, the DEI states will have supported, tested, and made visible creative strategies that other states can use to help their colleges learn and change. While there are few easy answers, no silver bullets, the experience of the DEI states should help other states support their community colleges in the redesign of developmental education offerings to dramatically improve student success.

ENDNOTES

¹ In an analysis of National Education Longitudinal Study data, researchers Attewell, Lavin, Domina, & Levey (2006) found that 58 percent of the students in the nationally representative sample took at least one remedial course.

² The *Developmental Education Initiative* is an extension of the demonstration phase of *Achieving the Dream*, with a specific emphasis on identifying, promoting, and scaling up of promising institutional and state policy strategies to improve outcomes for students who are underprepared for success in college. For more information on *Achieving the Dream*, see: www.achievingthedream.org.

³ These indicators are typically missing from state-level performance measurement and accountability systems. Most state-level performance indicators mirror the federal Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) measures that states are required to submit to receive financial aid. These indicators measure three-year graduation rates for Associate's degrees for first-time, full-time students. The effect is that student and institutional performance on developmental education is invisible.

⁴ According to the *Achieving the Dream* data sample, fewer than half of the students referred to developmental education complete their requirements or course sequences (Bailey, Wook Jeong, & Cho 2010).

⁵ Resources outside of the existing formula- or course-based funding mechanisms are essential for innovation. All community colleges have an institutional research function, but these are typically understaffed and devote most of their time and resources to federal reporting requirements (Jenkins & Morest 2007). Few institutional research offices—especially those at small and rural colleges—have the analytic and technical capacity to support a robust research, testing, and evaluation.

⁶ The Cross-State Data Work Group provides technical assistance to states to augment the state-level capacity to collect, report, and use data to inform decision making. JFF established the work group in the first year of *Achieving the Dream* by convening data experts from each state, and linking them with JFF personnel and other national authorities on data systems and use. Key activities of the work group include identifying student success performance indicators that are useful and relevant to community colleges, standardizing data collection and analysis within and across states, and benchmarking outcomes for cohorts of students on key indicators across institutions within the respective states, as well as benchmarking outcomes across states to learn from successful policies and practices.

⁷ The cohorts were from 2002-2003.

⁸ This is the topic of a forthcoming policy brief from Jobs for the Future and the *Developmental Education Initiative*.

⁹ Jeremy Offenstien and Nancy Shulock (2010) have profiled the DEI metrics and approach to identifying and defining intermediate and final measures, along with the CCA/NGA metrics and 11 other definitional efforts at the multi-state, state, and institutional levels. They set out the similarities and differences across key efforts, present a framework for understanding how intermediate measures can be used for improvement, and highlight key implementation issues in the definition and use of intermediate measures for institutional improvement and accountability.

¹⁰ JFF, which leads the state policy work for the *Developmental Education Initiative*, will coordinate these discussions.

¹¹ For more information on *Complete College America*, see: <http://www.completecollege.org>.

¹² Two recent studies found substantial variation in higher education institutions' success rates. *Promoting Gatekeeper Course Success Among Community College Students Needing Remediation* examined factors associated with higher probabilities that students who test into developmental education will enroll in and pass the remedial courses to which they have been assigned and go on to enroll in and pass math and English gatekeeper courses (Jenkins, Jaggar, & Roska 2009). The study found that some community colleges were more effective at getting students to enroll in the courses while other community colleges were more effective at getting students to actually pass them. A key takeaway from this finding is that the colleges, each apparently effective in different aspects of student success, can benefit by sharing lessons.

Big Gaps, Small Gaps: Some Colleges and Universities Do Better Than Others in Graduating African-American Students also found substantial variation in the student success, in this case graduation (Lynch & Engle 2010). For example, there is a 16-percentage-point gap in the graduation rate between white and African-American students in public higher education institutions. But some institutions have made great strides in narrowing the gap and others have eliminated it. These large gaps in success outcomes are yet another example suggesting that some institutions are more effective than others at helping students complete degrees. In addition, *Big Gaps, Small Gaps* asserts that there are lessons to be learned from the colleges that are most effective in getting students to complete.

¹³ The goal of a computer-based dashboard is to automatically provide users with useful and simplified presentations of underlying data.

¹⁴ For more information on BTW Consultants, see: <http://btw.informingchange.com>.

¹⁵ The proposal for the initiative called for five million additional community college graduates by 2020 and for plans that increase the effectiveness and impact of community colleges, raise graduation rates, modernize facilities, and create new online learning opportunities to aid in reaching this goal.

¹⁶ Alamo Colleges; El Paso Community College; Lone Star College System; San Jacinto College; and Tarrant County College.

¹⁷ Other criteria for the grants were faculty development and training, goals for Hispanic enrollment, and the integration of college-readiness standards.

¹⁸ The Connecticut Community College System Board of Trustees approved a budget allocation that provided for seed money for innovation and a budget allocation to pilot performance incentives based on achievement of intermediate benchmarks.

¹⁹ The Division of Florida Colleges used a combination of *Achieving the Dream*, *Developmental Education Initiative*, and College Access Challenge Grant funds to fund the mini-grants.

²⁰ Jobs for the Future, with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and in partnership with the Washington State Board for Community & Technical Colleges, the National Council for Workforce Education, and the National College Transition Network, is leading a new initiative, ABE to Credentials, that draws on the successes of Washington State's I-BEST Model and the *Breaking Through* Initiative since 2004. ABE to Credentials will engage 40 community colleges across the country in 14 states where the higher education agency governs Adult Basic Education. States and their colleges and ABE programs will advance over 18,000 adult learners, who will achieve credentials, earn 12 college-level credits or more, and increase their readiness to succeed in college, while also gaining the skills they need for employment in career pathways. After a first planning year in which state teams will redesign adult education and postsecondary systems and programs by integrating basic skills with occupational training, up to five states will receive three-year implementation grants.

²¹ The grants were funded by 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds.

²² For more information on the Common Core State Standards, see: <http://www.corestandards.org>.

²³ See The Florida College System newsletter *Zoom*, October 2010-03.

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