

Taking the First Steps Towards 100% Implementation of the Corequisite Model

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Getting Started

Texas House Bill 2223 (2017) was developed to accelerate underprepared students’ persistence and successful completion of credit-bearing college-level courses. The initiative requires that a certain percentage of underprepared students enrolled in developmental education be reported as enrolled in a corequisite course. Underprepared students are identified through their Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA) scores in reading, writing, and math. Required of all new to college students, the Texas Success Initiative

(TSI) was created to help colleges and universities identify students who need additional support before attempting college-level course work. This new corequisite mandate allows underprepared students to enroll in entry-level college courses and requires co-enrollment in a developmental education course/intervention designed to support the student’s successful completion of the college-level course (TX HB2223, 2017).

At the Northwest Campus of Tarrant County College (TCC), we began to research how to make the new mandate work for students. At the first point of entry, we considered the “effectiveness of the remedial courses in which a large proportion of entering community college students enroll” (Venezia and Hughes, 2013, p. 37). We wanted to make sure the effectiveness of our program was evident and that students felt better prepared as they began taking college-credit courses. The corequisite model was appealing since community colleges are aiming to decrease remediation time, consequently connecting students with certificates and degrees more quickly (Venezia & Hughes, 2013, p. 37).

Early research suggested that students are “not harmed by tackling slightly more difficult coursework than their test scores suggest they can handle” (Bailey, Jaggars, & Scott-Clayton, 2013, p. 24). Jones (2015) built on this idea: “The best way to support students who are currently placed into developmental education is to put them directly into college-level courses with additional academic support” (p. 26). Giving students support and strategies they can immediately put into practice is becoming much more popular, and based on these previous reports, it seems to be worth trying.

With this research and in anticipation of the HB 2223 mandate, our campus chose to offer four different types of corequisite pairings during Spring 2018. As shown in Table 1, we ran a total of six sections as corequisites. Students could choose between an English Composition, General Psychology, or U.S. History I course, each paired with an Integrated Reading and Writing (INRW II) support course. Campus administration agreed to allow small sections and to take special consideration of student success rates. Schedules of the college-level course instructors dictated most of the offerings. In all, the pilot ran with three college-level course instructors and three instructors from the Academic Foundations, TCC’s department that works with underprepared and TSI reading- and writing-liable students.

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Table 1
Four Varieties of Corequisite Pairings Offered Spring 2018.

| TCC Course | Sections offered | Transfer Course/ Length of Course | Support Course/ Length of Course | Shared Students/ INRW II Cap |
|------------|------------------|--|---|------------------------------------|
| PSYC 2301 | 2 | General Psychology 16 weeks (T/TH) | INRW II 16 weeks (T/TH) | 8/20 |
| ENGL 1301 | 1 | General Composition I 16 weeks (M/W) | INRW II 16 weeks (T/TH) | 5/15 |
| ENGL 1301 | 1 | General Composition I 16 weeks (T/TH) | INRW II 8 weeks (T/TH) 8 weeks NCBO | 10/15 |
| HIST 1301 | 2 | History of the U.S. I 16 weeks (T/TH) | INRW II 16 weeks (T/TH) | 8/20 |

Note: The term *NCBO* refers to a *non-course-based option*, which at TCC allows a student to take a course with an added tutoring component. Students are not charged for the NCBO, but it allows additional support in their college-level course.

Initially, INRW I instructors nominated students into the corequisite model. Registration was a manual process involving the student, an advisor, two administrative assistants, and the registrar. The process was unsustainable, but it offered the opportunity to work and brainstorm with various departments, a process that would be fundamental in the successful implementation of future courses. Collaboration among faculty, advisors, section builders, deans, and the college’s registrar were essential to streamline a systematic registration process that offers linked corequisite sections in TCC’s online system for students and faculty. In Fall 2018, students will be able to self-register for their sections.

Serendipity

This pilot identified some key elements.

- The college-level course instructor must be a willing participant in the model. Our current faculty partners are ideal for this program because they currently employ other student support programs such as Supplemental Instruction (SI), the free academic enrichment program designed to help students succeed in historically difficult courses, detailed study guides, and other intervention tools. As the faculty give campus-wide presentations on this new model, additional faculty ask to partner with us, giving us targeted growth opportunities. Our goal is to increase our faculty partners while ensuring selected faculty will welcome and support students as they complete each course.
- Communication between the college-level course and INRW instructor is vital. Whether these were conversations, curriculum collaboration, emailed class re-caps, or simple text/email follow ups, we

quickly realized that a *blind model* was not in the best interest of students. We informed students at the onset that their transfer-course instructor volunteered for the model and was equally supportive of their success. The course syllabus alerted students to the cross-discipline collaboration and shared information.

- Note taking, active reading, and study strategies should be front-loaded within the first few weeks of the course using the college-level course material. Although, initially, it felt like we abandoned the INRW course, using the textbook and readings from the college-level course intensified applicability and motivation. Students needed to see the immediate connection and experience success in their other course. Students shared that their perception of feeling prepared for a group discussion counted as a success, and they not only saw but also felt the benefits of the study and preparation strategies.

Looking Ahead

In Fall 2018, our campus will offer almost half of the sections of our higher-level course with the corequisite model with a goal of 100% by Spring 2019. All current instructors have re-enlisted, and another history instructor has expressed interest as well. The benefit of our piloting a Spring 2018 roll-out is the opportunity to reassess and regroup over the Summer and codify some of our best practices. For Fall 2018, instructors will anticipate the other discipline’s content and be able to prepare additional supplemental material. We will then begin preparations for creating corequisite courses for Composition I and INRW 0395, our lower-level course, to launch Spring 2019. As we take the model full scale, we anticipate changes in dynamics. The pilot model has afforded the opportunity to identify the key elements and focus on curriculum development. Overall, we continue to focus on student success as we accept these new challenges connected with corequisite implementation.

References

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