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Overview of Remedial Education at the State's Public Higher Education Segments

L E G I S L A T I V E A N A L Y S T ' S O F F I C E

Presented to:
Senate Education Committee
Hon. Benjamin Allen, Chair





What Is Remedial Education?

- Segments Assess Readiness for College-Level Coursework**
 - Colleges historically have required certain incoming students to take placement exams to determine if they are ready for college-level coursework.
 - The three public higher education segments historically have used different placement exams.
 - Remedial education is intended to help students who are assessed as “unprepared” to succeed in college-level work.

- Assessments Focus on Reading, Writing, and Math Skills**
 - California Community Colleges (CCC) and California State University (CSU) assess students in English and math.
 - University of California (UC) assesses students only in English.

- Remedial Education Is Known by Various Other Names**
 - Typically used interchangeably with terms such as developmental education and foundational skills. Known in the community colleges as “basic skills.”



How Many Students Are Assessed as Unprepared?



Rates of Unpreparedness Vary by Segment

- Three-quarters of first-time CCC students (more than 150,000 incoming degree, certificate, or transfer-seeking students identified each fall term as unprepared).
- More than 40 percent of first-time CSU students (about 25,000 students identified each fall term as unprepared).
- 23 percent of first-time UC students (about 8,000 students identified each fall term as unprepared).



Unprepared Students Are Less Likely to Graduate

- At CCC, 30 percentage point difference in graduation rates between incoming students assessed as college-ready versus not college-ready.
- 20 percentage point difference in graduation rates at CSU.
- Comparable UC outcome data not available.



What Is the Traditional Approach to Remedial Education?



Traditional Approach Involves Sequences of Term-Length Courses

- **Testing and Placement.** Based on a placement test score, colleges place students into a sequence of precollegiate-level courses they must complete prior to enrolling in college-level English or math courses.
- **Example of Remedial Course Sequence.** Arithmetic, Elementary Algebra, Intermediate Algebra.
- **Teaching Method.** Often involves lecture-based format and abstract and repetitive practice exercises.



Shortcomings of Traditional Approach

- **Placement Tests Often Misplace Students.** Data from national research and the CCC system suggest that about 30 percent of community college students placed into remedial coursework could have succeeded if directly placed into college-level coursework.
- **Sequences Extend Time in School.** Students beginning three levels below college-level courses must complete three terms of remediation before attempting college-level English or math courses.
- **Teaching Method Criticized as Ineffective.** Does not necessarily promote conceptual understanding or provide relevant context to help students connect what they are learning to their broader educational or professional goals.



What Are New Approaches to Remedial Education?



Innovations in Remedial Education

- ***Establishing Strong Partnerships With High Schools.*** CSU's Early Assessment Program, for example, provides feedback to high school students on the extent to which their English and math skills align with college expectations. The program includes a professional development component aimed at helping high school teachers improve their instructional practices.
- ***Using Multiple Indicators to Assess and Place Students.*** Common indicators include students' high school courses, grades, and test results.
- ***Accelerating Progress Toward College-Level Courses.*** Includes compressing sequences, pairing college-level courses with extra supports, and creating alternative remedial pathways for students not pursuing careers with heavy math or science focus (for example, allowing a statistics course to satisfy the math college-readiness requirement).
- ***Other Notable Innovations.*** These include incorporating remedial skills within academic or career technical education programs and embedding student services into remedial courses.



How Is Remedial Education Funded at CCC?

- Remediation at CCC Funded by Proposition 98 and Student Fees

- CCC Receives Funding Through Apportionments and Several Categorical Programs
 - **Apportionments.** In 2015-16, CCC received more than \$400 million in apportionment funding (general-purpose monies) for precollegiate-level English and math courses.
 - **Basic Skills Initiative.** Since 2007-08, the state has provided at least \$20 million annually for this initiative. Base funding level scheduled to increase to \$50 million in 2017-18.
 - **Basic Skills and Student Outcomes Transformation Program.** 2015-16 budget provided \$60 million (one time) in incentive grants for college to adopt and implement evidence-based practices over a multiyear period. 2016-17 budget included \$30 million (one time) for additional incentive grants.
 - **Basic Skills Partnership Pilot Program.** 2015-16 budget provided \$10 million (one time) in incentive grants for community colleges to provide remedial instruction to CSU students and for CCC, CSU, and local high schools to better align English and math curricula. Grants run over a two-year period (2016-17 and 2017-18).
 - **Components of Other Categorical Programs.** Including Student Success and Support Program, Student Equity Program, Extended Opportunity Programs and Services, Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative, and Awards for Innovation.



How Is Remedial Education Funded at CSU and UC?



Remediation at CSU Funded by State and Student Fees

- **Early Start Program.** CSU's summer remedial program received \$13.2 million in 2015-16, about half coming from student fees and half from state lottery funds.
- **Other Remedial Courses.** For remedial courses during the regular academic year, the state provides the same amount of funding to CSU as it does for college-level courses. In 2015-16, total funding for these remedial courses (state General Fund and student tuition revenue) was \$48 million.



Remediation at UC Also Funded by State and Student Tuition

- UC was not able to identify how much funding it uses for remedial education, but we estimate it likely spends in the low millions of dollars annually.



Issues for Legislative Consideration



Challenges in Coordinating Multiple CCC Initiatives

- Are CCC's many categorical programs working in concert to help campuses meet their student improvement goals?
- What could the Legislature do to promote better coordination and outcomes?
- What is the best balance of central versus local control? To what extent should the Legislature require campuses to use identified best practices? To what extent should the CCC Chancellor's Office intervene if a campus is not meeting its student improvement goals?



Funding Remedial Education

- Should UC and CSU rely more heavily on CCC and high school faculty to teach their remedial courses?
- Should the state fund all remedial courses across the three public systems at a uniform rate?
- Should the state financially reward colleges that improve their student outcomes? Should this results-oriented funding supplement or replace current student-support categorical funding?



Promoting Large-Scale Success

- Virtually every campus can point to an effective remedial practice or program. Often, however, these programs are pilots or small in scale and have not been implemented campus-wide. How can the Legislature ensure that existing and future spending on remediation improves practices on a larger scale, whether for an academic department, college, or statewide?