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Traditional Remediation Ends in Low Completion of Remediation and College Degree!

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TRADITIONAL REMEDIATION ENDS IN LOW COMPLETION OF REMEDIATION AND COLLEGE DEGREE!

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Policy Brief No. X

Background: This brief is one in a series aimed at providing higher education policymakers and advocates with an evidence base to address how to best serve students in light of the challenges facing higher education. This brief was authored by a University of Massachusetts Amherst graduate student in the Five Colleges Center for World Languages under Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant program as a course assignment for EDUC 674B: Higher Education Policy and was reviewed for accuracy by Professor Sade Bonilla.

CENTRAL TOPIC

Remediation completion and overall degree completion among students who are placed in the traditional remediation program is low. Many students do not enroll, fail, or withdraw from remediation ^{1 2 3 4 5}. However, using the co-requisite remediation model and multiple pathways in Math and English subjects prove increased remediation completion and overall awarding of degrees ^{6 7}.

KEY INSIGHTS

Breaking Down the Issue

- Traditional remediation program does not assist students to complete their major requirements to graduate ^{1 8}.
- Students do not receive college credits until they finish remediation and being placed in remediation causes students to lose self-confidence ⁸.
- Financial and opportunity costs of remediation and depletion of eligibility for financial aid lead students to avoid remediation program¹.
- Remediation completion and overall degree completion among students who are placed in remediation program is low. Many students do not enroll, fail, or withdraw from remediation ^{1 2 3 4 5}.

Recommendations

- Transforming remediation into the co-requisite model in English and Math subjects promotes success in completing remediation and graduating college.
- Applying for multiple pathways, rather than a single policy, in remedial intervention considering students' needs and majors might work better.

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ISSUE

Remediation program is a form of preparatory courses in English and Math that aim to prepare students who lack necessary skills for college level courses⁹. Traditional pre-requisite remediation programs assign students to enroll in remedial courses before taking college-level courses and completing their degree¹⁰. Remedial programs should be able to assist students to achieve their academic goals in terms of finishing their program requirements. The issue here is that the traditional remediation program is not serving the purpose, in fact, it is an obstacle for students in several ways¹. Students do not receive college credits until they finish remediation and being placed in remediation causes students to lose self-confidence and feel insufficient⁸. In addition, financial and opportunity costs of remediation and the depletion of eligibility for financial aid are the other factors that lead students to avoid remediation programs. Therefore, the traditional remediation program turns into a disadvantage for students to complete their major requirements in order to graduate¹. Fewer than half of students who take remedial math and English courses complete them since most students commonly fail or withdraw¹. High failure rates among remedial students impedes taking regular college classes^{1 2 11 7}. Furthermore, many students who demonstrate a need for remedial coursework do not even enroll in these courses because of longer pathways to degree completion and the discouragement and stigma of remedial education placement^{1 2 3 4 5}.

CASE STUDIES

Virginia

Virginia Community Colleges (VCCS) have restructured their remediation program in Math and English into a co-requisite remediation model. In this model, students are directly assigned to college-level courses with additional instructional support in Math and English with supporting workshops provided alongside the college-level content¹⁰. Math is designed as a sequence of nine short modules. Students are able to complete the modules that match with their major requirement based on their proficiency levels. Math modules are offered as one-credit courses and “shell” courses. Students are able to complete the modules in a structured timeline as it follows; one credit course requires to finish one module in 4 weeks. The shell courses permit students to register for a single course in a semester rather than registering for up to four separate one-credit courses. The length of a shell course depends on the number of modules a student aims to complete⁶. Each module course is designed as lecture style where students are able to interact with their faculty members and have access to one-on-one support as well as instructional technology delivering content, practice, and assessment².

On the other hand, English is designed as a one semester English Fundamentals course integrating academic writing and reading. With the redesigned English Fundamentals courses, students enroll in one-semester courses with different credit-hour requirements based on their placement test results. Students are required to finish one

Massachusetts

Massachusetts has transformed remediation in colleges. Massachusetts started implementing the co-requisite remediation model in math, reading and writing subjects. Math remediation is organized as different pathways which ensure that students are taking and completing the appropriate math for their major depending on their proficiency level¹¹.

of the remedial English levels in order to enroll into college level classes apart from high level proficient students who are able to take remediation courses as a co-requisite along with the regular college level English². This allows students to complete remedial and gatekeeper English in one year⁶.

POLICY LOGIC

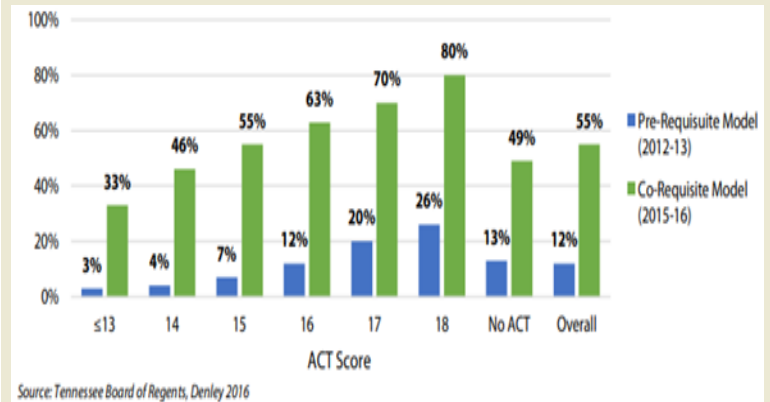
The re-organization of the remediation program in Virginia aimed to increase students' success, reduce remediation completion time at most to one academic year, and increase 4 years graduation and transfer rates from 25% to at least 33% in 4 years².

The policy logic is to enable students to enter college level and credit-bearing courses faster and to increase the number of students enrolling and succeeding in colleges¹¹. In this way, students are able to progress within majors and complete remedial courses simultaneously. The co-requisite remediation model saves money and enables students to graduate on a timely basis¹¹.

EVIDENCE

The remediation program in Virginia enabled more students to complete their program of study and earn degrees faster. Nearly 84% of students assigned to remediation completed math and English in their first semester⁷. The number of students who completed the program increased by 10% in math and 12% in English⁶. More first-time-in-college (FTIC) students earned college credits faster⁷. While the number of FTIC students eligible for enrollment in college Math doubled, the number of students ready for college level English tripled compared to their pre-design peers⁶. The number of students who have completed at least 12 credits in the first semester increased from 25% to 37% in 2017. The number of students who earn an associate degree in 3 or less increased by 20 percent⁷.

Figure 1: Traditional versus Co-requisite Remediation and Gateway Course Completion



The corequisite course model led to a significant increase in the enrolment numbers in college level English by 70%⁶. Students taking college-level statistics with workshops as a co-requisite remediation passed at a rate 16% higher, and accumulated more credits than students assigned to remedial elementary algebra in traditional remediation programs¹². The 3-year graduation rate of community college students taking remedial math courses increased by 8 percentage points with co-requisite remediation. Co-requisite remediation enables students to receive their degrees earlier each year¹³. These results show that policies allowing students to take college-level courses while taking remedial courses under the core curriculum

As seen in the figure, students achieved better outcomes in earning college-level credit in a co-requisite math course than in the traditional remediation model¹⁴. The Tennessee report showed that the success rate of the students at the lowest levels of academic preparedness with an ACT score of less than 15 was 11 times higher in the co-requisite model than traditional remediation^{14 15}. Tennessee report also presented that 55% of the community college students who took a co-requisite math course passed their college level and credit-bearing math course with 52% passing in the first semester. This is a more than four-fold increase compared to the traditional model in which only 12.3% of students achieved the same passing grade in an entire academic year. The passing rates of the students who took co-requisite writing course doubled from

might increase student success, remediation and college completion.

30.9 % to 61.8% in an academic year with 58.7 percent passing their English Composition I class in the first semester^{14 15}.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Implementation of the co-requisite remediation model and multiple pathways in reading, writing, and math subjects based on students' levels of proficiency and majors promote success in completing remediation and graduating college. Therefore, transforming remediation into the co-requisite model in English and Math subjects and applying for multiple pathways rather than applying single policy in remedial intervention considering students' needs and majors might work better.

CITATIONS

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The findings and conclusions contained within are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position or policies of the Center for Student Success Research, College of Education or University of Massachusetts Amherst.