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## Groups release principles for improving remedial education

Submitted by Ashley A. Smith on November 11, 2015 - 3:00am

Colleges and states have spent years working on ways to improve remedial education, especially as they find more students are graduating high school unprepared for the rigors of college.

Sixty-eight percent of community college students and 40 percent of students at public four-year colleges take at least one remedial course, and even more students are referred to developmental courses but never enroll in them, according to the Community College Research Center.

Now a slate of national organizations and states are endorsing six principles, all in an effort to aid in transforming and improving remediation <sup>[1]</sup>.

"No issue is more challenging for these institutions than addressing the large and wide number of students who appear at their doors unprepared for college work, and we're trying to crack the code on this challenge," said Kay McClenney, a senior adviser at the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and a longtime advocate of developmental education reform. AACC is one of a number of national organizations that is endorsing the principles.

McClenney said educators and policy makers still don't know what they need to about how to better serve students in developmental courses, but the new core principles should work as a guide to helping them do that.

Those principles are:

1. "Every student's postsecondary education begins with an intake process to choose an academic direction and identify the support needed to pass relevant credit-bearing gateway courses in the first year.
2. "Enrollment in college-level math and English courses or course sequences aligned with the student's program of study is the default placement for the vast majority of students.
3. "Academic and nonacademic support is provided in conjunction with gateway courses in the student's academic or career area of interest through corequisite <sup>[2]</sup> or other models with evidence of success in which supports are embedded in curricula and instructional strategies.
4. "Students for whom the default college-level course placement is not appropriate, even with additional mandatory support, are enrolled in rigorous, streamlined remediation options that align with the knowledge and skills required for success in gateway courses in their academic or career area of interest.

5. "Every student is engaged with content of required gateway courses that is aligned with his or her academic program of study -- especially in math.
6. "Every student is supported to stay on track to a college credential, from intake forward, through the institution's use of effective mechanisms to generate, share and act on academic performance and progression data."

Each of the statements represent the consensus views of the organizations and states that are looking for the best way to serve a myriad of students who are seeking to improve their lives, said Uri Treisman, executive director at the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

The organizations include Achieving the Dream, Complete College America, Education Commission of the States and Jobs for the Future. Also signing on were the University of the District of Columbia Community College and about 20 state higher education agencies, including California's **Central Valley Higher Education Consortium**, the Colorado Department of Higher Education, Georgia's university system, the Hawaii university system, the Illinois Board of Higher Education, the Indiana Commission for Higher Education, the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, Maryland's Higher Education Commission, the Missouri Department of Higher Education, the Montana University System, the New Mexico Department of Higher Education, the Northern Mariana Islands-Northern Marianas College, the Ohio Department of Higher Education, Oklahoma's State Regents for Higher Education, the Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner, the Tennessee Board of Regents and the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission.

Bruce Vandal, vice president of CCA, a nonprofit organization that is working to increase the number of people with certificates and degrees, said they expect more states and organizations to sign on to the principles. CCA is also a major advocate of the corequisite reform approach to developmental education, which encourages institutions to enroll students with remedial needs in college-level courses, but with additional supports like mandatory tutoring or extended instructional time.

"The ideas and research and strategy employed in the field are continuing to evolve and more institutions are committing to the agenda," he said.

Although CCA supports the corequisite model, the principles encourage institutions and states to implement any structured remedial reform that includes academic and nonacademic supports such as additional financial aid or advising.

The core principles originally were released in 2012 but have been updated to reflect changes and ongoing research in developing developmental education.

"We think this can make a very big difference for the many low-income and students of color who are disproportionately represented in developmental education," Michael Collins, associate vice president for postsecondary state policy at Jobs for the Future, a nonprofit organization that promotes educational and economic opportunities, said in an email.

Half of young people from high-income families hold a bachelor's degree by age 25, but only 10 percent of those from low-income families do so, said Collins.

"Low-income students, students of color and underprepared students need equitable access to postsecondary pathways and on-ramps to those pathways to dramatically increase their chances of earning credentials," he said.

Hunter Boylan, director of the National Center for Developmental Education at Appalachian State University, said the core principles are a good start to helping underprepared students be successful.

"It's probably a useful set of guidelines if you're just beginning to think about change in

developmental education," he said. "I hope it's an initial step and that it's a dynamic document that will change as we learn more."

But Boylan said he was also concerned that while the guidelines offer recommendations on integrating courses and support services, it doesn't do a good job of specifying how that integration should take place, or even how it might look.

"Implementing these principles will be expensive and labor intensive, and many state legislators are not in the mood to support such activities, particularly for underprepared and nontraditional students," Boylan said. "I have no idea where the money will come from to do these things, but we have to have some guidelines or framework or guidance that at least enables us to do what we can with what we have in hopes that we can do it better with more at some happier time."

[Community Colleges](#) <sup>[3]</sup>

[Curriculum](#) <sup>[4]</sup>

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[2] <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/05/08/states-and-colleges-increasingly-look-to-alter-remedial-classes>

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