Creating a Blueprint for

Access to Success

New Jersey Council of County Colleges
Big Ideas Project Group 3
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Executive Summary

Community colleges’ core mission has been centered on one word: access. Yet with stagnant two-year college graduation rates of less than 50 percent, it is clear that access is no longer enough. Instead, community colleges across the country are adopting a new mission with access to success at its core.

New Jersey’s economic future depends on the ability to provide an educated workforce. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that half of the new jobs created within the next eight years will require a postsecondary degree. It is imperative that college completion is increased.

Community colleges face the challenge of having to achieve more with fewer resources. In New Jersey, state aid to community colleges was cut by 8 percent, but full-time enrollments increased by 12 percent (NJCCC 2009). State aid is not expected to return in the near future. Thus, community colleges must look for big ideas to improve student success, improve retention, increase credential completion, and create better efficiency.

Nationwide, about 60 percent of students entering community college require developmental education. Students enrolled in developmental education courses are far less likely to complete a degree – only 25 percent of students who take developmental education classes complete a degree within eight years (Bailey 2009, p. 14).

Nationally, between $1.88 and $2.35 billion is spent on developmental education at community colleges (Strong American Schools 2008). There are remarkable potential savings for New Jersey if the need for remediation is reduced and developmental education success is improved.

Reducing the need for remediation in college and improving student success in developmental education will have substantial benefits for the State of New Jersey, including:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Increases in student retention</th>
<th>Increases in certificate/degree completion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial savings for colleges</td>
<td>Savings in government spending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial savings for students</td>
<td>A more educated New Jersey workforce</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the research of innovative strategies that have demonstrated an impact on reducing the need for remediation and increasing student success within developmental education, recommendations were made within this report, including:

1. Create a common vision on student success and on improving developmental education.
2. Seek to align expectations between high schools and community colleges.
3. Improve placement and testing practices.
4. Work together to collect better data and share information publicly to improve transparency, which could be used to inform best practices.

One recommendation for outside collaboration is to pursue a partnership with Achieving the Dream. This could help New Jersey create a culture of evidence by improving data collections and data analysis to inform best practices.

Community colleges are indeed entering the beginning of a new era. The changing economy is forcing community colleges to look beyond open access to a new priority of access to success. Though some of the issues surrounding student success are challenging, improving student success, especially within developmental education, can lead to great rewards. Community colleges must pursue aggressive action both individually and collectively if they are to remain true to their core mission of open access while increasing student achievement.
Introduction

Traditionally, community colleges’ core mission has been centered on one word: access. Yet with stagnate two-year college graduation rates of less than 50 percent, it is clear that access is no longer enough. Instead, community colleges across the country are adopting a new mission with access to success at its core.

New Jersey’s economic future depends the ability to provide an educated workforce. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that half of the new jobs created within the next eight years will require a postsecondary degree (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2008). One report notes that all of the six highest growth jobs in New Jersey will require a certificate, an associate’s degree, or a bachelor’s degree (Complete College America 2009). Such projections make it imperative that institutions of higher education take a hard look at student success.

While definitions for student success vary widely, common measures include completion of a college credential, transferring without a degree, or earning 30 degree credits with a GPA of 2.0 or higher. Data from 2002 to 2008 (a six year cohort) indicates that of the 29,436 first time, degree-seeking freshmen enrolled at New Jersey community colleges, 20.1 percent earned a degree or certificate, 14.1 percent transferred without a credential, and 12.9 percent earned 30 college degree credits within a six year time frame. While 47.2 percent of students achieved one of the student success measures, more than half did not. Further analysis indicates that of the 15,553 students who did not achieve a student success indicator, 2,839 full-time students and 1,997 part-time students did not earn a single college credit. This poses some very important questions for New Jersey. Why are these students dropping out before earning college credit? What barriers exist to student success?

Table 1 - Students Achieving Success Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Success Outcome</th>
<th>Percent of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earned a Degree/Certificate</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferred with Award</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earned 30 Degree Credits with GPA 2.0 or Higher</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>47.2</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

New Jersey Council of County Colleges, 2010

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1 The six high growth jobs are: dental hygienist, computer software engineer, HVAC/refrigeration mechanic, physical therapist assistant, network systems analyst, and licensed practical nurse.
Table 2A – Full Time Students who did not achieve at least one of the Success Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accumulated Degree GPA</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>0.01-1.99</th>
<th>2.00-2.99</th>
<th>3.00-4.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree Credits Earned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,839</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>967</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-11</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>1,077</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-17</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>658</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>398</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-29</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 or more</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>665</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3063 4070 1756 1098 9987

New Jersey Council of County Colleges, 2010

Table 2B – Part Time Students who did not achieve at least one of the Success Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accumulated Degree GPA</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>0.01-1.99</th>
<th>2.00-2.99</th>
<th>3.00-4.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree Credits Earned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,997</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>514</td>
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<tr>
<td>6-11</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-17</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-23</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-29</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 or more</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2239 1001 912 1414 5566

New Jersey Council of County Colleges, 2010

New Jersey is not the only state looking at student success. In fact, it has been a national effort. In July 2009, President Obama announced a challenge to become, once again, the nation with the highest percentage of college graduates in the world by 2020 (Whitehouse 2009). Standing in front of Macomb Community College in Michigan, he charged community colleges across the country to graduate an additional 5 million students by 2020. State governments and organizations throughout the country have been dedicated to this challenge. In fact, six national community college organizations came together in April 2010 signing a call to action to work together to raise college completion by 50 percent within a decade² (American Association of Community Colleges 2010).

Community colleges face a challenge of having to achieve more with fewer resources. In New Jersey, state aid to community colleges was cut by 8 percent, but enrollments increased by 12 percent (NJCCC 2009). State aid is not expected to return in the near future. This creates an entirely new situation for community colleges. While surging enrollments are helping to off-set current cuts to state aid, it will not be enough to remain sustainable several years from now.

² The six organizations include: the American Association of Community Colleges, Association of Community College Trustees, the Center for Community College Student Engagement, the League for Innovation in the Community College, the National Institute for Staff and Organization Development, and the Phi Theta Kappa Honors Society.
Research indicates that a major predictor in whether a student will complete a college credential is whether he or she has enrolled in developmental education classes. Nationwide, about 60 percent of students entering community colleges require developmental education. Numerous reports indicate that students who place into developmental education are far less likely to complete a college credential. In analyzing Achieving the Dream data, about 44 percent of students who are referred to remedial reading finish their recommended course sequence, while only 31 percent of students referred to remedial math complete their recommended sequence (Bailey 2009, p. 14). Students enrolled in developmental education courses are also far less likely to complete a degree. According to the National Education Longitudinal Study data, only 25 percent of students who take developmental education classes complete a degree within eight years (Bailey 2009 p. 14). Some studies suggest that developmental education may have a significant number of ESL students. However, many colleges consider developmental education and ESL as separate programs.

It is estimated that between $1.88 and $2.35 billion is spent nationwide for developmental education at community colleges (Strong American Schools 2008). These costs are a combination of tuition and fees ($513-642 million) and subsidies derived from state appropriations, private gifts, and investment returns ($1.37-1.71 billion). Thus, there are remarkable potential savings for New Jersey if the need for remediation were reduced and developmental education success improved. One estimate for New Jersey states that $44.8 million dollars would be saved, plus another $50.7 million in additional annual earnings, for a total benefit to the economy of $95.6 million (Alliance for Excellent Education 2006).

Since retention rates are quite low for developmental education students, colleges experience significant revenue losses. To get a better picture of the financial benefit at stake for each individual college, Bergen Community College (BCC) conducted its own projections. BCC estimated that a single student taking 12 credit hours per semester brings the College $1,800 per semester. If BCC loses the student after the first semester, it loses $5,400 over the next three semesters. Therefore, if BCC lost 20 percent of its students, its lost revenue would equal $5,400,000 (Bergen Community College 2009)! Considering statistics that show the developmental education retention rates as low as 25 percent, these projections of lost revenue are significant.

Recognizing that developmental education has become a barrier to student success, there are several major national initiatives underway aimed at improving developmental education and increasing college completion rates. Achieving the Dream (ATD) began in 2004 as a nationwide project to help improve student success. It achieves this through gaining college institutional commitments to improving student success, improving data collections and analyzes, creating a culture of evidence, and working on changing college and state policies to better support

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3 Developmental education is defined as courses that are non-credit and act as preparation for college-level material.

4 Note that one important cost not included is the lost tax revenue from the students who will have lower wages as a result of not completing a college degree.
students. ATD currently exists in 25 states at more than 100 colleges, and hopes to expand the network by adding 20 additional colleges every year.

Funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Lumina Foundation, the Developmental Education Initiative seeks to find innovative and effective practices to help improve student success within developmental education. The network currently consists of 15 colleges throughout six states.

Complete College America was established in 2009 and aims to increase college completion and reduce the achievement gap. The tools it uses include pursuing state policy action and gaining consensus among state leaders, higher education officials, and national education leaders. The organization builds state profiles with updated information about college completion rates and projections on future growth.

Founded by education pioneer Carol Twigg, the National Center for Academic Transformation seeks to redesign courses to improve student success and college efficiency. Success rates are high for colleges that have utilized the NCAT’s various models showing increases in course completions and overall retention rates as well as increases in financial savings.

Both reducing the need for remediation in college and increasing student success within developmental education is perhaps one of New Jersey’s biggest challenges, yet also represents one of the state’s biggest opportunities. If New Jersey succeeds in reducing the need for remediation and increasing success within developmental education, results for New Jersey community colleges will include: increases in student retention; increases in credential completion; financial savings for colleges from reduced need for developmental education; and savings for students (both time and money). Additional results will include: savings in government spending (through less financial aid burdens) and a stronger New Jersey economy with a more educated workforce. There is little doubt that this is a pressing issue that all New Jersey community colleges should focus strong attention. There is much at stake.
Background and Methodology

Prior to the Big Ideas Project, the New Jersey Developmental Education Initiative (NJDEI) convened to look at the issue of improving student success within developmental education. The NJDEI held three meetings in October 2009, November 2009, and March 2010. Group members represented all of the 19 New Jersey community colleges. Subcommittees included: Achieving the Dream, testing and placement, K-12 partnerships, Institutional Research, National Center Academic Transformation, National Center for Developmental Education, publications, grants, and best practices. All members of the NJDEI were invited to participate in the Big Ideas Project.

As the Big Ideas Project took form, this group’s focus (group three) has been on reducing the need for remediation in college and improving student success within developmental education. For a complete list of group members for the Big Idea Project, please see Appendix B.

To complete this project, materials from the NJDEI were utilized, including gathered literature, meeting notes, and subcommittee reports. Additional literature was gathered and analyzed through the assistance of the committee. The K-12 Alignment Survey was utilized for information regarding partnerships between community colleges and high schools. Organized and administered by Rebecca Sheppard of Cumberland County College, 14 colleges responded to the survey (See Appendix D for a copy of the survey). The Big Ideas Survey was administered to members of the current committee as well as members of the former New Jersey Developmental Education Initiative to gather information about best practices within the state. This survey received 16 responses from 14 colleges (See Appendix E for a copy of the survey).

A meeting on June 23, 2010, served as a kick-off for the group’s work, where research questions were finalized. Google groups facilitated additional discussion about various reform ideas, as well as one conference call on August 3, 2010. Drafts of recommendations and the white paper were reviewed by all committee members.
Recommendations Introduction

There are four statewide recommendations. First, develop a common vision on student success and on improving developmental education. Second, align expectations between high schools and community colleges in order to better prepare students for college-level work. Third, improve placement and testing policies and practices to more appropriately place students into courses. Fourth, improve data and transparency to begin an honest conversation on developmental education in New Jersey, which will help inform best practices. All recommendations are followed by potential outcomes and possible courses of action. There is one recommendation for collaboration with Achieving the Dream. Finally, there are suggestions for further research and a conclusion.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Build a Common Vision

Develop a common vision on student success and on improving developmental education.

Potential Outcomes: A common vision of student success will help align efforts in New Jersey community colleges to improve student success statewide. A common vision will ensure that all colleges are working toward a common purpose.

Possible Courses of Action include, but are not limited to:

Statewide Commitment

1A: Possible Course of Action: Have all community colleges sign institutional commitment to improve developmental education success and reduce the need for remediation.

   Example 1: All colleges participating with Achieving the Dream must first make an institutional commitment to improving student success (Achieving the Dream 2009).

Develop Blueprint for Student Success

1B: Possible Course of Action: Create a common vision of specific student outcomes. Discuss obstacles students face in pursuing success. Create a blueprint by identifying ways to help students overcome those obstacles.

Set Statewide Goals

1C: Possible Course of Action: Have all community colleges decide on state-wide goals (i.e. reduce need for remediation by 25 percent, increase developmental education completion by 25 percent, etc.).

   Background: There are currently no state-wide goals or benchmarks on improving student success within developmental education in New Jersey.

   Example 1: The Virginia Community College System follows three measurable goals, a best practice that has guided the work of the Virginia Developmental Education Task Force:
1.) “reducing the overall need for developmental education in the Commonwealth”;
2.) “designing developmental education in a way that reduces the time to complete developmental reading, writing, and mathematics for most VCCS students to one academic year”; and
3.) “increasing the number of developmental education students graduating or transferring in four years from one to four students (25 percent) to one in three students (33 percent)” (Virginia Developmental Education Task Force 2009, p. 5).

Example 2: A critical step in the Achieving the Dream process is to use data to prioritize actions. This helps colleges establish goals that are a top priority (Achieving the Dream 2009, p. 10).

Communication about Best Practices

**1D: Possible Course of Action:** Improve sharing of student success best practices.

*Background:* Many community colleges across New Jersey are already engaging in multiple student success strategies. There should be better, more regular communication to share these best practices on increasing student success within developmental education, such as a publication, website, or annual conference. Please refer to Appendix C for a highlight of best practices.

**Recommendation 2: Create Aligned Expectations**

Seek to align expectations between high schools and community colleges.

*Potential outcomes:* Aligning expectations will improve communication between K-12 and institutions of higher education. Students will graduate from high school better prepared for college work and will better understand what will be expected of them at institutions of higher education. The transition from high school curricula to college curricula will be seamless.

**Possible Courses of Action include, but are not limited to:**

**P-16 Councils**

2A: Possible Course of Action: Develop county-wide P-16 councils.

*Background:* Results from the K-12 Alignment Survey indicate that many community colleges (13 out of 14 respondents) work in some way with local high schools. However, few have established formal partnerships (Sheppard 2010).

Potential purposes and activities of these councils are numerous and will depend on each college and high school’s needs. Anchored at each New Jersey community college, these P-16 councils will bring community colleges, K-12 representatives, and other higher education representatives together to discuss needs and initiatives for improving alignment.

*Example 1:* After establishing a statewide P-16 council and realizing alignment work was not getting done at the local level, Georgia implemented regional P-16 councils. The local councils were coordinated by two staff members and were housed at Colleges of Education within the University System of Georgia (Jones 2010).
2B: **Possible Course of Action:** Develop a statewide P-16 council.

*Background:* Many, if not most, states have a P-16 or P-20 council, yet New Jersey does not.

**P-16 Alignment**

2C: **Possible Course of Action:** Help high schools develop syllabi aligned with the Common Core Standards.

*Background:* New Jersey has signed onto the Common Core Standards agreement. This provides a ripe opportunity for college faculty to work with high school teachers and administrators to align curriculum and course syllabi for a more seamless educational system.

2D: **Possible Course of Action:** Align high school exit standards with college entrance standards.

*Example 1:* One state example is California, where “public high school graduation criteria and California State University entrance requirements are identical” (Collins 2009, p. 6).

**Early Assessment and Remediation**

2E: **Possible Course of Action:** Partner with high schools to establish an early assessment program to evaluate students’ college readiness.

*Background:* Aligning expectations is imperative, but it is unrealistic to assume that this will completely dissolve the need for remediation in college. Early assessment is a tool that high schools and colleges can use to better prepare students for college-level work.

*Example 1:* In Florida, high schools are required by law (Senate Bill 1908) to offer a college placement test for all college-track high school juniors. If their test results indicate they are not college ready, the students take State Board of Education approved developmental education courses in their senior year of high school (Collins 2009).

*Example 2:* In California, the state implemented through an Executive Order by the Governor an optional Early Assessment Program, where high school juniors can opt to take college placement exams. If their results show they are unprepared for college-level work, students take necessary coursework while in high school. Early analysis indicates that early assessment reduces the probability that students will take developmental education courses in college (Howell, Kurlaender and Grodsky 2009).

2F: **Possible Course of Action:** Develop math and writing courses for high school students to address skills deficiencies.

*Background:* If all New Jersey community colleges offer the Accuplacer test early in high schools, what happens to students who are not college ready? Intervention will be key to reduce the need for remediation.

**Continued P-16 Collaboration**

2E: **Possible Course of Action:** Seek out partnerships that help promote college readiness.

*Background:* Partnerships with like-minded organizations could be helpful to further promote college readiness.

*Example 1:* One such partnership might be with the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce’s Business Coalition for Educational Excellence (BCEE), which has implemented a program called “Learn, Do, Earn.” The program aims to raise awareness about why rigorous high school courses and hard work are important to students’ future success.
Recommendation 3: Improve Placement and Testing

Improve placement and testing practices.

Potential Outcomes: Students will be more appropriately placed in college courses. Students will have a clear understanding of placement policies.

Possible Courses of Action include, but are not limited to:

Coordinate all Placement Policies
3A: Recommendation: Work to better analyze and coordinate all placement policies among community colleges.

Background: While New Jersey has common cut scores for the Accuplacer, some placement policies are not coordinated, such as retesting policies. According to a report by Michael Lawrence Collins from Jobs for the Future, common placement policies are critical to states’ strategies for improving developmental education. Aligning placement policies make it easier to track and assess data across the state as well as establish “clear expectations about the skills that high school graduates will need to succeed in college, and common practices will reduce confusion among entering students who want to understand their options” (Collins 2008).

Improve Diagnostic Assessment
3B: Potential Course of Action: Seek out opportunities to diagnostically test students to improve the placement process.

Background: Tom Bailey, director of the Community College Resource Center, argues in one report that two students who have the same score on a placement test might in fact have very different needs (Bailey 2009). Assessment tools should improve diagnostic capabilities to better determine a student’s weaknesses and needs. Better diagnostic tools will enable colleges to more appropriately place students and to better serve their needs.

Example 1: College Board has piloted a new diagnostic placement test. Houstatonic Community College in Connecticut is one pilot college.

Improve Communication on Accuplacer
3C: Potential Course of Action: Require all students to sign a discloser form informing them of the high stakes nature of the Accuplacer test.

Background: Considering that high school students take multiple tests, many students do not understand the importance of the Accuplacer. Simply having students sign an acknowledgement form might help bring awareness that students’ performance on the Accuplacer test could have serious consequences on their education (Dudley 2010).

Recommendation 4: Improve Data and Transparency

Work together to collect better data and share information publicly to improve transparency, which could be used to inform best practices.
While individual colleges may have transparent information regarding data on developmental education students, New Jersey as a state should have an honest conversation with all community colleges about developmental education progress.

Potential Outcomes: Better data will help provide a greater understanding of the progress of developmental education students in New Jersey. Data will help inform best practices. Data will help community colleges work with high schools in improving college readiness.

Possible Courses of Action include, but are not limited to:

Develop K-20 Data System
While developing a P-20 data system is ideal, opportunities at this time are somewhat limited. New Jersey currently has two separate data systems. The NJ SMART system tracks K-12 data, while the SURE system tracks higher education data. The two are not compatible, which makes it impossible to track data longitudinally. The New Jersey Department of Education has pursued a partnership with the National Student Clearinghouse to enable the Department to track some longitudinal data, such as how many high school students move onto postsecondary work and what high schools have the highest percentage of students moving onto college. Due to the inability to upload high school or postsecondary transcripts, however, there will be no developmental education data available. The SURE system does track the number of students registered in developmental education courses, but does not at this time provide additional information, such as how many students complete their developmental education coursework, how many students persist over time, and how many students transfer to a four-year institution or successfully gain employment. All research indicates that having an extensive longitudinal data system is imperative to the success of implementing successful college readiness strategies. However, there are limitations at this time of developing an extensive P-20 data system that would be able to track developmental education data.

Common Language
4A: Potential Course of Action: All community colleges should agree on a common developmental education assessment model (common indicators collected/measured).

   Background: The NJ Developmental Education Initiative IR Subcommittee in collaboration with the Community College Association of Institutional Research and Planning worked to identify potential indicators that all colleges could use, which include:

   - Percentage of students who were tested and placed [into developmental education coursework];
   - Number of enrolled in remedial courses during the first semester;
   - Progression of students (retention);
   - Completion of course sequences;
   - Performance in first college course;
   - Time to degree completion; and
   - Percentage of graduates.

   Work should continue to further develop common indicators collected by all colleges to assess progress of developmental education students, a process that was initiated with the old
Basic Skills Effectiveness Reports and then discontinued with the phase out of the New Jersey Basic Skills Council.

**Data Sharing Agreements**

4B: Possible Course of Action: Ask all community colleges to sign data sharing agreements with high schools, which will enable colleges to share information about high school students’ performance in college.

*Background:* While some colleges already share data with high schools on their students’ performance in the Accuplacer, not all colleges do.

4C: Possible Course of Action: Ask all community colleges to sign data sharing agreements using the common language indicators to gather information about developmental education. Agree to share data publicly.

*Background:* While community colleges across the state have the ability to individually collect and analyze information about developmental education students, this information should be available publicly to better inform practices.

**Early Alert Warning System**

4D: Possible Course of Action: Develop an early alert warning system.

*Background:* An early alert system would enable colleges to provide timely additional support to high risk students to improve retention.

*Example 1:* Virginia is working to establish an early alert warning system for all its community colleges. The system would use data submitted from faculty, such as class attendance, grades, and submitted assignments. If a student misses classes, has poor grades, or stops submitting assignments, the electronic alert system will automatically alert the faculty member and contact the student for the appropriate intervention, such as tutoring, counseling, or meeting with the faculty member to catch up on missed material.

**Outside Collaboration Recommendation**

**Achieving the Dream Collaboration**

New Jersey should consider pursuing a partnership with Achieving the Dream (ATD). The organization is becoming a private entity, which could provide a ripe opportunity to engage in a new kind of partnership. A partnership with Achieving the Dream would provide New Jersey colleges with expertise in setting up a culture of evidence, improving state policy, and finding and implementing best practices to improve student success.

**Further Research and Conclusion**

Though the scope of this project is broad, there are several items that should be looked at in greater depth. Time did not allow for a more complete analysis on placement policies. While a survey indicated that retesting policies varied, a more complete survey and analysis of what exactly those policies are may be appropriate. Additionally, the NCAT shows great promise as a
potential partner for redesigning courses. However, redesigning courses using this model may not work at every college, so greater care must be taken to look at this initiative more closely.

Community colleges are indeed entering the beginning of a new era. The changing economy is forcing community colleges to look beyond open access to a new priority of access to success. With dwindling state funds and surging enrollments, tough decisions are ahead for New Jersey’s community colleges. Though some of the issues surrounding student success are challenging, improving student success, especially within developmental education, can lead to great rewards. Pursuing some or all of these recommendations will be a first step to toward the new priority. Community colleges must pursue aggressive action both individually and collectively if they are to remain true to their core mission of open access while increasing student achievement.
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Sheppard, Rebecca, interview by Casey Maliszewski. *K-12 Partnerships at Cumberland County College (July 14, 2010).*


Appendix A: Term and Acronym Definitions

**ATD:** Achieving the Dream. A national organization devoted to improving student success.
**CCRC:** Community College Research Center. A center devoted to research in many topic areas within community colleges. Hosted at Teachers College at Columbia University.
**DEI:** Developmental Education Initiative. A national initiative to improve student achievement within developmental education. Funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.
**I-BEST:** Integrates Basic Education and Skills Training Program. A Washington State program that uses contextualization as a strategy.
**IHE:** Institutions of Higher Education.
**NCAT:** National Center for Academic Transformation. Headed by Carol Twigg, a national organization devoted to redesigning courses to improve student success.
**NCED:** National Center for Developmental Education. A national organization that publishes the Journal of Developmental Education.
**NJDEI:** New Jersey Developmental Education Initiative. A statewide task force created to research strategies for improving student success within developmental education.
**VCCS:** Virginia Community College System. The governing body of all of Virginia’s community colleges.

**Accuplacer:** A placement test utilized by all New Jersey community colleges.
**Contextualization:** A strategy that integrates occupational/workplace skills into the college classroom.
**Developmental Education:** Any college courses that are non-credit and aim to prepare students for college-level work. Usually in the topic areas of mathematics, reading, and writing. Interchangeable with remedial education.
**Dual Enrollment:** Programs that allow high school students to take college courses concurrently.
**High risk students/populations:** Population of students who are more likely to drop out of college, such as developmental education students.
**Learning communities:** A student success strategy that allows a cohort of students to take several classes together and aligns coursework to cover similar topics.
**Summer Bridge Programs:** Summer programs that help students prepare for college-level work.
Appendix B: Committee Members

Members of the advising committee included:
Chair: Joann La Perla-Morales, Middlesex County College
Carl Calender, Brookdale Community College
Elena Bogardus, Camden County College
Rebecca Sheppard, Cumberland County College
Barbara Nienstedt, Gloucester County College
Barbara Nienstedt, Gloucester County College
Susan Mulligan, Essex County College
Leigh Bello-DeCastro, Essex County College
Renita Ragan, Essex County College
Darlery Franco, Hudson County Community College
Christopher Wahl, Hudson County Community College
Guy Generals, Mercer County Community College
Alice Picardo, Middlesex County Community College
Dwight Smith, County College of Morris
Janet Hubbs, Ocean County College
Nancy Velazquez-Torres, Passaic County Community College
Christine Pipitone-Heron, Raritan Valley Community College
David Ross, Raritan Valley Community College
Lisa Summins, Warren County Community College
Larry Nespoli, New Jersey Council of County Colleges
Appendix C: Best Practices

**Please note:** The best practices listed here are merely a selection of highlights and are not meant to serve as a comprehensive review of all of the best practices within the state.

**K-12 Partnerships**

Many New Jersey community colleges already work with their local high schools in some capacity. Out of the 14 respondents from the K-12 Alignment survey, 10 colleges indicated that they work with neighboring high schools to discuss college readiness. Seven colleges reported that they hold regular meetings with the local high schools to discuss curricular alignment in math and English.

*Cumberland County College* began to work with its local high schools four years ago. The college offers high school juniors and seniors the opportunity to take the Accuplacer. If a student is not prepared for college-level work, students are able to utilize a program called A+dvancer (Piccone, 2010). With a 90 day subscription, students work through self-paced modules to better prepare for college level work. CCC meets with each of the high schools once a year to discuss how their students are performing on the Accuplacer test using aggregated data. College representatives also visit the high schools on college days to inform students and their parents about the importance of the Accuplacer test, offer early assessment, and offer preparation techniques (Sheppard, K-12 Partnerships at Cumberland County College, 2010). CCC has hired one person whose job is entirely devoted to working with the local high schools (Piccone 2010). She is a former high school teacher who has better facilitated communication with the high schools.

*Salem County College* is part of a monthly Superintendents Roundtable with all of the county K-12 schools and Rowan University. SCC has been offering Accuplacer tests to high school seniors for the past two years and even offers the test in some schools to juniors so unprepared students are able to better prepare for college-level work. SCC has made working with K-12 schools an institutional priority in an effort to better align high school and college curricula and improve college readiness (Baillie 2010). To help with that priority, SCC has devoted three college positions to working with high schools. Two academic deans, one from the English department and one from the math department, are required to work with high schools on alignment activities. Part of their duties will be to spend time at the high schools to meet with teachers and administrators. Another staff member is a recruiter who is in charge of developing a relationship with each of the local high schools (McCormick 2010).

**Summer Bridge Programs**

Studies show that students who participate in dual enrollment programs are less likely to need remediation. El Paso Community College (EPCC) in Texas used summer bridge programs as one of its strategies to reduce the need for remediation, along with early assessment and intervention in high school. Within a period of two years, EPCC increased the number of college-ready students from 3 to 5 percent in math, from 30 to 35 percent in reading, and from 51 to 66 percent in writing (Kerrigan & Slater 2010). In another study looking at the Virginia Community College System, almost 52 percent of students without dual enrollment credits needed remediation in college, while only 37 percent of students participating in dual enrollment needed remediation (Jenkins, Jaggers, & Roksa 2009). The National Center for Postsecondary
Research is conducting a study of summer bridge programs by looking at eight community college programs in Texas. No final results have been released yet.

Ocean County College offers a summer bridge program for students wishing to complete their developmental education requirements or to brush up on skills before entering college. Students pay for this program through tuition, and they are able to take a three-week intensive session during the summer (Hubbs 2010).

From the 14 colleges that responded to the Big Ideas Survey, nine colleges indicated they offer a summer bridge program. Many colleges also utilize a summer bridge program for Equal Opportunity Fund students (EOF).

**Dual Enrollment Programs**

Dual enrollment programs have multiple benefits, including offering students the opportunity to be exposed to college-level work, helping students earn college credit while in high school, facilitating the transition from high school to college, and reducing the cost of college by enabling students to take advantage of free or reduced tuition while in high school. One study shows that dual enrollment students are 12 percent more likely to enroll in college within seven months of graduation (Barnett 2010).

Studies show that students who participate in dual enrollment programs are also less likely to need remediation. In one CCRC study looking at the Virginia Community College System, almost 52 percent of students without dual enrollment credits needed remediation in college, while only 37 percent of students participating in dual enrollment needed remediation (Jenkins, Jaggers, & Roksa 2009).

From 14 colleges that responded to the Big Ideas Survey, all colleges indicated that they have some involvement with dual enrollment programs. Eight community colleges in New Jersey receive dual enrollment grants that allow high school students to take classes while in high school (Dual Enrollment Incentive Grants 2009).

**Student Success Courses**

Student success or developmental courses are also becoming a widely recognized tool for improving student success. These courses are often at least one credit and offer students information on time management skills, study skills, note taking skills, how to use resources on campus, etc. One study by the Community College Research Center found that of students who had taken a student success course, non-developmental education students were 9 percent more likely to complete a credential and developmental education students had a 5 percent increase in the likelihood of completing a credential (Zeidenberg, Jenkins, & Calcagno 2008).

Many colleges and states are recognizing the value of these courses and are implementing them as mandatory courses. In Virginia, one recommendation from the Developmental Education Task Force was to create a student development course targeted toward students in developmental education courses (Virginia Developmental Education Force 2009). Beginning in fall 2011, all developmental education students will be required to take this course within their first year (Schmidt 2010). The Florida Department of Education piloted a Student Life Skills course for students during their first semester. Both general education and developmental education students who completed the courses were found to be more likely to earn a college credential, transfer to a four-year university, or remain continuously enrolled for five years. Florida now requires all developmental education students to enroll in the Student Life Skills course (Collins 2009).
Many New Jersey community colleges use student success courses either as an optional or mandatory course. From the Big Ideas Survey, eight colleges indicated that they offer an optional student success/development course and nine indicated that they offer a mandatory student success/development course.

*Raritan Valley Community College* offers a two credit course for first-year students called The College Experience. Though optional, about 10 to 15 percent of first-year students take the course. Both retention rates and average GPA’s are higher compared to students who have not taken the course.

*Hudson County Community College* also offers a mandatory one credit course called College Survival Skills. It is now required for all majors. HCCC also offered the course in bilingual mode in English/Spanish and English/Arabic.

**Course Redesign (NCAT, Modularization, and Self-Paced Courses)**

There are some examples across the country showing that redesigning courses can increase student success while improving efficiency. The National Center for Academic Transformation (NCAT) is one organization dedicated to this project. The Tennessee Board of Regents decided to pursue a grant to redesign developmental education courses at community and technical colleges through the state. Using the NCAT partnership, Cleveland State Community College in Tennessee has seen dramatic improvements with its developmental education students. After the implementation of course redesign for developmental math, completion rates increased from 52 percent to 65 percent for basic math, 52 percent to 70 percent for elementary algebra, and 56 percent to 71 percent for intermediate algebra. Overall, the college saved $50,000 (Twigg 2009). Other participating Tennessee colleges also reported financial savings ranging from 19 to 51 percent (Mills 2010).

The Virginia Community College System (VCCS) is also dedicating resources to designing developmental math and English courses. This past year, faculty members and representatives from around the state have worked together to redesign the developmental math courses into 10 smaller modules. With improved diagnostic placement testing, the System’s ambition is to improve students’ placement so that they are able to complete developmental education courses more quickly (Schmidt 2010). They will fully implement the redesigned math courses in fall 2011 and will begin the English redesign process in fall 2010.

*Cumberland County College* is currently redesigning its entire set of developmental mathematics courses utilizing the Emporium model presented by the NCAT while applying for a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation grant. CCC will pilot the design in spring 2011 in half of the developmental education sections, which will include approximately 500 students. In fall 2011, the College will condense a total of six developmental classes into one single modular class will no lectures. It is expected that the redesign will reduce CCC’s cost per student by 25 percent – a savings of $87,000 per academic year (Westerfield 2010).

Some colleges are specifically focusing on self-paced developmental education courses, which focus on mastery instead of time spent in classes. Housatonic Community College in Connecticut is piloting an open entry/open exit program for remedial math courses. The computer-based program is self-paced with instructors to facilitate learning. It is suggested for students who are not comfortable with the pace of a traditional classroom and enables student to

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5 Some colleges reported that they offer courses that are mandatory only for certain populations. Thus, these colleges reported as offer both optional and mandatory student success courses (optional for most students and mandatory for some students).
complete their developmental math requirements in less than one semester (Housatonic Community College 2010). *County College of Morris* will also be piloting self-paced courses in mathematics in fall 2010 (Smith 2010).

**Learning Communities**

Learning communities are a well-established student success strategy, particularly for high risk student populations, such as ESL students and developmental education students. Kingsborough Community College in New York City participated in a MDRC learning community demonstration study where students were randomly assigned into a learning community and a control group. KCC found that the learning community group had impressive results. Students felt more integrated and better engaged than the control group. Learning community students attempted and passed more courses during their first semester and moved more quickly through their developmental English requirements (Scrivener, et al. 2008).

Out of the 14 respondents for the Big Ideas Survey, seven colleges said they utilized learning communities. *Mercer County Community College* implemented theme-based learning communities this past year, including students in allied health, business, fine arts, communications, and liberal arts fields. Initial analysis shows *slightly* better retention and better learning outcomes (Generals 2010).

**Improve Communication about Accuplacer**

Many students lack an understanding of the high stakes nature of the Accuplacer test (Dudley 2010). An Achieving the Dream study of El Paso Community College revealed that “the lack of understanding about the Accuplacer and the lack of preparation for it is a significant reason why many recent high school students do not place into college-level courses” (Kerrigan and Slater 2010, p. 9). Improving communication and transparency about the placement process is key (Dudley 2010). Many colleges are seeking to provide students with extensive, updated information about the placement process, retesting policies, ways to prepare for the placement test, and reasons why the placement test is a high stakes test.

**Help Students Prepare for Placement**

Helping students prepare for the Accuplacer test can help ensure that students are appropriately placed. Strategies to help students prepare can range from offering online preparation materials to offering a refresher or brush-up course. One study by Jennifer Dudley looked at the success of refresher courses. Out of 28 developmental education students who completed a mathematics refresher course and retested, 6 students moved up 3 levels, 11 students moved up 2 levels, 8 students moved up one level, and 2 students did not improve at all. Dudley also determined that students who have learned the material but have had time away from the material are most likely to benefit from a refresher course (Dudley 2010).

Virginia is currently selecting a placement test preparation package, which would include an online practice test (Schmidt 2010).

**Ban Late Registration**

There are several studies that show students who register late (after classes begin) are more likely to drop classes and have lower overall retention rates (Freer-Weiss 2004; Moore, Shulock, Ceja, & Lang 2007). Some colleges and states are banning late registration in order to help students get the right start.
Banning late registration was one policy Valencia Community College used to improve student success. As a result, overall persistence rates rose to 79 percent in 2004 from 65 percent in 1995 and persistence rates for developmental education students who also take a student success course is 89 percent (Shugart & Romano). The Virginia Community College System is currently reviewing a policy that would prohibit all Virginia students from registering after classes begin (Virginia Developmental Education Task Force 2009).

Contextualization

Contextualization is gaining popularity as a way to better engage students in learning and increase student success. In Washington, 10 community and technical colleges launched a program called the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training program (I-BEST). The program paired adult basic education or ESL instructors in the classroom with instructors to teach occupational skills. Studies revealed that students in the I-BEST program were more likely than other students to:

a. continue onto college level work;
b. earn credits that count toward a college credential;
c. earn occupational certificates, and
d. gain points on basic skills tests (Jenkins, Zeidenberg and Kienzl 2009).

In the Big Ideas Survey, two colleges indicated that they use contextualization within developmental education courses. Several community colleges indicated through discussions that they utilize contextualization strategies within learning communities.

Professional Development

There is little doubt that professional development for developmental education faculty is absolutely imperative. Specifically, there is a growing popularity with online faculty development resources. Under PROJECT DELTA in Florida, college faculty members have utilized the Sirius model, which provides online professional developmental training in learning and motivation theory applied to higher education pedagogy. Initially funded by a Fund for the Improvement of Higher Education grant, more than 600 faculty members have utilized the program to date (Project Delta 2010).
Appendix D: K-12 Alignment Survey

1. Is there a local or regional K16 council or committee in your county?
   - Yes
   - No
   - I don’t know

2. If yes, who participates in your K16 council/committee? (Check all that apply):
   - K-12 Teachers
   - Community college faculty
   - Four year faculty
   - School board members
   - Superintendents
   - Community members from local government/area business leaders
   - Other

3. Does a partnership exist between your community college and your local sending districts to discuss the college readiness of recent high school graduates?
   - Yes
   - No
   - I don’t know

4. Does your college currently hold regularly scheduled meetings with your main sending districts to discuss curriculum alignment in math and English?
   - Yes
   - No
   - I don’t know

5. Roughly how many public high schools are in your primary sending districts?
   - 1-5
   - 6-10
   - 11-15
   - 16-20
   - More than 20
   - I don’t know

6. Does your institution participate in the following alignment activities?
   - Host or attend annual meetings with High School Superintendents from sending districts to discuss college readiness
   - Hold discussions with County Superintendent regarding college readiness
   - Host meetings to discuss the alignment of math and English curriculum between high school teachers and college faculty
   - Provide high school teachers and college faculty an opportunity to take the Accuplacer test
   - Set clear standards as to what students should know or be able to do when they graduate from K-12 and enter postsecondary education
   - Provide early testing to high school students using Accuplacer Offer high school students who have completed Algebra II an opportunity to take the Accuplacer
l Offer “brush-up” course in math, English or reading to high school students who do not score at college level on Accuplacer
l Provide diagnostic software or computer adaptive programs to high school students who are not college ready
l Offer a summer bridge program to help high school students complete remedial coursework prior to their first semester at your college
l Host or participate in county-wide conferences or workshops to discuss college readiness and student learning
l Other alignment activities

7. If your institution provides students an opportunity to prepare for and/or take the placement exam early, at what grade do you offer these services?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offer Accuplacer</th>
<th>Middle School (Grades 6-8)</th>
<th>Junior High (Grades 9-10)</th>
<th>High School (Grades 11-12)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offer Diagnostic Testing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer Prep Class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer Brush-up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. On a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree) rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I would serve on a state-wide task force to discuss the development of a high school curriculum that would provide high school graduates with the skills necessary to enter post-secondary education without remedial education.</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dialog between institutions at the state level will have an impact on teaching and/or curriculum development at the local level.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A stronger system of K-12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
accountability is necessary to ensure the development of a high school curriculum that would provide high school graduates with the skills necessary to enter post-secondary education without remedial education.

9. Please share your thoughts regarding the task of aligning high school curriculum with college readiness skills. What benefits do you foresee to alignment.

10. What do you foresee as potential barriers or obstacles to the alignment between your institution and your local high schools?

11. Please enter the name of your community college in the space below.
Appendix E: Big Ideas Survey

The New Jersey Council of County Colleges Big Ideas Project seeks to find best practices in New Jersey community colleges and across the country. The four project areas include: 1.) capacity building, 2.) instructor quality, 3.) college readiness and student success, 4.) business practices. Your participation in this survey is vital to the success of this project. Thank you!

1.) Your Name
2.) Your College
3.) Your Phone Number
4.) Your Email
5.) Does your college have any of the following student success strategies for developmental education?
   - Early assessment programs (i.e. Accuplacer in high schools)
   - Dual enrollment agreements with high schools
   - Summer bridge programs
   - Refresher courses (6 weeks of less) to help students prepare for Accuplacer
   - Option student success/development course
   - Mandatory student success development course
   - Learning communities
   - Developmental education courses in modules
   - Self paced developmental education courses
   - Contextualization in developmental education courses (an approach in which skills are taught with direct reference to workplace skills
   - Other
6.) If you said yes to any of the above strategies, we would like to follow-up with someone from your college. Can you please provide one or more contact person(s) for each of the strategies.
7.) Does your college offer students the opportunity to retest if they are not satisfied with their Accuplacer results?
   - Yes
   - No
   - I don’t know
   - Other
8.) If so, what are the requirements for retesting?
   a. Students must wait a specific period of time before retesting (i.e. 30 days, etc.)
   b. Student must provide proof that they were not mentally or physically fit the day of the test
   c. Student must have intervention before retesting (i.e. refresher course, studied on their own)
   d. Other
9.) If a student is not prepared for college level work as indicated by their Accuplacer scores, is placement into remedial coursework mandatory?
   a. Placement is mandatory. Students are not able to enroll in any college level courses without first completing their recommended remedial coursework.
   b. Placement is not mandatory. Students are able to enroll in ANY college level courses without completing their recommended sequence.
   c. Placement is not mandatory. Students are able to enroll in SOME college level courses without completing their recommended sequence.
   d. I don’t know
   e. Other