

Ten-Year Roadmap Policy Options Report

Challenge Area:
Student Readiness, Remedial Postsecondary Education

Planning Activity:
*Strategies to reduce the number of students requiring
precollege coursework and to accelerate the progression of
those in precollege courses into college credit-bearing courses*

Council Lead Members:

Scott Brittain
Ray Lawton

Council Staff:

Noreen Light (Lead), Associate Director for Academic Affairs and Policy
Randy Spaulding, Director for Academic Affairs and Policy
James West, Associate Director for Academic Affairs and Policy

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Executive Summary

Student readiness for postsecondary opportunity and success is one of five critical challenge areas to be addressed in the Washington Student Achievement Council's Ten-Year Roadmap. Council members reviewed the Remedial Postsecondary Education Issue Briefing on March 26, 2013, and will consider this policy options report at their May 23 meeting. This report provides an overview of policy issues and options to reduce the need for postsecondary remediation.

Although there was broad agreement on many of the proposals, the contributors to this report did not uniformly support each policy option. This report reflects a diversity of input, providing the Council a range of options to consider and prioritize for inclusion in the Ten-Year Roadmap.

Policy Options for Consideration

- **Collaboration**
 - Redefine and identify remedial coursework as College Transitional Studies
 - Support the Office of the Superintendent and Quality Education Council Basic Education Funding recommendations
 - Support the Transforming Precollege Education Task Force recommendations
- **Assessment and Placement**
 - Increase enrollment of students into college-level courses as the default placement
 - Require pre-placement advising
 - Offer pre-placement assessment brush-up sessions
 - Use diagnostic and formative assessments
 - Utilize multiple measures and indicators of college readiness
- **Advising**
 - Begin comprehensive career guidance in the 8th grade
 - Provide parent education to raise awareness of postsecondary pathways, opportunities, and expectations
 - Employ graduation specialists
- **Curriculum and Instruction**
 - Develop a more meaningful senior year
 - Adopt statewide teaching and resource technology tools
 - Integrate additional academic support with college-level course content—as a co-requisite, not a prerequisite
 - Create cohort-based, first-year college experiences with a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, writing fluency, information literacy, collaborative learning
- **Professional Development**
 - Scale up professional development for teachers, faculty, advisors and support staff
 - Support institutional level exchange and implementation of good processes and practices
- **Research and Data**
 - Continue research on effective practices
 - Track students from early learning through postsecondary education and career paths
- **Funding**
 - Increase incentives for teaching College Transitional Studies
 - Offer innovation funds

Context of the Ten-Year Roadmap

Increasing educational attainment is vital to the well-being of Washington residents and to the health of our state's economy. To this end, the Washington Student Achievement Council is working to propose goals and strategies for increasing educational attainment through a Ten-Year Roadmap and a two-year Strategic Action Plan.¹

The Council's Strategic Action Plan, adopted in November 2012, identifies five critical challenges to be addressed in the Roadmap. The five challenge areas are:

- 1. Student Readiness** (with four planning activities: Early Learning; Outreach and Support; Alignment; Remedial Postsecondary Education)
- 2. Affordability**
- 3. Institutional Capacity and Student Success** (with two planning activities: Meeting Increased Demand; Assessment of Student Skills and Knowledge)
- 4. Capturing the Potential of Technology**
- 5. Stable and Accountable Funding**

To inform the Council's work of creating the first Roadmap, workgroups comprising lead Washington Student Achievement Council Members, Council staff, and external workgroup members were formed to research, discuss, and develop issue briefings and policy recommendations for each of these five critical challenge areas.

The Challenge Areas are complex and interrelated. While the Roadmap will recommend actions for each of the Challenge Areas, these recommendations will be integrated into a cohesive plan.

Challenge Area: Student Readiness – Remedial Postsecondary Education

This is the second report to the Council on the topic of remedial postsecondary education. The first report² provided a concise overview of the issue; this second report highlights an array of policy options. Both reports serve as resources to Council members in the development of the Ten-Year Roadmap.

Introduction

In Washington State, nearly three out of five recent high school graduates who enter the community and technical college system enroll in remedial (below college-level) coursework in English, mathematics, or both. Many older adults returning to school also require remedial or brush-up coursework to transition to college-level studies. (Remedial coursework can also be described as College Transitional Studies.)

Students who are not adequately prepared when they arrive at college are less likely to persist and complete their degree or credential. The majority of future jobs (64 percent nationwide by 2020³) will require postsecondary education, and students who are not adequately prepared for college may struggle to secure living wage careers.

The following policy questions were initially identified in the 2012 Strategic Action Plan, and were further refined through discussions and input from Council members and members of the Remedial Education staff workgroup:

- 1. Are currently used placement assessment tools correctly placing students in pre-college versus college-level coursework? If not, what strategies could be employed to increase appropriate placement?*
- 2. What actions are needed in K-12 to reduce the number of recent high school graduates who require remedial instruction?*
- 3. Will full funding of Basic Education support the actions identified above?*
- 4. What can be done now to optimize the allocation of existing remedial education resources?*
- 5. What actions are needed to improve workforce readiness and college success for returning students (those more than three years removed from HS graduation) who enroll in precollege courses?*

An examination of the two main issues in this challenge area—the unpreparedness of both recent high school graduates and returning adult students—accentuates the need to identify and implement policies to reduce the number of students requiring precollege coursework and to accelerate student progress toward completion of certificates and degrees.

The remedial education workgroup⁴—including three Council members and representatives from twelve agencies—met three times, exchanged resources and expertise via email and an online survey, and identified the policy options outlined in this report.

The workgroup also selected subject matter experts who served as panelists at the March 2013 Council meeting. The panel included Randy Dorn, Superintendent of Public Instruction; Gillies Malnarich, Co-Director of The Washington Center for Improving Undergraduate Education; and Bill Moore, Policy Associate, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

The workgroup developed two products for the Council: an Issue Briefing (submitted to the Council in March) and this Policy Options Report. The Issue Briefing provided a concise history and short literature review of remedial education. The brief also highlighted themes gleaned from the 2012 Listening Tour⁵ and the research of workgroup members.

The Policy Options Report offers potential policies for the Council’s consideration in developing the Ten-Year Roadmap. The Roadmap will provide prioritized strategies for remedial education and the other Challenge Areas.

Policy Options

The following array of possible policy options, based on national and statewide research and data, emerged from the Issue Briefing and stakeholder input. What is critical and intentional in the selection of these recommended policies is a focus on connected systems. Rather than continuing to promote and support *islands* of innovation and well-intentioned but short-lived initiatives, these policies promote and support a cohesive, continually developing *system* of education—from early learning to and through higher education.

In identifying policy options, the workgroup identified several complementary policy recommendations proposed or adopted by other entities. Although there was broad agreement on many of the proposals, the contributors to this report did not uniformly support each policy option. This report reflects a diversity of input, providing the Council a range of options to consider and prioritize for inclusion in the Ten-Year Roadmap.

• Collaboration

- **Redefine and identify remedial coursework** (also known as developmental or precollege) as work designed to transition students into college-level courses: **College Transitional Studies**
- **Support specific principles and policy recommendations** adopted by the following:
 - Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)
 - Quality Education Committee (QEC)
 - Community and Technical Colleges, Transforming Precollege Education Task Force
 - Charles A. Dana Center, Complete College America, Inc., Education Commission of the States and Jobs for the Future, in “Core Principles for Transforming Remedial Education: A Joint Statement”⁶
- **Support the following Basic Education Funding recommendations** of the OSPI and the QEC:
 - Implement the Common Core State Standards.
 - Adopt the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) assessments and use the SBAC 11th grade assessment as evidence of readiness for placement into college-level courses.
 - Implement the 4th year of math and English Language Arts, and a 3rd year of science (2 labs) as requirements for high school graduation.

- **Support the Transforming Precollege Education Task Force recommendations,** including the applied learning model adopted by the community and technical college system in May 2012.

The model, based on program elements and best practices identified through the various system initiatives in College Transitional Studies, empowers students to potentially progress through multiple precollege course levels in a single term. Students receive credit for the highest course level achieved by the end of the term.

- Develop enrollment, student services and instructional policies and infrastructure which support this model.
- Develop professional development for instructional and support staff to support implementation of this model

• **Assessment and Placement**

- **Increase enrollment of students into college-level courses;** this could be the default placement for many more students.
- **Require pre-placement advising** to make clear the importance of placement assessments.
- **Offer pre-placement assessment brush-up sessions** to increase appropriate placement.
- **Use diagnostic and formative assessments** (in lieu of assessments which are used solely for sorting and placement), and use the resulting data to tailor instruction and student support to accelerate student progress and eliminate unnecessary repetition of coursework already mastered.
- **Utilize multiple measures and indicators of college readiness,** including high school and military transcripts, to provide guidance in the placement of students in courses and programs of study.

• **Advising**

- **Begin comprehensive career guidance in the 8th grade,** develop model career pathways for secondary students, and enhance the High School and Beyond Plan to include students' career pathways beginning in 9th grade.
- **Provide parent education** to raise awareness of postsecondary pathways, opportunities, and expectations.
- **Employ graduation specialists** to develop one-on-one relationships with students. The specialists will advise students on pathways to high school graduation and postsecondary alternatives.

• **Curriculum and Instruction**

- **Develop a more meaningful senior year:**
 - Provide opportunities for more college-ready seniors to earn college credits (Launch Year⁷).
 - Identify senior-year “on track” courses necessary to maintain the momentum of students who are on a trajectory to be college ready upon graduation.
 - Offer intentionally-designed coursework, focused on identified problem areas, to ensure college readiness.

- **Adopt statewide teaching and resource technology tools**, such as Learning Management Systems, digital libraries, and online learning portfolios, to increase student familiarity with technology which will be used in postsecondary institutions and in the workplace.
 - **Integrate additional academic support with college-level course content**, as a co-requisite, not a prerequisite.
 - **Create cohort-based, first-year college seminars and experiences** with a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, writing fluency, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students’ intellectual and practical competencies necessary for college and career success.
- **Professional Development**
 - **Scale up professional development** for teachers, faculty, advisors and support staff.
 - Create cross-sector Professional Learning Communities of secondary and postsecondary educators to create seamless transitions from grade 12 to “grade 13” (freshman year of college).
 - Include elements of cultural competency, English Language Learner competency, and the application of Universal Design for Learning⁸ principles to address the distinct needs of groups of students in College Transitional Studies, including recent high school graduates; older, returning adults; veterans; and English language learners.
 - **Support institutional level exchange** and implementation of good processes and practices (several forums exist for exchange of best practices at the individual faculty level), including cross-sector Professional Learning Communities.
- **Research and Data**
 - **Continue research** on effective practices developed through the Transitions Math Project and Rethinking Precollege Math initiatives, I-BEST and other work resulting in increased student achievement.
 - **Track students from early learning through postsecondary education and career paths.** Create incentives for the development and implementation of longitudinal data systems. Use collected disaggregated data to inform practices that reduce the need for remedial postsecondary education, and improve student success in college and careers.
- **Funding**
 - **Increase incentives for teaching underprepared students** and those in College Transitional Studies.
 - **Offer innovation funds** to encourage and support research and implementation of promising practices designed to reduce the need for remedial postsecondary education and accelerate student progress.

Next Steps

Following the Council's consideration and discussion of these policy options at its May 2013 meeting, Council staff will prepare a framework for Roadmap recommendations for this planning area. This framework will include a delineation of specific strategic actions, each of which will be described by the following factors:

- Expected Outcome of the Action
- Action time Period
- Outcome Time Period
- Metrics for Measuring Outcomes
- Legislative Action Needed
- Fiscal Impact

The framework for Roadmap recommendations will be developed in close consultation with the Council members and workgroup members. The Council will use this framework at its October retreat to help shape the Ten-Year Roadmap.

Author Contact Information

Noreen Light
Associate Director for Academic Affairs and Policy
Washington Student Achievement Council
NoreenL@wsac.wa.gov
360-753-7811

Workgroup Roster

Lead Council Members:

Scott Brittain
Ray Lawton

External Workgroup Members:

Melissa Beard, Education Research and Data Center
Vi Boyer, Independent Colleges of Washington
Alan Burke, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Linda Drake, State Board of Education
Curt Guaglianone, Independent Colleges of Washington and Heritage University
Christine McCabe, College Spark
Justin Montermini, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board
Bill Moore, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges
Phil Venditti, Faculty Association of Community and Technical Colleges
Jane Wall, Council of Presidents
Gena Wikstrom, Northwest Career Colleges Federation
Bryan Wilson, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board

Council Staff:

Noreen Light
Randy Spaulding
Jim West

Endnotes

¹ Washington Student Achievement Council (2012) Critical Crossroads: A Call for Action. Retrieved from <http://www.wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/Crossroads-Revised3-26-13.pdf>

² Posted on the Washington Student Achievement Council website: http://www.wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/Remedial_Issue_Briefing.pdf

³ Workforce Training and Education Board. (2012). High Skills High Wages: Washington's 10-year Strategic Plan for Workforce Development.

⁴ See Appendix A for a full workgroup roster.

⁵ To read comments from community members across the state, visit the Listening Tour web page: <http://www.wsac.wa.gov/PlanningAndResearch/Roadmap/Listening>

⁶ Core Principles for Transforming Remedial Education: A Joint Statement. (2012). Charles A. Dana Center, Complete College America, Inc., Education Commission of the States, Jobs for the Future. Retrieved from http://www.completecollege.org/docs/Remediation_Joint_Statement-Embargo.pdf

⁷ The state's Launch Year Act, signed into law in 2011, requires all public high schools in Washington to work toward increasing the number of dual credit courses offered to high school students. Retrieved from <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/documents/billdocs/2011-12/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/House/1808-S2.SL.pdf>

⁸ UDL provides a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments using flexible approaches that can be customized and adjusted for individual needs. CAST Universal Design for Learning website: <http://www.cast.org/udl/>