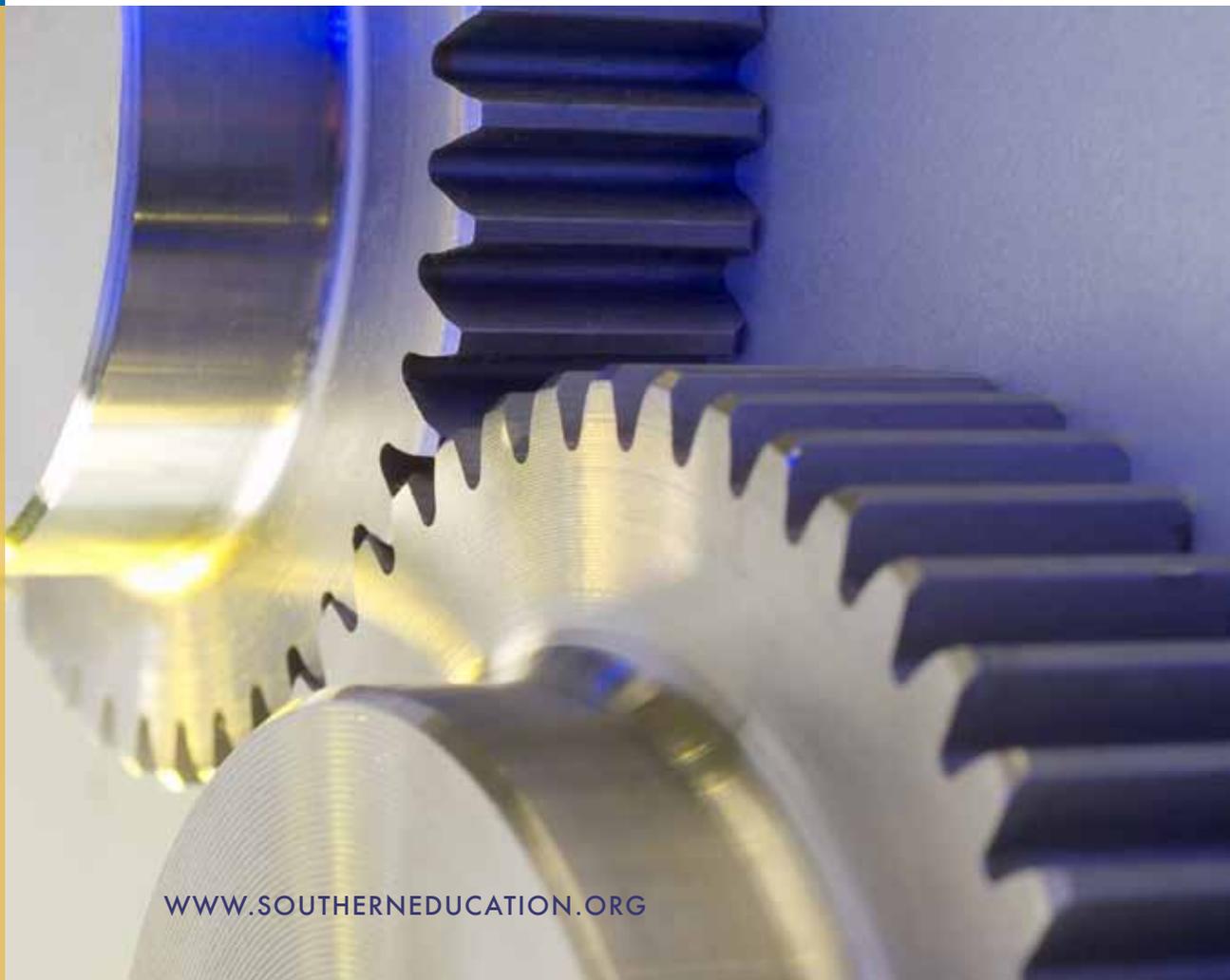# THE ROLE OF
MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTIONS

In Redefining and Improving Developmental Education

FOREWORD

The fact that we will need to see much higher rates of college enrollment and completion, especially among minority students, if the United States is to reach its goal of having the highest proportion of college educated citizens is no longer a question. The challenge for all of higher education is how to achieve this goal. Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs), where significant numbers of students may require one or more developmental courses to prepare them for success in college, need to be especially effective at providing these learning and skill-building experiences. The available evidence on the effectiveness of developmental education programs in higher education indicates that there is considerable room for improvement. Demographic trends, state policies and enrollment patterns confirm that our nation's success in increasing college graduation rates depends, quite frankly, on the success of MSIs with their students.

The good news is that to the extent any sector within higher education has met with success in providing quality developmental experiences, it has been MSIs. The available research suggests that these institutions are known for taking a comprehensive approach to student success, focusing not only on specific academic challenges but also the financial, social and emotional challenges that often conspire to limit the number of students who persist to graduation. This report draws on the findings of a series of case studies at MSIs that have a solid record of accomplishment in development education. Herein you will find examples of approaches and practices these institutions have found particularly effective in working with underprepared students. Perhaps of equal importance, are the insights into the trade-offs associated with different approaches in terms of institutional capacity, costs and time.

To be clear, we need much more innovation in the area of developmental education if we are to turn around the generally low success rates for students served by these programs. Given the increased attention paid to developmental education by policymakers, the time is ripe for carefully designed demonstrations of promising approaches. In the effort to produce more compelling evidence on effective practice, there is a clear leadership opportunity for MSIs. As this report reveals, some of the most coherent models in developmental education are found at these institutions. In short, MSIs can and should do more to share the keys to their success with the broader higher education community. Policymakers should look closely at their success as a guide to broader efforts to increase college completion. Finally, innovation in developmental education programs should guide MSI efforts en route to improving completion rates. In so doing, these institutions stand to add considerably to our knowledge of what works with students trying hard to earn a degree despite the odds we all know exist.

Kent McGuire
President

THE ROLE OF
MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTIONS

In Redefining and Improving Developmental Education

As the United States seeks to regain its position as a leader in degree attainment, higher education institutions must find new and innovative ways to not only increase college access but to also ensure students are successful once they enroll. President Obama's goal of raising the educational attainment rate of the U.S. to be the highest in the world by 2020 placed the degree completion agenda in the national spotlight. At the same time cities, states, non-profits and philanthropic organizations have set their own targets for increasing the proportion of U.S. citizens with college degrees. To meet these objectives, deliberate attention must be placed on substantially increasing the educational opportunities and successes for all students. This is particularly the case for students of color who are perpetually underrepresented in higher education enrollment yet represent the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population. Historically, Black and Latino students have experienced lower graduation rates than their White counterparts (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, & Ginder, 2011).

National data point to the high proportion of students, many of whom are Black or Latino, who begin their postsecondary careers in developmental education courses. Developmental education courses are generally non-credit-bearing courses designed to improve the academic skills of students considered underprepared. These courses are often required before taking college-level courses. Critics view remedial courses as a threat to academic excellence and a deterrent to degree completion. Proponents view these courses as a vehicle to correct K-12 system failures and an opportunity for motivated students pursuing a college degree. In the middle of this debate are Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) as they have a long history of granting opportunities to students who, due to inadequate preparation in elementary and secondary schools, might otherwise be excluded from higher education. MSIs have served students of color through innovative practices and support services, including comprehensive developmental education programs. Because these institutions educate more than 43% of all students of color enrolled in postsecondary settings (U.S. General Accounting Office, 2009), the goal of improving national college completion rates rests in large part on the success of MSIs.
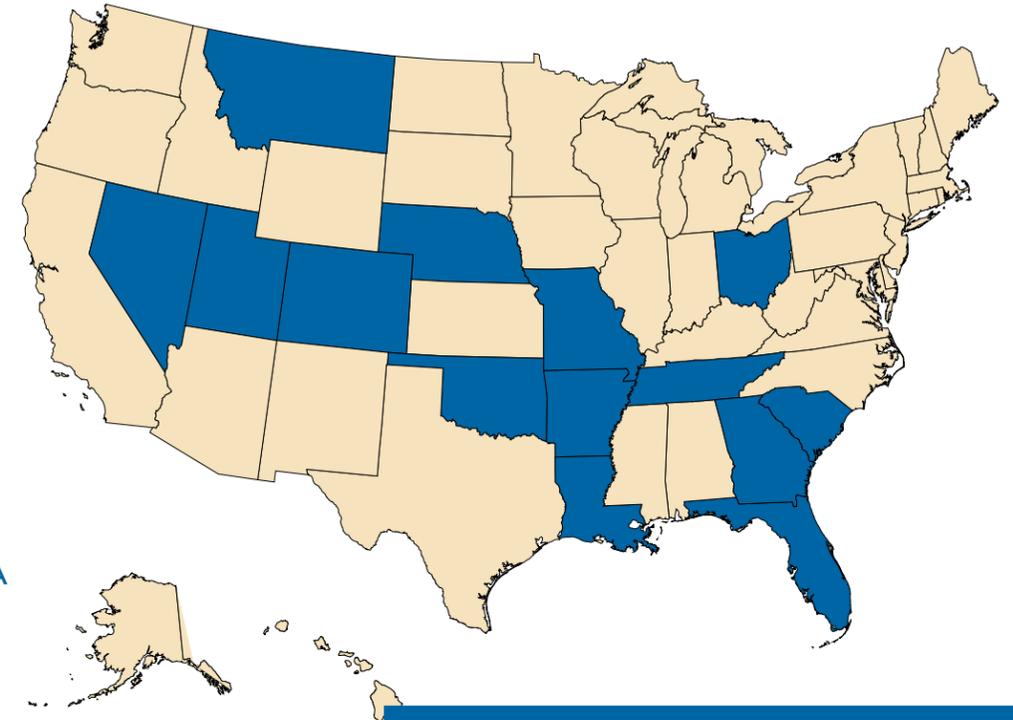
Recent shifts in state policy, however, threaten to limit innovation at MSIs as states continue to question the efficacy of developmental education. According to the Getting Past Go Project developmental education policy database (www.gettingpastgo. org), 46 states currently have nearly 200 policies related to the assessment, placement, and funding of college remediation. Of these, 14 states, half of which are in the Southern region of the U.S., have policies that prohibit or limit remedial courses and/or reduce state funding for such courses at public four-year colleges.

In some states, students needing developmental education are not considered for admission or continued enrollment in certain institutions. New York and California are two of the most prominent examples of excluding or severely curtailing opportunities for students. Four-year colleges of the City University of New York (CUNY) only admit, with few exceptions, students considered "college ready" as determined by standardized test scores in reading, writing, and math. The California State University System, which enrolled 273,000 students of color in 2010, may dis-enroll students who do not successfully complete developmental courses within the first 15 months of enrollment. Most recently in Louisiana, students needing developmental education will be ineligible for admission to any of the state's public four-year institutions, as of 2014. Given these university and state policies, students needing additional academic support may find the community

> *Students of color are perpetually underrepresented in higher education enrollment yet represent the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population.*

TABLE 1
States Limiting Remedial Courses or Funding at Four-Year Colleges

ARKANSAS
COLORADO
FLORIDA
GEORGIA
LOUISIANA
MISSOURI
MONTANA
NEBRASKA
NEVADA
OHIO
OKLAHOMA
SOUTH CAROLINA
TENNESSEE
UTAH

> *14 states, half of which are in the Southern region of the U.S., have policies that prohibit or limit remedial courses and/or reduce state funding for such courses at public four-year colleges.*

college their only alternative for a higher education. Some policymakers argue this is a viable alternative as community colleges are considered inexpensive, accessible, and the best fit for underprepared students. Yet, higher education research has consistently found that students who begin in community colleges are less likely to earn a bachelor's degree (Alfonso, 2006; Dougherty, 1992; Melguizo, Hagedorn & Cypers, 2008). For example, a recent study of California's Community College system, the largest two-year system in the nation, shows that 75% of Blacks and 80% of Latinos do not complete a degree, certificate program or transfer to a four-year college after six years (Moore & Shulock, 2010).

If the California system and its historic master plan for higher education, emulated in other states and internationally, cannot realize its promise of broad access through a commitment to transfer, alternative models must be considered. Further, limiting remedial courses to community colleges puts added pressure on a sector of postsecondary education already facing great demand with few resources. Consequently, limiting students who require developmental courses to two-year colleges with uncertain prospects of transferring or earning a degree is a questionable policy decision at best. Rather, it is critical that all institutions of higher education maintain a commitment to access and success by finding new and effective ways to support students considered underprepared.

Serving low-income students of color, many of whom require developmental courses, has been central to the mission of many two and four-year Minority-Serving Institutions. If MSIs are to continue this mission, developmental education must be a critical part of the strategy to successfully serve students of color. Previous research shows that at least 34% of Latinos and half of African Americans who earned baccalaureate degrees were once enrolled in college remediation courses (Attewell, Lavin, Domina & Levey, 2006). Clearly, these students would not have graduated if they were denied college access because of their need for developmental courses. Recent efforts to reduce the need for developmental education programs include systematically improving high school standards and achievement or better aligning what is required to exit secondary schools with entry requirements for college. MSIs, however, can ill-afford to wait for the promises of these reforms to materialize. If national goals of degree completion are to be realized, MSIs must commit to developmental education and must do it more effectively.

This report provides an overview of developmental education, describes the current policy environment, examines innovations at MSIs, and considers the implications for students and the national college completion agenda. While some states have moved away from racial/ethnic access and equity goals, MSIs have an important role to play in maintaining access and success for historically underrepresented students.

This report draws upon multi-site case studies. Data from faculty and staff interviews at four MSIs in Colorado, Kentucky, North Carolina, and South Carolina are used to highlight the ways policy influences institutional behavior and support for students considered underprepared for college. Until now, the conversation about the role MSIs play, particularly four-year colleges, in improving developmental education has been largely missing from the national dialogue on reform. The voices of those working within institutions are therefore useful for understanding the challenges and opportunities that face MSIs in maintaining their missions, enhancing quality, and improving degree completion for their diverse student populations.

WHAT EXACTLY IS DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION?

Despite recent outcries about the serious lack of preparation among incoming college students, the need for developmental education is not a new phenomenon in higher education. On the contrary, some form of college remediation has been in existence since the early days of Harvard as students often struggled with Latin and Greek. Further, colonial colleges predated elementary and secondary schools so there was no formal way of preparing students for college. In the mid-18th century, in fact, more than half of Harvard and Yale's incoming freshmen failed to pass the colleges' admissions exams but were permitted to enroll anyway (Casazza & Silverman, 1996). Serving students who were underprepared constituted a means to maintain enrollment at many higher education institutions during that time.

While remedial education has been in existence since the founding of American higher education, the terms used to define it have changed. In fact, many developmental educators argue that "remedial" is an antiquated term used to describe ways to remediate or "fix" students' academic deficiencies. Developmental, on the other hand, suggests a potential for students to grow and build upon their academic skills to reach their full potential. Therefore, developmental course instructors and some campus administrators often prefer the term "developmental education"

because of the negative connotations associated with "remediation." While this debate continues among educators, some have argued the issue is one of mere semantics and that the courses have not changed despite the change in terms.

Regardless of the name used, developmental education is one of the most controversial and yet important educational issues facing higher education today. While some form of developmental education can be found in most colleges and universities, there is little consensus about what characteristics deem a student to be underprepared, as each institution uses different criteria for determining "college-readiness." Moreover, students from various backgrounds are enrolled in these courses and programs. While taking a rigorous high school curriculum is considered a primary factor in preparing students for college, nearly half of those who took advanced high school courses also took developmental education courses in college (Attewell, et al., 2006).

While the need for developmental education can be found in students from a wide variety of academic and social backgrounds, the majority of students enrolled in these courses mirror the characteristics of students served by MSIs. Many students in developmental education courses attended secondary schools that lacked adequate funding and resources to prepare them for college. Whether required, recommended, or self-selected, students who enroll in developmental education courses are more likely African American, Latino, low-income, and/or first generation college students. When policies are made to reserve four-year colleges for those who perform well on standardized exams, inequities in primary and secondary education systems are perpetuated as students already with the least educational opportunities are excluded from furthering their education.

DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION AND THE POLICY ENVIRONMENT

According to the Getting Past Go (GPG) state policy database, higher education adheres to approximately 200 remedial education policies across nearly every state. States without written policies, such as New York, may have active university system policies that influence large numbers of students (i.e. City University of New York). Whether at the state or system level, many policies portray college remediation as a symptom of student failure and a barrier to college completion. Opponents of developmental education often argue that it is too expensive and reduces students' chances of completing their degrees. Research on these assumptions, however, is inconclusive (Parker, Bustillos, & Behringer, 2010).

Many state policies also regulate data collection on remedial education programs, student placement, and associated costs. Twenty-seven states require institutions to report the number of students enrolled in remedial courses each year. In some cases, states collect data only on high school graduates or first-time freshmen while others collect data on remedial enrollment for all undergraduates. While a majority of states simply report college remediation rates, 16 states also collect data on pass rates of students enrolled in developmental education courses. The University System of Georgia, for instance, reports data on the number of students who exit developmental studies ("Learning Support") programs and in how many attempts. The purpose of these data collection efforts, however, is often unknown to many campus administrators. Some worry that policymakers will follow the lead of other states and use the data to make a case for discontinuing remedial courses or to limit state funding needed to develop students' skills. As a result, some institutions may be inclined not to report developmental courses that offer credit or integrate developmental instruction with college-level content. Assessing enrollment, cost, and effectiveness thus becomes increasingly difficult.

Some states have moved beyond simply collecting data to regulating assessment and placement of developmental education. Nineteen states require public higher education institutions to assess students' preparation for college-level course work. Some, including Colorado and Florida, also require institutions to use common standardized exams (such as ACT/SAT, Accuplacer, COMPASS, etc.) and/or mandate minimal scores to determine college-readiness. Placing too much emphasis on cut-off scores however, is a disputed practice as correlations between performance on these assessments and future postsecondary success are weak (Bailey, 2008).

Some state policies are also concerned with the sequence for offering developmental courses. While this is often an institutional policy decision, 11 states require students placed in developmental courses to complete remedial courses before taking college level courses. This means, however, that institutions may be limited in experimenting with different modes of delivery, such as enrolling remedial and non-remedial students together in one college-level course or pairing remedial courses with college-level courses. Prohibiting students from college-level courses until they complete remedial requirements may prevent students from enrolling in courses they are prepared for and subsequently may inhibit their progress toward a degree.

Another way states monitor and regulate remedial education is through funding. Particularly during troubled economic times, state policymakers often look for ways to limit or reduce costs while increasing effectiveness. Thus, state lawmakers are increasingly concerned about the cost of remedial education. While only ten states require colleges and universities to report developmental education expenditures, 13 other states have reduced or eliminated funding for remedial courses at four-year institutions.
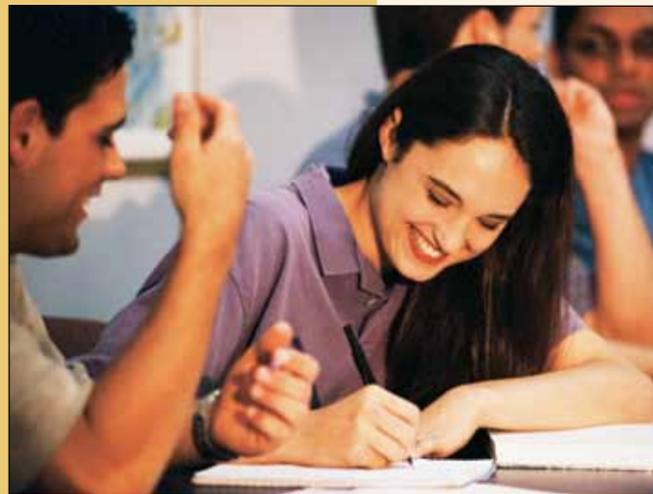
TABLE 2

Who Takes Developmental Education Courses?

52% of students from urban high schools

40% of students from rural schools

38% of students from suburban schools

43% of Black students

27% of White students

52% of students from low SES backgrounds

24% of students from high SES backgrounds

46% of students who took academically rigorous high school courses

Source: Attewell, P., Lavin, D., Domina, T., & Levey, T. (2006)

Critics of developmental education often argue that states spend excessive amounts of money on teaching underprepared students with mixed results. Indeed, national estimates range from one to three billion dollars annually (Breneman & Haarlow, 1998; Strong American Schools, 2008). Estimating national or state costs is difficult to assess because institutions use different measures to calculate expenditures. Some institutions for instance include the direct and indirect costs of instruction while others include only direct costs. Moreover, estimating the cost of developmental education will become even more complex as more institutions begin to use different strategies (i.e. accelerated learning) and new technologies (i.e. computer instruction programs) to offer developmental instruction (Fulton, 2010). Despite the inconsistencies across institutions and the forthcoming challenges, the cost of remediation is a growing point of contention, leaving many campus administrators to view state fiscal policies as a disincentive for instructional innovation. While some argue that offering developmental education is a good investment in retaining students, others view it as a waste of taxpayer dollars. Fourteen states including Oklahoma and South Carolina dissolved remediation programs or discontinued funding. Some state legislatures, as in North Carolina, have repeatedly proposed to eliminate developmental courses.

In states without developmental education courses at four-year institutions, community colleges are often the only public option for students who fail to pass academic skills/placement exams. Little is known about the ways mandated reductions of remedial course offerings impact educational opportunities, particularly for students of color. Parker & Richardson (2005) studied the end of remedial education in the City University of New York, one of the nation's most diverse university systems. In response to a highly charged political arena and growing concerns about academic quality and low graduation rates, CUNY began to phase-out remedial courses from four-year colleges in 1999. In accordance with this policy, students who require developmental education courses are ineligible for admission to CUNY baccalaureate programs. As a result, Black and Latino students were disproportionately and negatively impacted by the university's policy. Hunter College, for example, identified as an "emerging Hispanic-Serving Institution" faced a 39% drop in Black first-time freshmen (FTF) enrollment and a 31% drop in Latino FTF in the four years following the policy decision (Parker & Richardson, 2005; Santiago & Andrade, 2010). More recent data show that in the 11 years since the policy decision, Black undergraduate student enrollment dropped in each of CUNY's four-year colleges, except for the predominantly Black institution, Medgar Evers College. One of the sharpest declines in enrollment can be found at City College where Black enrollment fell from 40.5% in 1999 to 23.2% in 2010. While Latinos' share of the undergraduate population of CUNY four-year colleges made small

gains, the proportion of Latinos in two of CUNY's most prestigious colleges decreased over the past 11 years. Evidence suggests that many students who do not pass the placement exams and are therefore excluded from CUNY's four-year colleges, do not enroll in community colleges.

CHALLENGES FOR MSIs

While some policymakers complain about large numbers of students arriving to college campuses underprepared, some faculty and staff at MSIs view this as an indication of college demand and as an opportunity to meet that demand. Potential conflicts between state policy and institutional goals challenge MSIs to fulfill their mission of college access and providing effective academic support services for students, particularly in states where college remediation funding was eliminated or reduced.

Maintaining Access

National college completion goals have led some states and institutions to neglect the continued need for college access. Faculty and staff at many MSIs, however, remain committed to enrolling and serving diverse students, regardless of demonstrated academic skills.

Most states do not disaggregate remediation rates by race/ethnicity. In the five states that did so in 2008, a higher proportion of African Americans and Latinos enrolled in remedial courses compared to Whites. In Arkansas, Colorado, and Florida, the percentage of Blacks requiring college remediation was twice as high as that of Whites. Given the large proportion of Blacks and Latinos who enroll in developmental education courses, cutting remedial courses and/or limiting enrollment to students considered "college-ready" may reverse progress made in expanding educational opportunity and success.

Moreover, because many MSIs have a history of inadequate funding from states and a large

proportion of students placed into remedial courses, eliminating developmental education and/or state funding for them puts an additional burden on institutions to serve students. Indeed, some MSIs enroll significantly large populations of students needing additional academic support. At one Historically Black College & University (HBCU) in Arkansas, 93% of first-year students in the fall 2008 were assigned to at least one remedial course. Given the state's policy to reduce the amount of state dollars spent on remedial courses, it is unclear how institutions with this level of need will be able to sustain their current enrollment. At an Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) in California, 87% of first-time 2010 enrollees required at least one remedial course including 88% of Latinos and 93% of African American freshmen. Clearly, MSIs are maintaining a commitment to access by providing students of color with an opportunity to pursue a baccalaureate degree. The current policy environment, however, poses a real challenge to this commitment of access.

Estimating the cost of developmental education will become even more complex as more institutions begin to use different strategies and new technologies.

Insufficient Resources

While some colleges and universities have experienced increases in developmental education enrollment, institutions rarely have the fiscal or human resources required to adequately meet the high levels of need. MSIs often lack sufficient resources to hire tutors or instructors for developmental education, resulting in larger classes. In a Kentucky MSI, course enrollment was nearly twice the number recommended by their accrediting agency. Similarly, in Colorado and South Carolina, administrators explained that small classes and intrusive advising are critical to student success, but state budget cuts would likely limit the institution's capacity to provide necessary student supports. Some institutions resorted to taking circuitous routes to support students within state policy constraints; though some faculty argued a more direct approach is best.

Many MSIs therefore rely on federal dollars from Title III and Title V grants to offer summer college transition programs, and hire academic support tutors and staff. In one Colorado institution all developmental services are funded by a Title V grant, without any financial support from the state. These funds, however, are not guaranteed, leaving many to wonder what will happen if the grants are no longer available. Some institutions in Colorado also charge students an additional fee or "tax" for seminars and small group instruction.

Even when MSIs secure resources, many find it difficult to report their accomplishments as states are increasingly interested in developmental education data. Institutional research offices often have limited staff and lack the time to conduct a suitable analysis of the data. Without key data and time for analysis, MSIs will find it difficult to assess, with sophistication, the effectiveness of their developmental education courses or programs, which is problematic given state policymakers' increasing interest in validating funding through the use of data.

MSIs AS LEADERS IN DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION

To be effective in developmental education and to realize their institutional missions, MSIs must capitalize on unique characteristics they historically possess. While all colleges and universities must improve the success of students who are underprepared, it is the mission of MSIs that positions them as potential leaders of innovation and success in addressing developmental needs.

Research suggests that MSIs traditionally create an institutional community that supports student learning in a decidedly holistic way and offers students a supportive campus climate (Allen, Epps & Haniff, 1991). Rather than focusing only on students' academic challenges, these institutions also provide critical social, financial, and emotional supports that are key to degree completion. It is this commitment to supporting students combined with a holistic approach that presents MSIs with an opportunity to play a leading role in developmental education and student success. What follows are illustrations of effective practices in developmental education programs at MSIs found to promote student success and persistence. These practices are worthy of consideration at all institutions interested in improving the effectiveness of developmental education programs and the success of underrepresented students. Indeed, many of these strategies, although not attributed to MSIs, have become promising practices in efforts to reform developmental education (Bailey, 2008).

Fundamental Belief in Human Potential

From the moment a student is admitted, some MSI faculty and staff make personal investments in their students. Many look for the potential of success in students even when placement test results suggest they may not be fully prepared for college. During interviews, some faculty and administrators reflected that many underprepared students come

TABLE 3

Percentage of first-time freshmen requiring developmental education by race/ethnicity 2008

STATE	BLACK	LATINO	WHITE
Arkansas	85.1	62.2	42.8
Colorado	59.9	50.6	24.3
Florida	59.9	45	26.6
Kentucky (2006)	73.8	46.6	41.1
Missouri	72	47	40

in with low test scores but are able to excel. One administrator in Kentucky argued that students who enter college needing developmental support are often the *"better community citizens. They volunteer. They work harder. They understand the value of an education they've received, but they came in not necessarily looking like the best students."*

Many MSI staff, administrators, and faculty consistently support student learning by recognizing the potential in every student. Some saw developmental education as an opportunity for students as well as faculty and staff who, together, seek ways to improve learning. Indeed, many faculty and staff recognized that students often lacked the academic confidence that they can succeed. Providing a wide range of student supports that include developmental education or in the case of states that ended remediation, "developmental-like" programs, provide the structure and support for students to improve their academic skills and increase confidence. Developmental education, therefore, was often viewed as a *"stepping stone [for students]… not a terminal condition."*
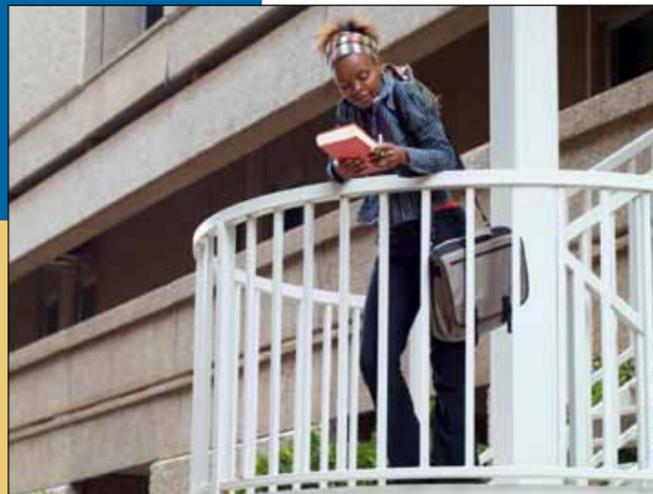
Removing Negative Stigmas

Faculty and staff also recognized the negative stigma that often accompanies developmental education and students placed in developmental courses. Many faculty and staff shared stories of students who were shocked that they needed the courses while others simply tried to avoid taking them at all. Students who did enroll often seemed not to take remedial classes seriously. MSI faculty from the campuses in this sample directly addressed these concerns.

In one HBCU in North Carolina, it was important to demonstrate to students how developmental education courses help students prepare for college-level courses. Motivating students to stay in the class to completion, was an important step in the process. Thus, all developmental education courses begin with reading chapter 7 of the Narratives of Frederick Douglass. In this chapter, Douglass described how he learned to read and write as a slave. An administrator who also taught developmental education courses explained that students were struck by reading the narrative, written by a slave

who went to great lengths to learn to read and was punished if caught. Recognizing their freedom in developing their reading and writing skills, students began to take developmental courses more seriously.

Students in these developmental education classes also wrote their own narratives that were subsequently published online. In doing so, developmental education was contextualized by *"giving special attention to students' own personal experiences or learning goals"* (Rutschow & Schneider, 2011, p. 35). This exercise not only helped to build students' confidence and a sense of pride in their writing, but it also forced students to engage with content and skills. In addition, the curriculum at this institution was standardized so that all faculty teaching developmental education used the same syllabus, course assignments, textbooks, exams, and teaching strategies in hopes of ensuring the success of students in all course sections.

A common approach across MSIs in these case studies was the identification and nurturing of student talents. Faculty and staff seemed to recognize that many students arrive on campus with little encouragement to succeed. At MSIs, students are told, "You can succeed; you can do this." Faculty and staff, however, cannot do it alone. An important part of their roles was to also connect students to other resources on campus, whether it is another faculty member or advisor, a specific program, a service, or even another student. MSI leaders recognized the value of being able to meet all student needs in a variety of ways.

Holistic Support

Students attending MSIs may benefit from a holistic and comprehensive approach furthering their commitment to serving the "whole student." Institutions across states provided students with a plethora of opportunities for support across the college or university. In the case of one Kentucky institution, some of these services were reserved for students in an academic support program while an institution in North Carolina was able to

connect various departments and programs to share information and support students.

Whether through a specific program or a larger campus-wide initiative for collaboration, many campuses placed an emphasis on supporting students academically, socially, and financially. Providing students with a menu of support options seems to be worth the cost for administrators. Some argued the investment in student support is returned through tuition dollars as more students are retained.

Rather than focusing only on students' academic challenges, MSIs also provide critical social, financial, and emotional supports that are key to degree completion. It is this commitment to supporting students combined with a holistic approach that presents MSIs with an opportunity to play a leading role in developmental education and student success.
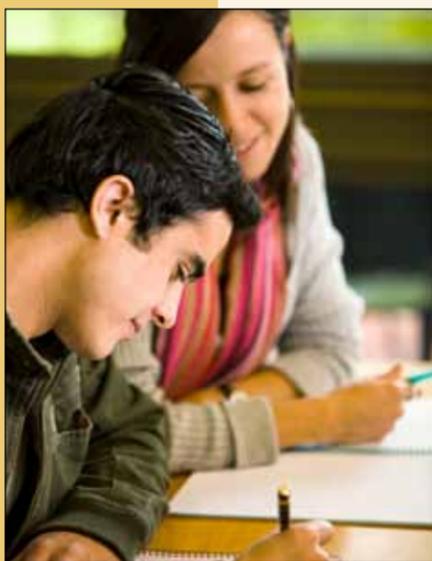
Academic Support:

Learning communities, for instance, provided students with social and academic support allowing a cohort of students to take a number of classes together. In some cases, students in a developmental education cohort also lived in the same residence hall, allowing students to connect with classmates as well as upper-class tutors outside of class to reinforce what they learned inside the classroom. Additionally, intrusive advising meant that some institutions required students to meet with an advisor early in the semester or even before registering for courses to begin connecting students to campus. Intrusive advising, however, often extended beyond a particular academic program or selecting classes, as many institutions developed informal systems to monitor student progress.

Recognizing that placement testing, to some degree, will be impacted by the current state of a students' personal life and their understanding of the exam, some institutions provided multiple opportunities for assessment and placement testing. If students do not pass the placement exam the first time, they may have another opportunity to take a separate test at a later date. Campus faculty also talked about ways they prepare students for placement exams. They explain to students the seriousness of the exam by discussing the implications of the test scores. One institution in South Carolina provided information to students to help them prepare for the test so they could improve their skills prior to taking the exam. This same institution was engaged in their own assessment of the reliability and validity of the placement exam. Therefore, while some states require assessments, including those that mandate which tests to use, institutions are finding their own ways of assessing and placing students and evaluating the results for continuous improvement.

Social Support:

In addition to academic support, some administrators believed it was important for faculty and staff to spend time getting to know their students. Therefore faculty and staff shared information about grades but also attendance so they became aware of issues that may impact students outside of the classroom. Institutional administrators recognized that many students have serious concerns at home and may be the leader within their own families. Attending classes, then, became less of a priority. Faculty and staff must find ways to work with students to address these issues and maintain their coursework. To be effective, however, institutions must

offer campus-wide support. Serving students with developmental academic needs therefore cannot be restricted to only academic affairs or only students affairs. Rather, all members of the campus community, regardless of departmental or unit affiliation have an important role to play.

Financial Support:

While colleges and universities worked to support students academically and socially, they also worked to support students financially. In fact, many administrators and faculty stated that students needing developmental education had particular trouble maintaining their finances long enough to persist to a degree. Many students exhaust all financial aid options but still face a balance for tuition and other educational expenses. Further, in some states, as in Colorado, students may pay more for developmental education services, further compounding their financial need. Thus administrators and staff provide financial counseling to students, work with parents, and help to connect them both to financial resources of which they may not otherwise be aware. As students needing developmental academic support also tend to be low-income, institutions that provide financial assistance in this way help to remove yet another barrier facing students as they pursue a college degree.

A summer bridge program in one Kentucky MSI illustrates the ways a comprehensive support strategy, using many of the practices outlined above, can translate to student success. This program, supported by federal program dollars serves 100 students who are the least academically prepared (based on test scores). Participants experience collaborative teaching among faculty and structured academic support through a living-learning community. Additionally, free tuition, housing, and books are provided to students during the summer months, although the program continues through the first two years of enrollment. This comprehensive support program has exhibited some success as program participants were more

Providing students with a menu of support options seems to be worth the cost for administrators. Some argued the investment in student support is returned through tuition dollars as more students are retained.

likely than non-participants to successfully complete developmental education courses. Further, program participants had higher year-to-year retention rates than non-participants.

MSIs provide developmental education support in ways that challenge perceptions that students who enroll in them drain institutional resources. As students continue to enter college with diverse academic needs and institutional policymakers struggle with ways to address them, the call for MSIs to become recognized leaders in developmental education grows in importance.

MSI SUCCESS AND DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION

At a recent Southern Education Foundation meeting of HBCU and HSI leaders, many expressed a need to more intentionally communicate their institutions' success and innovation. Successful developmental education programs are indeed a part of that story. Four-year MSIs, however, have been conspicuously absent from current debates of reforms in developmental education, as much of these discussions have focused on the community college. Given the current need and importance of increasing degree completion, there is no better time than now for MSIs to become a prominent part of the developmental education discourse. This brief highlights four important touchstones that should inform future efforts to support and improve developmental education programs:

- Success for students who attend MSIs is inextricably linked to the nation's education and economic goals

- Earning a bachelor's degree for many minority students means successfully completing developmental education courses at a four-year institution

- Although many students arrive to college in need of developmental education programs, there is too little known about which practices are most effective and why

- Financial and political support for developmental education programs in the four-year sector will be aided by better evidence on student outcomes that link developmental interventions to degree completion

State policymakers have primarily focused on reporting or defining enrollment, assessment, and remediation expenditures. Many states have proposed or implemented policies that eliminate courses or reduce funding. If MSIs are to survive these changes in the policy environment,

they must become stronger advocates for state policies that support developmental education by connecting the need for these programs to the national degree completion agenda.

If states implement policies that prohibit admission of students needing developmental education, MSI leaders might argue for exceptions to the policy to maintain their institutional missions. Florida, for example, removed remediation from four-year colleges but allowed the state's public HBCU to continue to offer these courses because of its mission. Given the national interest in improving degree attainment and the purpose of federal Title III and V programs, the role of the federal government must not be ignored. Institutions should be fiscally rewarded, not penalized, for successfully serving students with educational needs and those who, if successful, will help narrow disparities in degree completion.

Some institutions are focusing on improving current practices including more one-to-one instruction and more intrusive advising. These practices, while effective, may be too time-consuming or expensive for some MSIs to expand. Consequently, institutions then may consider using alternative means of providing individualized support. Computer-assisted instruction, for example, allows students to receive self-paced instruction and immediate feedback. While these programs may assist faculty in the classroom, and staff in tutoring labs, institutions are cautioned not to become overly reliant on them. Instead, faculty are encouraged to use computer programs as a tool for instruction, not as a replacement for it. The case studies revealed that the interactions some MSI faculty and staff have with students is critical to their success. Another alternative might include mainstreaming more students with remedial needs into college-level courses while increasing student supports in those courses.

While some states mandate specific placement exams, MSIs can determine when the tests are administered and how often. Providing multiple opportunities for students to take the exams is

a practice that other institutions might employ. Allowing students to retake a placement exam with such high stakes is a key strategy in recognizing the "whole student" and in improving the reliability of the test.

The importance of collecting and studying outcomes data cannot be emphasized enough. Understanding placement, participation and completion outcomes of developmental education is essential for determining which initiatives are most effective. Therefore, institutions with under-staffed research offices may benefit from forming data teams with representatives across the institution. Minimally, MSIs should pay particular attention to the percentage of new students enrolled in developmental education, their rate of successfully completing credit-bearing courses, and degree completion. All data should be disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, and when possible socioeconomic status to understand the ways various policies and practices affect students differently.

Analysis however should not be limited to quantitative data. Focus groups with students may help institutions understand student experiences in developmental and college-level courses they subsequently take. This understanding will help institutions assess some of their practices that are not easily quantifiable, such as a demonstrative recognition of student potential. Quantitative and qualitative evidence will support campus communities in becoming stronger advocates for themselves and the students they serve. Further, to more fully understand the challenges and successes of MSIs, it will be increasingly important to learn from students about what they deem important to their success. To date, too few studies related to developmental education have included student perspectives as only they can explain what courses or practices had the most impact on addressing their academic needs.

Success will likely require increased collaboration among MSIs. A joint public statement, for example, from MSI and association leaders on pressing issues related to serving students with developmental needs, would be an encouraging start. MSIs must stay true to their institutional missions if there is any chance of achieving national education goals. MSIs, in an organized fashion, must unabashedly demand more from state and federal governments and indeed the entire higher education community. The important role of MSIs must be amplified in the broader college completion discourses. Given the increasing racial diversity of the nation and the high percentage of minority students enrolled at MSIs, their success is essential.

ABOUT THE STUDY

About the Author:

Tara L. Parker is associate professor in the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Dr. Parker's research agenda focuses on higher education policy related to access and equity for historically underrepresented groups, particularly students of color. She is especially interested in the ways policies such as developmental education relate to postsecondary opportunities and outcomes. This report is based, in part, on data collected as part of the Getting Past Go initiative by the Education Commission of the States. The multiple case study of developmental education was designed to understand the ways institutions respond to changes in state developmental education policy.

SOUTHERN EDUCATION FOUNDATION (SEF):

For more than 145 years SEF has made outsized contributions to improving equity, excellence, and opportunity education at all levels, from pre-kindergarten through higher education. Research, policy analysis, advocacy, and programs are the primary means through which SEF pursues its mission.

This project was made possible by the generous support from Lumina Foundation, an Indianapolis-based private foundation dedicated to expanding access and success in education beyond high school and the Kresge Foundation whose mission is to promote human progress by helping improve the lives of poor and low-income children and adults.

SUGGESTED CITATION FOR THIS REPORT:

Parker, T. (2012). The role of Minority-serving institutions in redefining and improving developmental education. A report published by the Southern Education Foundation, 135 Auburn Avenue NE; Second Floor, Atlanta, GA 30303.

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RESOURCES

Community College Research Center
Website: http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Home.asp
CCRC's mission is to conduct research on the major issues affecting community colleges in the United States and to contribute to the development of practice and policy that expands access to higher education and promotes success for all students.

Center for Urban Education/California Basic Skills Initiative
Website: cue.usc.edu
To increase the number of students progressing from basic skills to college-level courses, the Center for Urban Education (CUE) is partnering with leaders of the California Community Colleges' Basic Skills Initiative (BSI) to enhance the capacity of educators to conduct performance benchmarking. CUE researchers are applying their expertise in data analysis to assist educators in using institutional data, disaggregated by race and ethnicity, to create performance benchmarks as part of a strategic planning process to improve equitable student outcomes.

Developmental Education Initiative
Website: deionline.org
The Developmental Education Initiative consists of 15 Achieving the Dream community colleges that are building on demonstrated results in developmental education innovations at their institutions. Six states are committed to further advancement of their Achieving the Dream state policy work in the developmental education realm. The initiative aims to expand groundbreaking remedial education programs that experts say are key to dramatically boosting the college completion rates of low-income students and students of color.

Getting Past Go
Website: gettingpastgo.org
Getting Past Go, a partnership between The Education Commission of the States (ECS), researchers at the University of Massachusetts Boston, and Knowledge in the Public Interest (KPI), seeks to leverage developmental education at postsecondary institutions as a critical component of state efforts to increase college attainment rates.

Global Skills for College Completion (GSCC)
Website: globalskillscc.org
Global Skills for College Completion (GSCC) deploys an online community of 26 outstanding basic skills faculty in 16 states on 13 campuses to innovate math and writing basic skills pedagogy to consistently increase pass rates to 80%. The project is funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation with a grant of $3.6 million to the League for Innovation in the Community College in partnership with Knowledge in the Public Interest and LaGuardia Community College.

National Association for Developmental Education
Website: nade.net
NADE seeks to improve the theory and practice of developmental education at all levels of the educational spectrum, the professional capabilities of developmental educators, and the design of programs to prepare developmental educators.

Tennessee Developmental Studies Redesign
Website: tnredesign.org
The project seeks to broaden access and success, and create a more affordable system of higher education for students by developing and implementing a more efficient delivery and assessment system to ensure college readiness through a comprehensive design of Tennessee Board of Regents developmental studies programs.

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