Michigan Developmental Education and Placement Recommendations
06/30/21

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT
The Michigan Reconnect Grant Act (January 2020) includes the requirement that a working group be convened to study developmental education placement policies and make recommendations to help the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity:

1. Identify placement practices and policies that ensure students know when remediation is required, what types of academic and nonacademic supports will be available during remediation, and when they can expect to complete credit-bearing English and mathematics courses. Policies must emphasize placement in college-level courses for as many students as possible, with students requiring remediation being placed in appropriate programs.

2. Encourage eligible institutions across this state to adopt consistent placement policies.

3. Clearly communicate sound policies for course placement and options for remedial courses.

Between March and June 2021, a 30-member working group that included representatives from the governor’s office, the legislature, community colleges, the Department of Education, the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity, secondary schools, nonprofit organizations, the United States Department of Labor’s Office of Apprenticeship, and the business community was convened to study policies and make recommendations.

The recommendations included in this document reflect the most up-to-date national evidence around placement and models of remediation. While three approaches to acceleration of developmental education are included as options for eligible institutions in the Reconnect grant act (compression, modularization, and corequisite remediation), only one of these approaches -- corequisite remediation -- has a strong evidence base with respect to significantly increasing the number of students who complete gateway math and English in the first year of college. For this reason, the placement recommendations offered here focus on corequisite remediation and do not include attention to compression and modularization, models that lack evidence of effectiveness. The recommendations are offered with the understanding that multiple models of acceleration are currently permitted under the statute.

Process
The working group came together in five synchronous facilitated working sessions, and members were provided with asynchronous learning and review opportunities between meetings. A repository of research and evidence from around the country was compiled in a shared folder and working group members were encouraged to engage with and add to the repository. Each of the ‘Learning Together’ sessions included presentations and discussion with leading expert researchers and practitioners from around the country. During the ‘Recommendations Development’ phase of the work, expert researchers and practitioners served as resources for answering questions and providing clarification around the evidence base. In addition to the five synchronous working sessions (see figure below), subgroup meetings for working group members from the business community, legislature, and institutions were held during the
‘Learning Together’ phase of the work to provide affinity groups with dedicated space for exploration and discussion.

**Note on Terminology**

In the recommendations, the term “gateway course” is used to refer to courses that are generally considered to be college-level, credit-bearing, and applicable for transfer. The terms “college-level” “credit-bearing” are used in the Goal section to parallel language from the Reconnect grant act text. The recommendations that follow conclude with a glossary of terms.
RECOMMENDATIONS

I. **Goal.** To recommend policies and practices for Michigan Community Colleges that place as many students as possible into college-level courses, ensure students have access to remediation that complies with the Section 3(c)(v) of the Michigan Reconnect Grant act\(^1\), and make transparent to students when they can expect to complete credit-bearing English and mathematics courses.

II. **Underlying Premises**

A. Research shows that traditional prerequisite remediation courses hinder students’ progress and raise, rather than lower, barriers to gateway course completion. Therefore, increasing numbers of institutions are transitioning from a prerequisite paradigm of remediation to a default approach of placing students directly into gateway courses with enhanced and integrated support.

B. Research also shows that all students complete gateway mathematics and English courses at significantly higher rates with corequisite support rather than with a sequenced developmental design. Increases in gateway mathematics course completions are linked both to corequisite support models and to the implementation of mathematics pathways. Mathematics pathways models enroll students in mathematics courses that are most appropriate for their programs of study and use algebra-intensive courses primarily for students whose program of study requires calculus.

C. High school grade point average (GPA) is a better predictor of college success and readiness than test scores. There is limited variability of GPA as a predictor of college success and readiness between high schools. Self-reported high school GPAs have been found to be highly correlated with GPAs reported on high school transcripts.

D. Changes to developmental education models should be designed and implemented for all learners at an institution. Maintaining historic policies and practices for some students while implementing new policies and practices for others and

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\(^1\) Reconnect grant act language: *By not later than January 1, 2022, for Michigan reconnect grant students who need academic remediation, [an eligible institution] provides accelerated courses aimed at enabling those students to raise their skills to college level and complete credit-bearing courses. To meet this criterion, an eligible institution must provide a remediation program that follows 1 of the following:*

(A) A corequisite model under which a student concurrently enrolls in a developmental education course and a freshman-level course in the same subject area for each subject area needing remediation, to be completed concurrently. An institution providing a remediation program that follows the model described in this sub-subparagraph or sub-subparagraph (B) or (C) remains eligible whether or not it charges tuition or fees for the program.

(B) A compression model under which a student enrolls in 2 or more courses, either a combination of developmental and college-level courses or 2 or more levels of developmental courses, within a single semester, to be completed sequentially.

(C) A modularization model under which the content of 1 or more developmental courses is divided into discrete sections with a student assigned to complete only the modules that he or she needs to qualify for the associated college-level gateway course required in his or her program of study.

(D) An independent model of the institution’s own choosing. To be eligible under this sub-subparagraph, the institution must provide the remediation program at no charge to students or the Michigan reconnect grant program.
piloting changes is not recommended. Evidence around implementation of corequisite remediation from around the country suggests that scaling and continuously improving is better than piloting a corequisite model for a small number of students with the plan of eventually scaling.

III. Equity Statements
   A. All policies, practices, and procedures related to placement and student success in gateway English and mathematics courses should be designed to eliminate structural inequities, recognize and address bias, and promote equitable course completion. Specific elements of the policy, in particular the identification of student need and level of support, are designed to ensure that each student receives the specific support they need, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.
   B. Some students who are placed into the maximum level of support may be identified as in need of further services to maximize their ability to complete gateway courses. These identifications and recommendations should be evidence-based and maximize the probability that students will persist to degree completion.

IV. Placement: The goal of placement is to accurately assess the level of support necessary to help students complete their gateway English and mathematics courses. The recommendations made here reduce reliance on inaccurate and unreliable placement systems.
   A. Course Placement: Students should be placed by default into a gateway English course and into the most relevant gateway mathematics pathway course for their program, with the appropriate amount of corequisite support. Students should be entitled to remain in the maximum available support regardless of placement measures if they so choose.
      1. Some students who are placed into the maximum level of support may be identified as needing additional services to maximize their ability to complete gateway courses. These identifications and recommendations should be evidence-based to maximize the probability that students will persist to degree completion. These services may include workshops or other structured support experiences that are delivered at no cost to students. These services may be delivered either prior to matriculation, within a single semester prior to enrolling in gateway courses, or across multiple semesters in conjunction with corequisite support.
   B. Support Placement
      1. Initial placement into support for gateway English and mathematics should be determined by high school GPA. Where possible, high school GPA should be transmitted from the secondary institution to the postsecondary institution as part of the admissions process. All U.S. accredited high schools and high school courses should be considered equal/ equivalent for placement purposes. Students should also have the opportunity to self-report their high school GPA.
      2. Students whose high school GPA is less than 10 years old and is 2.5 or greater should be placed directly into gateway courses with no required
support. A Guided Self Placement process (GSP) should also be available to determine additional support that students may need or choose.

3. Students whose high school GPA is unavailable or older than 10 years, or below a 2.5 should be placed into gateway mathematics and English courses with appropriate corequisite support using a GSP process.

4. Once the need for corequisite support for the gateway English and mathematics courses is determined by GPA, all students should be presented with the option to use additional measures as part of a GSP process that may result in more or less support or placement out of support entirely. Such measures can include, but are not limited to:
   a) SAT scores
   b) ACT scores
   c) Length of enrollment and curriculum in a U.S. or international high school
   d) Completed U.S. or international high school coursework, especially in mathematics
   e) U.S. or international high school grades
   f) U.S. military transcripts
   g) Prior learning assessment or credit, including CLEP
   h) GED
   i) ESL placement survey
   j) Adult education or foreign institution transcripts
   k) ACCUPLACER
   l) ALEKS
   m) Non-cognitive instruments

5. Students should be permitted to opt out of the presented placement recommendation(s) and enroll in the gateway English and/or mathematics pathway courses with less support or without support entirely, but only after completion of a GSP process.

6. A statewide workgroup should be formed to provide guidelines to help colleges develop and implement a high-quality GSP process. The workgroup should be composed of K-12 and college level practitioners including faculty, advisors, administrators.

C. Mathematics
1. The first mathematics course a community college student should take is a gateway course aligned with the student’s program of study.
2. Corequisite support should be available for all students enrolling in gateway math courses and may be differentiated by student need.
   a) Students should be placed into mathematics pathway courses with corequisite support determined by GPA.
3. Students should be permitted to enroll in a mathematics course beyond the gateway level after the completion of a GSP process.

D. English:
1. The first English course a community college student should take is gateway English composition.
2. Corequisite support in English should combine reading and writing and should be available for all students enrolling in gateway English courses. The amount of corequisite support may be differentiated by student need.  
   a) Students should be placed into gateway English composition courses with corequisite support determined by GPA.

V. Faculty & Staff Support:
   A. Institutions should be supported with necessary resources for faculty and staff to design, implement, and continuously improve evidence-based practices. Resources should include funding to support costs of revising placement and remediation models, and support for leaders, faculty and other staff including training, mentorship, and access to experts, and best practices.
   B. Faculty and staff should be supported by their colleges and wider associations with policies that create secure conditions for them to learn and implement new approaches.
   C. Faculty and staff should be empowered to lead design and implementation of evidence-based placement and remediation reform.
   D. Faculty supports should include training in providing instruction under a corequisite model.
   E. Faculty and staff supports should include training in the application of a GSP process.

VI. Data Collection & Reporting:
   A. Colleges should share data with the Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI) that will enable analysis to ensure new placement procedures are working as intended and as outlined in the goals.
   B. Data should include early momentum metrics as well as longer term outcomes including persistence to program completion, graduation, or transfer.
   C. Data should include a historical baseline for rates of completion of gateway courses during the first year of enrollment before the implementation of redesigned placement and developmental education models to enable monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement of the redesigned systems.
   D. The state’s longitudinal data system should take additional steps to collect and disaggregate student data by race/ethnicity, gender, age, Pell eligibility, zip code, and first-generation status to ensure adopted practices support equitable course completion for all students.

VII. Student Access to Information:
   A. Colleges should share their placement and remediation policies and procedures on a public facing website where students and other institutional stakeholders are able to easily access and understand the information.
   B. Policies and procedures for placement and remediation should include the number of semesters after enrollment that students should expect to complete gateway math and English courses. For the vast majority of students, this should be in the first semester after enrollment and for all students this should be in the first year after enrollment.
C. Websites should provide information on where students can go to ask questions about placement, corequisite and other learner support.
GLOSSARY

**Corequisite Support:** Supports that are aligned to the gateway course and delivered as a “just-in-time” practice. Corequisite support refers not to a single model of instruction but encompasses a variety of integrated and contextualized academic and/or nonacademic supports necessary for student success in gateway courses.

**Early Momentum Metrics:** Research-based metrics associated with increased persistence, retention, and completion. These EMMs includes measures of gateway momentum (completion of gateway English and math in the first year), as well as credit momentum (completion of 6, 12, or 15 college credits in the first semester, completion of 24 or 30 credits in the first year); and persistence momentum (persisting from the Fall to Spring terms of the first year).

**Gateway course:** The first college-level or foundational course for a program of study. Gateway courses are for college credit and apply to the requirements of a degree. They are designed to enable students to master foundational skills needed for their chosen pathway.

**Guided Self Placement:** A tool or process that allows students, in consultation with counselors or other faculty, to determine suitable coursework and level of support in the appropriate mathematics and English.

**Just-in-Time Support:** Teaching and other support provided to students in gateway courses that is fully aligned and carefully coordinated with the delivery of the gateway course.

**Mathematics Pathways:** Appropriate gateway mathematics courses that are aligned with the skills students need for their chosen career pathway and program of study taking into account that algebra, including intermediate algebra, may not be an appropriate prerequisite for non-STEM majors. Transferability of mathematics pathways courses is based on course learning outcomes, and not on a required prerequisite course.

**Traditional Prerequisite Remediation:** A model of remediation for students assessed as not being prepared for college level coursework. In this model, those students are required to take one or more prerequisite courses before they are able to enroll in college level courses, with the intent of “catching up” to college level.
## Appendix - Work Group Members

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