COMPLETE COLLEGE AMERICA

North Carolina
Reinforced Instruction for Student Excellence (RISE)
Policy Review and Recommendations
for Developmental Education Reform and
Statewide Corequisite Support



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North Carolina RISE Policy Review and Recommendations

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Introduction

The following policy review and set of recommendations are based on the North Carolina Reinforced Instruction for Student Excellence (NC RISE) initiative to reform developmental education in the state and increase gateway momentum. NC RISE is supported by the North Carolina Student Success Center which serves as a resource hub for shared learning, technical assistance, idea generation, and policy advocacy for all 58 colleges to advance, scale, and sustain state-wide student success and completion efforts.

The call for change was initiated through a directive by the North Carolina Community Colleges system office to address the limited success of traditional remediation. The NC RISE initiative began in 2016 to examine relevant research on developmental education, decide on a reform model, and develop communication strategies. The theory of change reflects NC RISE's and the community colleges' implementation of statewide reforms to collect data leading to the development of an official policy. The enactment of these reforms has been an ongoing process across the community colleges over the last three years. North Carolina Institutional Research and The Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research established a set of Program Requirements that are "absolutely necessary for consistent data," as well as Program Best Practices "to indicate potential differences in success rates" and allow for flexibility of practice. The overarching reform process has been iterative to achieve the best results. As North Carolina moves to codify developmental education reform policies, this process should continue to be iterative with goals to achieve best results.

Established in 2009, Complete College America (CCA) is a bold national advocate for dramatically increasing college completion rates and closing institutional performance gaps by working with states, systems, institutions, and organizational partners to scale highly effective structural reforms and promote policies that improve student success. This review for NC RISE is based on CCA's more than 10 years of experience in the field working with college/university systems and states to define best practices that achieve the strongest results. In order to ensure educational reforms have an impact on all students, particularly students of color, first-generation students, and students from low-income backgrounds, it is necessary to examine the overall and disaggregated success rates. CCA believes that the recommendations contained in this report are necessary to move the center of action from students to institutions. Moving from a perspective of 'student achievement gaps' to 'institutional performance gaps' enables policy and practice recommendations to focus on how systems and structures are responsible for the conditions necessary for student success.

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Executive Summary

Key Recommendations for Effective Scaling

NC RISE asked CCA to review practices and policies associated with corequisite support. The following set of recommendations answer these specific questions and provide additional suggestions for an effective implementation of corequisite support at scale.

Key Questions from NC RISE

- The appropriate contact hours for corequisite support vary greatly based on the model adopted by the institution; NC RISE should continually assess model to determine how it best meets student success and desired outcomes.
- NC should conduct a statewide analysis to determine the high school GPA to serve as threshold for placement into corequisite support.
- All entry level gateway math and English courses should have corequisite support options.
- High school GPA should not be disqualified as a valid placement indicator based on time between high school graduation and college enrollment.
- Students should not be allowed to opt-in to a placement exam.

Implementation Recommendations

- All students should be enrolled in college-level math and English in their first year of college.
- Students who require or request additional support should be placed in a corequisite course.
- Multiple measures, including high school GPA, should be used for placement into college-level courses.
- "Transitions" courses should be limited to students enrolling in adult basic education or in high school equivalency programs.

Pedagogical Recommendations

- Corequisite support should follow a just-in-time teaching model to support student success in college-level math and English courses.
- Corequisite support classes should include academic and non-academic skill building with culturally competent, equity-based teaching practices.

Process Recommendations

- Academic maps, degree plans, and transfer articulations should reflect corequisite courses and credits.
- NC RISE should continue to emphasize broad stakeholder engagement and training across colleges including strong faculty involvement.
- North Carolina should develop deliberate and comprehensive communications strategies for internal and external stakeholders for how corequisite support transforms the student experience.

Policy Recommendations

- The North Carolina State Board of Community Colleges should establish policy for corequisite support including:

Foundational Considerations

This review is meant to answer five specific topics to strengthen corequisite support in North Carolina community colleges: 1) contact hours for corequisite courses, 2) corequisite support for all gateway courses, 3) placement exams, 4) length of use for high school GPA as success indicator, and 5) different pass/fail results between corequisite and gateway courses. To provide comprehensive recommendations associated with these questions, however, additional considerations must be taken into account to ensure the success of corequisite support implementation. The following bullet points are meant to provide foundational recommendations to the work already underway in North Carolina.

- NC RISE makes clear that its approach has focused on a "grass tops" recommendation, perhaps just shy of a mandate, to reform developmental education with a focus on equity combined with a "grass roots" focus on colleges working through the details of implementation and best practices. This dual-edged focus is an example of institutional reform that is multifaceted with impacts across all areas of the college. All large-scale change processes take time and go through cycles of continuous improvement. There has been tremendous work toward this goal already with many initial successes in adoption of a reform model and curriculum development. **CCA recommends that this work move to the next level, based on lessons learned from within North Carolina and from other states engaging in similar work, to set new goals.**

- Throughout this document, 'gateway' is used to match the terminology within NC RISE documentation and the terminology often used in the field. In this terminology, 'gateway' should be conceived as the first postsecondary mathematics or English course that a student takes to fulfill the mathematics or English degree requirement for the student's program of study. 'Gateway' should not be confused with the term 'Gatekeeper,' which has a deficit connotation due to being perceived as a way of keeping students out of academic pathways. So as to eliminate confusion, CCA prefers the term 'college-level' to describe non-remedial, entry-level college math and English courses.

- Recent recommendations from the field and scholarship have pointed to a philosophical shift of moving from the expectation of college-ready students to an institutional responsibility to become a student-ready college. As North Carolina reforms its approach to developmental education, it is important to ask which students are being centered in this policy and practice. In other words, is the expectation that Transitions courses and corequisite support are uniquely reserved for students who require extra support? Or do colleges view students who can benefit from built-in supports as the base upon which the model is built? This answer will impact expectations for students, faculty, and staff members, will affect the role of institutions in grounding instruction within this framework, and will determine how this message is communicated to students. **CCA recommends the following philosophical foundations to drive developmental education reform in North Carolina:**

  ⇒ Students, regardless of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or familial educational achievement, have equal opportunities to access and complete a college education or credential of value because postsecondary institutions, policy makers, and systems of higher education welcome, invest in, and support these students through and to an on-time completion.

  ⇒ A growth mindset posits that students can be successful with the right institutional models of support. Traditional developmental education sequences follow a deficit mindset that students do not meet benchmark standards or focuses on the academic skills they are lacking. An

effective institutional transformation requires the conversion of the deficit mindset towards providing a model of support to enable student success, particularly for those who, historically, have been disproportionally placed into a remedial process.

⇒ Institutions are responsible for providing relevant information to every student in order to help them select a program of study that meets their career goals, for determining what each student needs in order to reach those goals, and for satisfying those needs to help every student succeed.

⇒ Access to remediation is not access to college.

⇒ Enrollment in gateway courses should be the default placement for all students meeting fundamental academic skills.

⇒ Students needing additional support should be provided assistance as a corequisite, not a prerequisite, within the context of the gateway college-level course.

⇒ Completion of a set of gateway courses is an early, critical measure of success toward college completion.

⇒ The content in required gateway courses should align with a student's academic program of choice.

- There are multiple models for corequisite support and, upon request, CCA can lead a discussion on promising models. **CCA recommends that whichever model is chosen by NC RISE institutions should factor courses and credits into academic maps and degree plans.** These multiple models range from pairing a college level math or English course with a corequisite support course (with required time and credits), requiring a zero-credit lab or tutoring that students must complete, and extending time and credit to the college-level math and English course. The options may include the opportunities to earn remedial or college-bearing credits. All models are designed to give students more time to focus on the content and skills that are essential for success. Based on the latest data from Georgia, however, a model where only corequisite students are in the gateway course taught by one faculty member appear to yield the best outcomes. CCA recognizes that for any model to be successful it must fit the local context of the institution or system, and, as such, does not support a specific model.

- **CCA recommends that North Carolina make corequisite support the default model for all students assessed as unlikely to succeed in a gateway course without explicit additional assistance.** There is a misconception, unsupported by consistent evidence, that corequisite support only aids students who place just below defined measures of college-readiness. However, a study from Tennessee, as well as more recent studies from California and CUNY, show that corequisite support benefits students across all levels of academic preparedness. Furthermore, Transitions courses do not address one of the main problems of traditional prerequisites stand-alone remediation, namely that even if students would pass numerous levels of remedial courses, requiring multiple levels of remedial courses creates extra points at which students may exit the remedial sequence before taking college-level courses. A study from Community College of Denver demonstrates that a corequisite model, as opposed to even a one-semester pathway of remediation, leads to a higher ratio of enrollment and of completion of college-level courses. Additionally, a randomized controlled study from CUNY concludes that students in corequisite courses not only passed gateway courses at higher rates, but also succeeded in other disciplines, and had significantly higher graduation rates. Such a result translates into students saving both time and money.

- Corequisite support does not mean teaching or re-teaching all content and skills that a student learns in a high school or remedial sequence. Instead, it recognizes that students have been exposed to or mastered those skills by graduating high school or completing a high school equivalency. Students have the capacity to reengage these skills with proper support even if they have not used these discrete skills recently. Ivy Tech Community College and CCA have outlined guiding principles for corequisite support that follow a just-in-time teaching model. **CCA recommends using a just-in-time teaching for corequisite support to:**

  ⇒ Fill in deficiencies in background knowledge
  ⇒ Preview upcoming topics for the college-level course
  ⇒ Support the college-level course instruction
  ⇒ Answer student questions about the college-level course content

  While college-level courses should maintain the same depth, rigor, and expectations as all other sections of that gateway English or mathematics course, corequisite courses allow for more flexibility in structure and pacing to address supports for students to succeed. Instruction should employ many different methodologies focused on active learning, which may include mini-lectures, group work, inquiry-based problems, and computer use. Class sessions should include Q&A time incorporating the college-level concepts as often as possible.

- **CCA recommends that students should complete gateway courses in math and English in their first year.** Student completion of gateway courses is one step in building academic momentum toward certificate and degree completion. Far too often, students delay gateway math and English courses, which holds up their academic progress and decreases their likelihood of success. Although NC RISE currently demonstrates success by the number of students successfully completing gateway level math and English within two years of enrollment at the community college, a substantial group of national organizations has outlined a set of core principles to transform developmental education that includes having students pass gateway courses in less than two years.

- **CCA recommends that North Carolina focus on the creation, not just of optimal models of corequisite support, but also of the ensuing academic and non-academic paradigm shifts across the college.** When done well, corequisite support can contribute to cultural shifts in the classroom and academic departments in areas such as collaborative work leading to academic peer support group formation, early alert systems and interventions, increases in student persistence based on explicit instruction in non-cognitive academic habits, and the use of ongoing formative assessments embedded in courses. Similar cultural shifts can occur across the college in student services areas of colleges for how students are admitted, oriented, advised, and supported at colleges.

- **CCA recommends that each institution conduct a comprehensive audit of student supports and their impact at their campus in relation to corequisite support.** Although corequisite support often focuses on the content of the gateway course, the pedagogy of instruction, and the delivery model, it is important for institutions to understand how the corequisite model is integrated across the institution. This includes, but is not limited to, onboarding of students, orientation, advising, registration, financial aid, course scheduling and rooming, instructor credentials, instructor credit loads, tutoring, dual credit, and more.

- **CCA recommends continued emphasis on broad stakeholder engagement with strong faculty involvement, and to expand the contribution of academic advisors, registrars, and student**

government associations. A 2019 MDRC Report on the changing landscape of developmental education practices cites the variety of factors on efforts to improve developmental education, with faculty input as the most common influence. This is important for any successful educational reform, and it is clear that NC RISE has successfully used a collaborative approach for their reform movement.

- The same MDRC report suggests that state policy may have a more complex and influential role in the scaling of practices. **CCA recommends codifying key principles about, setting standards and goals for, and defining models of implementation for corequisite support through written policy from the North Carolina State Board of Community Colleges.**

- **CCA recommends that North Carolina use Transitions courses exclusively for students in need of gaining high school level proficiency; all other students should be enrolled in college-level courses and have the opportunity to receive corequisite support if needed.** Adult basic education (basic skills courses), as opposed to college-level courses, is more appropriate for students who do not yet have the fundamental academic skills – meaning students whose proficiency is below high school levels. North Carolina faces potential challenges of how Transitions courses are currently housed both in basic skills and in curricular divisions of the college. While there are compelling reasons to maintain the basic education courses in the college catalog for dual credit, financial aid, and veteran's status, **CCA recommends for basic skills options not to be tied to the constraints of a college-level course, contact hours, credits, and fees**.

  Students who significantly struggle in a college course even with corequisite support could be referred to a late-start parachute Transitions course to gain the basic skills they need. NROC and boot camps may be utilized for students who want a refresher of material in a shorter time frame or self-paced format. The CUNY Start is being evaluated by MDRC and others with early findings showing positive results for progression in developmental education and college matriculation, especially when paired with a support program like CUNY ASAP. However a recent MDRC study in Texas found the majority of students who scored between fourth and eighth grade proficiency and were referred to a bridge program did not enroll in it, did not complete it, or did not continue beyond it. Significant attention should be placed on how pre-college (Transitions) programs are designed and implemented. NC RISE should provide paths for most or all college students to enroll directly into a credit-bearing college-level gateway course in their first semester and reserve adult basic education option for students with skills lower than high school levels of proficiency. For example, Idaho legislation makes this distinction.

NC RISE Specific Questions

Are the number of contact hours and credit hours for the corequisite courses accurate?

A variety of models for math pathways exist, including a new model recently released by the University of North Carolina System. Similarly, corequisite support models vary across colleges with both credit and non-credit options and no evidence indicating a single best model for corequisite support. The determination of the correct number of contact and credit hours should follow the needs of the course objectives, curriculum, and instructional model. Other considerations include if the credits count toward degrees and how the number of credits fit within institutional academic maps as well as across the state for transfer agreements – either for when students transfer between a 2-year to 4-year institution or for when students transfer credits from one community college to another within the state. Because courses can be taught in lab or lecture formats, there may be some flexibility and complexity in the relationship between contact hours and credits. Added to this are still more considerations from a variety of perspectives including faculty concerns, class-size caps, financial models, transcript impacts, and political considerations. For example, in California, the number of contact hours is determined locally at each college. Overwhelmingly, these are 1 or 2 credit courses; although some of those credits are lectures while others are labs. These are often remedial units; however, there are also examples of 5-credit college gateway courses that have the corequisite support embedded into the course itself. A different variation is seen in Idaho where 2-year colleges have a 2-credit corequisite course and the 4-year schools have a 1-credit corequisite course. As another example, the variety in models can be seen at Helena College University of Montana which offers either a 1-credit lab option, equal to 2 contact hours, or a paired course option which pairs a 3-credit corequisite (remedial credit) lecture course equal to 3 contact hours with a 3 credit gateway course. With all these variables, the correct number of contact and credit hours are best determined in the local context based on the needs of the individual college in relation to other public colleges and universities in the state. The number of credits can and should be reviewed with content faculty on a regular basis to consider how they continue to serve curricular requirements related to student success and failure rates in those courses.

Should all the gateway courses require corequisite support (MAT 110 in particular)?

One of the inquiries from NC RISE consisted of whether the Technical Math course should also have a corequisite support course paired with it. The simple answer is yes. **CCA recommends that all entry level gateway math and English courses should have corequisite support**. Regardless of the math pathways required in their programs of study, every student should have the opportunity to receive necessary support, in the form of a corequisite course, for their gateway math courses. Depending on how institutions set up academic maps, students may opt to take one gateway course in the fall and the other in spring (e.g. English in fall, math in spring) so that they complete both within their first year. This is different than being placed into a Transitions course as a prerequisite which delays the student enrolling in a gateway course and earning credits towards their degree. By offering all gateway courses with the option of support, all students would be able to enroll in a college-level course in their first year or even first semester. This also creates a culture where support for a first college course is a norm, and not a fix to a perceived deficit. Furthermore, corequisite support courses can help in both increasing academic skills and creating a positive academic mindset in students; particularly for students of color,

first-generation students, and students from low-income backgrounds who may have had racialized experiences in education in the past and/or who may not feel comfortable or question their sense of belonging in institutions of higher education. For students who struggled with math or may have been out of school for an extended period of time, the option of corequisite support might help them in the decision to enroll in college and lead to higher rates of success. Providing an option of support can serve as an extra welcome that can help build confidence, grit, and momentum in students as they persist through the completion of certificates and degrees.

Do the GPA ranges for placement seem appropriate?

North Carolina is commended for moving toward using high school GPA, as opposed to tests, for placement because research has demonstrated grades to be a superior predictor of students passing gateway math and English courses at all skill levels. Additional research not only concludes that high school academic performance is a more useful predictor of success, but also demonstrates that correlations between scores on placement exams and course outcomes are weak and yield significant placement errors. Results from a study of multiple measures placement in the State University of New York presented at CAPR 2019 indicated that high school GPA is the best predictor of success in college math and English. Finally, the move away from reliance on standardized tests is gaining momentum beyond community colleges as the National Association of College Admissions Counseling is publicly questioning the role of standardized tests; the University of California system, among others, recently made news headlines with the decision to suspend the use of ACT/SAT scores for admission.

While the high school GPA ranges used in North Carolina follows for the most part national trends, **CCA recommends that North Carolina conduct analyses similar to California's to determine what are the optimal high school GPA placement scores based on data from that specific state.** For comparison purposes regarding high school GPA placement ranges, we can view this memo that California released as part of an implementation guide to Assembly Bill 705 that mandates high school performance as part of college placement. It is important to note that the placement guidelines were determined through an analysis that correlated high school GPA with success in courses students had enrolled in based on Accuplacer scores. For math placement, the state also differentiated STEM and non-STEM pathways to determine appropriate criteria. California set the standards using data that demonstrated that "students are more likely to successfully complete a transfer level [college level] course in one year than the data from the cohort placed one level below." California recommends to colleges that students with a high school GPA of 2.6 or higher place into college English composition without support, while North Carolina uses 2.8. California recommends additional support for students with a high school GPA below 2.6 and strongly recommends additional support for high school GPA below 1.9. This compares with North Carolina placement into corequisites support for students with high school GPAs between 2.2. and 2.799, and Transitions courses for students with high school GPAs below that threshold. It is worth noting that California does not recommend prerequisite remediation. In keeping with the earlier recommendation that Transitions courses be limited for students to reach high school equivalency standards, **CCA recommends that all students be registered in a college-level course and, if they do not meet the agreed upon high school GPA threshold, be placed into a corequisite support course.**

If there is resistance to a default corequisite support model rather than the current 3-tiered model with Transitions courses, there may still be options that could be explored. For example, NC RISE could consider a placement model with multiple corequisite support courses that have differing levels of credits and time attached to them. For example, there could be an option for a 1-credit or 3-credit corequisite support course depending on the student's level of assessed needed support. However, this

model creates a complicated system for students to understand, advisors to explain, and colleges to manage.

How should the ranges be determined?

The determination as to the most appropriate high school GPA range for placement needs to take into consideration what the optimal placement guidelines should be overall. NC RISE may consider the following criteria to enhance current placement guides:

- **Placement guides should be easily understood by all students** without having to consult multiple steps in a decision tree model or requiring translation from college staff. Meeting with an advisor is still recommended for building relationships, contextualizing information, and helping students get on the right track; however, students should be able to understand placement guides on their own. Placement guides, as well as comprehensive information about corequisite courses, should be publicly available on the school's website for prospective students, families, high school counselors, and community-based organizations to consult. Such website information becomes an early outreach tool that sets a tone for the college. One way to think about this is how would a student with limited knowledge of higher educational systems and who has some anxiety about college respond to placement guides and corequisite course information written in particular ways.

- College placement strategies are not static and can range in the measures used, systems or approaches used with placement measures, and types of placement. Placement strategies using multiple measures have been assessed in numerous studies and locations including in studies in California and New York. This research has consistently demonstrated that multiple measures placement strategies increase the number of students who are directly placed into and succeed in gateway courses, as opposed to being placed into traditional, prerequisite, remedial courses. There is no one way to use multiple measures. Some multiple measures placement strategies integrate information from multiple sources together such as test scores, high school performance, experience and comfort with reading/writing and math, self-efficacy, etc. This is different from a multiple measures approach that uses multiple necessary and sufficient measures for placement—e.g., placement of a student in a college-level course if that student received at least a specified score on the Accuplacer *or* on the SAT *or* on the ACT *or* at least a specified high school GPA.

- Assessments can be connected to the college curriculum and to student interest in order to support students' purposes in going to college. Assessments can determine students' needs in terms of their pursuing particular college-level courses, programs of study, metamajors, and broader college and career goals. However, it is important to ensure that such an approach does not result in students of color or low-income students being tracked into certain fields due to bias related to course rigor and/or student aptitude. Instead, with proper interpretation and advising, this can become an equity strategy to increase the number of students who pursue programs of study and careers in which they are traditionally underrepresented.

In making the recommendation that **all stakeholders, and particularly faculty, should be engaged in the process of continuous improvement** of RISE, CCA is being cautious about offering a specific set of placement guidelines that should be followed exactly as described. Instead, this should be a starting point for further conversation that NC RISE can lead with representatives of the North Carolina colleges.

For example, research into multiple measures shows that this approach leads to better student outcomes than test scores alone, yet, based on the evidence to date, there is no single, correct way to design multiple measures to improve course placements. The challenge is to create the best placement system that works for North Carolina.

As stated in the Foundational Considerations, data from multiple studies demonstrate that students at all levels of academic preparedness (measured by either GPA or ACT) have significantly higher pass rates in college-level courses when they enroll in corequisite support courses instead of traditional prerequisite remedial courses. Several states have made college-level courses as the default placement for all students with an option to take a corequisite support. California took this approach through legislation that prohibits placing students into remedial education courses unless evidence exists that the students are more likely to graduate college by starting in a remedial course as opposed to a college-level course, evidence that does not exist. Put another way, **if a college cannot demonstrate that students who start in prerequisite remedial courses pass gateway courses and complete college certificates and degrees at higher rates than those in corequisite courses, placing students in those courses may bring more harm than benefit to students.**

The reduction or elimination of college-offered Transitions courses combined with default placement into corequisites frees advisors from the onerous task dedicated to navigating a placement model—both from the technical student records side and from communicating this to students—in order to determine the correct course a student should take. Instead, the elimination of college-offered transitions courses combined with default placement into corequisites allows advisors to focus on proactive advising as a way to connect with and meet student needs holistically. This creates a culture where seeking extra help is normalized and becomes a standard best practice, not a fix of student deficit. Students who place directly into a college course without corequisite support could still choose to opt into this model without feeling stigmatized if they prefer to have the extra time and support for their gateway course.

The purpose of placement guides is to determine readiness and to predict success in a course; however, they are not perfect. To add an additional layer to ensure students are in the correct courses, NC RISE could build a model with start-of-semester (typically within the first week or two) rapid assessments that allow instructors to advise students to switch to a more appropriate course with or without corequisite support. An early, rapid assessment model is better suited for students to opt out of corequisite support; institutions should use extreme caution in utilizing such a strategy to move students from corequisite into a Transitions course because of the opportunity for intentional or unintentional instructor bias, or for students to exhibit stereotype threat that can negatively affect women and students from underrepresented groups.

Should there be an expiration date for high school GPA to be considered as valid placement?

While guided self-placement might be a more effective policy in these instances (more on this below), **CCA recommends that North Carolina maintain the policy of using high school GPA (from a United Stated high school) for placement purposes even if it exceeds 10 years.** Although the evidence shows that the correlation between high school GPA and success in the first community college English or math course decreases as the time between high school and college increases, this correlation is higher than the average correlation between Accuplacer scores and course success with 10+ years between high school and college. The explanation that has been given for the superior predictability of high school GPA is that a high school GPA reflects not just academic ability, but also non-cognitive traits such as

persistence, work habits, attendance patterns, ability to turn in assignments, and follow through on deadlines—all of which are important in college as well as in high school courses. If institutions are apprehensive about abandoning the 10-year expiration marker, we would recommend the use of multiple measures assessment, which would still incorporate high school GPA, and complementing it with a specific outreach by academic advisors to best support the success of students.

Placement Strategies

A multiple measures assessment can reduce the concern with expiration dates for and reliance on high school GPA alone because high school GPA can be one factor, among many, that determines appropriate placement. These factors can include traditional placement and standardized tests, high school transcripts, subject area coursework completed and corresponding grade, noncognitive assessments, skills assessments, questionnaires and surveys, vocational or career aptitude interest inventories, prior learning experiences, and more. There are also a variety of models and recommendations for how multiple measures assessments can be adopted. For example as demonstrated in this MDRC report, Anoka-Ramsey Community College follows a set of decision rules that places students into gateway courses first using ACT/SAT scores, then using Accuplacer scores, and then using high school GPA. In contrast, the Northeast Wisconsin Technical College set up a system that looks first at GPA and then a combination of Accuplacer scores and grit (noncognitive) factors. Incidentally, the GPA scores required for placement into college-level courses are 3.0 and 2.6 respectively for these two colleges.

Some colleges utilize directed self-placements that are based on the fundamentals of guidance and choice. Prior to making their self-placements, students may be given explanatory information, questionnaires that yield recommendations, content-oriented assessments, and individual or group orientations and advising. Writing or math samples in this context differ from placement exams because they provide an opportunity for an informed dialogue between the students and an advisor about abilities rather than being used as gatekeepers that set thresholds for participation. Similarly, students can reflect on their comfort with various academic tasks, study habits, use of English and math in daily life, and non-academic factors such as personal and family obligations together with their ability to commit to time studying outside of class. It is even possible to have students self-report their high school GPA which removes the burden from admissions and registrar offices to collect this information. Multiple studies, including research conducted by the College Board and ACT, have demonstrated a high level of accuracy in students reporting their high school GPA. Examples of guided self-placement at colleges include Boise State's The Write Class™, Los Angeles Pierce College's English and math Self Placement Tools, or Community College of Denver which, together with multiple measures placement based on standardized tests or high school coursework plus GPA, offers self-assessments placements for English and math.

Placement strategies may be informed by alignments between the curriculum of high schools and colleges. **NC RISE may consider having college faculty and department chairs engage with curriculum specialists from their local high schools and districts to crosswalk the high school curriculum to both the Transitions course and gateway course curriculum to find points of alignment**. The purpose of such work is to determine what level of high school coursework prepares students to enter a college-level course. This exercise may be best done over an extended period for deep engagement with curricular artifacts, rubrics, assessments, and learning outcomes. It also has the benefit of fostering relationships and building trust between high schools and colleges as they engage in a shared effort toward common goals of student success. Idaho ENACT is an example of how intentional partnerships were built upon and increased networks across school district and college faculty.

One immediate outcome of K12-college partnerships is alternative placement based on grades in the high school math or English courses that have been identified as meeting college readiness standards. This strategy can be used instead of or in conjunction with high school GPA as an authentic assessment of students' academic skills in a particular subject as a measure of college readiness. This strategy supports the hypothesis that students who do not meet a grade or GPA threshold in those courses, but have been exposed to the material, can be successful in a corequisite support model which uses just-in-time teaching as opposed to prerequisite remediation or Transitions courses that re-teach content. Further, the determination of which high school coursework prepares students for college can be used as a prerequisite for dual credit students in the NC Career & College Promise (CCP) program, pointing CCP students to an appropriate high school course rather than to a Transitions college course that repeats content that the student has already had. In addition, the direct alignment of high school and college courses, if marketed well, could open dual credit opportunities to a greater number of students, particularly students of color, first-generation students, and students from low-income backgrounds. For example, it is possible that NC RISE may find that passing 11th grade English with a B or better prepares a student for college, and then CCP courses become a natural fit for passing students once they enter 12th grade. A course alignment strategy can also be used to crosswalk high school courses with college-level equivalencies that can be used as prerequisites into different math pathways courses, as has been done at Georgia College.

Should students be allowed to take a placement test?

CCA recommends for NC RISE to continue its current policy of not permitting students to choose to take a placement test. While there has been some interest across colleges to allow this, there is also concern about how this could be misunderstood and used in unintended ways to boost placement scores. Not allowing placement testing may protect against the operation of Goodhart's law, which posits that when a measure that serves as an indicator becomes the target measure, the measure ceases to function as a valid indicator. Removing placement testing as an option is supported by research from Florida since the passage of SB 1720, which exempted students from placement testing. Since this reform was instituted, performance gaps between White and minority students have been mitigated. Specifically, since this reform, Black and Hispanic students have shown a greater increase in earning college-level credits than have White students. Utilizing multiple measures assessment based on student input may deemphasize the importance of any one standardized test and may reduce the incentive for students to take placement tests at all by relying on other academic and non-academic benchmark sources of information. By being transparent about placement guidelines, students are actively engaged in decisions that guide their educational progression. Students are empowered to understand how corequisite support works, their current academic strengths and challenges, and will have a broader view of the academic and financial impact of the choices they make. Rather than education being done to them, students become co-pilots, together with their advisors, in steering their college pathways.

What about students failing corequisite?

CCA recommends that students who pass the gateway course but fail the corequisite course not be made to repeat the corequisite section. The question about the impact of passing or failing a corequisite course on a student's progression in their program of study may be best examined first from a pedagogical perspective rather than from a financial perspective of potential loss of benefits. While it is typical for students who pass the gateway course to also pass the corequisite support course, there are exceptions to this. For example, a student may perform well in the gateway course but never attend the

corequisite support course. The underlying concern should focus on the purpose of the corequisite support model whose goal is to increase success in the gateway course. A matrix created by the Dana Center based on information from Roane State Community College in Tennessee shows that passing the gateway course meets gen-ed requirements regardless of passing the corequisite support course. It therefore does not follow that a student who passes the gateway course but fails the corequisite course should be required to retake the corequisite support course since a corequisite support course does not exist by itself, but is attached to the gateway course. Retaking the corequisite support course would result in the student having to retake the gateway course that they already passed. This does not mean that corequisite support courses do not serve a purpose. Quite the opposite—data from a recent study conducted by CCRC demonstrate the causal effects of placement of students in corequisite support in Tennessee compared to students in traditional prerequisite remediation. **One potential solution is to incorporate the gateway course grade into the grading scheme of the corequisite course** (but not the other way around). While the grades in the support and gateway courses may be slightly different, the grading scheme can be designed in such way that a passing grade in the gateway course inevitably results in a passing grade in the corequisite support course, and a failing grade in the gateway course results in a failing grade in the support course.

Another concern associated with students passing the gateway course but failing the corequisite course might be financial, particularly for veterans who might lose benefits in this situation. Perhaps the best way to reconcile this potential issue would be a two-pronged approach. First, at the individual level, advisors should emphasize to veteran students the importance of the corequisite course so that they approach it with the same dedication as the gateway course. Second, at the structural level, NC RISE can work closely with those administering veterans' benefits to fully explain the pedagogical model of corequisite support, the data that back this up, and the national movement across states that makes corequisite support a default model so they better understand the program. It would be important to explain both the increased pass rates when students take a corequisite support course and the risk of significantly lower pass rates for students in traditional prerequisite remediation if veteran students were not supported to take corequisite support courses. The goal would be to move beyond a technicality that limits funding because corequisite support courses do not meet a requirement for degree progression. To avoid a situation of the tail wagging the dog, educational decisions should be made for the benefit of students that are evidence-based rather than change entire college structures to meet well-intentioned rules that penalize students and limit statewide developmental education reform.

Program Requirements vs Best Practices

The NC RISE document on Program Requirements and Program Best Practices details some best practices for corequisite support, specifically that:

- The corequisite course should be offered in the same modality as the gateway course.
- Students from gateway courses with different instructors should not feed into the same corequisite support course to ensure students are learning the same concepts at the same time.
- Gateway and corequisite courses should be offered over the same amount of time.
- Evening and weekend courses may offer hybrid or online corequisite support.
- Corequisite courses should not contain homework or tests.
- Corequisite course material must be completely aligned with the gateway course throughout the semester.

While having some flexibility by campus is useful to accommodate local needs and to build faculty and staff support, **CCA recommends NC RISE establish standards to establish common understandings around the pedagogy of corequisite support and the use of a just-in-time teaching approach**. For example, the model changes significantly if the gateway course lasts 16 weeks, but the corequisite support course only lasts 8 weeks. Similarly, if one college has no homework or tests in the corequisite support course and another is built on a separate curriculum, students may have vastly different experiences of what corequisite support is that could lead to different success outcomes. As data are collected on the efficacies of the different approaches based on these best practices, NC RISE should consider requiring certain essential pieces of the program, while still allowing flexibility in other areas. Given the variety of practices, NC RISE may be able to conduct research to determine if there is a correlation between student success and the types of corequisite models across colleges.

Recommendations and Policies

The North Carolina State Board of Community College should establish specific standards and expectations of developmental education reform based on the work of NC RISE. **CCA makes the following recommendations:**

- NC RISE should consider how to best **establish and communicate the urgency** of codifying developmental education reform prior to, during the adoption of, and after any policy is in place.

  As an example, the Indiana Commission on Higher Education published a resolution to redesign remedial education to establish a vision of reform.

  As additional examples, several states have produced and presented white paper reports to communicate the current status and urgency to scale reforms:
  - Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
  - Missouri Department of Higher Education
  - Nevada System of Higher Education

- Once a policy is adopted, it can be helpful to **publish a set of FAQ's** for implementation to provide clarity around requirements, timelines, and applicability. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is an example of this. Similarly, it is important that information on corequisite policy reforms is maintained publicly as was done by the University of Hawai'i Community Colleges.

  Although the NC RISE Google Doc Folder is comprehensive and serves as a solid historic record of this initiative, NC RISE may consider **developing a comprehensive website** for students, the 58 campuses (faculty, staff, and administrators), and policy makers that may be easier to navigate. Two examples of similar websites from California include one from the California Acceleration Project and one from the California State University System.

- Developmental education reform policy should **set specific, numeric goals** for the minimum percentage of students who do not demonstrate college-readiness and who should be placed directly into college-level courses with corequisite support, as in these examples:
  - Georgia: default placement for ALL students into corequisite support
  - Tennessee: default placement for ALL students into corequisite support
  - West Virginia: default placement for ALL students into corequisite support
  - Colorado: a maximum of 10% of students may be enrolled in traditional developmental education courses.

- Developmental education reform policy should **set a specific target date**, often 3 years from the institution of the policy, by when the policy requirements must be in place. This may include a tiered timeline to reach the goals for the percentage of students who will be placed directly into college-level coursework.

- Developmental education reform policy should outline how the state will **collect, disaggregate, analyze, and use data** to modify and drive subsequent action. Key performance indicators should include the number and percentage of students per institution and across the state, disaggregated by race, gender, age, and income/Pell-status who:

  - enroll in and pass remedial courses (including corequisite support courses)
  - enroll in and pass college-level gateway courses within one year
  - persist across terms
  - complete certificates, degrees, and transfer

North Carolina is strongly encouraged to adopt statewide participation in the Postsecondary Data Partnership as the standard for this data collection and analysis.

- Policy makers should consider **funding mechanisms for continuous improvement** cycles and institutional needs, including the following actions:
  - Support continued professional development for instructors, staff, and administrators. This may come from grant or institutional budgets or a combination to provide technical assistance workshops at the institutional, regional, and/or state level.
  - Allocate funds for robust data collection and analysis including participation in the Postsecondary Data Partnership.
  - Anticipate and address concerns around instructor credentialing. Some colleges have moved to a single set of instructor credentials so that everyone can teach both corequisite and college-level courses (so that instructors previously qualified only to teach precollege-level courses can teach college-level corequisite courses). Facilitating the obtainment of those credentials by instructors who lack them takes both time and money (e.g., in the form of scholarships for instructors to earn a full master's degree or a 'mini-masters' if they have a related masters but are missing graduate hours in the content area). A 'mini-masters' may also be useful for dual credit instructors in the CCP program.

Detailed Policy Language

CCA has published samples of detailed policy language which may be used when crafting state policy.

Framing Statements

WHEREAS, more than half of community college students are assessed as not being ready for gateway mathematics and English courses upon enrollment in a postsecondary institution.

WHEREAS, low-income and minority students are even more likely to be assessed as not college-ready.

WHEREAS, the assessments used to evaluate college readiness have been proven to be less effective than high school performance measures in predicting college readiness.

WHEREAS, students who are assessed as not college-ready have historically been required to enroll in a series of remedial courses that cost them money, do not count toward their degree requirements, and extend the time needed to graduate.

WHEREAS, many students successfully complete remedial courses but fail to enroll in and complete both their remedial and gateway courses, indicating a system design flaw which causes student attrition.

WHEREAS, institutions that deliver academic support while student are enrolled in college-level gateway courses as a corequisite rather than a prerequisite eliminate this point of attrition.

WHEREAS, nationally only 22 percent of remedial students complete the gateway course, but students who instead receive corequisite support do so at a rate of 60 percent or more.

WHEREAS, the state educational attainment goal can only be reached if the state eliminates student attrition caused by prerequisite remediation and reduces the time and cost required to earn a degree or credential.

Definitions

Gateway course: the first postsecondary mathematics or English course that a student takes that fulfills the mathematics or English degree requirement for the student's program of study.

Remediation: coursework or other activities that are: (1) designed for students who are assessed as needing additional support to succeed in college-level gateway courses in mathematics or English and (2) required to be completed before a student may enroll in the gateway course for that subject.

Corequisite support: coursework or other activities that are: (1) designed for students who are assessed as needing additional support to succeed in college-level gateway courses in mathematics or English and (2) administered in the same academic term in which the student is enrolled in the gateway course for that subject.

Multiple Measures Placement: Utilization of one or more of the following in the placement of students into English and mathematics courses: (1) high school coursework, (2) high school grades, (3) high school grade point average, (4) standardized test scores.

Action Steps: State Policy

- Postsecondary institution shall replace 100% of remediation with corequisite support by 20XX.
- Postsecondary institution shall maximize the probability that a student will enter and complete gateway courses in English and mathematics by using multiple measures placement.
- Multiple measures placement shall apply in the placement of all students in such a manner so that either of the following may occur:
    - Low performance on one measure may be offset by high performance on another measure.
    - The student can demonstrate preparedness and thus bypass remediation based on any one measure.
    - When high school transcript data are difficult to obtain, logistically problematic to use, or not available, a postsecondary institution may use self-reported high school information or guided placement, including self-placement for students.
- A postsecondary institution shall not require students to enroll in remedial English or mathematics coursework that lengthens their time to complete a degree unless placement research that includes consideration of high school grade point average and coursework shows that those students are less likely to succeed in gateway courses in English and mathematics than in remedial coursework.

Action Steps: Institutional Policy

- Faculty shall provide corequisite support instead of prerequisite remediation for 100% of students by 20XX.
- The institution's placement policy shall include use of multiple measures placement.
- No student shall be required to take remediation once corequisite support is available to all students.

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