Ensuring Student Success Through the Redesign of Developmental Education: A Year Two Report

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A LETTER FROM ELIZABETH COX BRAND

During this past year, I have had the privilege to work with a talented group of team leads from each of Oregon's 17 community college campuses. They have impressed me as they've led efforts to implement the recommendations Oregon's Developmental Education Redesign Work Group made in June 2014, after nearly eight months of deliberation.

While their responsibilities to students and colleagues remain in force, the team leads and their campus colleagues have dialed it up a notch for the students of Oregon, making real progress implementing the recommendations they have selected.

It's been a big year for mathematics in Oregon. I would like to highlight the work we did together to make the non-STEM pathway an official option for completion of the requirements for the Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer (AAOT) degree. Several campuses are taking advantage of the opportunity they now have to develop alternative pathways for non-STEM students, allowing them to complete their degrees and transfer to a four-year institution by taking a rigorous mathematics course that doesn't have to be algebra. I have to admit I get goose bumps thinking about all the students who will get two- and four-year degrees with this one change alone.

But our campuses have accomplished much more. In reading and writing they are accelerating student learning and eliminating exit points by, for instance, combining reading and writing courses and creating co-requisite classes that combine developmental education with college-level course work. They are moving away from using a single measure for placement and considering or using "non-cognitive" or other cognitive measures and finding inventive ways to make sure that students are placed in the highest possible course in which they can achieve success and not languish in long developmental education sequences. And they are rethinking the way they advise students, particularly developmental education students.

This is an exciting time for community colleges in Oregon.

Make no mistake. We've come a long way, but we've got more work to do. The old paradigm for developmental education is hard to undo because it has been was with us for a long time and on the surface makes so much sense: Take entering students whose knowledge and skills are at the pre-collegiate level, enroll them in a sequence of courses designed to build their knowledge and increase their skills, make them college-ready and then finally allow them to enroll in college-level classes. As last year's report documented, however, this approach just doesn't lead to much success.

So, as we celebrate the successes of our second year of work, we need to redouble our efforts for our third. This report documents progress our campuses made this past year and points to what we can do next. The list of accomplishments in this report is not all-inclusive. There are many more than we could include and, I am sure, many more to come.

Thank you for all your efforts!

Elizabeth Cox Brand

INTRODUCTION

Oregon's developmental education redesign work entered its implementation phase in the 2014-15 academic year. 2013-14 found the Developmental Education Redesign Work Group – consisting of teams from each of Oregon's 17 community colleges – examining developmental education practices throughout Oregon and the United States and making recommendations on the implementation of best practices that result in greater student success. The group pursued goals that included identifying practices and policies that decrease time to completion (i.e., to degree, certificate or matriculation) and decrease student attrition from point of placement test to enrollment.

The group met with national developmental education leaders and reform pioneers, learned from top researchers and practitioners in Oregon and other states, discussed what it had learned, debated its options and ultimately settled on a set of recommendations to redesign developmental education and improve student success in Oregon (see Appendix A).

To support implementation of the Work Group's recommendations in the 2014-15 academic year, the Oregon Community College Association (OCCA) convened team leads from each of the 17 campuses. Team leads first met in October to discuss how to prepare their teams to attend full-day meetings to develop basic implementation plans. With the help of third-party facilitators, campus teams met for full days at the state Capitol and developed these plans. Team leads then reconvened in February to develop more detailed work plans with timelines, deliverables and metrics. Team leads continue to meet, share challenges, develop solutions and review campus plans.

Although the effort to transform developmental education in Oregon is in its early stages, the campuses have accomplished more than we might have imagined in the four major recommendation areas: mathematics, reading and writing, assessment and placement and student services. What follows is a sampling – not an all-inclusive list – of campus accomplishments in each of the four areas.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

MATHEMATICS

Long developmental math sequences are a barrier to success. The Developmental Education Redesign Work Group suggested in its report, "Eliminating these sequences and accelerating student enrollment in college-level gateway courses can be achieved through multiple strategies. . . . One strategy that is likely to have a positive impact is for each campus to establish a separate, more accelerated pathway through developmental math for students in non-STEM degree fields." Campuses now have this opportunity. Oregon community college math faculty took the lead in organizing a meeting with colleagues from all 17 community colleges and four public universities; other invited representatives included the Oregon Department of Education (ODE), Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD) and the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC). Over the course of two, day-long meetings and email exchanges in the fall of 2014, the group agreed on common outcomes for the two courses in the "new" non-STEM pathway, MTH 98 and MTH 105. Next the university provosts and community college instructional administrators gave their support to the work. In the

spring of 2015, the HECC concurred, officially making the non-STEM pathway an option for completion of the requirements for the Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer (AAOT) degree.

Many campuses have plans to move or have already moved to provide this alternative pathway:

- In winter 2015, Clatsop hand-picked students to enroll in its new quantitative literacy sequence of classes (MTH 98 to MTH 105 to MTH 241).

- Portland Community College created a new two-term math literacy curriculum and offered multiple sections on each campus winter and spring terms. In winter term, seven instructors offered 14 sections of MTH 58 across all four campuses and enrolled 229 students. In spring term those same seven instructors offered five sections of MTH 58, enrolling 116 students, and eight sections of MTH 98, enrolling 102 students.

- Treasure Valley implemented a non-Stem pathway in the fall of 2014.

- Lane plans to expand the alternative math pathway courses it began offering in the fall term, 2014. For those students who begin in MTH 20, with the goal of passing MTH 105, the number of courses students must pass has now been reduced from five to three, with students moving now from MTH 20 to MTH 98 and then on to MTH105.

- Columbia Gorge's math department has chosen to design and implement a new non-STEM math sequence. It will begin offering MTH 98 and MTH 105 in the spring.

- Blue Mountain will begin implementing its non-STEM pathway in fall 2016.

- Central Oregon has moved three courses in its non-STEM pathway through its curriculum committee and has sent them on to the state for approval. It piloted MTH 58 in the spring.

> "We believe having two math pathways will help with student success and retention as the courses are better aligned with students' areas of study."
>
> *-Jenni Newby, Instructional Dean, Central Oregon Community College*

- Southwestern will offer the MTH 98 and MTH 105 courses this fall.

- After working to align MTH 105 with new state outcomes, the math faculty at Mt. Hood is exploring how to implement both STEM and non-STEM pathways.

Although it is still too early to assess results, campuses are eager to do so. Kurt Simmonds of Portland Community College reports, "We will need to do an in-depth data analysis on successful course completion, term-to-term retention and certificate and degree completion and/or transfer for the math literacy students versus students in the traditional algebra sequence."

Additional notable redesign mathematics work seeks to accelerate student success:

- Blue Mountain's Jump Start program gives developmental education students an opportunity to jump to the next course after a two-week intensive preview of material. In fall quarter, 53% of students
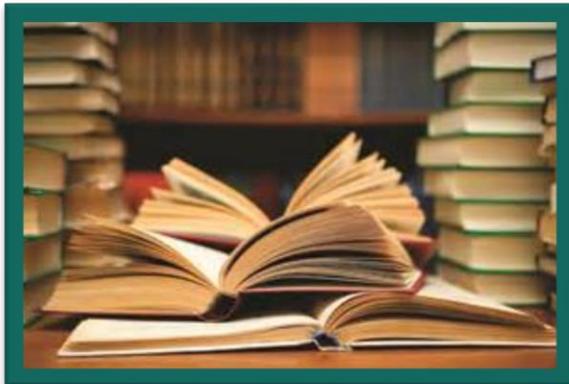
enrolled in the pre-algebra Jump Start class and 45% of students enrolled in the elementary algebra Jump Start class passed challenge tests and moved to the next level.

- Rogue eliminated three developmental education courses, including Introduction to Mathematics. The college's math coordinator has adjusted the curricula for the next level math course, and Rogue now offers more sections to accommodate more students.

READING AND WRITING

The Developmental Education Work Group's recommendations focused on the importance of acceleration – and provided a menu of options to accomplish it – and a commitment to backward design, the notion that developmental education coursework must reflect the demands of college-level coursework. As in mathematics, campuses have made great progress in these areas:

- Mt. Hood's English and writing faculty are developing a combined RD/WR 90 course to pilot in spring 2016. English faulty are preparing for the shift by cross-teaching with reading faculty teaching some writing courses and writing faculty teaching some reading courses.

- Tillamook Bay's English and developmental reading/writing faculty worked together to ingrate reading and writing classes, RD/WR 90. The integrated class began in spring quarter 2015. The college offers these classes as cohort classes, to be taught by either the same instructor or a team of teachers. The classes are scheduled back to back to further reinforce this teaching and learning strategy.

- Rogue has piloted a combined developmental and college level writing course (WR30/WR115).

- Traditionally, Linn-Benton Community College students placed into developmental education in writing started in either WR 90, WR 95 or WR 115. This means that a student could have to take up to three quarters of writing before enrolling in a college-level course. Linn-Benton found that only 29% of its students who began in WR 95 completed WR 121. To see more students placed into developmental education complete the required college-level WR 121, Linn-Benton created an Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) for WR 121. Students are invited to the ALP by passing WR 90 or 95 with a C grade or better, or by testing into WR 95 or 115. The ALP allows students to skip over the developmental courses and enroll directly in a college-level course. However, these students must simultaneously enroll in a credit-bearing support class that takes place directly following the WR 121 class. Students stay in the same room with the same instructor and have a second hour of class where they get concentrated, more individualized support.

- Chemeketa reading and writing faculty used backward design to revise their courses. For instance, the developmental writing faculty redesigned the general writing courses so students who pass the course will meet college-level expectations of the transfer writing faculty. The effort has included developing a post-assessment for the WR 90 class that mirrors the entry assessment for WR 115.

ASSESSMENT AND PLACEMENT

The Developmental Education Redesign Work Group called on Oregon's community colleges to consider a common set of practices and commitments for the placement of students that are designed to more accurately place them and more intentionally err on the side of enrolling students in college-level, accelerated or co-requisite courses. As a result, the group called for the creation of a work group of community college, university, and high school representatives with appropriate expertise to convene to consider recommendations to the state that promote shared practices, such as using multiple measures and common decision-zones for placement, and identifying common course outcomes. The group also recommended that campuses establish test preparation programs and mandate that students review test preparation materials before taking the test. While campus teams will assemble as the Placement Work Group in fall 2015 to begin reviewing the recommendations of the Developmental Education Redesign Work group, some campuses have already begun to redesign their assessment and placement programs:

- Oregon Coast's math work group created a new placement rubric for students recently out of high school. It includes highest math course completed with a B or better and the COMPASS placement examination. In addition, math faculty now administer a first day placement verification to all students in each of their classes, with results allowing the student the option to drop/add into the optimum beginning level course. Oregon Coast now requires mandatory COMPASS testing preparation and is developing a preparation video, website practice tests and a method to ensure all students complete the test preparation prior to testing.

- Southwestern lowered the placement scores for WR 90 to make it possible for more students to bypass WR 80.

- Mt. Hood is considering the use of multiple measures in student placement, studying the purchase and implementation of a non-cognitive assessment tool to ensure better placement of students.

- Clackamas has piloted the Placement Advising for Student Success (PASS) program with students who placed into developmental math, reading and/or writing. As in the past, students still get the results of their COMPASS tests immediately. However, the exam is no longer the only source of information a student can use to make his or her enrollment decision. Students now have the option to meet with a PASS advisor. PASS advisors discuss with students whether they should consider passing on to a higher level course than what their test scores suggest.

- Chemeketa has hired an assessment advisor to speak with students before and after they take the COMPASS test to help decrease the number of students placed in developmental education. It has also developed an online workshop for placement test preparation.

- Umpqua is in the process of putting a no late admission policy into place.

STUDENT SERVICES

The Developmental Education Redesign Work Group's student services recommendations address both academic and non-academic barriers to success that students, especially developmental education students, experience. Its recommendations call for the creation of a mandatory advising process for all developmental education students delivered through professional advisors and/or faculty who have received training in the CAS professional standards or current research in advising best practice. The recommendations ask colleges to monitor student progress and address underperformance. Other recommendations call for rethinking orientation and the first year experience and providing great foundational experiences for students, including opportunities to develop financial literacy practices, and experience registration and financial aid practices that support retention and address significant and under-recognized barriers. As in the other three major recommendation areas, campuses are thinking about or making changes:

- Central Oregon has formed an advising task force that will work with a consultant to assess its current advising practices.

- Columbia George adopted a policy to provide early alerts for students who may be struggling or underperforming and implemented a program that helps students make sound financial decisions about their education.

- Clatsop faculty developed eight guided pathways – art, English, biology, history, mathematics, physics, pre-med/pre-dental/pre-physical therapy/pre-veterinary and psychology/social services – that facilitate strong advising and course selection.

- Klamath made advising mandatory and is supporting specially trained advisors for developmental education students, providing faculty staff and administrators advising training and leveraging its course management system more fully to survey students in targeted developmental courses. Klamath also redesigned the content of its training for new student orientation to better meet the needs of developmental students.

CONCLUSION

It has been a good year for the redesign of developmental education in the state of Oregon. A remarkable cross-campus collaboration changed the way we think of mathematics pathways, eliminating a significant barrier to college completion by allowing a non-STEM path for a college degree. Campuses are implementing the new pathway, accelerating movement into college-level curriculum, limiting exit points, rethinking the way we place students and how we advise them. Although data the colleges collect in the future will tell how successful these redesign efforts are, all signs point toward increased college success for Oregon's students.

The 2015-2016 academic year calls for a continued commitment to the redesign effort. Team leads will continue to meet to discuss implementation issues with their colleagues, solve problems, review implementation plans and examine data to see how redesign efforts are working. As they did this past year, campus teams and team leads will have access to third-party coaches and facilitators to help advance the work, only this coaching and facilitation will take place on individual campuses, not just in Salem. Finally, in the coming academic year, teams from all 17 campuses will begin meeting as a work group that will discuss and act

on the assessment and placement recommendations. The work group will meet first by webinar in August and September and then begin meeting in person in October. Its goal will be to find better ways to place students so that they begin in the highest level class in which they can succeed.

APPENDIX A:

MATHEMATICS

Non-STEM students must have access to mathematics experiences appropriate to their chosen career paths. Alternate mathematics pathways will reduce the number of exit points and decrease time to graduation. Therefore, the Developmental Education Redesign Work Group urges each campus and the state of Oregon to consider strongly the following recommendations:

- Create an alternate non-STEM pathway appropriate for the student population and mission of each college. These pathways would offer courses that prepare students to succeed in a college-level liberal arts mathematics course such as Math 105, Contemporary Math.

- Change the requirement to "any transferrable 100-level mathematics course that satisfies the Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer (AAOT) degree must have a prerequisite of Intermediate Algebra or a Quantitative Literacy course." Currently, for a mathematics course to satisfy the Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer (AAOT) degree, it must have a prerequisite of Intermediate Algebra, Math 095. This implies that all degree-seeking students, regardless of degree field, must complete the traditional pre-calculus course sequence before attempting a gateway mathematics course.

- Agree that Math 105 fulfills the Baccalaureate Core Requirement in Mathematics for all non-STEM four-year degrees at all Oregon public colleges.

- Convene under the leadership of OCCA mathematics faculty representatives from Oregon two-year and public four-year institutions during the fall to clarify and improve consistency in the outcomes for Math 105 and ensure that Math 105 provides appropriate and sufficient mathematics education for non-STEM students.

READING AND WRITING

Acceleration

Institutions should consider strongly the adoption of models that accelerate learning to reduce exit points and support students' entry into college courses, including career and technical courses. Students must be encouraged, advised and allowed to complete developmental education classes in one to two terms. In the accelerated model, students do in fact complete their developmental coursework in this much briefer span of time while they are simultaneously introduced to college- and/or transfer-level coursework. In all models for acceleration, college-level work must be included and contextualized in the curricula and focus on reading as meaning-making, writing as inquiry, and the development of academic literacies including information literacy.

Various models for acceleration from which institutions can choose include:

- Integrating reading and writing courses

- Combining levels of reading or writing (i.e. Reading 80 with Reading 90)

- Providing an option of a reading and writing developmental course co-requisite with a college-level course

- Enhancing the combined course or co-requisite models by creating intentional learning communities so that students experience a culture of success

Although the goal should be acceleration for the vast majority of students, campuses should continue to offer developmental sequences for students who really need them.

Leadership oversight and institutional assessment of acceleration efforts must include developmental education, transfer and CTE faculty.

Backward Design

The developmental education course of study must be constructed from college-level curriculum, an approach that begins with the desired outcomes and uses state standards to work backwards through the curriculum design process to achieve those outcomes. A key component of backward design is that developmental course work resembles what college-level courses expect students to do. A course that focuses on basic grammar and sentence structure must teach those skills within the context of doing college-level work – reading higher level text and writing complex papers, for instance.

Course design also should embed research-based student success practices that affect progression and completion, such as grit, a growth mindset and habits of mind.

To implement the backward design mandate, colleges should create structures in which conversation among all faculty members who teach reading, writing and literacy curriculum can occur. This includes reading and writing subgroup participants in the developmental education work group and representatives from developmental education reading and writing departments, college-level English departments – where they are distinct from developmental education staff – ABE/GED/ESOL departments, paired "content" areas, the Oregon University System and local high schools.

ASSESSMENT AND PLACEMENT

Statewide Common Placement Practices

To create a statewide system that uses effective placement processes and strategies that recognize students arrive at community colleges with different education backgrounds, life experiences, skills and goals, Oregon community colleges should consider strongly the creation of a set of common practices and commitments for the placement of students. These should be designed to more accurately place students and more intentionally err on the side of enrolling students into college-level courses or the accelerated and co-requisite models recommended above.

Therefore, the Developmental Education Redesign Work Group recommends that a body of community college, university, and high school representatives with appropriate expertise convene in Spring 2015 to consider recommendations to the state that promote the following shared practices among institutions:

- Using multiple measures to place students, including non-cognitive measures (for example, work schedule, child care situation, motivation, self-confidence and grit); the GED, Smarter Balanced, Advanced Placement and IB exams, Engage, high school transcripts and/or grade point average

- Using common "decision zones" for placement, with decision zones defined as a range of scores and non-cognitive measures that would indicate placement at a specific level and result in increased placement in college-level courses

- Identifying common course outcomes for similar courses in developmental education and gateway English and math courses

- Exploring how supplemental learning activities (e.g. tutoring, math labs, study groups, self-paced faculty developed activities, use of computer labs, library, student services activities) factor into placement decisions

- Assessing the effectiveness of the common placement processes and/or instruments or measures on a regular basis

Test Preparation Practices

- Colleges that administer high stakes placement examinations should strongly consider having a test/placement preparation program that meets the following standards:

  1. The program improves students' knowledge of the content, format, policies and purpose of the placement

  2. The program promotes messaging that exam preparation is appropriate

  3. The program provides study materials that include guidance on how to review for the exam

- Institutions that require placement tests should also consider mandating that students review test preparation materials before taking the test; the placement test should take place only after review of the materials is completed.

STUDENT SERVICES

The student services recommendations focus on four areas: foundational student support, advising, student orientation and the first year experience. Institutions should consider strongly each of the recommendations.

Foundational Student Support

- Develop and implement admissions, registration and financial aid practices that support successful retention and completion for all developmental education students

- Develop and implement financial literacy practices that support student success and minimize student loan debt

- Develop and implement tutoring and other supplemental instructional practices to support successful retention and completion of all developmental education students

- Develop and implement practices to address significant and under-recognized barriers to student success, including childcare, transportation and financial challenges, physical and mental health issues, the absence of adequate information and student disabilities

Advising

- Create a mandatory advising process for all developmental education students

- Deliver advising to all developmental education students through professional advisors and/or faculty who have received training in the CAS professional standards and/or current research in advising best practice

- Implement a system designed to monitor student progress on an ongoing and consistent basis, and identify and address underperformance. (e.g., early alert systems)

Orientation

- Create a mandatory orientation for all developmental education students. Mandatory orientations for developmental education students should be distinct from initial advising and include evidence-based student success strategies

- Identify learning outcomes for each student success strategy, regularly assess these outcomes and make appropriate adjustments to the orientation curriculum

First Year Experience

- Create a mandatory first year experience program and set of activities for all developmental education students that include evidence-based student success strategies to provide academic, career and social support throughout the students' first year (e.g., AVID)

ESSENTIAL SUPPORTS FOR OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Professional Development and Data Collection

Oregon higher education governing bodies should consider strongly the following recommendations:

- Provide an oversight committee that promotes ongoing research-based support in student success for all community colleges

- Provide ongoing research and professional development resources to facilitate the redesign of developmental education

- Provide for all colleges an entity dedicated to the collection, analysis and dissemination of data to inform the redesign of developmental education

Individual community colleges should consider strongly the following recommendation:

- Use whenever possible existing resources to provide professional development for the continuous improvement of the implementation of best practices in developmental education identified by the collection, analysis and evaluation of data

Oregon higher education governing bodies and individual colleges should consider jointly the following recommendations:

- Agree on common state-level metrics to measure progress and collect data to provide all parties with insight into what approaches to developmental education lead to student success

- Disaggregate this data to ensure equitable education opportunities for under-resourced, underserved, underrepresented and historically excluded student populations

- Agree on what data the parties will collect, who will collect it and how, and finally how the parties will interpret it for comparative purposes