Building Support for Developmental Education: An Executive Toolkit

Greetings,

As a leader in the Developmental Education Initiative, you possess the unique authority to spread the word about our groundbreaking work to help every American complete the college credential needed for a living-wage job and a middle-class life. Because you’re a busy executive, we’ve assembled this toolkit to make this responsibility easier. Please use these ideas and materials as you speak with colleagues, policymakers, contacts in your community, and other external audiences.

This guide explains the four important themes we’re all working to communicate. We offer them with some suggested language that we can all use in our conversations with various constituencies so that we all reinforce one another’s efforts.

The first four pages are suggestions for talking about developmental education and are not meant to be distributed beyond practitioners in the field. But we’ve also prepared a companion set of handouts for external audiences that you can distribute freely to anyone as you share these important messages. They’re posted on our website, and you’ll find them linked individually at the end of this guide. Feel free to e-mail them or to print and duplicate them as often as you like.

Sincerely,

Maggie Shelton
Senior Program Director, MDC
Talking about developmental education

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: Persuade key decisionmakers to support our improved developmental education methods to help thousands more students complete college.

- We must name the challenges that have hindered the effectiveness of conventional remedial education – and then demonstrate that we can address them through the innovations that the Developmental Education Initiative is scaling up.
- We must show how innovative, quality developmental education at community colleges benefits communities, states, and the United States economically and socially – in addition to transforming students’ lives.
- We must improve the image of and respect for programs and policies that meet the needs of underprepared students.

GENERAL ADVICE FOR TALKING ABOUT DEV ED AND DEI

Use simple, conversational language anyone can understand, avoiding proprietary jargon and acronyms. This guide models this way of speaking.

- Whenever possible, speak in terms of specific, real students and how your work is improving their lives rather than talking in a theoretical way. Tell student stories.
- Appeal to people’s American values of fairness, opportunity and hard work.
- Tailor what you say to the person you’re talking to. A legislator wants to hear about the economic benefits, while an administrator cares about graduation rates, for instance.

MAIN MESSAGES AND SUPPORTING POINTS

1 The problem: Half the new jobs created in the next 10 years will require some college education. Yet right now, students who need a developmental course are much less likely to finish college than those who don’t need one. That’s not fair.

- This issue is not confined to community colleges. Many four-year university students also require developmental (sometimes called remedial) courses — one in five freshmen at public universities and one in eight at private universities. At four-year colleges, 52 percent of students who take developmental courses finish bachelor’s degrees compared to 78 percent of students with no developmental coursework.2

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1 Remedial Education at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions in Fall 2000 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003)
2 Paul Attewell, et al.
As many as six in ten community college students need a developmental course, but fewer than half of them even finish their developmental education courses—and only a quarter of them graduate within 8.5 years, compared with 43 percent of students who never enroll in developmental education courses.1

Many community college students never advance beyond their developmental sequence: less than half complete developmental coursework in reading and less than a third do in math.2

The conventional one-size-fits-all approach to developmental education doesn’t work for many students. We can do better, and we know how to do better. It’s time to tear down the unfair barriers for these students.

Students often don’t realize they may need developmental courses—and colleges don’t always stress to high schoolers the importance of preparing for placement exams. Secondary and higher education institutions must cooperate to prepare students for college success and to align high school standards with college expectations.

For many community college students, developmental courses take too long to complete. Two-thirds of developmental students spend a year or more taking these courses, paying tuition but typically not earning college credit.3 Those with a family, those with a job, and those unemployed and in need of training can’t afford so much time or money.

Students lose interest in required developmental math and English classes because it isn’t apparent how the skills are relevant to their career or job goals.

Without adequate support services—including advising, tutoring, and career counseling—some students can become disconnected and academically adrift.

Developmental education can work for students who need it, and we’ve got the research to prove it. We’re developing an array of techniques that help students complete their certificate or degree.

Early assessments provide high school students the opportunity to take college-level placement exams in mathematics and English to determine if they need to upgrade their skills before entering college.

A variety of proven, accelerated approaches speed students toward degree completion.

New teaching methods and student-centered approaches, including active learning, project-based learning, and collaborative learning, make the material more relevant and engaging.

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2 Thomas Bailey, Challenge and Opportunity: Rethinking the Role and Function of Developmental Education in Community College, in Policies and Practices to Improve Student Preparation and Success, New Directions for Community Colleges, Spring 2009
3 Remedial Education at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions in Fall 2000
Contextualized approaches make the material more relevant to students by placing developmental education in the context of academic subjects or careers.

Learning communities, or cohort programs, bring students together for two or more courses to provide a shared learning experience and mutual support.

Modularized approaches break down course material so students can progress at their own pace.

Student supports, from tutoring and academic advising to career counseling and financial aid, deal with students’ individual needs. In addition, student success courses help students learn study skills and other habits that promote success in college—and ultimately, the workplace.

It’s just a matter of offering motivated Americans at all stages of life and from every background a fair chance at a good-paying career and a better future.

Policymakers, community college administrators, and others have the opportunity to be part of the solution.

By supporting us in this effort, you’re helping working moms, students who are the first in their families to attend college, suburban and rural high school graduates, unemployed adults and adults returning to the workforce, and 18-year-olds who worked hard to graduate from high school but see that isn’t enough for a good career.

SPECIAL MESSAGES FOR KEY AUDIENCES:

Federal policymakers (White House, members of Congress, Department of Labor)
Reinventing our approach to serving underprepared students should be a cornerstone for increasing the number of college-educated Americans, reviving the economy, and making the U.S. more globally competitive. Nearly half of job openings this year will require a college credential. We can reduce the need for expensive federal services like welfare.

State policymakers (legislators, workforce board members, university system officials)
Supporting innovations in developmental education and reducing the need for any kind of remediation will help more people in our state complete college—and do it more quickly. That’ll give us a more robust workforce, help us attract business investment, and make our state more globally competitive.

College professionals (leaders, faculty and staffers)
Long, inflexible developmental education (or remedial) sequences discourage students and contribute to the decision to drop out. We’re scaling up innovative developmental education practices to be more flexible and equip students to do college level work as quickly as possible. We also want to show students how developmental work moves them toward their long-term career goals. All of this is based on objective evidence of what works for students. These new techniques will improve our graduation rate.
A HALLWAY CONVERSATION

Here is how you might talk about DEI during the social hour of a professional conference or at a chance meeting with a legislator at a community event:

“ You know, my college is part of the Developmental Education Initiative, an $18 million national effort that the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Lumina Foundation are backing to get students up to speed for college coursework. Each college has been experimenting with different strategies, and we want to roll out the best ones to all our students and then across the nation.”

“ The two most promising things we’ve tried at my college are ____ and ____. By 20XX, we are going to be doing these things with X portion of our dev ed students.”

“ Not only are my college and all these other colleges studying the best ways to help these students, we’ve got a policy team working with state legislatures to make it easier for us to do this work.”

“ I’m glad you’re interested. Give me your card, and I’ll email you a couple of handouts that’ll tell you a little bit more about it. I’d love your support of what we’re doing.”

HANDOUTS FOR YOU TO DISTRIBUTES

Go to www.deionline.org/resources and click on “Communications” to access PDF handouts to read and share with your contacts.

Developmental Education is Good for Business and the Economy

Winning Formula: Institutional innovations + State policy strides = Students succeeding in college

Examples of Promising Interventions at DEI Colleges
Helping community colleges get more workers ready – faster – for the skilled jobs of the economic recovery

We’re at a critical moment in American economic history. Ask any business leader struggling to hire the workers they need and they’ll tell you: American companies need highly skilled workers ready to do sophisticated jobs. For workers, a high school diploma is no longer enough. Most low-skill jobs have moved overseas, probably forever. In the 21st century economy, American workers need advanced skills to earn a middle-class living.

America’s community colleges have long offered everyone the chance to earn the certificate or college degree they need to get ready for a skilled career. Yet far too many students enroll only to end up dropping out. While maintaining their commitment to broad access to education and training, community colleges are becoming far more nimble, efficient and focused on turning that access into success. We’re working with them to improve assessment of students’ capabilities when they arrive, then help students gain exactly the additional skills and knowledge they need to get qualified for the career they seek. We help colleges teach students organization, workplace skills, and professionalism alongside the practical math and communication skills they’ll need in their careers. Developmental Education Initiative colleges are scaling up these proven new methods to meet the demand for skilled workers in their communities.

TOP FIVE JOB CATEGORIES FOR WHICH U.S. EMPLOYERS CAN’T FIND ENOUGH QUALIFIED WORKERS:

1. Skilled trades
2. Sales representatives
3. Nurses
4. Technicians (primarily production/operations, engineering or maintenance)
5. Drivers

—“Supply/Demand, 2010 Talent Shortage Survey,” Manpower, Inc.

WORKERS WITH A COMMUNITY COLLEGE CREDENTIAL:

- Have the skills and knowledge companies need most.
- Are more motivated, reliable, and dependable.
- Earn higher salaries and are worth it because they’re more effective, need less on-the-job training, and stay longer in their positions than other workers.
- Become contributing members of society, supporting their families without government assistance, contributing more tax revenue, and spending more money in the local economy.
- Improve the quality of the workforce, which supercharges corporate, regional, and national competitiveness and attracts more quality employers, which helps form and build regional clusters of technology and expertise.
THE 21ST-CENTURY ECONOMY DEMANDS SKILLED WORKERS

Employers have gotten more specific about the combination of skill sets that they are looking for, not only seeking technical capabilities in a job match, but holding out for the person that possesses the additional qualities above and beyond that will help drive their organization forward. This conundrum is upsetting to the ubiquitous job seeker, who will need to take more responsibility for his/her skills development in order to find ways to remain relevant to the market.

— Jeffrey A. Joerres, Manpower Inc. Chairman and CEO

One of the most common concerns that I hear from leaders in the life sciences industry is the need for skilled workers, such as lab technicians and individuals with training in biomanufacturing … These jobs require great skill, but not a bachelor’s or more advanced degree.

—Dr. Susan Windham-Bannister, President & CEO of the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center.

Hundreds of thousands of low-skill jobs in manufacturing, farming, fishing, and forestry have been permanently destroyed because the recession has further prompted employers to either automate those positions or ship them offshore to take advantage of cheap labor. Overall, we project 637,000 jobs in the manufacturing and natural resources industries will meet such fates by 2018. … The jobs that replace them will be very different kinds of jobs, requiring very different kinds of workers—and very different kinds of preparation. … [T]he economy is demanding more and more workers with postsecondary education, and employers are willing to pay more for them.

—Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements through 2018 by Anthony P. Carnevale, Nicole Smith, and Jeff Strohl, Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

There’s too much focus on the unemployment number and not enough real strategy on where this economy needs to go. Education is a huge issue. If you’re going to stay competitive in the world, it’s got to be about education, education, education. It’s skilled people who are actually going to drive the jobs.

—Neville Isdell, former CEO and chairman of Coca-Cola, to CNBC, October 2010

Businesses need highly trained workers just as much as workers need good, family-supporting jobs.

—James Imhoff, CEO of First Weber Group and Greater Madison (Wis.) Chamber of Commerce Board Vice-Chair
Examples of Promising Interventions at DEI Colleges

ACCELERATED APPROACHES

Patrick Henry Community College in Martinsville, VA, is implementing fast-track developmental math courses, in which a student can complete two courses in one semester. In Fall 2009, 39% of developmental students enrolled in a fast-track course. Current data show that 71% of students in fast-track classes passed the specific developmental courses compared to 53% of students not in fast-track. Additionally, the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) allows some students to enroll in the developmental course and a related college-level course simultaneously with the same instructor. ALP courses are currently offered in English composition and pre-calculus, with more sections to be added in Fall 2010.

STUDENT-CENTERED APPROACHES

Valencia Community College in Orlando, FL, has narrowed achievement gaps in student performance in a number of gatekeeper courses through a student-centered approach that includes supplemental instruction, learning communities, and a student success course. The college also embeds reading skills into developmental math courses. A study by the Community College Research Center found that underprepared students in Florida who took a student success course were 5 percent more likely to complete a credential than those who did not enroll in such classes. Following implementation of the student-centered approach, the average success rate for students in gateway courses rose, and the African American student cohort narrowed the achievement gap from 13.4% in 2004 to 3.6% in 2008.

STUDENT SUPPORTS

Zane State College in Zanesville, OH, analyzes student performance data and sends early alert notifications to advisors about students with academic or attendance problems. These students are provided with access to intensive advising, personalized counseling, a professionally staffed learning center, peer and professional tutoring, and integrated support services. Of the students who placed below college level math, the percentage that subsequently passed college-level math increased from 65% to 81%.

INITIATIVE TECHNIQUES: A GLOSSARY

Here are examples of the innovative strategies we’re using to help community colleges produce larger numbers of qualified workers:

- **Modular and self-paced courses** let students get the skills they need to move to the next level in as short as a few weeks—instead of spending a full semester reviewing lots of material they already know. Students move through their education faster.

- **Learning communities** partner instructors in several disciplines with a fixed group of students, promoting mentoring and teamwork and showing how concepts from several disciplines relate to each other and to real-world situations that students will encounter on the job.
CONTEXTUALIZED APPROACHES

South Texas College’s Contextualized Curriculum Taskforce, comprised of faculty from the Developmental Reading, Developmental English, and Developmental Math Departments, has created a special contextualized lesson in each of the three levels of both Developmental English and Developmental Reading, using themes from the field of sociology. Sociology is one of the gateway courses that students may take once they have exited the developmental program. The college aims to contextualize 60% of the Developmental English and Reading curriculum over the next 3 years. In addition to the contextualization of the instruction of reading and writing skills within content areas that are reading and writing intensive, a mathematics component will be included in each contextualized lesson.

LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Norwalk Community College in Norwalk, CT, is enrolling developmental English students in learning communities that pair Basic Composition with a Student Success course. The learning communities focus on integrative learning, both through pedagogical innovation as well as in assignment design. The pairing of these courses provides an opportunity for students to apply strategies in both classes, including critical thinking. During the 2009-10 academic year, 28% of eligible students enrolled in learning communities.

At Houston Community College in Houston, TX, the same cohort of students is simultaneously enrolled in two classes taught by two collaborating instructors and linked by complementary content and teaching strategies. Most learning communities consist of a developmental education course linked with a Student Success course. Such courses have been shown to increase students’ social and academic engagement, factors demonstrated to improve college performance and persistence. Gains in persistence rates have been documented for HCC students in learning communities compared with peer students in similar non-linked courses. Especially noteworthy is the persistence rate from Fall 06 to Spring 07, where the learning community students persisted at a rate nearly 20 percent higher than the control group students (87.8 percent compared to 68.3 percent).

INITIATIVE TECHNIQUES: A GLOSSARY

■ Student success courses teach incoming students about time-management, organization, concentration, punctuality, and professionalism. This improves their learning as students and prepares them to be more professional and dependable in the workplace.

■ Partnerships with local high schools help students arrive at community college with more skills, which enables them to complete their credentials faster and enter the workforce sooner.

■ Peer-led instruction initiatives identify successful students with leadership ability and engage them in helping fellow students to improve those students’ performance.
MODULARIZED APPROACHES

El Paso Community College in El Paso, TX, is implementing a “Math Emporium” option for developmental math instruction. Though most entering students need developmental math courses, not all need the traditional 16 weeks of developmental instruction to be ready for their first college-level math course. These emporiums give students opportunities to: work only on the concepts and skills in which they are deficient, work at their own pace, complete courses, and advance to the next course in less time. Within the next three years, EPCC will offer at least 30% of its DE math courses on all five campuses using the math emporium model.

Housatonic Community College in Bridgeport, CT, is expanding its modular “Open Entry/Open Exit” (OE/OE) developmental math and English programs. These are self-paced, computer-assisted courses designed to help students move through developmental math and English at their own pace with an instructor and two tutors present to provide assistance. The OE/OE format allows students to take more time mastering skills in areas where they experience difficulty and speed through sections that are merely review for them. The format is also designed to give students the opportunity to complete course requirements in less than one semester and advance to the next higher level course within the same semester. Students who do not complete the course by the end of the semester may begin the next semester where they left off instead of having to retake the entire course.

EARLY ASSESSMENTS

Sinclair Community College in Dayton, OH, is working with area high schools to implement an Early Support program in high school classrooms. The goal is to increase the number of students who test college-ready, decrease the number of developmental course needed, and improve passage rates on the Ohio Graduation Test. The Early Support Program is providing coaching services to high school seniors who are undecided in their post-graduation plans. The college’s services include workshops on college and career exploration, goal setting and decision making, time management, and finance. Sinclair is working to introduce the college’s student success software, MyGPS, for use by high school staff and students. MyGPS helps students identify personal barriers to learning and connect with college and community resources to assist them in addressing those challenges.
Winning Formula:
Institutional innovations + State policy strides = Students succeeding in college

OVERVIEW

The Developmental Education Initiative is devoted to improving developmental (remedial) education at community colleges to increase graduation rates, propel under-prepared students toward rewarding careers, and boost states’ economies. This requires synchronized innovation in two important arenas:

1 Educators at Developmental Education Initiative community colleges are pioneering and proving better strategies that prepare students for college work quickly and efficiently.

2 State policy teams coordinated by Jobs For the Future are pushing state community college systems and legislatures to change outdated and cumbersome rules, funding, and incentive structures that stand in the way of these innovations. They’re also multiplying the impact of both types of work by spreading strategies proven at DEI colleges throughout state systems.

AWARENESS AND COORDINATION

Building on the work of Achieving the Dream, DEI is working to show policy teams and front-line innovators how closely their work relates and to draw them together in closer partnership in each state that’s part of the initiative: Collaboration will help educators prove new strategies more easily and quickly, producing evidence that policy teams can use to urge states to scale up these new approaches to dramatically improve outcomes for all students who test into developmental education. Each participating state has agreed to:

1 A data-driven improvement process to create the right conditions for institutional innovation (such as identifying appropriate success indicators, establishing a baseline, and publicly sharing progress toward improvement)

2 A state-level innovation investment strategy that provides incentives for the development, testing, and scaling up of effective models

3 Policy supports that facilitate the implementation of new models and encourage the spread of successful practices (for example, removing rigid census dates and seat-time requirements, and rewarding institutions that enable students to succeed)
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<th>STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR DEI COLLEGES</th>
<th>DEI STATE POLICY PRIORITIES</th>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrate leadership and institution-wide commitment to the success of underprepared students by developing institution-wide policies and practices that support better outcomes for those students.</td>
<td>Set goals for improved institutional outcomes, use appropriate performance indicators to measure progress, and make progress transparent to key stakeholders.</td>
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<td>Increase the number of underprepared students who quickly become ready for credit-bearing courses and revise existing developmental education curricula and/or adopt new teaching methods to address the varying learning styles of developmental education students and maximize opportunities for success, including bypassing or accelerating progress in traditional courses.</td>
<td>Redesign developmental education courses and sequences to help students avoid developmental courses if possible, have easier access to flexible delivery options, and get the academic and non-academic supports they need to move quickly toward proficiency and success in credential programs.</td>
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<td>Provide intensive and comprehensive academic and student support services for underprepared students that are implemented in an intentional manner.</td>
<td>Reduce the need for developmental education among incoming students through better alignment of expectations with K-12 systems and accurately assess college readiness, placing students who need developmental education in courses and interventions that maximize their chances of college success.</td>
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<td>Increase the impact of effective strategies by scaling them up within the institution, across multiple campuses, and throughout community college systems.</td>
<td>Remove barriers and create incentives for institutions to introduce, test, and scale up innovations that significantly improve results.</td>
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THE VIRGINIA EXAMPLE

Virginia's Community College System has what one state administrator called “a laser focus on developmental education,” according to the report “Altered State: How the Virginia Community College System Has Used Achieving The Dream to Improve College Success” by Jobs for the Future. Typical of many states, about half of all first-time Virginia community college students need at least one developmental course. Yet developmental education requirements had become an obstacle for too many students rather than a pathway to higher education. Virginia community colleges embraced their “unique mission to help under-prepared students to be successful in college work … to eliminate barriers and to create structures that support students in achieving their academic goals.”

The system established a Developmental Education Task Force as part of a strategic plan to increase the number of students earning credentials by 50% over six years. According to the task force’s 2009 report “The Turning Point,” the state is committed to reducing the need for developmental education in Virginia, helping students complete developmental requirements in one year or less, and raising the proportion of developmental students who earn an associate’s degree or transfer to a four-year college from one in four to one in three. By systematically collecting data through Achieving the Dream and DEI, “we now know things that we did not know, and those things are now policy levers,” Chancellor Glenn DuBois says. “You are going to see the [VA State Community College System] develop system-wide policy changes focusing on at-risk students.”

Data showed how important college skills instruction – such as information literacy and time management – are to keeping students enrolled. So the task force recommended that each college increase the number of students learning those skills. The systematic gathering of data helped policy advocates secure state-funded financial assistance grants for low-income community college students ready to transfer to four-year colleges.

Such success requires constant collaboration among system leaders, policy advocates, and those working with students on a state’s college campuses. The Altered State report commits system leaders to “use regular communications and convenings with college representatives to reinforce the importance of work to improve student success.”