Accelerated Learning Program Improves Remediation

BY DENNIS PIERCE
JUNE 8, 2015
Students taking developmental and gateway courses during the same semester are twice as likely to pass both courses, research shows. The Community College of Baltimore County created a model that works.

Students who take accelerated learning programs in writing and math at the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC), in Maryland, are more likely to advance to upper-level classes than are their peers who take standard remedial classes, research reveals. This success has inspired hundreds of other colleges to adopt similar programs.

Like other community colleges, CCBC serves a broad range of students, including many adults returning to school. It also draws many poor and minority students from the city of Baltimore. Nearly 80 percent of CCBC students come in with at least one remedial need, as measured by the College Board's Accuplacer exam.

“Some of our students had those skills in high school, but their skills have eroded since they graduated,” says Donna McKusick, dean for developmental education. “Others got the instruction in high school but weren’t ready to receive it. We have thousands of enrollments in developmental courses each year.”

CCBC’s approach to remedial instruction used to be typical of other schools: Students took a one-semester course that prepared them for gateway courses in English or math the following semester.

About 10 years ago, campus leaders wondered: Although they had sufficient pass rates in these developmental courses (around 60 percent), were students then passing the introductory courses that followed?

“In researching that, we discovered an alarming fact,” McKusick says. “Even though students who passed the developmental courses did very well in the gateway courses, not very many of them even took the gateway course.”

By the time they would have gotten to the gateway course, “we had already lost half those students,” she explained. “This is very typical; most community colleges lose from 30 percent to 50 percent of their freshman class from fall to spring.”

She added: “That remediation felt like it was for naught … purely because of attrition.”

**Establishing the co-requisite model**

In looking to solve this “pipeline problem,” campus officials hit upon an innovative solution: They would compress the developmental and gateway courses into a single semester.
“If we were going to lose students, at least it would be after they had completed some credits,” McKusick says.

In 2007, CCBC launched its Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) for remedial English, which came to be known as the “co-requisite model.”

Students enrolled in the program take developmental English and English 101 in the same semester. Each remedial course contains only 10 students, and they are placed in the gateway course, with the same instructor, along with 10 college-ready students. The developmental course serves to support what the students learn in English 101, while also helping to contextualize this learning.

**Replicating a remediation program that works**

Under this new model, the number of students who passed both courses has more than doubled, McKusick says, and students who take part in ALP go on to earn twice as many credits, on average, as their peers who enroll in traditional remediation courses.

The [Community College Research Center](http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu) has studied the program and has declared it “probably the most successful innovation in remedial education across the country,” McKusick says.

CCBC leaders have worked with the state community college systems in Arkansas, Indiana, Connecticut and Michigan to replicate the program. Altogether, more than 200 colleges have adopted this co-requisite model for remedial instruction.

In 2010, CCBC launched a similar program in math. “Math is tougher, because the learning is more sequential than in English,” McKusick says. But the college has had success teaching developmental pre-algebra alongside Algebra 101.

Not all of CCBC’s remediation is done this way. The co-requisite model is “such a big curricular change,” McKusick says. “It really requires massive faculty training and a whole reorientation to the philosophy of developmental education.”

CCBC leaders have developed training programs to help faculty make this shift, and the college offers consulting services to help other institutions adopt this model. More information can be found on the [ALP website](http://alp-deved.org/).

“Maybe the most exciting thing we’ve learned from this experiment is that if you expect more of students, they’ll give more,” McKusick says.
DENNIS PIERCE () is a contributor to the 21st-Century Center.
A ‘New Breed’ of Remedial Math Education
(http://www.aacc21stcenturycenter.org/article/new-breed-remedial-math-education/)
Solving the Remedial Math Problem
(http://www.aacc21stcenturycenter.org/article/solving-remedial-math-problem/)
Remedial Math Project Keeps Students Coming Back
(http://www.aacc21stcenturycenter.org/article/remedial-math-project-keeps-students-coming-back/)
Adopting a Co-Requisite Model to Improve Dev Ed
(http://www.aacc21stcenturycenter.org/article/adopting-a-co-requisite-model-to-improve-dev-ed/)

Center Discussion
Fill out the form below to log in.

Username

Password

Remember Me

Log In

Empowering Community Colleges
To Build the Nation's Future
An Implementation Guide


WHAT’S NEW

TAACCCT Round 4 Grants Awarded (http://www.dol.gov/opa/media/press/eta/ETA20141865.htm)
Advancing the Success of Boys and Men of Color in Education (http://interwork.sdsu.edu/sp/m2c3/files/2014/08/FINAL-POLICY-REPORT-9-1-14.pdf)

NAVIGATION

Topics (http://www.aacc21stcenturycenter.org/topics/)
Recommendations (http://www.aacc21stcenturycenter.org/recommendations/)
Resources (http://www.aacc21stcenturycenter.org/resources/)
Submit (http://www.aacc21stcenturycenter.org/submit/)

TOPICS

Leaders & Training (http://www.aacc21stcenturycenter.org/topics/leaders/)