# CPS Center for Postsecondary Success

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**Learning From the Ground Up:**
Developmental Education Reform at Florida College System Institutions

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# Executive Summary

Under Florida Senate Bill 1720 (SB 1720), passed in 2013, institutions in the Florida College System (FCS) were required to implement comprehensive developmental education reform no later than the fall semester of 2014. The comprehensive reform required FCS institutions to offer developmental education courses using four modalities: compressed, contextualized, modularized, and co-requisite. The legislation also exempted some students from developmental education based on high school graduation date and military status.

Researchers at the Center for Postsecondary Success (CPS) are conducting a comprehensive evaluation of how FCS institutions have implemented the reform on their campuses. The first steps in the evaluation of SB 1720 included an analysis of the institutions' implementation plans and a survey of college administrators. In the current phase of the evaluation CPS team members have conducted surveys with college administrators and students during site visits to 10 FCS institutions. In this report we present findings from our analysis of focus group interviews conducted with college administrators, advisors, and other personnel, faculty members, and students. The key findings from our site visits to FCS institutions answer the research question: *How have the Florida College System institutions implemented developmental education reform?*

Our findings identify five themes related to (1) individual and institutional responses to SB 1720, (2) new student intake and advising processes, (3) faculty and student assessment of the revised developmental education curriculum and college-level courses, (4) unforeseen challenges related to financial aid, specific student populations, and technology, and (5) faculty, advisor, and student perspectives on the influence of increased student choice on student academic outcomes.

1. ***Individual reactions and institutional responses varied and resulted in implementation efforts customized to the local context.*** For example, reactions to SB 1720 reflected a continuum of individual views from unconvinced to responsive. The rapid timetable for implementation left little time for more systematic institutional planning processes at some of the ten FCS institutions. On the other hand, many institutions in our sample were already engaged in redesigning, or had recently redesigned, their developmental education programs. Campus personnel felt these pre-legislation efforts should have been studied prior to the development of the legislation. Institutions have disparate ways of implementing the developmental education legislation such as oppositional implementation, satisficing implementation, and facilitative implementation.

2. ***Institutions created new intake processes that incorporated new student sorting and advising procedures for exempt and non-exempt student.*** Campus personnel were concerned about not requiring placement tests in order to appropriately place students in developmental or

college-level courses. Campus personnel found that reliance on high school grades, or student's assessment of their performance proved to be untrustworthy in many cases. Despite this, the use of multiple measures in advising has produced a more holistic process that has resulted in more students seeking advising appointments and more time spent with each student.

3. **Faculty redesigned developmental education, and at some institutions college-level curriculum.** Sentiments among campus personnel and students we interviewed were mostly negative towards the compressed option, mixed for the modularized option, and mostly positive for the co-requisite and contextualized options. Faculty resisted adjusting college-level courses for more academically underprepared students enrolled in gateway courses. Faculty teaching college-level courses opted to emphasize diagnostic assessment and academic support services to assist underprepared students. Institutions we visited reported an increase in the use and availability of academic support options, such as online tutoring, preparatory boot camps, and embedded tutors. At some of the 10 institutions, increased enrollments in college-level courses resulted in a shortage of qualified faculty to teach requiring faculty retooling.

4. **A number of challenges related to financial aid, concerns for certain student populations, and technology were identified.** Challenges related to financial aid centered on the timing of disbursement, students' ability to maintain "satisfactory academic progress," and the denial of financial aid to fund developmental education classes for exempt student veterans and their families. SB 1720 also presented challenges for institutions with outdated or insufficient technology and sometimes necessitated complex workarounds by IT staff. The digital divide among students oftentimes presented challenges for nontraditional and economically disadvantaged students, especially those enrolled in modularized instruction.

5. **The new modalities and optional developmental education courses led to greater student choice, while influence on outcomes remains unclear.** Campus personnel have been divided or skeptical at best about the impact of increased student choice on student success. Faculty at the FCS institutions we visited expressed both optimism and pessimism about students opting out of developmental education and the potential consequences for college-level courses. With the increased emphasis on student choice under SB 1720, many administrators, faculty, advisors, and academic support staff in our sample questioned whether developmental education students were making well-informed educational decisions.

# Introduction

Under Florida Senate Bill 1720 (SB 1720), passed in 2013, institutions in the Florida College System (FCS) were required to implement comprehensive developmental education reform no later than the fall semester of 2014. The comprehensive reform required FCS institutions to offer developmental education courses using four modalities: compressed, contextualized, modularized, and co-requisite. The legislation also exempted some students from developmental education based on high school graduation date and military status.

Researchers at the Center for Postsecondary Success (CPS) are conducting a comprehensive evaluation of how FCS institutions have implemented the reform on their campuses. The first steps in the evaluation of SB 1720 included an analysis of the institutions' implementation plans and a survey of college administrators. In the current phase of the evaluation CPS team members have conducted surveys with college administrators and students, and site visits to 10 FCS institutions. In this report we present findings from our analysis of focus group interviews conducted with college administrators, advisors, and other personnel, faculty members, and students. The key findings from our site visits to FCS institutions answer the research question: *How have the Florida College System institutions implemented developmental education reform?*

The report is organized into six sections. In section one, we present the research design used to collect and analyze the data followed by key findings on developmental education reform in Florida. Next, in section two we present the individual and institutional responses to SB 1720. In section three, we provide an overview of new student intake and advising processes. In section four, we present findings related to faculty and student assessment of the revised developmental education curriculum, and present implications of the new curriculum for college-level course. In section five, we identify a number of unforeseen challenges related to financial aid; specific student populations, including English language learners, economically disadvantaged students, and veterans and their families; and technology. Last, in section six we present faculty, advisor, and student perspectives on the influence of increased student choice on student academic outcomes.

# Section One: Research Design

## DATA COLLECTION

Email invitations were sent to all FCS institutions requesting participation in the site visit component of the larger study on developmental education implementation and evaluation in Florida College System (FCS) institutions. Ten institutions accepted our invitation, and two-day site visits to the institutions were completed in fall 2014 and early spring 2015. Each institution assisted CPS researchers with setting up logistics of the visit, including soliciting potential focus group participants, as well as securing on-campus space for the focus group sessions. Data sources included field observations, institutional documents collected prior to and during site visits, and transcripts from focus groups with relevant stakeholders at the institutions.

**Field Observations.** At least two CPS researchers visited each institution. CPS researchers generated field notes for each site visit, identifying salient, interesting, or illuminating observations from each visit.

**Institutional Documents.** In phase one of the project, CPS researchers collected and analyzed Implementation Plans from all 28 FCS institutions. The plans from the 10 FCS institutions visited were re-analyzed and used to support the development of the focus group interview protocol and the coding framework used for data analysis.

**Focus Groups.** We conducted 87 semi-structured focus groups lasting between 20 and 111 minutes. Focus groups on average involved between 5-10 individuals. In total we spoke with 78 administrators, 140 faculty members, 71 academic advisors, 25 support staff members, and 204 students, resulting in data from 518 focus group participants. The interview protocol was designed to identify the considerations underlying institutions' choices for the new placement, advising, and developmental education options. All interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants.

## DATA ANALYSIS

A digital recording of each focus group was used to generate a verbatim transcript. Transcripts were then imported into qualitative data analysis software, NVivo 10, for coding and analysis. To establish dependability, multiple analysts coded the data.

We used pattern coding of the focus group transcripts to identify central ideas and properties in the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). We employed a three-phase approach to guide data coding and analysis. In the first phase, we read through the field notes, institutional documents, and focus group data to synopsize the chronology of policy implementation processes at each institution. During the initial phase of open coding a coding framework was developed that included 157 codes. The codes included broad codes like legislation and more detailed codes like positive responses to legislation.

Coding in phase two involved a subset of eight data files across participant types. During this process the coding team of five researchers engaged in a reliability-building process. Each researcher coded the eight files individually. We then ran the Kappa coefficient function in NVivo 10, and met as a team to discuss and compare the coded text.

The framework developed in open coding was used to identify additional emergent themes not captured under existing codes. This process resulted in the identification of 54 additional codes.

After we achieved inter-coder reliability, in phase three, members of the team used the revised framework to code the remaining files, and to re-code and analyze the data coded in the second phase. The entire coding team met weekly to share findings and discuss emergent themes.

Researchers wrote analytic memos throughout the coding and analysis process. Memos are written records that describe the products of the analyses of the components/themes that emerged (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Memoing in this project was used to identify salient, interesting, illuminating, or important themes in the data.

Trustworthiness was established through analyst triangulation, data source triangulation (field notes, institutional documents, and focus groups), and peer debriefing with three researchers who acted as "devil's advocates" in questioning the group's interpretations (Patton, 2002). Member-checking was conducted with administrators from the institutions we visited.

# Section Two: Individual and Institutional Responses To SB 1720

In this section, we highlight findings related to individual reactions and institutional responses to the legislation. First, we present the individual campus personnel's reactions to the legislation. We then turn to institutional responses to SB 1720, including an overview of the planning processes developed to guide implementation. Last, we present responses from institutions regarding pre-legislation activities related to developmental education reform.

## MULTIPLE REACTIONS TO THE LEGISLATION

Individual reactions to SB 1720 reflected a continuum of views from perceptions of the legislation as a "terrible idea" to an understanding of legislator's reasoning for the new policy. Terms like *shocked, scared, dismayed, disbelief*, and *panic* were used consistently to describe administrators' and faculty members' initial reactions to news of the legislation's passage. Participants described emotional reactions, including anger at legislators, sadness for students who might not be successful, and tears for adjunct faculty who might lose their jobs.

Some participants described the legislation as "upsetting," and "deemed to fail." A faculty member concerned about the consequences for faculty stated, "They [the legislature] are pretty much asking

us to do the impossible, which is teach people information that they don't have the prerequisite knowledge for." The uncertainty about the legislation seemed grounded in campus personnel's on-the-ground view of students' varying levels of academic preparedness for college-level coursework, for which developmental education is often meant to serve as an equalizer. One faculty member admitted:

> My initial reaction was shock and horror mostly. I couldn't believe anybody could look at the level of academic achievement coming out of the high schools and think these people are ready for college. That's a ridiculous assumption to even start with. So, getting rid of developmental-- this whole year to really guide students through the expectations of college life, the behavior expectations, the academic expectations, those two semesters that they would have had probably with the math they needed and English they needed to get them to a level that they were ready for [ENC] 1101, I think that was an extremely valuable experience that we have robbed students of, and we don't give them the option anymore.

Some faculty and staff members took issue with the lack of consultation from faculty, or higher education administrators, those on the "front line." One faculty member commented:

> …when the legislature did this, they did not consult with people who were right here in the trenches, you know. They just sit in their offices and made some decisions and said, okay, and it just makes you wonder, is it because of maybe finances and student financial aid. Was it a monetary decision, because it doesn't seem like it was an educational decision.

Another faculty member shared similar sentiments, noting the lack of consultation even with FCS institution presidents.

> The sponsor of that bill didn't go to the committee of the Florida College System presidents and say, what's going on, and what can we do for you, what do you need? He just imposed this. There was-- it's an absurd way to do things, is to not start with the grassroots and say, what is happening at your institutions and how can we address that?

Similarly, another faculty member described the legislation as "a setup for failure" for students, and by extension the institution. She commented, "When I heard what was happening, and there was no one from education being consulted, that this was literally a legislative decision made in the vacuum seemingly to me, I thought this is a set-up for failure."

In contrast, other participants expressed excitement and optimism at the possible benefits to students, noting the course "variety" and "increase in student options." Other administrators and faculty described their initial reaction using terms like *excited, positive,* and *apprehensive but hopeful*. One faculty member recounted her initial reaction saying:

> …sometimes to revise a system you have to throw a bomb in and see how everything settles, and let the dust settle. I think for some time education has needed reforming, like our healthcare system. And, sometimes you are not going to have everybody on the same page.

An administrator expressed optimism:

> I think that [shorter time to degree] is one of the very positive aspects of the legislation. Students who are motivated and diligent, hard-working, they can move at a faster clip and get to credit bearing classes. I think in the long-run that helps with the length of time to degree. Could cut that down substantially, if many take advantage of that.

Many of these administrators and faculty members shared attitudes of "wait and see" about the long-term effects of the legislation. Connecting all responses to the legislation was an underlying commitment to student success. There was a shared understanding among faculty and administrators that "dev. ed. was broken," however, many in our sample remained unconvinced that SB 1720 was indeed the solution. One administrator remarked, "We were already doing a lot of reform…We all recognized that there were problems with dev ed." One learning support staff member explained:

> We understood the reasoning. The reasoning was that the State of Florida was spending so much money on preparatory courses, and the link between those students who took preparatory courses and actually successful graduation, there was a very minimal level of successful graduation for the long-term. So, it was understandable that the legislature would look at that, and say, we are not getting much bang for our buck. I understood a lot of the reasoning behind it, though it was very difficult for us because, obviously, we want all students to have an opportunity. We want all students to be successful. And, we just felt that-- a lot of us felt that this perhaps wasn't the best route for those students to be successful.

An administrator admitted:

> So we knew that we needed to do something different, which is why all of this redesign work was underway even before the legislation came down because everybody looked at that data and said this is not acceptable. So there was a cost. I mean, there was a – kids were getting stuck in dev ed and they weren't getting out and so, you know, the idea of thinking about instructing them differently or changing the way we teach them, or moving to a modular format as opposed to you start at the same place when you come back next semester that you started this semester. The faculty and the leadership team had already decided that that was something that needed to be done. I think we thought at the time we were gonna be able to do it gradually.

An administrator echoed the idea of gradual change to the developmental education system. Equally important was the idea of the legislation being supported by research.

> I would add to that that the bill came down without the benefit of support of research. It was like, do this, do this, do this. As faculty and administrators, our primary concern is student success, so we are thinking about our developmental students who struggle to get through particularly math in 16 weeks, and all of a sudden we have got to do it shorter, faster-- push them through. Our concern, I think I can speak for everybody at this table, we are passionately committed to success for students who otherwise would not have a college education. We are that door. And, we are afraid, and I hope to God we are proved wrong, but I think we are very concerned that we are shutting that door because these

folks won't be able to do those kind-- make those kinds of gains in a short time period…. We have done some research since, and we were finding out some strategies, but one of the strategies is to do this very deliberately. Don't rush it…. So we are working towards making this work, but to have to do it that quickly, was just really-- we are doing the best we can do, but we are really concerned about our students passing. It will be interesting to see what happens this month when grades come through.

Many faculty and staff members in our sample also expressed the belief that legislators and those who crafted the legislation did not fully comprehend its likely impact. One administrator described the legislation as being similar to "training on live animals," in the sense that the effects of the legislation were unknown at the time of implementation. One faculty member supported the legislation, but had misgivings about the consequences for students, commenting, "There is a rationale for it [the legislation], but …the problem stays on the students not knowing things, but that's the wrong issue." An administrator echoed those sentiments, while acknowledging the unknown for students. "This may force us on the back end to have a new day of looking at developmental ed, and doing what's right, but what a traumatic way to get there on the backs of the current student body."

Students appeared to have a low level of awareness of the SB 1720 legislation. When students were asked about the legislation in focus groups, they typically replied that they were unaware of SB 1720, but did understand that they were not required to take developmental education courses. One

student mentioned the legislation, "I didn't have to because they passed like a new law, or something last year. That I didn't have to take it [developmental education]."

## PLANNING PROCESSES FOR A RAPID IMPLEMENTATION TIMETABLE

Despite conflicting views of the legislation, Florida College System institutions were required to implement the required change as indicated in the statute. In the face of the "overwhelming" nature of the timetable for implementation and the details of the legislation, many administrators at FCS institutions in our sample quickly moved into action mode and organized administrative structures to craft the institution's response. Financial and human resources had to be shifted to the implementation effort from other institutional priorities. Administrators at several institutions described significant uncompensated overtime generated by campus personnel.

Institutional planning processes involved developing an implementation team, task force, or ad-hoc committee to systematically address provisions of the law. All FCS institutions in our sample included faculty members, higher-level academic and student affairs administrators, and advising personnel on their planning teams. After discussing the broad sweep of the legislation, some institutions added personnel from financial aid, information technology, institutional research, and academic support to their planning teams. In the case of institutions with several campuses, the requisite personnel from each campus was represented on the implementation teams.

One administrator characterized the comprehensiveness and sense of urgency around the planning process at her institution:

> I knew immediately we needed to sound the alarm across campus, because there would be a group of students who would go directly into gateway, with weak skills. So we decided to form a task force, and that included everyone. Not just academic divisions, but areas such as Enrollment Services, and Advising, and Learning Commons. We included everybody. And, so our goal in doing that was to get each division to think about what are some strategies that we can put in place for students who might come to us academically underprepared.

The institutional implementation teams then facilitated the complex task of carrying out the legislation campus-wide. This work typically involved trainings with a variety of campus personnel including advisors, enrollment services, faculty, and academic support staff to understand the provisions of SB 1720 and to effectively address those provisions through revised institutional practices. Training for advisors included a comprehensive overview of the legislation and explanation of the new development education course options and sequencing. Campus personnel at one institution described a 20-page document created by a faculty member that provided useful clarification on the legislation for other faculty, administrators, advisors, and support staff.

Among many other functions, planning included writing new curricula, re-programming computer interfaces, and revising processes for admissions, new student orientation, academic advising, and data reporting. A faculty member described how

new curricula were written in work groups at the departmental level after the institution-wide ad-hoc committee (or implementation team) tasked the faculty with writing new developmental education coursework:

> So, from those conversations, the ad-hoc committee was formed at the institutional level…. And then from there we came to the department and there were several small work groups that were formed, and in those small work groups those of us who teach these developmental courses and ENC 1101 courses were invited to participate, and in what options we were going to offer students. We looked at the variety of options that were offered by the state and came up with the two that we really wanted, the modularized and compressed format, and from there we just got to work on-- got together on compressing our courses, and if this is the direction that we needed to go in, to help them [students]. We brought in McGraw Hill adaptive learning technology to help remediate the skills of those students who were in ENC 1101, and had opted out of developmental, or were exempt. And, we incorporated the same technology in the developmental course, so that students are kind of being followed by the same technology program from developmental through 1101.

Our evidence suggests that the rapid implementation timetable left little time for more strategic planning processes. We found that institutional culture drove the institution's approach to implementing the required changes. Academic administrators reported that the compressed implementation timeline was disruptive to normal organizational processes. In addition to writing new curricula,

college-level course sections often had to be added due to exempt students now enrolling in gateway courses, and adjunct staffing levels had to be adjusted accordingly. One administrator remarked, "We were planning, researching and enrollments were already happening." Two faculty members described the meetings in which administrators explained how the legislation would be implemented:

> *Faculty member 1:* During these summer sessions that were kind of called very quickly together, they said, all right, now we have to start, and I guess the few people who were available during the summer were pulled together and there was administrative involvement there, and there was a certain amount of guidance and we were made aware of our limitations. That's really what--- how I saw it. We were told that these are the rules, these are the new-- basically our directives; here is what you can't do.

> *Faculty member 2:* They basically told us, they said, here is what we are going to do, now do it.

## PRE-LEGISLATION REDESIGN EFFORTS

Some institutions, however, were already engaged in redesigning, or had recently redesigned, their developmental education programs. Many of the 10 institutions had received external awards from foundations or other sources to redesign their developmental education curriculum. Campus personnel expressed frustration at the lack of consideration for their redesign efforts at improving developmental education student success. In the same way many faculty and administrators in our sample identified the lack of research conducted prior to the legislation passing. Participants argued that these pre-legislation efforts should have been studied

and considered prior to the development of the legislation. A faculty member suggested:

> I feel they put two things together. You're not making the numbers so we're getting rid of dev ed but then you have to have a plan. I think there should have been a step in between if you're not making the numbers, enforce a plan. I know that they had talked about it for the past 10 years and people weren't doing, but enforce what a plan is and then decide now that you have a plan are the dev ed students passing or not. Because they were taking data, I mean we weren't the only school across the state that was implementing, so our data really started 2011; you weren't using that 2011-2012 data to make a decision. So we were having improvement and we have the numbers showing that those students were retaining. I think it was they didn't logically plan it out.

Prior to SB 1720, representatives from FCS institutions were included in discussions about how to modify developmental education across the state. One administrator recalled the task force and their work prior to the legislation.

> I know I was disappointed at the timing of the legislation, too. Because I felt like we had some really good synergy already going on. There were projects going on around the state about trying to do some supplemental stuff and some of the other kind of strategies that were put into legislation we were already kind of modeling and working on, and I kind of felt like nobody looked at all of the good work that was already going on. It felt like just kind of push everything off the table and start over; where had somebody really talked to the people who were implementing

things, they probably would have seen that within a year or two we might have been closer to where it was anyway, maybe a little less painfully.

Administrators spoke of the Connections Conference sponsored by the Division of Florida Colleges and the focus on developmental education consistently at this state-wide meeting. An administrator lamented:

That brings me back to some of my disappointment earlier. We have been doing that Connections Conference. This is the 10th year. And, that's always been the focus of that Connections Conference. It turned its focus exclusively to helping us deal with this legislation that particular spring, but there was no recognition. All of this showcase of work, in resolving and revamping developmental had been going on for eight years at that point. Really good concentrated work.

An English faculty member recounted a similar experience in her area and spoke to the redesign effort completed years prior to the legislation.

So we were four years ahead in one part and a year ahead in the other. And I remember going to the meetings, Reading was just starting because we were talking about our redesign model of the year before Reading and English was thinking and piloting different redesign models at the campuses.

Developmental education redesign efforts underway at institutions had to be modified or in some cases abandoned to comply with the legislation. One institution's faculty member also spoke of their redesign efforts that had to be abandoned once the legislation passed. She explained:

Well, and we redesigned – specifically the Gates grant, we redesigned specifically for first-time-in-college students. That was our target group. So all of our work went out the window because we had all kinds of support for them, boot camps, and testing, to make sure that when they came in, they were successful, and then the state said, "Oh, never mind. You don't need any of that." It was like, "We just spent four years doing this."

In a few instances, institutions had received external funding to support developmental education redesign efforts before the legislation was passed. Faculty at one institution referred to external funding received that prompted math developmental education course redesign that was completed and then piloted in 2009-2010. One faculty member explained:

And I think math had a little bit of a unique situation in a way that we had already – it was actually we had applied for a Gates grant I don't know how many years ago. And we didn't get it but we decided to do a redesign for our math classes, more heavily in developmental Math, which was already eight weeks compressed and active learning. We piloted that in 2009-2010, so we actually already had a working model that was expanding before we ever knew about the changes…So for us, we actually already had a working model so we didn't have to scramble as much.

Another faculty member agreed and noted:

On the math side, we were ahead because our classes were implanted but at least the other disciplines were discussing the idea of it. So when

it passed I think we were ahead. And I actually went to a meeting for one of the publishers but it had nothing to do with that but this bill came up. And it was only about three colleges from an entire state that actually were ready to go when the bill passed. Like they were scrambling like what are we even going to do with this plan where I felt that we were very comfortable that when the task force decided what we were going to do I think we were already like well, we already started talking about this stuff. So it wasn't like it was thrown on any of the faculty members.

Math faculty at another institution also spoke of a $2.9 million Title III grant they received to redesign math courses.

So, we were on that path to the redesign with the modular no matter what because that's what we were going to do with our Title III grant, if it was funded. We were going to do the modular no matter whether the Senate Bill went through or not. So we were on that pathway, but I think that gave us other opportunities for other delivery methods, because they said you had to give students more than one option of those four strategies, and that's when [Name] spoke up and said she would like to do some research in the contextual approach.

**Other Prior Redesign Efforts.** Faculty at another FCS institution identified other initiatives they were engaged in prior to the legislation focused on developmental education:

…we have all been so involved in like Achieving the Dream, and Developmental Education Initiative (DEI), and Statway, and all of these other initiatives to help our developmental students,

and to make some innovative changes to the curriculum, because we all felt like it needed some work, so I think on one hand we were initially-- I was initially kind of excited, like, okay, maybe, yeah, this will kind of jump start some change.

A student support services staff member identified the work previously completed on their intake process, and how this work supported the changes required by the developmental education legislation.

I would say prior to Senate Bill 1720 some of the work that we were doing, that dovetailed nicely into passing of that legislation, was our focus on redesigning the new student experience, and that became the focus of our quality enhancement plan.

Similarly, planning for implementation of SB1720 aligned well with the development of one institution's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). Administrators and faculty chose to focus the QEP on improving student success of MAT1033, the College Algebra course. At the institution, successful completion of MAT1033 was found to be an indicator of future academic success. As a result many of the planned improvements nicely complimented the adjustments required by the legislation. One academic support member explained:

I think the great thing about this whole discussion is, what we do our QEP on, because we are devoting so many resources to our QEP, and then the dev ed changes have come in at that same time. We have gone out and put together all of these resources that help both situations, and getting faculty to understand their roles in this whole process is a lot easier because we have had so much buy-in with QEP.

**Influence of Prior Redesign on Implementation Response.** We found that FCS institutions that had initiated redesign efforts prior to the legislation appeared to be better positioned to respond to the legislation, as compared with institutions not undertaking developmental education revisions. In the end, for institutions that had begun to discuss developmental education redesign, the legislation provided more accountability to increase their efforts. One faculty member said:

> So some of the language of the bill at the end of the day were best practices that we already beginning to discuss here at the college, as far as modernization, accelerated contextualized courses. These were things that were already on the table. I think what the bill did was kind of put the fire beneath us, and it kind of got the ball rolling a little quicker.

A faculty member also acknowledged their prior efforts and the role this played in their quick response to the legislation.

> I thought that [institution] was really being innovative and progressive in how they were addressing it, but I thought regardless of what it is you choose to do-- because they got ahead of things. We had courses that we were delivering and in place before, as pilots, almost an entire year before it was necessary for us to actually have to be accountable for doing so.

An administrator noted:

> Yeah, and it sort of – so we said let's try it, learn – let's try learning from doing, measure it, see what's working, what's not working, what's consistent with everything that we've been

doing for this couple of years during this massive redesign of academic and student services. So this – the way we planned it, the way we implemented was consistent with a structure and a process that we already had in place anyway, and in fact, I think the reason we were able to do it so quickly and do it so well and, in many cases, do it so much faster than other people was because we were already well underway with all of the other work we were doing and this was, in many ways, a logical extension of what we were already working on.

## VARYING IMPLEMENTATION PATTERNS

Some institutions were slow to respond while others took note of the momentum of SB 1720 and proactively began to develop processes to prepare for the new mandates. Three patterns emerged from our data related to how individuals within the FCS institutions implemented the legislative changes. Those patterns included oppositional implementation, satisficing implementation, and facilitative implementation. Oppositional implementation involves implementing a policy through actions or intentional inaction that defy, oppose, or sidestep the provisions of the policy. Satisficing implementation involves implementing a policy through actions that satisfy the minimum requirements of the policy. Facilitative implementation involves implementing a policy through actions that exert maximum effort to find novel solutions to problems presented by the policy.

As an example of oppositional implementation, an administrator described waiting to take action on the legislation until absolutely required by law, indicating

that they felt the law might be potentially harmful to students. Therefore the institution wanted to avoid a spring implementation (even though they were encouraged to implement in the spring) and instead waited to implement until the fall, thus allowing some spring admitted student to avoid being impacted by the legislation.

Our next example illustrates the satisficing pattern, in which campus personnel satisfy the minimum requirements to implement the legislation. A faculty member explained that budgets were not reallocated to hire more academic support staff to work in the learning lab due to increased demand, and as a result, existing staff experienced increased workloads:

> And, unfortunately, they are averaging 500 students a day [in the lab], and they have two full-time people, one for writing, one for reading, but you can only process so many writing students a day. And, we have the people [students] who aren't doing well in comp who were placed there because they're exempt. The people who work there are exhausted right now. And, we don't have enough people because we can't get the budget for it. We need more people in that lab. I'm concerned about the physical condition of a couple of people who are just so over-burdened.

The most common implementation pattern among our focus group participants was facilitative implementation. An administrator described how faculty had been reassigned to the academic support labs to ensure adequate staffing:

> And, actually, we did reassign some of our faculty to work in the Learning Commons. We don't have actual money to buy new help in the Learning Commons, but we gave them, because we were going to have lower loads, we gave them time in the Learning Commons as part of their load, so they have become tutors in addition to becoming instructors.

Our findings suggest that the culture of service and commitment to students in the FCS far outweighed any negative attitudes campus personnel felt towards SB 1720. Another rationale for adopting a facilitative pattern of implementation was the desire to overturn the legislation. The objective in these instances was to prove to policy makers that the legislation was unworkable even with the most vigorous implementation efforts. An important finding, then, is that when policies are unpopular with those who must implement them, the commitment to their clients, students in this case, can function as a counterbalance to oppositional behavior.

# Section Three: New Student Intake and Advising Processes

In this section, we present findings about the student sorting and intake procedures the 10 FCS institutions employed to admit, orient, and advise students of their educational choices. First, we discuss the student sorting procedures and identify promising practices related to student intake from some institutions. Next, we present findings related to the cumulative effects of the changes to the advising process and examine promising practices related to advising.

## COMPLICATED STUDENT SORTING PROCEDURES

FCS institutions had to modify and in some cases create entirely new intake processes to comply with SB 1720. Universally, institutions modified their application forms to include questions that would assist admissions staff in initially identifying students as exempt or non-exempt. These questions typically covered high school graduation date, high school academic courses and grades, and military service. An administrator said:

> Once you [students] do that, the application is processed. When it's processed that's when we determine if a student is within the bill or not like she said. Then there's buckets, so we will look up the application and to determine by the questions that we have on the application that reflect the senate bill then they are put into the two different buckets. Once they are put into those two different buckets, within which within our screens it will tell us whether they are 1720 or not those are the triggers that actually allow them to go right into a Blackboard course, which is online.

In addition to the application form, all 10 institutions used high school transcripts and test score data from the SAT, ACT and Postsecondary Education Readiness Test (PERT) to support advisor recommendations for orientation and course placement. When transcripts or scores were not available, advisors at most of the 10 institutions strongly encouraged students to take placement tests to ensure accurate course placement.

As students became aware of the mandate regarding testing and the criteria for exempt and non-exempt status, many in our sample refused testing and opted into the exempt status. An advisor lamented:

> By and large they [students] choose not to take the placement test. But there is a lot of variability in there. The fresh out of high school ones, they are like, no, I was good in high school. They are not choosing to do it. The returning students are more aware of the fact that, I don't want to jump into college algebra. Let's get that placement level. We also have a very large active duty population. For the most part they do not take the placement test either.

Institutions developed innovative ways to work around the mandate. Many of the 10 institutions provided students with informal ways to assess their college ready status without violating the statute. One college offered a novel kind of informal testing to students before the actual intake process began. The college also provided links for students to remediate weak areas before they came in to do placement

testing. An advisor at another institution described their plan:

> We actually take the time and do self-assessment questions for students to use. We have a registration guide that's a handout in addition. They get a registration guide, and this has all kinds of information, screen shots, to help them with getting ready for the first day of classes. But inside of that we have, this is repeating, and we refer to them, turn to this page while we are talking on the screen, and we talk about placement testing. Then we actually take the time and stop, and have them, and in a very positive way say, we want you to try this assessment and see what you can do….So, they have more awareness, and then they can make that decision on their own. So we started that this last fall, and we heard from testing that there was an overwhelming increase in the number from the last year, when we weren't doing this.

All of the institutions in our sample devised methods of informing students about their exempt or non-exempt status, though not necessarily the legislation. Some students received the information before orientation, while others were notified during orientation. Orientation was mandatory for students at most institutions. Many of the ten institutions offered both online and face-to-face versions for students' convenience.

Several institutions also modified the way they offered orientation. Some institutions customized orientation by exempt or non-exempt status while others focused on career outcomes. An administrator spoke about the new process:

The newest iteration [of orientation] that we've been working on has really focused much more towards career. So we're spending, I think its three hours in the orientation process… We're spending that now doing what we call Focus 2, which is kind of a career inventory and then looking at some of those results and working with the students to make sure they're right, in the right pathway. That's actually one of our five areas. We've begun to color code students depending on if they were in a true degree plan. If they knew what they wanted to do, if those things aligned and that they had some propensity to be successful in whatever that career is. So we've kind of laid that out but we've really made the new student orientation that, kind of that front end alignment to that process to get students on the right track, on the right path.

Most institutions created a form that students signed to attest that they had been made aware of their exempt or non-exempt status and had made a choice to opt in or out. An administrator reported:

> [A]nd all students based on whether they are exempt or nonexempt, there is a point at which when they actually go online, they pull up the exempt non-exempt contract-- the students who are exempt obviously get the exempt contract and they fill in-- they sign their contract. They have to read it and sign it. The students who are exempt, it clearly states that it is in their best academic interest, and the interest of your college success, to follow your advisors' recommendations and then they have to sign that they understand that, and further they have

to sign that they understand that they are responsible for the academic decisions that they make, and the registration decisions that they make.

Almost all institutions in our sample developed an individualized information sheet, some called them spreadsheets, for students detailing course recommendations and meta-major choices. Career pathways were included in these individualized forms. An advisor spoke about the form used at that institution's orientation:

Well, in orientation…we have a PowerPoint that was designed college-wide in which we basically present the information to our students…when they come in we try to check on their pathways so that we can know what pathway they're going into so that we can make sure that the [name of form] we created the day before is matching the current pathway that they're going to be having now. Sometimes they're undecided. Sometimes they have a pathway. And once we do orientation and we go through the presentation, then from there they get registered and they get a copy of their schedule, and we follow up with them again in the fall semester.

## PROMISING PRACTICES RELATED TO STUDENT SORTING AND INTAKE

Despite the challenges presented by the legislation, each FCS institution in our sample adopted student intake practices that focus groups participants believe function well in their local institutional context. From our discussions with focus group participants, we identified a number of promising practices related to student intake. These practices represent intentional

responses by campus personnel to address the needs expressed by students.

**Interactive Online Admissions Document.** Campus personnel at one institution initiated a program to support students prior to enrollment. An administrator explained:

We created an interactive document that is on-line for students who are applying to the school, …-- so we are trying to give them a way, before they even get into the system, and it's-- actually what it is it's basically the end of course exam, with some other stuff added into it, so we make sure we cover all the topics. It's interactive, so they can do it, they can check their answer, if they get it wrong then we have links to like Khan Academy, and a bunch of other stuff, so they can diagnose themselves and remediate before they come. That's one thing we did. For free. It's on our website, and it has a lot of resources connected to it. It's a really cool document. I don't know how-- we don't track it anyway, so I don't know. But, it's put out there pretty well, so students know that it's available. We probably should do more to market it.

**Summer Rise Academy.** One institution targeted students long before they engaged in the formal intake process in a new program they called Summer Rise Academy. A faculty member outlined the program:

This past summer, for the first time, we operated a three week summer math academy for rising juniors and seniors from the two high schools in [name of county] who were not college ready in

math [as defined] by PERT, by PSAT, by ACT. In addition, we also maybe looked at some other factors; if they are AVID eligible, just to make sure we got a significant pool to choose from. Went through a process of going out and recruiting these students to join the academy. We ended up with 42 initially, who came out for three weeks. They met Monday through Thursday, nine until two. What we did with these students is we used Pearson product Foundations course that's very adaptive, so it's a whole course diagnostic to determine where their deficiencies were. We created modules that were topic specific-- whole numbers, integers, fractions-- and we gave them a whole course diagnostic, and based on that it determined where their deficiencies were, and which modules they needed to work in. Students worked on math skills in [name of institution's] emporium style labs, were exposed to college culture through trips to the [name of campus], and heard from guest speakers including a retired judge. Campus officials deemed the program a success, "We ended with 37 students who took the PERT on the last day, because that's how we determined whether they were successful. We had pre-test scores for most, and then we did the post-test. Twenty of those students placed college ready. These were rising juniors and seniors. So the rising juniors can come back one more time after this school year if they still aren't college ready. They can come back.

**Freshman Freebies.** The college covers the costs of a three-credit course for students graduating with a standard high school diploma from public schools in nearby counties. These seniors can enroll in one free class at the in-state tuition rate. Students must enroll

in classes by early summer to qualify. An advisor described the program:

> We had this great idea because everyone was struggling with enrollment, midsummer to offer a free class to every graduating high school senior from the public school system, one free class, in-state tuition rate. The only catch was they had to have all of their application processes, including assessment and orientation, everything done by [date]. …And I think the number college-wide was like 2300, am I remembering that right?...I think that…successfully spread our traffic out, so that at least we didn't feel that horrible gush volume, extended wait time, we didn't see that. But it's not because it wasn't there. It's just that we were really smart about managing it.

**Diagnostic Assessments during Orientation.** Since testing was no longer mandatory under SB 1720, college staff hoped to give students an alternative means of assessing college course readiness. To this end, faculty at one institution designed a segment of student orientation in which students took an informal diagnostic presented in a PowerPoint slideshow. Two institutions collaborated to introduce a similar segment for their new student orientation.

When it comes to "selling" developmental education to reluctant students, advisors at four institutions relied on short diagnostic quizzes, which are often administered during orientation. One advisor said, "I really love that little tool that our department has put together, just five math problems that I show them." This quiz is meant "to show the students [that] if you can't do these three problems in your head, you probably are not ready for intermediate algebra."

In short, it is a "reality check." Another advisor explained, "I very nicely try to scare them with some of the material just to let them know what they're getting themselves into."

**Orientations for Specific Populations.** One institution changed the structure of the new student orientation to meet the specific needs of diverse student populations. An advisor at this institution discussed the changes:

> Part of the orientation piece is that specific groups have been broken off. [Name] and [Name] developed the veteran's orientation pieces… so that the people that are not veterans, they don't have to listen to the same thing for that hour and 45 minutes. It's a separate piece. Allied health has a separate piece, and nursing has a separate piece so by implementing all of those, the length that the general population is sitting in that orientation is slowly going down and when we have to institute new state things, it goes back up again of course. If you're in one of the limited access, at this point you would go through academic orientation… and the limited access health people would be scheduled for that particular orientation they would stay with the workforce advisor for more specific information.

## MULTIPLE MEASURES FOR ADVISING

Administrators, faculty, and advisors were universally concerned about not requiring placement tests and other assessments in order to appropriately place students in developmental or college-level courses; however, the new use of multiple measures in academic advising was perceived by many advisors in our sample as increasing the accuracy of advising recommendations.

Generally, campus personnel responses to the implications of SB 1720 on placement testing were often strong. One faculty member complained, "Not being allowed to require them to take a placement test is killing us because we can tell 'em all we want, but if they don't wanna do it, they don't have to do it." Another faculty member said, "I think not being able to test students to figure out where they should be and should they get these extra courses, it's a ridiculous idea." An advisor wondered, "Giving them the choice of whether or not they are being or going to be tested… Are we doing them, the students, benefit?"

Many advisors in our sample were particularly worried about the lack of placement tests because of the difficulty in recommending coursework without knowing a student's academic strengths and weaknesses. An advisor commented:

> I don't really think that you can really have an honest conversation… with a student, because… you really don't have a lot of information other than from that high school and that profile. It was different when they took the PERT. I mean we could've still implemented something like this SB 1720. They could have still taken the PERT but at least you would've had something to go on, something to back you up in a conversation with this student.

Other individuals on campus recognize this challenge. One support staff member, for example, explained that in the past, "you were tested, and we could show you a score and say, 'To be college ready, this is the score you need, and you scored down here.' That's a very easy black and white issue… But now, I have no idea how an advisor would identify a student as being

weak in reading." One faculty member pointed out, "if we had the ability to require them to do that, we would have more to work with."

Respondents described disparate impacts of SB 1720 on placement test participation. Despite the initial concern, several institutions have not seen much of a difference. One advisor reported, "We have had a huge number of students now, even though they are exempt, go and at least take the PERT to see where they place so they have more awareness, and then they can make that decision on their own."

Similarly, an advisor estimated that, "all of the ones I have encountered, 99 percent, even if they met the exemption by the high school graduation date, said, 'Oh, I want to take the test.'" Another advisor said, "There was no change in the number of tests administered. Even though 50% of the population was not required to test, they chose to." This finding is not consistent across all 10 institutions. For example, an advisor described "it's probably half and half-- some are willing to do it, but others no. They are not even considering it."

The new policy not only impacts underprepared students, but also high performing students. Without test scores, sometimes students don't realize that they should enroll in a higher-level math courses. An advisor said:

> I have seen one or two students put at a disadvantage in that respect because maybe they took math for college readiness in high school, or maybe they took algebra two as their last math class and earned like a C or a D, but they actually can place into MAT 1105.

Likewise, an advisor stated:

> …because the exempt students are not required to provide any test scores, including ACT or SAT, there comes a time where students, the highest level math that they can take is Intermediate Algebra, yet they have ACT or SAT scores that put them in a higher level math and we don't have that information necessarily.

## MULTIPLE MEASURES INCREASE ADVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Since placement tests can no longer be required, advisors now consider multiple measures of documented student achievement when making their recommendations, especially for exempt students. Many of the advisors in our sample believe that these changes have been beneficial, in that advising sessions are more *holistic, individualized*, and *engaging*. However, multiple measures have also increased advisor workload at most institutions.

One advisor explained the new use of multiple measures in advising: "We actually spend more time looking at other factors rather than just putting them [students] in something [a class]... that probably was a reflection of a bad day." In a similar vein, an advisor explained that advising happened "on a case-by-case basis. We don't do anything... with a broad brush. We take into account that person that's sitting in front of us." An advisor reflected:

> …advising appointments used to be very descriptive… First semester, you know, especially if the student was all prep, there was no discussion about major, there was no discussion about the career goals… It was, 'Here's your prep. This is where you start.' [Now] the opportunity for

that conversation exists, that opportunity to get the student to think more about their educational process.

Another advisor admitted "even though this does take a little bit longer, I think it gives our students more of an opportunity to share their story with us." In the words of an administrator:

I think it has prompted conversations that weren't happening before… I think it's more a dialogue now with the student. Whether we like the outcome at the end, or not, whether we can prove the outcome at the end, or not, at least… the conversations are happening in more meaningful ways than they did before…

An implementation team member described the new philosophy of advising using multiple measures and in-depth conversations with students about their placements:

We thought it was a really good payoff 'cause we were teaching people to have conversations where you would review – you would sit and you'd have a substantive conversation with a student about what is this student's career goals, what are the constraints, how fast do they wanna get out, you know, all the things you need to be able to give good advice to a student, and whether you're faculty or advising staff, you're a professional and the more information you have, the better.

**Increased Advisor Workload.** The cumulative effect of all of the changes to the advising process has created an increased student need for the services of academic advisors. The advisors we spoke with

believe the reform has impacted both the number of students seeking advising appointments and the length of time spent on each appointment. In terms of the increased number of students, one advisor commented that the legislation:

…has impacted the amount of students that have come in. Many more have come in. I've looked at the data from last year. I look at it every month compared to the year before and we have increased at least 200 to 400 students.

As a result, there is often a long line of students waiting to be seen. One advisor said that now, "we are booked solid every half hour with students from now until we close." Another advisor candidly stated:

At one point on Tuesday, I think I saw 40 people in the queue… I think that we were having like a two-hour, two and a half hour wait, a lot of it due to development ed stuff. I think we lost a bunch of people, too. People were like—'Screw it, we are leaving'

Most institutions reported that advising sessions lasted approximately 15-20 minutes prior to the implementation of SB 1720. Now, those same appointments can last upwards of 60 minutes. One advisor estimated that "the changes… have probably tripled the length of time of a normal advising session." According to another advisor, this dramatic increase in workload is due to the nature of more choices for developmental education students. He noted "when [students] were required to take the prep… it was bada-boom, bada-bang, we are putting you in it." Now advisors describe appointments:

An appointment that normally took us in the past 20 minutes with a student can go anywhere from

half an hour sometimes up to an hour, explaining the exemptions, talking about where they are with their levels, trying to make them see that they may not be as proficient as they think they are.

An advisor explained the increase in time in this way, "It really does require a lot more extra work on our part… Before when they had preparatory classes they had to take, it was clear cut." Now, "you are looking at transcripts, and test scores. As you are talking to them, you are multi-tasking… trying to determine your next strategy on what you should do… so it takes a while." An advisor pointed out:

> …now there are more moving parts. I used to be able to, if someone tested in the lower level you just go, 'Okay, next you take this, this, this. Bye.' Now, it's really a different conversation depending on if [the students] are eligible to be exempt, or if they are struggling, if they are doing well, if they are telling us the class is easy…

It is no surprise, then, that many of the advisors in our sample are overworked. One advisor admitted, "I lost a lot of sleep over the last year." Another advisor said, "The amount of overtime that was logged by our staff was just incredible." To cope with the increased demands, some advisors confessed to rushing through meetings. In the words of one advisor, "more and more and more is being asked of an advisor in an advising session that's just impossible to do. You learn to cut corners and do things as best as you can."

A few institutions have also chosen to address this problem with group advising. An advisor explained, "Every individual student doesn't necessarily have

to meet with their advisor." An advisor at another institution shared a similar sentiment:

> …it is group advising because… [of] manpower. We can't see the current students and new students. And you spend more time with a new student because you have to go over so many things… So a lot of those things we try to narrow down so that we can share with everybody…

## PROMISING PRACTICES RELATED TO ADVISING

Despite the challenges presented by the legislation, each FCS institution adopted advising practices that focus group participants identified as functioning in their local institutional context. From our discussions with advisors and other focus group participants, we identified a number of promising practices related to academic advising. These practices represent intentional responses by campus personnel to address the advising needs expressed by students.

**Educational Planning / Course Mapping.** Many of the institutions we visited provided students with a map or educational plan to aid in the course selection process. One advisor aptly described this guide as a form with "highlighted possible courses that they should take." Depending on the institution, students received these individualized plans either at orientation or during their first advising meeting. At some institutions, these individualized plans focused primarily on the first semester. One advisor explained: "We do prep before the orientation starts, and that has directly to do with SB 1720, where we will look at the students' records in advance to the best that we're able… to generate a first semester IEP [Individualized Educational Plan], a first semester plan with a full-time course load suggestion"

At other institutions, the plan extended through graduation. An administrator remarked, "The mapping allows us to be very, very intrusive advising from orientation to 18 hours... After 18 hours the student should have their entire two years mapped out." Some students seem to appreciate these plans. An advisor spoke about one student in particular who keeps the map in plain sight, "She has her map taped up on her refrigerator, so she can check off the courses."

**Case Management.** Case management is the practice of assigning a group of students to a particular advisor. For institutions with the staff necessary to pull this off, case management has proved to be a promising practice. One advisor reported,

> One of the things we implemented… is case management of students who are in SLS. So

that, we feel, is a good buffer for those students. Because they get to know us and understand that they're their academic advisor. We feel that that's one of the good things that has come out of this reform because we really want to build relationships with them, to get to know them, to help them understand the changes, how those changes impact them, and keep that conversation going.

The real strength of case management is that students appear to build rapport with an advisor and return to them for future advice. This is the case at several institutions. An advisor said, "A lot of times they will come back to us and say, am I making a good choice? They want to have our consideration. They want to have our blessing as to what they are doing because we develop a rapport with them."

# Section Four: Revised Developmental Education and College-Level Courses

In this section we highlight findings related to the new developmental curricula, including student and faculty reactions to the new modalities. We next discuss implications for college-level courses and faculty credentialing. We then examine promising practices related to coursework we identified in our visits to the 10 FCS institutions.

## MORE DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION COURSE OPTIONS

Faculty designed new developmental education curricula inclusive of the modularized, compressed, co-requisite, and contextualized course options. Although the course modalities were prescribed by the legislation, administrators typically granted faculty significant autonomy over curriculum development. Faculty at some of the institutions we visited had begun redesigning their developmental education curriculum prior to SB 1720, but the

majority of institutions were required to create the new course modalities on a very short timeline. An implementation team member described the role of faculty members in the institution's course redesign process:

> So, we worked with all of the divisions, all the academic divisions, and had them brainstorm what they thought the needs that they would have…. We wanted them to think about the options that they could have, and things that would work with what they want to do, and what they want to accomplish. We wanted them to be the decision makers behind that.

**Reactions to Compressed Courses.** In response to providing more options, many of the 10 FCS institutions offered both developmental and college-level compressed courses in successive short terms to allow for students to progress through needed coursework without delay. Sentiments from faculty and students were mixed about the new modalities. Most faculty expressed serious concerns about the most commonly adopted new modality, the compressed course. One math faculty member commented that the lack of time to present course content led to problems when students entered college-level coursework:

> Do I think that eight weeks is adequate time to teach Developmental I or II? Absolutely not. I think 10 or 12 weeks might be more acceptable… what you are doing is forcing the adjunct or the professor into making decisions on what's going to be presented and not be presented to get through the material, and get the students to where they are successful. Because to me that's the only thing that's important, is the students being successful and learning basic math. And if they don't have a concept and a grasp of basic

math when they go to Intermediate Algebra, which is the next thing that they would take after Developmental II, they are in deep trouble. Deep trouble.

A faculty member described similar concerns in her reading class:

> Well, when you combine two 16 week courses… You are only going to get about half of this and half of that because that's all you have time for. And you know, I used to spend two to three weeks on main ideas, because they struggle with main ideas. Just finding out the most important thing they should read on this page, or get from reading this section of a text book, they will underline a detail and think that's it. They just don't get it. So, we have to spend a lot of time practicing, and they do get it with practice. But, now I am lucky if I can spend two class periods on main idea, and then it's on to the next thing because we have so much material to cover.

In contrast, a minority of faculty members were pleased with the new compressed courses. One faculty member commented, "I am happy with the eight week courses." Another faculty member described her changing perspective on the compressed modality, "I became a very reluctant fan of the compressed classes."

One faculty member expressed her surprise at the success of developmental education students completing developmental education English course and subsequently enrolling in a compressed college-level English course. She explained:

> I have had several students come into my ENC 0015 class, very, very early in the course,

demonstrate that they were far more advanced than where they placed into by the PERT. And, have demonstrated they could move into 0025 and finish the semester there, and go into the late start ENC 1101…And this year, this semester in particular, I have had the opportunity to teach a developmental section that then fed into late start ENC 1101, so I am now teaching that late start 1101. Many of those students are students who I already taught early in the semester in my developmental class, so I am able to see how they are performing, and I am very surprised by what I am seeing…There is no way that I would have seen in my week four of a 15 week ENC 1101 my students as advanced as they are now. I have had to compress that course. So surprisingly they are definitely rising to meet the challenge.

**Reactions to Modularized Courses.** Reactions to the modularized courses represented a greater balance between positive and negative views. Faculty and students alike appreciated the self-paced customization of modularized classes. A faculty member described the flexibility of the new courses:

> I personally like the idea of the original use of the idea of modularization, to be very specific at tailoring, to be able to tailor modules, short, small guided but semi-- on their own, but guided modules tailored to what they need. If they are weak on certain fundamentals, then they take a module in that, and they go until they pass it.

From this faculty member's perspective, modularized instruction alleviated the challenges of having both better prepared and underprepared students in the same class. A student remarked on the same feature of modularized courses:

> I love it. You can work at your own pace. You don't have to sit there and wait for the teacher to talk you to death. You just go home and if you do what you were supposed to do in class, you can go home and fix it. She can see what you do, but still I just like it because it's work at your own pace.

The primary concern expressed by faculty and students about modularization was that some students, particularly older adults, found the technology requirements daunting. An advisor expressed this concern about the modularized courses:

> Many of them don't have computers, don't have access to computers, don't know how to turn a computer on, so to then put them in modularized classes and expect them to be proficient at the end, when they are not proficient on the curriculum, and that's why they are in the class, and now they have the hurdle of trying to be comfortable and progress in a class with this instrument in front of them, the computer, it's a double-edged sword.

**Reactions to Contextualized and Co-Requisite Courses.** Faculty and students expressed fewer negative sentiments about the contextualized and co-requisite course modalities, though these were less frequently adopted than the compressed and modularized modalities. For instance, an administrator commented that "my dev ed English people were pretty excited about some of the options, the co-requisite for example, and then also contextualizing courses."

One institution experimented with a learning community co-requisite model in which students move through the developmental education English course and the gateway college-level English course together as a cohort over a 16-week period:

> One is a learning community model that's a co-requisite model with ENC0025 and ENC1101. And it is two separate classes taught by two separate professors but the students – that's cohort based, I guess you could say because both cohorts are enrolled in the 0025 and the 1101 simultaneously. And the way we make it work through the learning community is that the professor's work together to create some common assignments. So that the students aren't doing double work per se in every area, they are indeed able to build upon their work from one class to the next. And then the idea is that they would still get through both the dev ed class and the gateway course within that 16-week semester.

## RESISTANCE TO ADJUSTING COLLEGE-LEVEL COURSE EXPECTATIONS

Some students however, decided they did not need the warm-up described by the faculty member. Instead, exempt students oftentimes opted into gateway (college-level) courses, and were more likely to opt into developmental education courses in math than in English/writing and reading. Therefore, advisors made an effort to explain the academic expectations in college-level courses in English. An advisor explained:

> People probably need help with math. They can speak English, everything is fine, so I always-- my method is to tell them, okay, you feel like you should go into the English class right now. So, if I told you right now to write me a 10-page paper

comparing Moby Dick to The Color Purple and The Great Gatsby, would you feel comfortable doing that right now? And, then typically they are like, oh. I am like, this is what you are talking about in a college-level English course. You are not writing sentences. These are the types of things you are going to encounter, and that sometimes gives them pause. Sometimes they decide to do it, and sometimes they don't. But I think it helps to contextualize what a college-level English course is going to look like. It's not, you know, filling out letters and writing their name, which I think they think it's going to be well, I speak English, and I have had English, so it will be fine.

**Assessing Preparedness.** Faculty teaching gateway courses at most institutions had created in-class diagnostic assessments that were administered on the first day of class. The results of these diagnostic assessments were then used by faculty to provide students with a realistic benchmark for their current placement in the course. Often the diagnostics were used to persuade students that they should opt into a developmental education course rather than the gateway course. A math faculty member observed, "I have a couple of them who just cannot add, multiply, and they are going to fail. And, I have specifically told one, you are setting yourself up for failure, please go and change classes."

Faculty also made the academic expectations clear to students at the beginning of the semester. One faculty member expressed her philosophy to students this way:

> I told them on the first day, we are in the deep end of the pool. If you can't even float, you don't

belong here, because I can't be that kind of lifeguard. I need you at least floating and then I will take you the rest of the way.

Similarly, another faculty member recounted asking math students:

And how many times have you factored a polynomial in the past five years? [Laughter from focus group participants] You haven't? Have you rationalized the denominator? You haven't? So, when they don't have the requirement to take the pre-test, and some of these students really think they are super heroes and can come into the course, and, oh, I am ready. I am college ready… We are not going to teach those basic concepts. I tell them from the beginning, I am not teaching this. I am starting here, so—for some students, it's a wake-up call.

Students sometimes heeded the advice but more frequently chose to attempt the gateway course despite the faculty member's warnings.

**Maintaining Rigor in Gateway Courses.** Faculty members reported that the content and level of challenge in gateway courses was affected by having more academically underprepared students enrolled in them. Indeed, there was a range of responses to having more underprepared exempt students in their courses from faculty who teach college-level classes. Some faculty members overwhelmingly acknowledged that they struggled to adjust their college-level courses to account for students who were academically underprepared. Faculty at many of the 10 institutions described seeing new grade distributions in gateway courses after the passage of SB 1720. An academic support staff member stated:

You get students who simply aren't ready for 1101 and they simply cannot do the work….I have preparatory assignments before the big papers, and they don't give me what I am asking for, and then I have to reiterate, that's not what I want. It's not just writing. It's reading. How are they going to do English if they can't read?

Students in gateway courses also commented on the presence of more underprepared students in their classes. One student remarked, "I think that a lot of time could have been spent on other things, and instead was spent on getting someone up to speed." Another student commented on the classroom dynamic with exempt students in the class:

We keep moving forward in the course but we spend a lot of class time where someone will ask a question and if it applies to a lot of people it's good, but if it's something we have already been over, then we get caught on it. It's just class time.

One faculty member commented that her college-level course had to be overhauled as a result of having exempt students in the class noting, "I totally changed how I was presenting. Totally changed." Another faculty member described decreasing the workload in her gateway course to account for the new grade distribution:

What you see is you have a group of maybe third year students who are prepared, who are on message, who can do everything. Then you have some if you push at them they do all right, and then you have a significant group, sometimes as much a quarter of your students, or more, who are just not-- they can't do it. They just can't keep up….A lot of them start washing out midterm.

When you have that spectrum, it's hard. I want to get my pass rate up, and I can see it's too much work for some of these students. So the only option is to lower the workload a bit and that means that the advanced students don't get as much practice. You don't want a 50 percent failure rate.

In contrast, some faculty refused to make adjustments to their gateway courses on the rationale that doing so would be unfair to the students who were academically prepared for the class. One advisor reported that, from her perspective, faculty had refused to alter college-level courses for exempt students,

We [the faculty] are not going to go back. We are going to teach like we always teach. We are not going to do anything special for these students. We [the advisors] said, we understand that, and we can pass that on to our students that there is nothing special that will be happening.

Another faculty member reported that plagiarism had become rampant in college-level English courses because exempt students were plagiarizing when the writing assignments became too challenging:

Plagiarism is huge. Now you are going to wonder how this relates. Plagiarism is huge because our students have been taught to write with a cut and paste method. The thing about this is going back to students who can't write, sometimes it's not apparent that they can't write because they haven't done any developmental testing. Then they come in and they can't write. Then I give them an assignment to write, and when I give them this assignment and they realize, I can't write a sentence, what they do is plagiarize.

Similarly, a faculty member explained that exempt students in college-level courses were prone to disruptive behaviors in class:

You can talk to some of the people that work in student services and the rates of behavior problems in classes have gone up because part of developmental is teaching students the college culture, and they don't get that, and they are thrust into a classroom where the majority of students who wouldn't have taken developmental they are ready to behave like a college student, but the developmental students thrust into the room are completely overwhelmed by the level of material they are not ready for, so how do they react to that? Negative behavior outcomes.

## FACULTY CREDENTIALING

Because it was difficult to predict in advance how many exempt students would opt out of developmental education courses, it was challenging for administrators to predict how many course sections would be needed, both in developmental education and in college-level gateway courses. An administrator described the course scheduling process as:

Trying to hit a moving target in regards to scheduling when we don't really know how many students are going to opt out of dev ed, how many are going to go into the gateway courses, how, you know and dealing with how many sections of each. Additionally, I know in math we have a lot of faculty that are only credentialed to teach developmental education, excuse me, a lot of adjunct faculty are only credentialed to teach developmental education and then trying to see if you can get them classes or unfortunately,

telling them that we don't have classes for you any longer. That meant also additional hiring to replace, because we had so many more sections of intermediate algebra, and then the new gateway to statistics class that we created and getting the faculty onboard to teach that.

At some campuses, the increased enrollments in college-level courses resulted in a shortage of qualified faculty to teach those classes. This is because those who teach college-level courses may require more credentialing than developmental education faculty. A faculty member explained, "There is absolutely a difference in the faculty credential that's required by SACS, because SACS requires 18 or more graduate hours in English to teach a credit bearing English course."

Due to credentialing issues, there was a shortage of college-level course offerings to offset the new demand at some campuses. An administrator explained:

> We don't know if we should hire more full-time. We don't know how this is going to play out, and where students are going to end up and what they are going to need. We ran out of the availability to offer [ENC] 1101, and especially math, to students who wanted it….We couldn't offer enough math. We didn't have the resources. We didn't have adjuncts. You just don't pull people in to teach college algebra.

Institutions responded to the need for more faculty with credentials to teach college-level courses in a variety of ways. A few institutions offered developmental education faculty tuition funds to pursue graduate credits that would allow them

to teach college-level courses. Other institutions informed developmental education faculty that they would need to retrain or get more credentials in order to teach college-level courses. A faculty member described her institution's response:

> Because in the past…they allowed for a retraining period, and then putting those faulty in other departments, absorbing them. But at this point, they – you know, it was like, well, you're on our own. Go retrain if you want to. We really can't tell you what to do. We don't know what's gonna happen. But if you want to do it, we suggest you do it, but we can't tell you. So I retrained. I mean I'm now credentialed to teach speech, and many of the reading faculty in my department are now credentialed to teach English and some credentials in other areas like ESL. So the rumor is that the reading faculty will not be here much longer – most.

Still other institutions found ways to reallocate resources in the absence of additional funding and reassign faculty to other areas to accommodate the reduced need for developmental education faculty. At one institution, faculty members were utilized as tutors in order to simultaneously address the lower teaching loads of developmental education faculty and the increased traffic in the Learning Commons.

## PROMISING PRACTICES RELATED TO COURSEWORK

Despite the challenges presented by the legislation, each FCS institution adopted new developmental education coursework. From our discussions with focus group participants, we identified a number of practices related to coursework that focus group participants believed were promising. These practices

represent intentional responses by campus personnel to address student needs.

**In-Class Diagnostic Assessments.** Many of the 10 institutions in the FCS offered diagnostic assessments in the first week of coursework to help faculty and students determine whether students had been appropriately placed.

**Innovative Coursework.** In addition to the required new developmental education course modalities, several institutions experimented with innovative curricular options. One institution offered a combined reading and writing course with a common book to discuss or "Common Read." A faculty member stated, "The students have loved it. We chose this book because we thought the students would be able to relate to it, The Power of Habit, so it's all about personal habits, company habits, habits in society… I've never seen such enthusiastic learners..

Another institution created a "math emporium." The emporium model is a grant-funded project that replaces traditional lecture-style class meetings with an interactive technology-enhanced classroom with customized online curriculum and individualized assistance from faculty and peer tutors. In this instructional model, students' math deficiencies are addressed on a one-on-one basis.

An institution, which tended to have small class sizes at rural branch campuses, created a synchronized classroom using live classroom feeds. An advisor described the classes:

> So we are working, as a college, to synchronize our classrooms so that we can-- if I can get 10, our threshold is like 16, 10 here, and then if [name

of branch campus] will get 12, we can combine that and have a full size class. That means that the student is without a teacher live, which I am not sure how they will feel about that. This will be the first spring where we are doing that with our developmental classes, where the students don't move. They will sit in the classrooms in [name of branch campus] and here, but the teacher will move. So half the class time the teacher is here, and half the class time they are there, and we have cameras in the rooms. So it's a live feed, and they will be able to address questions, but it's a whole technology hurdle to come over.

Faculty in these classes use a live feed for each class session and move from campus to campus to synchronize classes at different campuses so that developmental education courses will have sufficient enrollments to be offered at all campuses.

Most campuses offer a Student Success (SLS) course that developmental education students are encouraged to enroll in to improve their college readiness skills. Advisors at some institutions advised exempt students who opt out of developmental education to enroll in SLS 1101. An administrator described advisors' efforts to encourage exempt students to enroll in the course:

> But, the advisors have done a great job in trying to get a lot of our students who are exempt, who don't want to take the PERT, don't want to take dev ed, even if we see academic indicators from the past that suggest they should, getting those students into SLS 1101…It is not currently a course that addresses the academic math, English, reading. But, more it's a course literally about college success-- where is the library, and what do you do there, and if you are looking at a

text book what's an effective way to take notes. And, there is some reading in there. Where will you find the main idea in a chapter, and where will you find the supporting and the heading….I think students are often very pleased…They are often surprised by what they get out of it….We think it's helpful to the dev ed student, and to those that should be dev ed students that are not.

**Coordination of Coursework, Academic Support, Advising, and Library Services.** There is strong coordination among faculty, academic support staff, and advisors at most institutions. Institutions adopted a number of practices to better coordinate academic support with coursework. Among these practices are faculty serving as advisors in the 2nd year of coursework, faculty conducting office hours in learning labs and centers, requiring lab hours and tutoring in course requisites, embedding tutors in courses, and faculty training tutors and advisors in course content. For instance, a faculty member reported inviting academic support staff to visit classes to familiarize students with the resources available to them.

Some faculty members also require students to seek tutoring as a part of their course grade. An administrator mentioned that most lower-division classes require online tutoring, "and, added to that is the lower division classes. Most of them have a component that requires students to do online tutoring, or Smart Thinking." An English faculty member at one institution has an embedded librarian who assists her with teaching students how to use library resources and do MLA paper formatting.

**Coordination of Developmental Education and College-level Courses.** Some institutions also reported close coordination of developmental education and gateway courses. One institution adopted a cohort approach in which a class of students progresses through developmental education and gateway courses together with same professor. At another institution, developmental education faculty train college-level faculty in presenting basic skills to exempt students who may be enrolled in their classes. College-level faculty, in turn, communicate learning objectives to developmental education faculty who present those skills in their courses.

## INCREASED USE OF ACADEMIC SUPPORT

FCS institutions offer a variety of academic support services, both course-based and out-of-course. Most campuses reported an increase in students' use of academic support services as a result of SB 1720, particularly in learning centers and labs. Some campuses in our sample have been unable to reallocate or increase their budgets to offer additional academic support services due to increased demand.

**Course-Based Academic Support.** Course-based academic support offered at the institutions include a wide variety of options including early alert systems, summer bridge programs, summer boot camps, student success courses, and embedded lab components in coursework. Two institutions that we visited offer Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) to their students.

At one institution, Learning Support Services, in collaboration with the Assessment Department, developed a new one-week pilot boot camp that was

piloted last August with a group of 25 students who were identified as needing developmental education. The boot camp ran for 16 hours during the one-week period and participants received individualized instruction in reading, writing and math as well as a $100 stipend on completion of the camp. The students were also taken on tours of the college's learning support facilities.

**Out-of-Course Academic Support.** Out-of-class academic support at the institutions include a wide gamut of services including: learning labs, tutoring – both face-to-face and online, career advising, library services, workshops, mental health counseling and student success courses. One institution developed a Veteran Success Center. A newly introduced grant-funded Math Emporium has been implemented at one institution that is a "learning facility where students interact with MyMathLab software from Pearson and a highly skilled instructional team to master mathematical concepts."

One institution reported an increase in student visits to out-of-classroom support services. An implementation team member reported the "number of visits we had in out-of-classroom support last semester was over 100,000." This increase of use was attributed to a changed model at the college. Where previously administrators remarked, "it was often thought of kind of a punitive thing…out of classroom support [now] is an expectation of being a student here at [institution]." Another institution also reported an increase in students' use of academic support services, particularly for tutoring. One academic support staff member noted, "…by the end of week four, this semester, I maxed out my overall fall semester numbers from last year."

Similar increases in demand for services were seen at most institutions in our sample but they were sometimes hard pressed to directly attribute it to the new legislation as several other factors were seen as contributing. Many faculty members in our sample are making attendance at the learning labs or tutoring a part of course requirements. Some institutions require and/or encourage faculty to hold their office hours in the learning labs and the early alert system and advisors are also driving students to the tutoring/learning labs. In addition, Academic Support Service departments are attending classes at the beginning of the semester to market their services. For example, an academic support team member suggested that the increase in use could be related to greater visibility of lab services facilitated by "…our increased activity going into the classrooms introducing ourselves."

Technology was heavily used by all of the institutions in our sample to supplement their face-to-face academic support services. Several software products were used to facilitate online tutoring including StateSmart, Khan Academy, Pearson's Smartthinking, as well as their MyLab suite: My FoundationsLab, MyReadingLab, MyWritingLab, and MyMathLab. McGraw-Hill's Assessment and LEarning in Knowledge Spaces (ALEKS) was also a popular choice for math support. Other institutions utilize Math XL and PenCast to supplement course instruction.

## PROMISING PRACTICES RELATED TO ACADEMIC SUPPORT

**Early Alert Systems.** Most campuses reported using early alert systems as a first line of communication with students needing help to resolve academic and life issues. When faculty members have concerns about a student's academic progress, they trigger the

early alert system, and students receive an email, call, or letter to contact the faculty member or an advisor. A faculty member stated that the early alert helps to inform students of the seriousness of the situation, "It does get their attention. They get notice from the college to contact your instructor and they almost die coming through the door to try to talk to you." An advisor described the early alert system:

> We download it every single day and our average is running about a day and a half between it getting submitted, and if it gets triaged to a level we think somebody needs to intervene, which is about 75 percent of them, we assign it immediately to an adviser on the campus where the student is mostly taking their classes, so their home campus. Within a day and a half they are getting some kind of communication from an adviser, a phone call, an email, something that is really dependent on whatever was reported. If they are a veteran, we try to make the connection to [Name], and if they are athlete, we try to make the connection to [Name]. If they are dual enrollment we try to make the connection to the dual enrollment advisors.

**Tutoring.** Face-to-face and online tutoring are important components of the academic support services seen at various colleges. Several institutions have taken a proactive approach in marketing their tutoring services by going directly to the classroom at the beginning of the semester. A faculty member described the process, "The tutors come up at the beginning of every semester. They come to the classroom so the students can put a face to them." Institutions also rely heavily on faculty to promote their services. Increased demand for tutoring and/or

the learning labs are often seen at institutions where use of these services was built into the syllabus as a part of coursework. A faculty member described the course requirements, "…one thing we have built into our class is that we are requiring visits to a writing center, three, because we figure there are three essays, so you got to go at least three times."

The location of tutoring and learning labs may also be an important factor in student use. An academic support staff member observed, "…also we have moved upstairs where the math classes are, so you can come out the door and in the door. [We] used to be downstairs in another hallway, and I think we lost a lot of students because of that."

To accommodate working students, students with families and the other factors that impact on a student's ability to access on campus services, online tutoring is an option offered by many of the 10 institutions, often through third-party service providers like Smartthinking.

A few institutions have implemented the embedded tutor model to support course instruction for their developmental education courses. One faculty member noted that:

> …a small amount of contact with her made all the difference in the way their writing was, in the way their reading was, in the way they processed the information… I was surprised because I had just jumped on the bandwagon that everybody was gonna fail, but I have to say, the embedded tutoring and making them go to tutor once they saw they worked, they went, and it made all the difference in their grade.

An academic support staff member described it as "…a really strong safety net that the students like and amazingly, the professors have embraced."

A few institutions are experimenting with different academic support models at their campuses. One institution is working with the learning community model for developmental English students simultaneously enrolled in ENC0025 and EN1101. A faculty member reported,

> "...And it is two separate classes taught by two separate professors but the students – that's cohort based, I guess you could say because both cohorts are enrolled in the 0025 and the 1101 simultaneously. And the way we make it work through the learning community is that the professor's work together to create some common assignments. So that the students aren't doing double work per se in every area, they are indeed able to build upon their work from one class to the next."

Two other institutions have piloted an emporium model that requires students to spend a mandated amount of class time in the learning lab with a tutor. A faculty member described the model:

> I do have a hybrid emporium model course. So it's four day a week course, but I only meet them in the classroom twice a week. What I have them do is I have them generate a worksheet, and it's an individualized worksheet. So it's a worksheet for whatever they're working on. And they are

required to go on one of the non-meeting days to the lab, and sit with a tutor. And I have a little sign-in sheet, and some place for the tutor to actually write down notes and things like that so that they do have that one-on-one interaction for at least an hour, minimum an hour with someone else in the lab. Plus, now they know where the lab is, and they get to know a tutor in the lab. You see the same two or three tutors signing every week for the same student. So they kind of stick to someone that they like.

**Supplemental Instruction.** One institution offers Supplemental Instruction (SI), a peer-assisted weekly study session program that targets difficult academic courses. The structured study sessions target courses where large numbers of students withdraw or receive a grade of D or F. The study sessions are conducted by SI Leaders, who are students that have successfully completed the targeted courses, and who attend the same classes again, with the same instructors.

# Section Five: Unforeseen Challenges to Implementation

In our interviews with campus personnel a number of unforeseen challenges to implementation emerged. We first discuss the financial aid implications related to disbursement and student satisfactory progress. Next, we identify concerns about how specific student populations have been impacted by the legislation. Last, we provide an overview of the technology challenges at the institutions we visited.

## FINANCIAL AID CHALLENGES

Participants in our focus groups reported a number of issues that SB 1720 influenced with the disbursement of financial aid to students. These problems were related to the disbursement of funds for compressed courses, changing from gateway to developmental education courses, satisfactory academic progress, financial aid for veterans and active duty military, and degree completion.

**Compressed Courses.** Students enrolled in 8-week compressed courses offered in the first part of the fall semester would receive financial aid disbursements at the end of September. However, if students enrolled in 8-week compressed courses offered during the second half of the semester, their financial aid disbursement would be delayed until after the course was underway. This delay created financial hardships for some students.

As a result, advisors reported students choosing course modalities based on financial aid considerations rather than the most appropriate modality for their learning style. An advisor explained

the crucial role that financial aid played in students' course enrollment decisions:

> A lot of times it's based on if they are paying themselves, or if they have financial aid. If financial aid is paying, they are more likely to take it because it's being paid for. If they are self-paying, they don't really want to take it.

In fact, financial aid was often the deciding factor for students in course enrollment decisions to the detriment of academic factors.

**From Gateway to Developmental.** Financial aid was also a consideration for students who decided to change into developmental education classes from gateway courses after the semester had begun. A faculty member explained:

> If they are on any kind of financial aid, they are required a certain number of credit hours to get their award, so there are kids that talk to me about not dropping my class-- but they are afraid to drop, because it's going to affect their financial aid.

Financial aid considerations were also an issue when exempt students performed poorly in gateway courses because they were unable to maintain the "satisfactory academic progress" stipulated by their financial aid award. An administrator described the problem:

> The other end issue that we're going to have in December once grades roll is there's no probationary period for financial aid satisfactory academic progress you've got to have a 67%

completion ratio and 2.0 GPA. Anytime you don't hit that, your aid's suspended. There's an appeal process. It's going to be interesting to see the numbers of financial aid students who are suspended for failure to make satisfactory academic progress and see if we can draw any conclusions related to this legislation.

**Veteran Students.** A serious unforeseen complication arose for veteran students in that the Veteran's Administration (VA) will not pay for developmental education for exempt students because the courses are not classified as required. Because developmental education was required prior to SB 1720, developmental education coursework was covered by the VA before the legislation passed. Thus, while SB 1720 resulted in greater choice for most student populations, it resulted in less choice for veterans and their families who now had to pay out of pocket in order to enroll in developmental education courses. An advisor recounted vivid descriptions of a number of experiences with veterans and their families:

> I have had students in tears at the window because I had to tell them that we can't pay for that class. You don't-- you don't need it. It's not required…If a class is not absolutely required for them to graduate, the VA can't pay for it. I can't certify it. That's what this law does. It makes those prerequisite prep classes not required.

> It doesn't take into account for special needs students. I have a girl who was using Chapter 35. Chapter 35 is for children or spouses whose veteran parent or spouse is 100% disabled or deceased. I had one student who was using Chapter 35 who has Down's Syndrome. She was trying to take a math prep class. Poor girl, I had to explain to her that had she taken that class the

previous semester, we could have paid for it, but this law went into effect and now we can't pay for it for her. It doesn't take into any account for any special needs, or anything.

In the advisor's last example, the student was entitled to have the GI Bill pay for developmental education courses, but was placed in the unusual position of having to prove that she was not exempt because she had not graduated from high school in the United States.

> Another student I had, I had her in tears as well. The law states if you start 9th grade in 2003 or 2004, and finish, go your four years at a Florida state school, and graduate, you don't need prep classes, and you can't use your GI Bill to pay for it. I had a student who graduated from [name of high school] went there for two years, and graduated. That poor girl had to get high school transcripts from Japan to prove to me that she did not go to school in a Florida state high school for four years…It just creates a burden for everyone who is in that time frame.

Overall, campus personnel expressed concern that the financial aid challenges may slow degree completion because some students drop out for a semester when they are unable to pay their tuition and fees. In addition, there was concern that students would exhaust their financial aid eligibility by enrolling in college-level coursework and making several attempts to pass the same class. An administrator described this scenario:

> I think approximately 60% of our students receive financial aid and this directly affects the number of attempts to complete if they take that course they decide to just go ahead and oh great, I don't

have to take that course, great. I'll go right into college algebra. And once they get into college algebra, if they withdraw, if they get a failing grade, there is so many times they can take it and then it's not going to be funded anymore and then it's also going to affect their financial aid.

## CONCERNS ABOUT STUDENT POPULATIONS

Student populations at the FCS institutions we visited appeared to have been differentially impacted by SB 1720. In this section we present some of the challenges campus personnel, and students themselves have identified for non-traditional students, English Language Learners (ELL), economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and veterans.

**Non-Traditional Students.** According to some of the advisors we spoke with, there are age differences in how students respond to the option to skip developmental education. In describing older, non-traditional students, one advisor said:

> They put off the decision to come to college for a while and they are a little bit hesitant, and they are more willing to listen to what we are trying to tell them, than the recent graduates… [recent graduates] are the tough ones because they say, 'All my friends said I don't need to do this,' or 'I don't have to take this development ed class,' and you say, 'Well, your friend is right but… just because you are eligible doesn't mean you have to take that.'

Another advisor reported:

> By and large they [students] choose not to take the placement test. But there is a lot of variable [SIC] in there. The fresh out of high school ones, they are like, no, I was good in high school. They are not choosing to do it. The returning students are more aware of the fact that, I don't want to jump into college algebra. Let's get that placement level.

**English Language Learners.** Administrators, faculty, and advisors at institutions we visited were concerned about the impact SB 1720 had on English language learners (ELL) and students for whom English is a second language (ESL). Across many of the 10 FCS institutions, exempt ELL/ESL students, like other exempt students, claimed their exempt status even when strongly advised to first consider developmental education courses. An administrator perhaps summed up the issue best:

> Senate Bill 1720 didn't provide any asterisk for that ESOL student [who] graduates with the standard high school diploma and…they're good to go. In the past we have had students come to us who just really need to go through the EAP path they would be best served by that and we can no longer assess… students in that direction either….They'll have that difficult conversation and they'll be able to at least ask them if they're ok but you have to keep going so it's truly difficult for my staff because they would see it and they would know they're not supposed to be going to [college-level] but they're not even recognized in the statute…so it's hard for the state to consider the implications if they're not even recognized in the whole populations.

Some students expressed frustration as well. One student spoke of her experience in the tutoring lab after not understanding the class homework assignment:

> The way you tell me, trying to tell me how to do it, so you can do it for the teacher. And when he said that to me, and then I say, well, if I need help, where should I come? Where should I go? And, he said here, and when he said here, I said, thank you so much…So, I said I need help now. I tell you what I need-- if I need help, where should I go? He said, here. And, I said, thank you so much. Because if I need help, I expect you to help me. Don't tell me you can't. I don't tell you to do my homework for me, but I….expect you to help me, or try to explain to me what my teacher was saying that day.

**Economically Disadvantaged Students.** There is a general awareness that economically disadvantaged students face a number of barriers that hamper their access, retention, and academic success. As mentioned in the technology section, these students are less likely to have a computer and/or internet access at home. While institutions provide computer labs, transportation and family obligations can hamper their ability to access these services as needed.

One faculty member reported that students with major financial obligations often have longer work hours and as a result students have less time to spend on homework and assignments. Seventy-eight percent of students at one campus were categorized as below the poverty line. While students often qualify and obtain full financial aid, transportation can often be an issue. One faculty member at the institution explained:

> Most of them work. They can't – most of them are obviously on financial aid; they get full financial aid, but they don't have a car, they have to take the bus, you know, they – a lot of 'em, they come to school hungry and they've got kids.

Additionally, socioeconomic status differentiated between those who will take their advisor's recommendation and those who chose to ignore it. An advisor noted:

> …the kids are less likely to take your recommendation if they went to a higher socioeconomic school because they basically are like 'I'm not going to take something for not credit. I'm ready for, you know, I went to a good school. I'm ready for college.' Whereas kids who went to a poor performing school, the word of the person that's talking to them and they'll accept that.

One faculty member noted that while one of the intents of SB 1720 was to lower the cost of attending college by eliminating required developmental classes and subsequently their associated costs, students may choose to skip much needed developmental classes "…based on the financial aspect, to their detriment."

**Students with Disabilities.** Some of the FCS institutions we visited were also challenged with addressing the concerns and providing support for students who present with a range of emotional and

learning disabilities including dyslexia, Tourette's syndrome, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Students with documented disabilities are provided with services through many of the 10 institutions' disability support services offices.

A faculty member pointed out that disabled students with outdated documentation, who cannot afford to have it updated, are a particularly vulnerable population.

> It's harder for those students who have disabilities, because more and more we are seeing students coming in, maybe they have the documentation when they were in public schools, they can't afford to get that updated, and they are the ones that are kind of going down the tubes because there is no way to accommodate what their needs are. They need extra time to learn the material, but for some of those students they are going to be done with their intent numbers, and that's the worst thing is they make disability students take the class three times and pay the out-of-state fee before they can at least apply for a waiver, if they are eligible.

Several institutions reported that they do not offer onsite counseling for their students. Instead, counseling is outsourced to a third-party mental health provider.

**Veteran Students.** Several campus personnel expressed concern that the legislation disproportionately impacted veterans. For example, one administrator labeled the law "anti-military" because "they [veterans] are forced to not accept the extra help" provided by developmental education. Another advisor remarked:

> The Florida legislature has just screwed our veterans... Math is something that if you don't use you lose, and somebody that's been getting blown up and shot at for four years, and coming back to school, is not going to be able to start off in college algebra… These guys have to have their prerequisite math and English, if we want them to be successful. The only way for them to do it now is for them to pay out-of-pocket [which] cuts into their family living.

Not surprisingly, the success rate of veterans is highly variable. A faculty member at one institution reported that "They're, a lot of the times, the ones that do better in the accelerated courses because – [snaps fingers] – 'We gotta get it done.'" In contrast, a faculty member at another college said, "They [veterans] give up very quickly because it's so frustrating and alien. They just stop showing up."

SB 1720 has significantly impacted the financial aid of veterans, including which classes are covered, the basic housing and food allowance, and the "36 month timeframe" that these students must use their GI Bill. Campus personnel at one institution observed that some veterans are choosing to enroll in out-of-state institutions in order to get all classes covered. An advisor noted, "They have earned their GI Bill. They served the country, not the State of Florida. If they went to any other state, they could take these prep classes." An administrator agreed, "They go to out-of-state schools, schools that have their act together."

## TECHNOLOGY CHALLENGES

**Outdated or Insufficient Technology.** One challenge faced by several institutions was old or limited technology that could not keep pace with the complex requirements of SB 1720. To illustrate this, an advisor admitted that "One of our biggest frustrations for advisors and students is our student database hasn't kept up with all the changes and all the different options, the complicated options." Another advisor agreed:

> Our antiquated software can't accommodate the complexity of what we're trying to do with the students. And we're trying to make them more independent and we're actually creating more dependence on us because of all the things that we have to do, like overrides… We tell them one thing, somebody else tells them something else, their teacher tells them something else, and our antiquated system tells them something else. And it's like no wonder they're confused and feel abused and I understand that.

This problem was not unique to that institution. An administrator at another institution also spoke about the challenges they face with an antiquated system:

> We have students sign-off on a verification statement that this is, in fact, the decision they wish to make, because of the financial aid implications [and] because of the state law on the restriction of number of repeats, just so that they understand what's going on. It's not to dissuade

them, but just to make sure they understand. And, we also use it as a way to verify their exemption. But I also keep data in my office on every one of those statements that comes to us, and we have like a checks and balances to make sure, because our system is very antiquated and doesn't do it automatically right now. Everything is a manual process.

At another institution, advisors had similar concerns, "Our system is very old, and we have new systems in place, we just – it's not at the point where it's rolled out as smoothly as it should be."

Even when technology was up-to-date, it was sometimes not sufficient to accomplish all of the goals institutions now have in light of SB 1720. Modularized courses are particularly challenging because they require that a large number of computers be available to students. An individual from a branch campus reported, "X number of classes had to be modularized, but there's only so many computer classrooms. I mean, it's a small campus. We don't have that much… real estate. So that became a challenge." An implementation team member at one institution described a similar challenge:

> We don't have computer classrooms available just for any class… Having a real modular approach where you would come maybe into a classroom with computers and work on some specific areas of need, we just don't have the rooms or the funding.

Outdated and insufficient technology has the potential to undermine the effectiveness of the legislation. An advisor explained:

> I don't want to belabor the point, but the technology, for me, is a huge issue - that we do not have the technology to support the big goals we're trying to accomplish whether it's educational planning [or] caseload management. And we are… often in the position of having to try to pursue goals with our advisement staff without the technology to support it and we have to field a lot of frustration, complaints about the systems we don't have.

**Digital Divide.** Not all students in our sample had equal access to and comfort with online and computer-based learning. This digital divide is due, in part, to geographic, age, and economic differences between students. Regarding geography, rural campuses expressed the most trouble with access to technology.

An administrator at one institution described how collaborating with rural school districts has presented a challenge during the intake process:

> We have quite a few rural school districts in the state that don't use electronic process, which makes all of this even more difficult… Even if we had an automated system, those [high school transcripts] would still have to be input manually.

In terms of age, many faculty and staff in our sample described a difference between the ways in which older and younger students interact with technology. A faculty member explained, "that older generation doesn't do computers. Some of them don't even own computers in [names of communities], and they don't have high speed internet." An advisor said, "especially the older ones, they were okay with taking the dev ed and they wanted it in traditional [formats]. They did not want the computer part of it." A faculty member said, "a lot of the non-traditional students, who are already struggling with the technology, find that [Blackboard is an] obstacle in a fully on-line class." In contrast, younger students are more familiar with technology, and subsequently are more comfortable using it. An older student admitted that a lot of younger people now are used to technology…"Even though I didn't graduate that long ago, we didn't use a lot of computers when I was in school… [Now] you just do everything on the computer in class, so for them [younger students], that's probably normal."

Socioeconomic status was another factor that caused disparate access to technology. More specifically, the cost of technology was a concern for students of low socioeconomic status across institutions. A faculty member discussed the challenges facing that student population:

> We have so many first time in college students… This is all a new experience for them. Many of them are from low, lower socioeconomic homes. They don't have computers at home so if you

are giving homework that's on a computer it's, it's not helpful for them. Or they don't have the internet… Obviously, our college is wonderful. We offer many computers for the students to use, [but] it's still where they have to come to the college to do that. They can't do that in their little slippers at home when their kids are at home. It makes it difficult and they also see that the difference that [exists] between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' when you have so many students that have the computers at home and they don't.

The move towards computer-based learning has also proved difficult for some veterans, especially those who are older and are returning to school. According to one faculty member, "We have a lot of vets that are returning from overseas and they've been out of the classroom 5, 6, sometimes 18 years. They need help coming back." A student shared these sentiments: "The only place that had computers were the military… [but] we used to use microfilm and microfiche… So, you know, everything now is new to me… [Using] a computer is like I am starting from the first grade."

One unintended consequence of using software in the classroom is students' inability to share or transfer from one student to another. While students on a tight budget can still buy and sell used books, the same cannot be said of access codes. A student explained that the code "comes with the book… But if you buy it used, you have to buy the actual code to get it… 125 bucks, I think." Similarly, a student at another institution pointed out, "I paid $355 for this math book that I used only nine chapters out of…

[and] they can't take it back, because it's obsolete now… If you break the seal on that book it's done, because of the access code." Another student explained the financial consequences on course enrollment decisions.

I just want to reiterate that ALEKS is very helpful but… you can't access those assignments without paying for $110.00 to get a code… I've heard that costs like that were integrated in the cost for the class and so it's a little frustrating knowing that every math class I take I am going to have to pay for an ALEKS code so that I can access the coursework. It's not something that I can get online or share with somebody, like a textbook, if I'm physically incapable or financially incapable of paying for it, you know. I've actually – I dropped a computer literacy class because I found out that they also had a code you had to purchase and I couldn't pay $110.00 to access computer literacy's coursework and then pay $110.00 to access my Intermediate Algebra coursework two months later.

A faculty member at one institution suggested that selling these access codes has turned into big business for testing and curriculum companies, even at the expense of student learning. The faculty member acknowledged that companies like Pearson are "making billions of dollars on this stuff… To push for the product that is [not working] doesn't help the students all that much… I know they have statistics, but on a day-to-day basis, it's not really teaching them anything."

**Perceptions of Technology.** In our focus group sessions, perceptions of technology varied, with some individuals expressing love for technology and others expressing fear or cynicism. Some of the more positive reactions were related to students working at their own pace. Some individuals were surprised with how well technology worked in the classroom. A student at another institution shared this realization:

> I do believe I'm taking 0057, because I do know, they said that it's two maths combined. Before the course started, I went to the bookstore to get my book and they gave me a card called ALEKS and I'm like now where is the book? And it was like 'Oh, it's all online.'… When I went to class and we put the [access] codes in, I was afraid because I'm the type to take my book and go home and, you know, look through it and work on some of the problems… [But] I actually like ALEKS. It explains step by step and it gives you multiple questions that you can continue to practice, and it moves you forward at your own pace. So, so far math is working out well for me.

Technology was also viewed positively by those in leadership. One institution described the investment in new technology to support mandated changes to developmental education courses. An implementation team member explained:

> So we had to make some major changes and… technology helped a lot. Getting adaptive learning technology on board helped us. Math had already been using adaptive learning technology for years, so we took a lesson from their lesson book and we did what we needed to do.

In contrast, many individuals in our sample, including faculty, staff, and students, expressed reservations with technology. For example, a faculty member said, "there are some students… who will never learn off a computer-type program. Who have to do the old fashion paper and pencil, because that's the only way they will see it." A few students agreed with this assessment. One student reported, "I can focus more in a classroom setting." A student at another institution admitted, "I don't take online classes because I just can't sit online and do what I'm supposed to do. I'll be Facebook-ing, shopping, you know, everything." Another student explained,

> I just forget about ALEKS. I forget to go on there, and I missed the dates that they were turned in, so I just dropped out of the class… After a good two weeks of all these ALEKS assignments that I missed, I forgot about one test, I missed that one test, I felt like there was just no point, I'm gonna fail it. Why stay in it and get an F."?

# Section Six: Perspectives on Student Choice and Outcomes

In this section we present faculty, advisor, and student perspectives on the increased student choice provided by the legislation. We then turn to campus personnel's perceptions about how the comprehensive legislation might influence students' academic outcomes.

## STUDENT CHOICE

Developmental education reform at FCS institutions has provided students with more choices. Students can choose whether to opt into developmental education courses, and if they do so, they can choose the modality that best suits their learning needs. Campus personnel have been divided, skeptical at best, about the impact of increased student choice on student success. With the increased emphasis on student choice in SB 1720 many administrators, faculty, advisors, and academic support staff in our sample questioned whether developmental education students were making well-informed educational decisions.

**Faculty Perspectives on Student Choice.** Faculty expressed a diversity of perspectives on the increased student choice under SB 1720. A faculty member shared her frustration with legislators who had never worked with developmental education students:

> You are saying, okay, our state legislature is saying well, okay, we are going to do away with these developmental classes and give you the option. You are going to give a developmental student the option of taking College Algebra? That doesn't make sense to me. I mean, they are not capable of making that decision. Students will always opt to take a class at that level above what they can actually do, because-- oh yeah, I will do it. I will study harder-- they don't. They are not even yet programmed into being a college student. So, they miss those skills they may get in developmental classes. I think you are setting them up for failure, and if we are not-- seems like to me we are not-- when the legislature did this, they did not consult with people who were right here in the trenches, you know.

From the perspective of faculty members, a few exempt students made the correct choice to take developmental education courses. A faculty member praised students who chose developmental education:

> I tell them in the 17 course, they made the wiser decision, and I share maybe some success stories from the past in terms of what I have seen. You know, I don't name the student, but I share that with them. And, I say, listen, you have made the wise decision here. You are learning that when it comes to your education, you will be better for that.

When given the option, many students in our sample, however, did not opt for developmental education courses. The most common reaction to increased student choice among faculty was the view that students, particularly younger students, lack the maturity and self-knowledge to choose wisely between developmental education and college-level

courses. A faculty member stated, "The majority of the students who are developmental don't have the type of self-awareness to self-select for developmental."

Another faculty member described the student decision-making process:

> If it's not required they're not going to do it. It's like the whole concept is students don't do optional and to them that's an optional thing. SLS is optional, dev ed is optional and they're not mature enough to understand it. And you can explain it to them and explain it to them and you can meet with them but they're failing and then they give up.

In addition to students' own perceptions of their academic readiness, faculty reported that students tended to accept the advice of friends and faculty over the advice of college personnel.

> There are also a number of students that simply don't go to advisement at all. They self-advise, and their friends advise them. So yeah, then of course if your friend tells you, you don't have to take that class, you know, go this route. And we saw it happen on our campus actually when the law was instituted. There was one student that was very knowledgeable, told his classmates, and the classmates went to the teacher, told the teacher we were all gonna leave. They all had a mutiny in class, walked out and went to advisement because they heard. And they were incorrect, but they still heard it.

Consequently, many faculty members in our sample believed that educational decisions should be taken out of the hands of students, particularly younger students who lacked self-awareness of their academic readiness for college-level coursework:

> That's where you are supposed to make 18 year olds, who can't make the decision to go into developmental education because they need it, that's why you are supposed to help them make that decision. Like nobody at 18 and 19 is like, let me take a course that doesn't count towards my degree. They are not thinking it's going to save me money to do that instead of wasting money failing classes. Nobody knows that at 18, but you probably have your like returning student at like 45 who is aware of that, but at 18 you don't.

In contrast, a faculty member at another institution expressed the less common opinion that increased student choice would positively impact students by holding them accountable for their decisions:

> I started thinking about what's the mission of a community college? It's an open college, open enrollment, and students who come here should have the choice of what they want to take. But they need to suffer the consequences and take responsibility….You do the minimal amount in high school and they just push them along. All right. And they come here and they expect the same thing. And they make their choices. You're right. They make their choices not necessarily the right choices, but they have to learn that the right choices or the wrong choices have

repercussions…Well, let them make the mistake. It was your decision to do that, all right, and you didn't get through it…So I was kind of in favor of this bill.

Another faculty member pointed out that increased student choice had the unintended positive effect of helping students to accurately assess their academic readiness early in the semester:

> One thing is that students that probably would not have been successful in the first place are realizing that much sooner in a semester now. So instead of them, you know, figuring out around week nine and ten that they are not going to finish out the semester, they are discovering that in week two. They are taking a test week two, they are realizing they will never get caught back up because it's moving so quickly, and they are making that decision. So that might be a good thing.

**Advisors' Perspectives on Student Choice.** Most advisors in our sample agreed that student choice is influenced by the opinions of others. Many stated that after talking with friends, parents, and classmates, students will arrive at their advising meeting with pre-set ideas regarding which classes they should take. One advisor explained, "Now that they have heard from their friends, from their parents, and from their peers, it's getting harder and harder to get them to do anything other than what they already want to do."

These situations are most likely to occur when students have learned from their peers about the legislation. One advisor explained that students say to their advisor, "'Oh, I am exempt,' and you [the advisor] have to explain the whole thing." Another

advisor reported that occasionally "you get students that are adamant… 'Where's the paper I need to sign so I can be exempt?' Not recognizing that paper is not necessarily in their best interest."

Advisors reported that some students will initially agree with their advisor, but ultimately choose to follow the advice of family and friends. Another advisor lamented:

> In the session they would listen and we would make that connection and they would say, 'You know, I agree with you. I need to step back into this level.' And you would get them registered and you would feel good that between the two of you you've made the right decision. And ultimately, they would go home, discuss it with their family and if you looked at their schedule, a couple weeks later they changed it.

However, the number of course offerings often played an important role in restricting student choice. Course offerings were limited, especially on rural and satellite campuses, by financial constraints and low enrollment. With limited funding for reform in the English department, a faculty member at one institution admitted, "We did what we could with what we had. So that also was part of our decision making process in terms of narrowing down the four modalities to the two."

Regarding low enrollment, one advisor pointed out that "we have students in reading, and there have been only been five students in there… so we are calling them back and saying, 'Guess what, let's go ahead and exempt you.'" According to another

advisor, course recommendations "depend on the individual. If they have experience in online technology then maybe they may be okay with a module that has a large technological component. If they're more traditional learners, we try to seek those traditional learning opportunities for students. But it also becomes what's available at the same time." Another advisor described being limited by the course sections open at the time of advisement:

> What we have available at [this satellite campus] is not even a fourth compared to other campuses. So we give them what we have… For the math, we only have like one or two sections open and once those are filled, we're putting them in something else because we don't have any other choice.

**Students' Perspectives on Student Choice.** Student choice, in terms of course selection, is influenced by a number of factors including finances, course availability, course schedule, and peer pressure. In addition, students reported varying levels of self-awareness and agency. For example, one particularly self-aware student reported, "I am fully aware that it's not college required, it's not a credit, but I need it." In contrast, a student at another institution admitted that "my coach pretty much made my schedule"

Financial aid and the cost of taking courses that did not count toward degree completion was a major factor in how students made registration choices. A non-exempt student identified the quandary many students in our sample find themselves in with making decisions about whether to enroll in developmental education courses, particularly for students without financial aid.

Well, if I was offered that I probably would have, because that's just one class less I have to pay for. I don't qualify for financial aid. It's like everything I am doing is out of pocket. So, the way college is going today it's very pricey, so I probably would have. I don't know how well I would have did though.

Another non-exempt student compared his pre and post SB 1720 experience to a friend's:

> …once I found out that this new law was gonna take effect, I had not taken any of my math classes, 'cause I was waiting till the end, which was against the advice of my advisor. And I really felt that – I was so fearful of math that I didn't want to take it till the end 'cause I didn't want to deal with it. So we kept pushing it to the end….So when I found out that you – it was only within a ten year I was kind of upset, because now I still had to take it anyway. But I can tell you one thing. I have a coworker who took remedial math two times and failed, and then he opted out, to not take a remedial and go straight into college algebra, which I thought was a mistake and I voiced my opinion to him 'cause I've known him for three years. And I said, "You know, you failed it twice, and I really don't think that if you take the college level you're gonna do any better." He goes, "Yeah, but I don't have to pay the five credits," 'cause remedial classes are usually five credits and it comes out of your FAFSA money. He said he didn't want to pay that anymore. I said, "But if you fail it, then it's three strikes and all that goes on your degree audit and college transcript. Not only did you fail remedial but you're gonna – you know, you may fail your college-level" but he still opted out.

While some students who were aware of SB 1720 declined to take placement tests because they were not required to do so, other students opted to complete the assessment. A student said:

> I don't see why anybody would just sign-up for classes, especially your first semester of college, and not find out where you are at. Like, you take a class that sounds interesting but it involves a lot of writing, and you have no clue how to write…Why take a class that you are going to fail because you don't have the knowledge you need going into that class? I think having to take the placement test is a good idea.

Two students at the same college had different experiences with advising. One student stated:

> But, upstairs they throw you in classes. They don't care. They don't care what you got outside of this. That's another thing I found just yesterday from an instructor, and I won't say who, but the comment was made that when you do register they try to push you into four classes minimum… They force you in classes. That's what she tried-- I said no."

> Another student at a different institution had the opposite experience, "They [advisors] don't force me in classes. They are good to me, but I tell them how many classes I need a semester, or whatever.

## STUDENT OUTCOMES

At the time of our site visits many of the 10 FCS institutions were in the first semester of full implementation of the required changes. Other than published research that documents many of the relationships between themes participants discussed (i.e., influence of student part/full-time status on persistence, enrollment in developmental education on time to graduation), the student outcomes of the legislation are still being assessed. In the full report of the CPS Developmental Education Implementation study, data from the Division of Florida Colleges will provide a snapshot of true outcomes for students. As a result, the data we present here related to student outcomes largely represents perceived influences on student academic outcomes.

**Impact on Other Courses.** Faculty at the FCS institutions we visited expressed both optimism and pessimism about students opting out of developmental education and the potential consequences for college-level courses.

One faculty member explained the larger implications for faculty in handling students who choose to opt out of developmental education courses:

> But our big issue with the Reading was now we were going to have this huge population of students who are not going to be taking the Reading. And unfortunately, when students think of Reading they say well, I can read this, I don't need to take Reading. But they have no concept of how to find the main points, of how to outline, on logical thinking. To read a math problem and try and figure out what the reading is in the math. So a big part of the Reading department is that we have to train subject area teachers how to teach these skills but in their courses.

Another faculty member recounted an example of a faculty colleague who taught both a developmental writing course and a college-level writing course.

But my friend, who is a teacher, was teaching both Com I and a developmental ed course in the spring, and he said the difference between the two classes was pretty startling because his Com I people were far worse than his developmental ed. Developmental ed people, who had to because of their-- they hadn't met the exemption requirements, they were people from private schools, possibly people who hadn't been to all four years in the Florida system, for one reason or another, they were not exempt, that class was much better than his Com I class.

Given the early stages of implementation, an administrator discussed the lack of data available to track the success of those opting out of developmental education in other courses:

I am interested in knowing what happens to the student in first level science, or the first level of psychology, or those areas. Because we don't have data to parlay who should have had developmental and who shouldn't have. We have aggregate numbers. We don't know. But, there has to be an impact there as well, because they are not getting any remediation. They bypassed even something like reading. You know, if they are reading on a sixth grade level, but we don't know that, there is no prerequisite in any other course that would pick-up on that, so they are taking the first level of English, which may give them a little bit of help with that, but then they are taking first level biology and might not be able to read the text book. We don't have any way of unpacking that data. That's a real concern moving forward.

Another administrator remarked about the negative effect of developmental education students in college-level course success.

So the students in dev ed are the students who want to be there now, that's my theory and that's why they are doing well. And the students who opted out of dev ed are the students who are bringing down the 1101 and the College Algebra grades…

Campus personnel at one institution remarked that SB 1720 had created a leveling effect by making developmental education more challenging with only highly motivated, self-aware students enrolled in developmental education and college-level courses less challenging with more academically underprepared students, "You know, it's just anecdotal and statistically, it probably isn't significant, but I have seen in my little domain the developmental courses get harder, the [MAT]1033, and those courses get easier."

**More Committed Developmental Education Students.** Other campus personnel are observing a difference in the type of developmental education student. An administrator noted:

…the success rate in our highest developmental math went up significantly which leads me to question, was dev ed the problem or were the students in the dev ed classes the problem and those students have now opted to go into other courses? …I know on most of the campuses, we didn't change how we were teaching the developmental math, because we had this program we have been implementing for the past six years.

One academic support staff member at the institution acknowledged her amazement at student's proactive stance toward academic support:

I am amazed at how many students are opting in to take the developmental reading classes…And the students, their mindset is a little different; they're being a little more proactive where their needs are concerned and they'll come to the lab of their own volition…and I didn't expect that to happen, didn't expect it to happen at all.

**Student Perceptions of Ability.** In our preliminary reports of both site visits and student survey results, administrators, faculty, and students consistently agree that by and large students "do not do optional." The student level data provided by the Division of Florida Colleges will determine if there is truth to this belief, but faculty agree, especially related to developmental education reading courses.

Administrators, faculty, and advisors consistently agree that students often do not have accurate perceptions of their abilities, and at times overestimate their level of preparation, despite being presented with evidence to the contrary. Campus personnel explained that this overestimation came from multiple sources, including a desire to fit in with peer groups, self-advisement, and unrealistic assessment of their own level of preparation. One advisor explained how the advisor recommendations are often countered by peer groups:

A lot times they say, fine, you have some experience with that, and will go along with it, but it's hard to do that with the younger students

that just-- they just have it in their minds that their friends are not doing this, or their friends signed a waiver and I want to be with my friends, and they just don't see the long-term consequences that this could have.

In contrast, a student expressed frustration that their test scores and advisor recommendation did not align with the outcome of their developmental education course.

… I said earlier on, that I took the MAT 0028 and the PERT said that I should take that course, when in reality, I shouldn't have even been in the course to begin with. I probably could have skipped those two and still gone onto [MAT]1033. So I feel like what the advisors select for the students and what the students actually know that they can do themselves, I don't think it's in line very much with anything.

Another student spoke of her choice to enroll in developmental math despite being able to enroll in MAT1033. She explained:

I was like, what is MAT 0028L? I was like I don't know what that is, so I was like, okay, if it's satisfied. I mean I guess they're pretty much telling me I can go on to the next thing. But I still, within myself, I didn't feel like it was gonna be just okay to just jump right into it, I needed a refresher. Because they told me, you can take it for a refresher, so when you get to College Algebra then you know it'll be a piece of cake. So that's pretty much that.

As mentioned previously, campus personnel agreed that older non-traditional students returning to school are better able to assess their abilities than younger, more recent high school graduates. One advisor explained:

> We see some returning students that still fall into that exempt category, but when they were here previously prior to the senate bill being implemented, they were in developmental classes. So upon returning and having that conversation with them they're more likely to pick up where they left off, finish developmental classes rather than opting out of the developmental and using their exemption. They are much more realistic if they've been in school before.

# Summary and Conclusion

In response to the legislation, the 10 FCS institutions we visited created new intake and advising processes that incorporated complicated sorting procedures for exempt and non-exempt students. Campus personnel were concerned about not requiring placement tests, but the use of multiple measures in advising has produced a more holistic process that has resulted in more students seeking advising appointments and more time spent with each student. In terms of revised coursework, faculty and students communicated mixed feelings on the new course modalities, while faculty resisted adjusting college-level courses for exempt students.

A number of unforeseen challenges related to financial aid, specific student populations, and technology were identified. Challenges related to financial aid were associated with the timing of disbursement, students' ability to maintain "satisfactory academic progress," and the denial of financial aid to fund developmental education classes for exempt student veterans and their families. Likewise, many campus personnel and students in our sample expressed concern that different student populations seem to have been affected by the legislative changes in a variety of ways. Lastly, technology was identified as a component of the implementation that was not fully considered by legislators, for both the institution and students.

Developmental education reform at FCS institutions has provided students with more choices. Students can choose whether to opt into developmental education courses, and if they do so, they can choose the modality that best suits their learning needs. Campus personnel have been divided, or skeptical at best, about the impact of increased student choice on student success. With the increased emphasis on student choice under SB 1720, many administrators, faculty, advisors, and academic support staff in our sample questioned whether developmental

education students were making well-informed educational decisions. Administrators, faculty, and advisors consistently agreed that students often do not have accurate perceptions of their abilities, and at times overestimate their level of preparation, despite being presented with evidence to the contrary.

Overall, the findings from our site visits highlight the complexity of comprehensive education policy reform. The wide-sweeping reform instituted by SB 1720 elicited a variety of responses from those involved with implementing the changes at FCS institutions. One faculty member described the importance of developmental education:

> You may want to have that warm up like an Olympian before you go out and run a, you know, 1000m race, you might want to warm up that math or English or reading muscle that's gone dormant. Because some students, you know are brand new, some have gone to college and come back after a miserable start 10 years ago. And so they are coming in totally new to the system and this is just saying this contributes towards your success. Your initial placement in dev ed courses is the best possible starting point with the highest probability of success for you in that subject area.

Faculty remain convinced that developmental education classes serve an important purpose for academically underprepared students. Although there was strong consensus that the poor student outcomes and the costliness of developmental education were problems, faculty, administrators, advisors, and other campus personnel are unsure whether SB 1720 is the solution to these problems. Nevertheless, a shared commitment to students has allowed FCS institutions to implement the legislation. Further study, particularly analysis of student records data in combination with continued implementation analysis, will help inform the continued effort to reform developmental education in Florida with credible evidence so that policies and practices aiming for student postsecondary success can be put in place.

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# Appendices

## INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

**Appendix A:**
**Interview Protocol for Administrators and Implementation Team Leaders**

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## APPENDIX A

### FL Developmental Education Study: Interview Protocol for Administrators and Implementation Team Leaders

**Researcher Introduction and Instructions**

Hello. My name is --- and I work with the Center for Postsecondary Success at Florida State University. We are studying how developmental education has changed on your college campus and we want to hear your thoughts. We've read over your implementation plan and are particularly interested in hearing about how the implementation process has gone.

Please feel free to speak up even if you disagree with someone else here. It's OK to disagree, because it's helpful to hear different points of view. There are no wrong answers and everyone's ideas are valuable. You names will not be attached to what you say here. I might write down notes or ask additional questions, and my colleague will be observing as well. These are just things to help us remember your comments. You have also been provided materials to write any notes or comments you may have.

We have our conversation scheduled for a limited time today, so, for the sake of time, I may jump ahead to the next topic from time to time, but please stop me if there is something you really want to say. We're audio recording our discussion because we want to make sure we don't miss any comments. Later, we'll go through all of your comments and use them to prepare a report on our discussion.

Participation in the study and this focus group is voluntary. You may chose not to participate in the study, stop participating in the study at any point, and decide not to answer any questions without consequence to you. Does anyone have any questions?

**Directions**

Once administrators have been given the opportunity to ask any questions they have and you have answered them, distribute the Administrator Background Information Sheet and Participant Consent Forms. Any individuals deciding not to participate are allowed to leave. Also distribute the background questionnaire.

You may know some of the people that are in this room, others you may not. Today we all have name placards in front of us, and I ask that you use the names on our nametags to refer to everyone in this room. We are going to go ahead and get started if no one finds any reason why we can't proceed.

**\*\*We need verbal consent from each participant that they agree to participate in the focus group. \*\***

**Introductions**

Let's first share the names on our name placards and a little bit about ourselves – perhaps your year and how long you've been here at XXX College, and in what capacity you work, and your role in developing the implementation plan.

**Planning Vs. Implementation**

1. From reading your implementation plan, we noted XXX, would you agree with our read of your plan?

2. Do you see the college's plan being implement as planned? Are there certain areas in which implementation has differed from the plan?

3. From reading the Implementation Plan, it seems as though the College has chosen to emphasize: (Choose one: modularized, compressed, contextualized, and/or co-requisite instruction)? Why did you choose to emphasize some methods of instruction more than others?

4. How did the college choose which methods of instruction to emphasize?

5. What kind of new services are available to exempt students? Non-exempt students?

   a. Probe: Does your college offer supplementary academic supports (summer bridge programs, tutoring, etc.)?

6. How does the college communicate with students about the resources available to them?

7. What role does instructional technology play for students referred to developmental education?

8. Has your college developed a rubric or predictive model for identifying whether students (particularly exempt students) need developmental education?

   a. Probe: If so, what factors does your rubric/ model consider?

**Impact**

9. What has been the impact of the implementation plan on campus resources thus far?

10. Were hiring or reallocation measures required?

    a. Probe for: Faculty members in developmental education or college-level courses?

    b. Advising staff?

    c. Information technology (IT) department to support increased online learning?

11. Were investments necessary in facilities, equipment, and/or technology? Can you describe those investments?

    d.    Probe: computer labs, new educational software, resources necessary for online learning)

    a.    Has the redesign been more or less costly than expected?

12. What has been the impact of the redesign on students thus far? Are students making used of the services and resources offered to them?

13. How have enrollment patterns changed in developmental education and gateway courses as a result of the reform? Were you expecting these changes?

14. What metrics will you look at to determine whether the redesign was successfully implemented on your campus?

15. What outcome data is currently available to you? Can you share any preliminary/early outcomes?

16. What do you foresee as the long-term impact of this implementation? How do you anticipate your plan will change over time?

17. Which mode of delivery do you feel has been most effective (modularized, compressed, contextualized or co-requisite) and why?

**Reflection**

18. What have been the most successful parts of the redesign?

19. What challenges or barriers have emerged?

    e.    Probe: Do you see these challenges as primarily coming from the state of Florida, other administrators, faculty members, and/or students?

**Concluding Thoughts**

20. Are there any unique or innovative responses to the developmental education redesign at your college that you think other college leaders should know about?

21. What has been your experience working with the Division of Florida Colleges over the past year? Additionally, what do you perceive their role to be in this process?

22. What additional experiences or feedback would you like to share?

## FL Developmental Education Study: Interview Protocol for Advisors

**Introductions**

Let's first share the names on our name placards and a little bit about ourselves – perhaps your year and how long you've been here at XXX College, and in what capacity you work.

**Planning and Implementation**

1. How did you hear about the developmental education reform?

2. What kinds of resources or professional development/learning opportunities have been available to prepare for implementation of this reform?

3. How have these resources been useful? Can you give me a specific example?

**Counseling and Advising Processes for Developmental Education**

4. Walk me through the intake and advising process for a typical student, starting with their first point of contact with the college.

5. How does this process differ for exempt and non-exempt students?

6. How do you assess whether an exempt student might need developmental education (e.g., a test, a rubric, a predictive model, *GPA, SAT/ACT scores, and other measures of high school performance* etc.)?

7. How do you communicate this recommendation?

8. Do you attempt to match students to particular delivery modes (for example advising a student to take modularized math versus co-requisite math)? If so, what factors do you consider?

   a. Do you ask students about their comfort level with technology prior to recommending an online or hybrid course?

**Ongoing Student Support**

9. How often do students come back into your office/department for follow-up appointments?

10. What (online) advising resources are available for students? How do you communicate with students about these resources?

11. What role do advisors play in the college's Early Alert System?

**Reflection on Changes Post-Reform**

12. How has the number of incoming students advised in-person by your office changed as a result of the reform?

   a. *If applicable:* How are you handling the increased number of students? *(Probe for additional staff, collaboration with other offices/departments, new policies and procedures, reliance on technology)*

13. To what extent do you think the new advising process is accurately recommending developmental education and college-level courses for exempt students?

14. Do you think students view their developmental education referral as accurate? Do students seem to take your recommendations to heart?

15. What is your perception of the impact of this reform on student success?

**Concluding Thoughts**

16. Overall, what is your perspective on the developmental education redesign in comparison to the old system? What is going well with the redesign?

17. What additional experiences or feedback would you like to share?

**FL Developmental Education Study:  Interview Protocol for Faculty**

**Introductions**

Let's first share the names on our name placards and a little bit about ourselves – perhaps your Division/Teaching area and how long you've been here at XXX College.

**Planning and Implementation**

1. How were you told about the reform?

    a. Probe: From what sources did you get the information?

2. What was your initial response?

3. Did you receive any training prior to implementation?

**Teaching in the Redesign**

4. Tell us about the developmental education sequence in your college. Or Tell us about the course(s) you're teaching.

5. How do you use instructional technology in the course(s)? If so, is this mandated or at the discretion of instructors?

6. How do you think the use of instructional technology affects how students learn and other academic behaviors?

7. Have your teaching methods changed as a direct result of the developmental education reform? If so, in what ways?

    a. Probe for specific examples regarding changes in pedagogy/methods of delivery, course content, order and pacing of that material)

8. How have the new policies and procedures changed the make-up of your classroom *(Probe for class size, age, race, and gender)*?  What about classroom dynamics?

    a. Probe: Are you seeing more or less students in developmental education? How has this impacted classroom dynamics?

9. What do you do when students struggle in class?

10. How do you use your college's Early Alert System?

11. How have faculty adjusted gateway courses as a result of the developmental education reforms?

**Impact and Reflections**

12. What support have you received or would like to receive from the Division of Florida Colleges?

13. What is your impression of the reform and how it has been implemented on your campus?

    a. Probe for feelings of insecurity, confusion, frustration, etc.

    b. Have you felt supported by your institution throughout this process?

14. What additional feedback or experiences would you like to share?

**FL Developmental Education Study: Interview Protocol for Student Focus Group**

**Introductions**

Let's first share the names on our name placards and a little bit about ourselves – perhaps your year and how long you've been here at XXX College.

**Course Selection**

*Now, I would like to start by asking you some questions about how you decided which classes to take this semester.*

1.  How many of you were required to take the placement test? (Record names/hands)
2.  How many of you chose to take the test? (Record names/hands)

    a.  How did you make your decision to take the test?

    i.  Probe: advice from an advisor, uncertainty about ability, family or friends

3.  What happened after you took the test and received your scores? Listen to student responses.

    a.  Probe: Did anyone from the college explain the test results to you? If so, who met with you, and what was explained?

4.  If you did not take a test, how were you advised about what classes to take? What other things did the advisor consider (grades, other tests, etc.)?

5.  How did you feel about their recommendations? Did their advice seem appropriate for your specific situation?

6.  How did the college share information about class options with you?

    a.  Probe: orientation, website, print materials, phone calls, emails, during a meeting with an advisor

7.  Did you talk with anyone else (family, friends, faculty, etc.) about your options?

    a.  Probe: Did you rely on any other resources we haven't yet talked about to help you make up your mind?

8.  What did you think of the information you were provided?

    a.  Probe: When it was time to make a decision, how well do you think you understood the different options that you had?

**Experiences in Developmental Education: Exempt Students Only**

*Now, I'd like to ask you some questions about your current developmental education class.*

9.  Who chose to enroll in developmental education courses? (Record names/hands)
10. And for how many of you was this enrollment optional? (Record names/hands)
11. How is instructional technology used in your class(es)?
12. How does this compare with the technology used in your non-developmental classes?

**Experiences in Non-Developmental Education**

13. For those of you who did not choose to enroll in developmental education course, why not? Why did you decide NOT to take this class or classes?

**Supports and Services**

*Now I'd like to talk about the services on campus that are available to help you be successful.*

14. Can you give me an example of a time you've had difficulty in class? Think about why you may have had trouble. When you encountered difficulty, what did you do?

    a. Probe: Did you get help or not? What kind of help (e.g., help from the instructor, tutoring)?

15. What supports are provided to you by the college to help you complete your developmental education courses? How did you hear about these services?

**Reflections**

*We're almost finished. Thank you for your participation so far. You've given us lots of good information. Now, let's talk about what you think of your experience so far.*

16. Looking back, do you think you made an informed choice about your classes? Ultimately, was the decision to enroll (or not enroll) in developmental education a good one? Are you satisfied with your courses?

    a. Probe: Please explain.

17. How has your choice (either to enroll in developmental education or not) impacted your educational plans?

18. Is there anything else about your experiences with developmental education that you'd like to share?