College Readiness in California’s Community Colleges

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Developmental education is a major challenge facing community college students

- California Community Colleges (CCC) system is big and diverse
  - Educates almost half of the state’s undergraduates, especially underrepresented students
  - Critical to the state’s production of bachelor’s degrees

- Our research questions:
  - Is developmental education successfully preparing students?
  - How do colleges determine which students are college ready?
  - What are colleges doing to improve in these two areas?
Most students enroll in at least one developmental course

- College-ready, 20%
- Only math, 25%
- Math and English, 39%
- Only English, 15%

2009–10 cohort
Latino, African American, and low-income students are overrepresented in developmental education

![Bar chart showing the share of students in developmental education by demographic group.](chart.png)
High attrition is a big concern

Math cohort progression by starting level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrolled</th>
<th>Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Algebra</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning Algebra</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate algebra/geometry</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College level</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Four levels below: 100%
- Three levels below: 69%
- Two levels below: 59%
- One level below: 44%

- Four levels below: 26%
- Three levels below: 15%
- Two levels below: 8%
A large share of developmental education students never achieve their academic goals.
Assessment and placement policies govern where students begin their college journey
  - There is little clarity about how colleges assess and place students

PPIC developed a survey of CCC policies
  - Assessment and placement into transfer-level math and English, and the highest level of ESL
  - 73% response rate (82 colleges)
  - 2014–15 academic year
Colleges rely heavily on assessment tests

Most common assessment measures

- Assessment test score
- Grade in last math/English course
- Early Assessment Program
- High school GPA
- Instructor/counselor recommendation

Share of colleges (%)

- Math
- English
- ESL
Minimum scores for placement into transfer-level courses vary considerably

- Over half of colleges used Accuplacer to assess college readiness in math
  - But cut scores ranged from 25 to 96 out of 120
  - Half of colleges considered a score of 58 or higher to be college ready

- Access determined not only by student performance, but by where students enroll

- Students of color may face stricter access to transfer-level math
Ongoing reforms aim to promote more consistent and accurate placement policies...

- Common Assessment Initiative
  - Will establish a common assessment system
  - Placement will continue to be locally determined

- Multiple Measures Assessment Project
  - Aims to improve consistency in colleges’ use of multiple measures

- Colleges are discussing reforms, but ESL needs more attention
  - ESL students may be disadvantaged by current policies
  - Fewer colleges are discussing changes in ESL policies
Reforms to redesign developmental courses focus on:
- Reducing exit points where students drop out
- Aligning sequences to students’ programs of study

Two-thirds of colleges offer redesigned math courses
- But enrollment in these courses was less than 10% of total developmental math enrollment in 2014–15
- Limited research on the effectiveness of reforms
Colleges are moving in the right direction, but more work needs to be done

- Developmental education is an obstacle to student success
- Colleges vary in how they identify college-ready students
- Colleges have started implementing promising reforms
  - PPIC will evaluate the effectiveness of reforms
  - Next step will be to scale up successful efforts
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Notes on the use of these slides

These slides were created to accompany a presentation. They do not include full documentation of sources, data samples, methods, and interpretations. To avoid misinterpretations, please contact:

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Thank you for your interest in this work.