



Update on Developmental (Remedial) Education in Wyoming Higher Education October 2014

Every Wyoming higher education institution is addressing the low levels of success in developmental education.

The Problem:

- Students who start in developmental coursework do not complete college-level courses in Math and English in a timely manner, and are less likely to complete a degree.
- Students need remediation for a variety of reasons:
 - Have been out of school for many years and not utilizing skills (particularly math)
 - Did not take math during their senior year of high school, so knowledge is stale
 - Have skills gaps that preclude them from testing into college-level courses

The Response:

The Wyoming community college developmental (math and English) faculty met two years ago to discuss the challenges and concerns of developmental education. Institutions have sent representatives to national conferences and have done significant research on best practices, studying those institutions that are experiencing increases in student success.

Each institution has developed strategies for addressing this problem. Unfortunately, there are no easy and “cookie-cutter” answers.

Subsequently, the CCW team sponsored a group to go to the Lumina-funded Developmental Education Bootcamp to learn more about best practices. The team included two K-12 representatives, a math faculty and a superintendent, who subsequently have joined the CCW team.

A follow-up meeting to share initiatives and results was held on October 3, 2014. Approximately 50 faculty and staff representatives gathered to share progress on their developmental education initiatives and discuss continued challenges. K-12 partners joined the group to talk about progress from their perspective.

The Changes:

- Institutions have addressed the issue of appropriate placement in developmental math and English by adjusting COMPASS and ACT cut-off scores and/or are using other indicators such as HS GPA and grades in math to determine placement.

- Several institutions have started utilizing the co-requisite model in both math and English, whereby students are enrolled in the college-level course and provided with supplemental instruction (generally with the same faculty member) to address selected areas of deficiency. This is the preferred model for change in English.
- Some colleges are running accelerated programs, particularly in math, so that students can move quickly through the sequence if they just need to build skills in certain areas.
- Institutions have augmented support systems for students requiring remediation.
- Some institutions have addressed the non-cognitive aspects of student success and are starting to develop strategies for identifying and addressing areas such as motivation, independence, confidence and self-responsibility.

Early Results:

Institutions are beginning to see results from their developmental education efforts. Many changes have only been operational for a semester or two but have some very positive indicators of success.

A preliminary success story: Central Wyoming College has been utilizing the co-requisite model for English for three full semesters. They went from 35% completion rate in English 1010 for those who started in remediation to a 67.5% completion rate. The overall student completion in English 1010 is 78%. These results illustrate that students can be successful in these courses when provided the right learning environment and support.

Eastern Wyoming College has been working collaboratively with service-area high schools to emphasize the importance of taking the ACT and COMPASS. They have provided Compass prep sessions, the summer Bridge program, and offered developmental math to seniors at area high schools. So far, results seem promising with a decrease in the students who tested into developmental math of 38 percent, English of 40 percent, and reading of 67 percent.

Casper College has also piloted teaching developmental math in Casper high schools with an initial 91% success rate. Some students saw up to a 7 point increase in ACT scores after taking the remediation.

Western has been using the accelerated lab method for math for three years with mixed results. Students did not succeed at significantly higher levels than through the lecture method. They did, however, have the opportunity to progress more rapidly through the developmental sequence. Western is currently incorporating a new mini-lecture strategy to enhance success.

Next Steps:

The group who met on October 3rd agreed that an annual meeting to discuss results and share successes and challenges would be extremely valuable. They will also meet annually for statewide articulation. Each institution will continue to share best practices and results on their initiatives.

Institutions are contributing resources to changing developmental education, accelerating student progress to college-level courses, and are maintaining their commitment to the CCW goal of helping students to complete the first college-level math and English courses within the first 30 credit hours of their program. More concrete data will be available in the coming year.