

# Best Practices in Retention at Community Colleges

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In the following report, Hanover Research identifies best practices for improving retention at community colleges. The report provides a review of the research literature regarding retention best practices as well as a series of program profiles of exemplary programs.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

## INTRODUCTION

In this report, Hanover Research reviews strategies for improving student retention at community colleges. In particular, this review focuses on institutional practices — both instructional initiatives and broader student support programs — that are identified in research literature as particularly promising for increasing student engagement and persistence. The report comprises the following two sections and emphasizes theory and practices for improving retention:

- **Section I: Literature Review** surveys the research literature on best practices in improving retention at community colleges. Sources discussed in this review include large-scale studies on the effectiveness of various strategies as well as reports on the impact of retention programs implemented at particular institutions.
- **Section II: Program Profiles** provides in-depth profiles of effective retention programs at three community colleges (Community College of Baltimore County, South Florida State College, and Tallahassee Community College) and one state-wide initiative (the California Acceleration Project).

Research on community college retention consistently finds that students who place into developmental levels of math or English are far less likely to persist in their education.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, much of this report focuses on strategies for supporting developmental students and increasing their likelihood of success.

## KEY FINDINGS

- **Accelerated developmental education courses show significant evidence of improving students' academic engagement and retention.** These courses de-emphasize traditional remediation methods and focus on allowing students to complete college-level work as early as possible. Studies of multiple accelerated developmental education programs at different institutions show that these courses can shorten the developmental pipeline, improve students' performance in gatekeeper courses, and increase retention.
- **Supplemental instruction, a formal arrangement for academic support beyond regularly scheduled class times, has been associated with greater collaborative learning, student effort, and student-faculty interaction, among other positive indicators of engagement.** For instance, LaGuardia Community College in New York has found that supplemental instruction improves students' grades in high-risk

<sup>1</sup> [1] Fike, D. and R. Fike. "Predictors of First-Year Student Retention in the Community College." *Community College Review*, 36, 2008. [http://www.ori.soa.efn.uncor.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/SAGE\\_PredictoresrendimientoacadamicoUSA.pdf](http://www.ori.soa.efn.uncor.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/SAGE_PredictoresrendimientoacadamicoUSA.pdf)

[2] "Remediation: Higher Education's Bridge to Nowhere." Complete College America, 2012. <http://www.completecollege.org/docs/CCA-Remediation-final.pdf>

courses and increases retention. This program employs student leaders who have successfully completed the targeted courses to lead supplemental instruction sessions and to provide students with positive role models for learning.

- **Student orientation sessions and first-year experience courses have been shown to improve a range of student outcomes, including retention.** Successful student orientation sessions focus on familiarizing students with institutional organization, administrative procedures, and campus support services, while first-year experience courses aim to help students apply time-management strategies, goal-setting strategies, and interpersonal communication skills.
- **Certain retention strategies that are emerging as best practices, such as mandatory orientation, may reduce enrollment** by introducing barriers to students whose work and family commitments limit their availability. However, many community colleges seek to accommodate students' schedules by offering orientation at multiple times and locations or offering the option of online orientation. An additional strategy is to offer separate orientation programs targeted to the needs of traditional-age and adult learners.

## SECTION I: LITERATURE REVIEW

While education experts and scholars have gathered comprehensive data on the use of various retention strategies at community colleges nationwide, they have dedicated comparatively little attention to evaluating which of these practices are most effective at promoting student retention.<sup>2</sup> As a 2012 College Board report on retention at community colleges states, “[a] practice is not ‘best’ simply because it is accepted or prevalent.”<sup>3</sup>

However, in recent years, institutions have made more concerted efforts to collect systematic evidence on the effectiveness of different retention practices. For example, the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE) at the University of Texas at Austin recently completed a multi-year research project to establish an evidence-based account of the factors that affect engagement and retention among community college students.<sup>4</sup> The three reports from this initiative identified 13 promising practices and assessed the impact of these practices on student engagement and outcomes.<sup>5</sup>

This section surveys existing research on retention strategies at community colleges, with special attention to strategies that show the most promise based on preliminary assessments of student outcomes.

### OVERVIEW: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS IN PROMOTING RETENTION

#### *DEFINING RETENTION AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES*

Because of the high proportion of non-traditional students at community colleges, defining retention and student success at these institutions presents unique challenges. Experts on retention at community colleges recommend combining traditional success and retention measures, such as those presented in Figure 1.1, with additional metrics that are better adapted to the trajectories of community college students.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> [1] “Securing the Future: Retention Models in Community Colleges.” College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2012. p. 11. <https://cerpp.usc.edu/files/2013/10/Community-college-securing-future-retention-models1.pdf>

[2] “High-Impact Practices Initiative.” Center for Community College Student Engagement. <http://www.ccsse.org/center/initiatives/highimpact/index.cfm>

<sup>3</sup> “Securing the Future,” Op. Cit., p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> “High-Impact Practices Initiative,” Op. Cit.

<sup>5</sup> [1] “A Matter of Degrees: Promising Practices for Community College Student Success.” Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2012. [http://www.ccsse.org/docs/Matter\\_of\\_Degrees.pdf](http://www.ccsse.org/docs/Matter_of_Degrees.pdf)

[2] “A Matter of Degrees: Engaging Practices, Engaging Students.” Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2013. [http://www.ccsse.org/docs/Matter\\_of\\_Degrees\\_2.pdf](http://www.ccsse.org/docs/Matter_of_Degrees_2.pdf)

[3] “A Matter of Degrees: Practices to Pathways.” Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2014. [http://www.ccsse.org/docs/Matter\\_of\\_Degrees\\_3.pdf](http://www.ccsse.org/docs/Matter_of_Degrees_3.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [1] Moore, C. and N. Shulock. “Student Progress Toward Degree Completion: Lessons from the Research Literature.” Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy, California State University, Sacramento, September, 2009. pp. 1-2. [http://www.csus.edu/ihelp/PDFs/R\\_Student\\_Progress\\_Toward\\_Degree\\_Completion.pdf](http://www.csus.edu/ihelp/PDFs/R_Student_Progress_Toward_Degree_Completion.pdf)

**Figure 1.1: Traditional Measures of Student Success**

ULTIMATE OUTCOMES	INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Graduation rates</li> <li>▪ Degrees awarded</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Term-to-term retention</li> <li>▪ Year-to-year retention</li> <li>▪ Transfer from community college to four-year institution:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Without completing two-year transfer curriculum</li> <li>○ After completing two-year transfer curriculum</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Source: Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy<sup>7</sup>

The College Board Advocacy and Policy Center suggests several ways that administrators can adapt retention and success monitoring practices to the community college setting:<sup>8</sup>

- Track students over longer timelines (i.e., using six-year graduation rates)
- Identify degree-seeking students using appropriately inclusive yet specific cohort definitions
- Include student enrollments throughout the calendar year

In addition, Timothy Leinbach and Davis Jenkins of the Community College Research Center at Columbia University have developed a **system of “milestones” and “momentum points” that can help measure student success beyond attainment of traditional outcomes.**<sup>9</sup> Milestones include both conventional measures and additional “intermediate outcomes such as completing developmental education or adult basic skills requirements,” while momentum points are “measurable educational attainments that are empirically correlated with the completion of a milestone.”<sup>10</sup> For example, momentum points can include completion of particular gatekeeper courses or a certain number of credits. Leinbach and Jenkins have designed these measures specifically to help identify areas for institutional intervention: “the rates of momentum point attainment and the probability that a student who attains a momentum point will subsequently achieve a milestone are valuable pieces of information about factors within a college’s control that could contribute to student success.”<sup>11</sup>

[2] Hagedorn, L. “How to Define Retention: A New Look at an Old Problem.” Transfer and Retention of Urban Community College Students Project. p. 13. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED493674.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Moore and Shulock, Op. Cit., p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Bulleted text taken verbatim from: “Securing the Future,” Op. Cit., pp. 9-10.

<sup>9</sup> Leinbach, T. and D. Jenkins. “Using Longitudinal Data to Increase Community College Student Success: A Guide to Measuring Milestone and Momentum Point Attainment.” Community College Research Center, January, 2008. [http://academiccommons.columbia.edu/download/fedora\\_content/download/ac:172404/CONTENT/longitudinal-data-momentum-point-research-tool.pdf](http://academiccommons.columbia.edu/download/fedora_content/download/ac:172404/CONTENT/longitudinal-data-momentum-point-research-tool.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

Finally, retention expert Linda Hagedorn recommends use of the Successful Course Completion Ratio (SCCR), which is a simple measure of the “percentage of courses that a student completes as compared to the number of courses in which the student enrolls.”<sup>12</sup> One of the major advantages of the SCCR, Hagedorn notes, is that students enroll in community colleges for many reasons, and not all students intend to pursue a certificate or degree; however, because presumably students intend to complete the courses in which they enroll, the SCCR allows institutions to measure students’ success against a clearly defined and widely applicable goal.<sup>13</sup> However, a limitation of this measure is that it does not reflect the number of certificate/degree-seeking students who complete their courses but fail to enroll in the following term.

### *MEASURING AND TRACKING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT*

In its 2013 and 2014 reports, CCCSE uses the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) to measure various aspects of students’ engagement with their institutions and the learning process as a whole. This survey asks students about their behaviors and the educational and support practices of their institutions, with responses serving as indicators or benchmarks of students’ level of engagement in several key areas. Figure 1.2 shows the benchmarks, the engagement areas measured by each benchmark, and sample survey questions grouped under each benchmark.

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<sup>12</sup> Hagedorn, Op. Cit.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

**Figure 1.2: Benchmarks of Engagement Measured by the CCSSE Survey**

BENCHMARK	WHAT IT MEASURES	SAMPLE QUESTIONS
<b>Active and Collaborative Learning</b>	Students' active involvement in their education and their collaborations with others to solve problems	During the current school year, how often have you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Made a class presentation?</li> <li>▪ Worked with other students on projects during class?</li> </ul>
<b>Student Effort</b>	Students' level of effort in their studies and the time spent on academic work	During the current school year, how often have you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in?</li> <li>▪ Come to class without completing readings or assignments?</li> </ul>
<b>Academic Challenge</b>	Amount and nature of assigned work, complexity of cognitive tasks presented to students	During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized the following mental activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations?</li> <li>▪ Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences in new ways?</li> </ul>
<b>Student-Faculty Interaction</b>	Personal interaction between students and instructors	During the current school year, how often have you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Talked about career plans with an instructor or advisor?</li> <li>▪ Used e-mail to communicate with an instructor?</li> </ul>
<b>Support for Learners</b>	Students' perceived level of institutional support	How much does this college emphasize each of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Providing the support you need to help you succeed?</li> <li>▪ Providing the support you need to thrive socially?</li> </ul>

Source: CCCSE<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> "Benchmarks of Effective Practice." Center for Community College Student Engagement.  
[http://www.ccsse.org/tools/docs/working\\_with\\_results/CCSSE\\_Benchmarks.pdf?ts=20140919134138](http://www.ccsse.org/tools/docs/working_with_results/CCSSE_Benchmarks.pdf?ts=20140919134138)

The engagement indicators used in these surveys can help community colleges measure and track how students are approaching their academic work, whether students are receiving adequate institutional support, and whether students are developing meaningful relationships with instructors and peers. The idea that higher levels of engagement among community college students will translate into increased persistence and graduation rates is not only intuitive, but backed by recent data as well. A 2014 study analyzed correlations between engagement areas as measured by the CCSSE and institutional graduation rates as reported to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).<sup>15</sup> **The researchers found that two CCSSE benchmarks in particular, *active and collaborative learning and support for learners* were associated with higher graduation rates**, even after controlling for institutional characteristics and student demographics.<sup>16</sup>

The most recent CCCSE report, published in September 2014, further identifies associations between the “promising practices” and improved student outcomes in developmental education courses, first-year gatekeeper courses, and early retention rates, as discussed in greater detail below.

#### *MANDATORY VS. OPTIONAL PROGRAMS*

Experts on retention at community colleges disagree about whether retention strategies should incorporate mandatory or optional student support services. While mandatory programs, such as orientation, academic advising, or supplemental instruction/tutoring, ensure that students are exposed to support services, such requirements may exclude students with work or family commitments, and conflict with community colleges’ mission of accessibility. Arguing for mandatory support programs, Kay McClenney, former director of CCCSE, has coined the phrase, “students don’t do optional.”<sup>17</sup> However, some community college administrators have suggested that increasing the number of mandatory offerings not only restricts access for adult learners, but also may reduce enrollment and, consequently, shrink institutional budgets.<sup>18</sup> **Given these considerations, community colleges must carefully weigh the potential value of mandatory programs in improving retention against possible impacts on revenue and state funding.** Institutions may wish to consider establishing some mandatory programs and services, while retaining certain optional programs and services.

<sup>15</sup> Price, D. and E. Tovar. “Student Engagement and Institutional Graduation Rates: Identifying High-Impact Educational Practices for Community Colleges.” *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 2014. [http://homepage.smc.edu/tovar\\_esau/esauprof/Price%20Tovar%20CCSSE%20Paper.pdf](http://homepage.smc.edu/tovar_esau/esauprof/Price%20Tovar%20CCSSE%20Paper.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> McClenney quoted in: Fain, P. “Make It Mandatory?” *Inside Higher Ed*, February 2, 2012. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/02/02/academic-support-offerings-go-unused-community-colleges>

<sup>18</sup> Fain, P. “Biting the Bullet on Completion.” *Inside Higher Ed*, February, 2013. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/02/20/community-college-learns-boosting-retention-comes-cost>

## INSTRUCTIONAL INITIATIVES

### *DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION*

Developmental or remedial education courses are financially burdensome for students, and research has shown that students are more likely to drop out of the courses the longer they enroll in a developmental education track. Accordingly, many community colleges implement “fast-track” or accelerated developmental education programs. These programs move students through basic mathematics and English courses more quickly than traditional developmental sequences.

CCCSE finds that, among developmental students, **accelerated developmental education programs are associated with both improved engagement (specifically, on the *support for learners and engaged learning benchmarks*)<sup>19</sup> and improved success in developmental and gatekeeper courses.** Specifically, developmental students who participated in an accelerated course were 1.8 to 2.4 times more likely to complete a developmental English course than those who took a traditional developmental course.<sup>20</sup> Accelerated developmental students were also 1.5 to 2.2 times more likely to complete gatekeeper English courses.<sup>21</sup>

Additional research supports these conclusions. For instance, one large-scale review of accelerated developmental education programs found that students are as likely or more likely to complete accelerated developmental courses as compared to traditional semester-long courses.<sup>22</sup> In addition, studies of the California Acceleration Project (CAP), which implements accelerated developmental math and English courses at community colleges, yielded higher completion rates in college-level courses in both subjects.<sup>23</sup> A 2014 study of accelerated remedial courses at one California institution found that students who participated in accelerated developmental programs are more likely to obtain a certificate or a degree, or to transfer to a four-year institution.<sup>24</sup>

While many of these findings are preliminary, the consistent positive results found in students’ early success and persistence suggest that accelerated developmental education is one of the most effective strategies for improving retention. Section II of this report

<sup>19</sup> “A Matter of Degrees: Engaging Practices, Engaging Students,” Op. Cit., p. 12.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>21</sup> “A Matter of Degrees: Practices to Pathways,” Op. Cit., p. 18.

<sup>22</sup> Zachry, E. and E. Schneider. “Building Foundations for Student Readiness: A Review of Rigorous Research and Promising Trends in Developmental Education.” *NCPR Developmental Education Conference: What Policies and Practices Work for Students?* September, 2010. pp. 25-26. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED533870.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> Hern, K., and M. Snell. “Rethinking Remediation: Increasing Student Completion through Acceleration and Redesign.” The California Intersegmental Articulation Council, 2014. pp. 8-9. <http://ciac.csusb.edu/2014Conf/California%20Acceleration%20Project.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> Edgecombe, N. et al. “Accelerating the Integrated Instruction of Developmental Reading and Writing at Chabot College.” Community College Research Center, May, 2014. <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/accelerating-integrated-developmental-reading-and-writing-at-chabot.pdf>

provides in-depth profiles of two particularly successful programs in this area, California's CAP (mentioned above) and the Accelerated Learning Program at the Community College of Baltimore County.

### *SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTION AND TUTORING*

Supplemental instruction and tutoring both involve providing students with academic support beyond regularly scheduled class times. *Tutoring* generally refers to one-on-one or small-group sessions, while *supplemental instruction* is a more formal arrangement that takes place at a regularly scheduled time and "may be taught by the class instructor or a trained assistant, often a former student who was successful in the class."<sup>25</sup>

CCCSE's recent studies have yielded mixed results regarding the efficacy of supplemental instruction and tutoring. The 2013 study of student engagement found that supplemental instruction was positively related to all five CCSSE benchmarks, with tutoring related to all but one.<sup>26</sup> However, while students who participated in one of these practices were slightly more likely to complete a developmental English course,<sup>27</sup> no relationship emerged for students' performance in gatekeeper courses or their likelihood of persisting to a second semester or second year.

Although research has not identified multi-institutional evidence of effectiveness for these practices, some institutions report improved outcomes, including increased retention, because of these programs. For example, a recent article by the directors of the supplemental instruction (SI) program at LaGuardia Community College (NY) presents data linking the program to higher grades in targeted high-risk courses and increased retention. The authors identify the following four "pillars" of the program as crucial to its success:<sup>28</sup>

- **SI Supervisors:** Three part-time administrative staff members select, train, supervise, and support SI leaders.
- **SI Leaders:** Students who have successfully completed targeted courses are hired to lead SI sessions at a salary of approximately \$1,100 for a twelve-week semester. SI supervisors provide training that covers theories of learning, how to facilitate collaborative learning, and ways to address behavioral issues that may arise.
- **Faculty:** Instructors for all SI-targeted courses collaborate with SI supervisors and leaders to encourage students to attend SI sessions.
- **College Administration:** Administrative staff provide funding support for the SI program and occasionally attend meetings of SI leaders to thank them for their service. SI supervisors keep administrators informed of program operations and report end-of-year data to help administrators track the effectiveness of the program.

<sup>25</sup> "A Matter of Degrees: Practices to Pathways," Op. Cit., p. 4.

<sup>26</sup> "A Matter of Degrees: High-Impact Practices for Community College Student Engagement," Op. Cit., pp. 22-24.

<sup>27</sup> "A Matter of Degrees: Practices to Pathways," Op. Cit., pp. 13-14.

<sup>28</sup> Zaritsky, J. and A. Toce. "Supplemental Instruction at a Community College: The Four Pillars." *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 106, 2006. [http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/docs/Zaritsky\\_x\\_Toce\\_2006.pdf](http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/docs/Zaritsky_x_Toce_2006.pdf)

As with other retention initiatives, community colleges may choose to make supplemental instruction and tutoring mandatory or optional. La Guardia Community College’s SI program, for example, is voluntary, which program leaders note can present a challenge in ensuring strong attendance. However, incentives and support from faculty can help mitigate this problem. For example, faculty members can successfully encourage student attendance through 1) regularly mentioning SI in class and including it in the syllabus, 2) offering some extra credit for students who attend a minimum number of SI sessions, 3) using the SI leader as a teaching assistant in the classroom when appropriate, and 4) providing instructional materials and guidance to the SI leader on a regular basis.<sup>29</sup> Another model, employed by Klamath Community College in Oregon, is to provide supplemental instruction for a range of courses but require it in courses with low success rates.<sup>30</sup>

## STUDENT ORIENTATION AND FIRST-YEAR SUCCESS COURSES

Short-term orientation courses and semester- or year-long student success courses reflect the same basic idea of preparing students for both the academic and non-academic aspects of college life. As with other practices surveyed in this report, research has not yet established a clear link between orientation/success courses and long-term retention, but evidence does suggest that both of these practices are associated with increased student engagement and improved first-year outcomes.

### SHORT-TERM ORIENTATION

Evidence from the 2013 and 2014 CCCSE reports suggests that students who attend a short-term orientation course feel more supported by the institution (i.e., they show higher scores on the *support for learners* benchmark),<sup>31</sup> and are more likely to successfully complete developmental math and English courses.<sup>32</sup> In addition, students who participated in orientation were somewhat more likely to persist to a second or third term, though this effect was only observed among non-developmental students.<sup>33</sup> A challenge with assessing the impact of orientation on outcomes is that orientation is optional at many community colleges, meaning that students who attend orientation courses may differ systematically from those who do not or cannot attend.

Additionally, while mandatory orientation can ensure that all students are informed about institutional organization, administrative procedures, and campus support services, it can impose significant burdens on students with demanding schedules.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps reflecting these reservations is the fact that only 43 percent of institutions responding to the 2013

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 25-29.

<sup>30</sup> “A Matter of Degrees: Practices to Pathways,” Op. Cit., p. 33.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>34</sup> [1] Fain, “Biting the Bullet,” Op. Cit. [2] Stephens, N. and Revell, L. “Guide to Personal Success: South Florida State College’s Quality Enhancement Plan Status,” South Florida State College, September, 2011.  
[https://www.southflorida.edu/\\_documents/SFCC\\_GPSReport.pdf](https://www.southflorida.edu/_documents/SFCC_GPSReport.pdf)

CCCSE survey required orientation for all first-time students, and only 60 to 66 percent of students complete an orientation.<sup>35</sup>

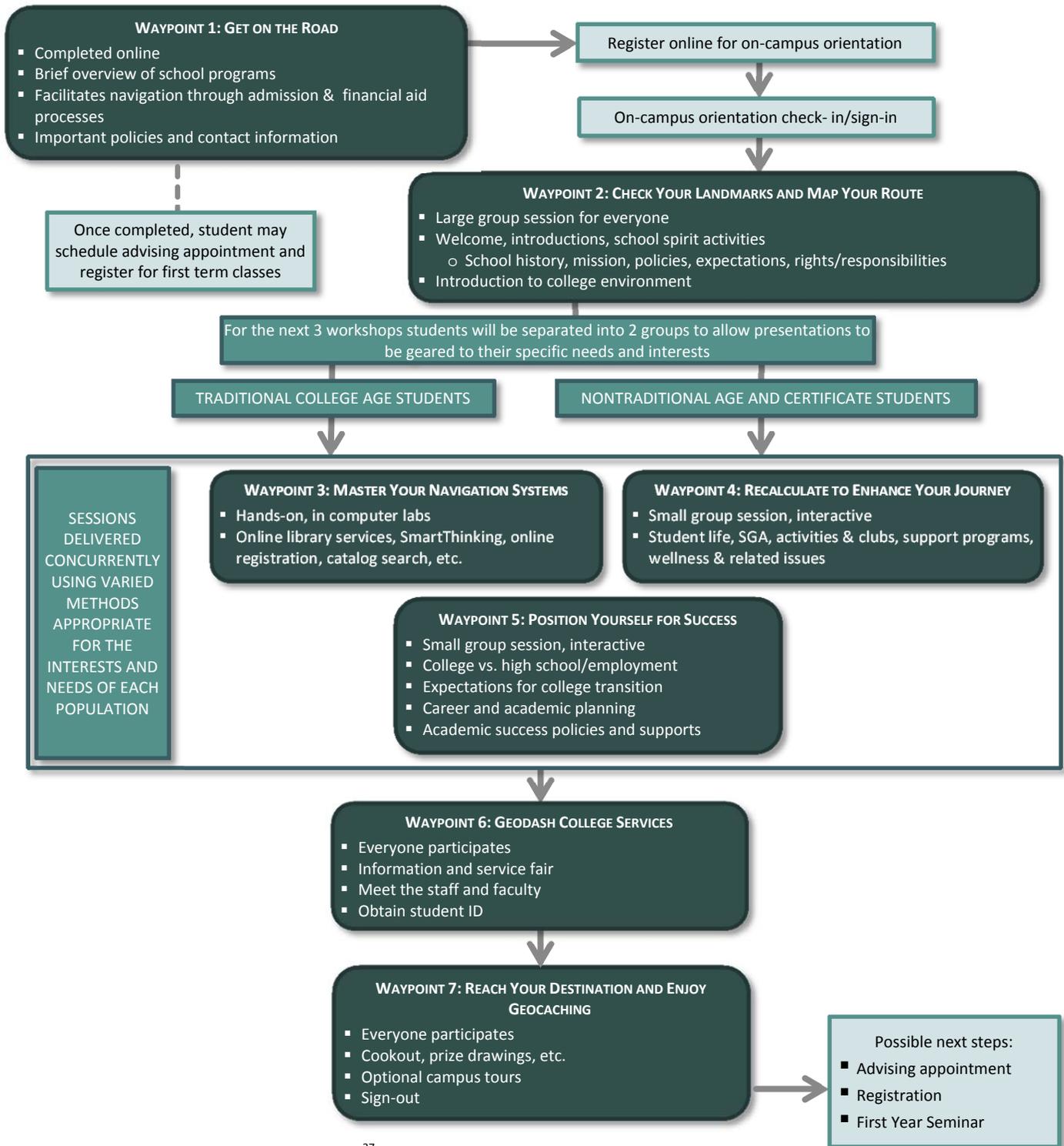
Whether or not orientation is required, many community colleges seek to accommodate students' schedules by offering orientation at multiple times and locations and/or the option of online orientation. An additional strategy is to offer separate orientation programs targeted to the needs of traditional-age and adult learners.<sup>36</sup> The orientation process at South Florida State College, shown in Figure 1.3, provides an example of an orientation program that includes both general sessions for all students and targeted workshops for different student populations.

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<sup>35</sup> "A Matter of Degrees: Engaging Practices, Engaging Students," Op. Cit., p. 11.

<sup>36</sup> [1] Stephens and Revell, Op. Cit., p. 14. [2] "A Matter of Degrees: Engaging Practices, Engaging Students," Op. Cit., p. 11.

**Figure 1.3: Orientation Process for New Students, South Florida State College**



Source: South Florida State College<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Stephens and Revell, Op. Cit., p. 80.

### *STUDENT SUCCESS COURSES*

Student success courses are “specifically designed to teach skills and strategies to help students succeed in college (e.g., time management, study skills, and test-taking skills).”<sup>38</sup> These courses, also called “First Year Experience” courses, are an extension of the orientation experience, and research suggests that such longer-term foundational-skills courses can improve both student outcomes and retention.<sup>39</sup> An analysis of the effects of “Student Life Skills” (SLS) courses offered at Florida community colleges found that for both developmental and non-developmental students, “students who enrolled in a SLS course were eight percent more likely to complete a credential, three percent more likely to transfer, and eight percent more likely to remain enrolled after five years,” even after controlling for students’ academic preparation.<sup>40</sup>

CCCSE’s most recent study found much higher rates of success in developmental and gatekeeper courses among students who participated in a student success course during their first academic term. These students were approximately five times more likely to complete developmental English courses, and 1.4 times more likely to complete developmental math courses.<sup>41</sup>

Typical elements of student success courses include training in time management, goal-setting, study skills, technology skills, and cultural diversity.<sup>42</sup> The following is a representative example of learning objectives for a student success course, from Rio Salado College in Arizona:<sup>43</sup>

- Identify and apply time-management strategies.
- Identify and apply goal-setting strategies.
- Identify preferred learning style and describe its relationship to teaching and learning strategies.
- Identify and utilize interpersonal communication skills.
- Identify and utilize strategies to organize study materials.
- Identify and utilize note-taking strategies.
- Identify and utilize textbook, academic, and classroom strategies.
- Identify and utilize test-taking strategies.

<sup>38</sup> “A Matter of Degrees: Practices to Pathways,” Op. Cit., p. 4.

<sup>39</sup> [1] Moore and Shulock, Op. Cit., pp. 6-7.

[2] Boylan, H. R. and D. P. Saxon. “What Works in Remediation: Lessons from 30 Years of Research.” The League for Innovation in the Community College, 2005. p. 8. <http://inpathways.net/Boylan--What%20Works.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> Moore and Shulock, Op. Cit., p. 7.

<sup>41</sup> “A Matter of Degrees: Practices to Pathways,” Op. Cit., p. 11.

<sup>42</sup> Fain, P. “Success Begets Success.” *Inside Higher Ed*, February 21, 2012.

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/02/21/student-success-courses-catch-slowly-community-colleges>

<sup>43</sup> Abts, M. “Effectiveness of Online Community College Success Courses.” League for Innovation in the Community College, June, 2013. <http://www.league.org/blog/post.cfm/effectiveness-of-online-community-college-success-courses>

- Identify and utilize strategies to improve memory.
- Identify and utilize strategies for critical and creative thinking

Importantly, while there is considerable overlap in the typical components of these courses, some researchers point out that the specific features of student success courses that are most effective in improving first-year success and long-term retention have not yet been identified.<sup>44</sup>

## LEARNING COMMUNITIES AND INTEGRATION

Learning communities seek to promote retention by fostering academic and social relationships among a cohort of students, faculty, and the institution as a whole. These communities “involve a group of students taking two or more linked classes together as a cohort, ideally with the instructors of those classes coordinating course outlines and assignments as well as jointly reviewing student progress.”<sup>45</sup> Institutions found their use of learning communities to improve retention based on the theories of retention expert Vincent Tinto, who argues that social integration and commitment to the institution are major considerations for student retention.<sup>46</sup> In congruence with this theory, several studies have found that students are more reluctant to leave an institution after joining a campus organization.<sup>47</sup>

**Quantitative studies of the relationship between learning communities and student outcomes suggest some positive impact on student performance but little or no impact on retention.** CCCSE’s studies have found learning communities to be positively related to both engagement — as measured by the “active and collaborative learning,” “student-faculty interaction,” and “support for learners” — benchmarks<sup>48</sup> and first-year success, with students who participated in a learning community more likely to complete developmental and gatekeeper English courses.<sup>49</sup> However, the studies found no impact on fall-to-fall or fall-to-spring persistence. Similarly, a randomized controlled study of learning communities at six community colleges found that learning communities produced a modest (half-credit) increase in credits earned but had no impact on persistence.<sup>50</sup>

However, a recent qualitative study conducted by Melinda Karp and her colleagues at the Community College Research Center found that **community college students who are**

<sup>44</sup> Zeidenberg, M., Jenkins, D., and Calcagno, J. C. “Do Student Success Courses Actually Help Community Colleges Succeed?” Community College Research Center, June, 2007. p. 6.

<http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/success-courses-help-students-succeed-brief.pdf>

<sup>45</sup> “A Matter of Degrees: Promising Practices for Community College Student Success,” Op. Cit., p. 15.

<sup>46</sup> Tinto, V. “Promoting Student Completion One Class at a Time.” American Council on Education, 2012. p. 2.

<http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Documents/Promoting-Student-Completion-One-Class-at-a-Time--Tinto.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> Albert, S. “Student Retention – A Moving Target.” Brock University, 2010.

[http://www.brocku.ca/webfm\\_send/6993](http://www.brocku.ca/webfm_send/6993)

<sup>48</sup> “A Matter of Degrees: High-Impact Practices for Community College Student Engagement,” Op. Cit., p. 18.

<sup>49</sup> “A Matter of Degrees: Practices to Pathways,” Op. Cit., pp. 12, 20.

<sup>50</sup> Visher, M. et al. “The Effects of Learning Communities for Students in Developmental Education.” National Center for Postsecondary Research, 2012. [http://www.tc.columbia.edu/i/a/document/23011\\_LCSynthesisFull.pdf](http://www.tc.columbia.edu/i/a/document/23011_LCSynthesisFull.pdf)

**integrated into campus information networks are more likely to persist to a second year.**<sup>51</sup> Faculty, staff, and peers from whom students learn about the institution comprise these information networks; in this way, the learning networks go beyond mere social relationships and encompass the exchange of information about campus opportunities, courses, or professors.<sup>52</sup> As an example of a practice that promotes information network integration, Karp et al. described guided campus tours that include introductions with personnel in various campus support offices. The authors explain, “[a] number of students reported feeling more comfortable taking advantage of these supports once they had developed relationships with support staff.”<sup>53</sup>

The relationship between integration and persistence found in this study is particularly notable because some scholars of the student experience at community colleges have suggested that Tinto’s integration framework is inapplicable to community college students. These doubts arise because of the presumption that community college students, who are likely to commute to campus and have significant responsibilities outside of college, are unlikely to integrate socially on their campuses in the same way as students at four-year institutions.<sup>54</sup> Karp et al.’s findings suggest, to the contrary, that integration efforts designed around embedding students in informational networks can increase students’ level of identification with the institution, which, in turn, promotes persistence.

## PLACEMENT, ACADEMIC PLANNING, AND ADVISING

### *PRE-ENROLLMENT ASSESSMENT AND PLACEMENT*

Most community colleges require students to take an assessment test to determine initial placement in developmental or college-level courses,<sup>55</sup> though some institutions, such as Klamath Community College (OR) also consider high school performance.<sup>56</sup> Data from CCCSE indicate that students show higher levels of engagement when they are notified more than a month in advance about having to take the test and when they prepare for the test.<sup>57</sup> In addition, developmental students are 1.6 times more likely to persist fall-to-spring when they use online or printed materials to help them prepare for the placement test.<sup>58</sup>

### *ACADEMIC PLANNING AND ADVISING*

Resource constraints at community colleges can impose challenges for the provision of advising services, with many community colleges unable to provide in-depth, one-on-one

<sup>51</sup> Karp, M., K. Hughes, and L. O’Gara. “An Exploration of Tinto’s Integration Framework for Community College Students.” Community College Research Center, May, 2008.

<http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/exploration-tintos-integration-framework.pdf>

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>55</sup> “A Matter of Degrees: Promising Practices for Community College Student Success,” *Op. Cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>56</sup> “A Matter of Degrees: Practices to Pathways,” *Op. Cit.*, p. 33.

<sup>57</sup> “A Matter of Degrees: High-Impact Practices for Community College Student Engagement,” *Op. Cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>58</sup> “A Matter of Degrees: Practices to Pathways,” *Op. Cit.*, p. 24.

advising.<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, research suggests that **advising services, particularly early development of an academic plan, can increase students' success.** According to CCCSE's 2014 report, students who reported that an advisor helped them develop an academic plan during their first term were 1.3 times more likely to complete a developmental math or English class, and 1.5 times more likely to complete gatekeeper math and English courses.<sup>60</sup>

Several researchers have argued that involving faculty in student advising increases retention by improving students' identification with their academic experience and the institution.<sup>61</sup> According to David Crockett and Virginia Gordon of Noel-Levitz, "academic advising is an important extension of the teaching/learning process, and as such, there are some elements of the advising process that are best done by instructional staff."<sup>62</sup> A 2005 study at Atlantic Cape Community College (NJ) found that both student satisfaction with advising and four-year retention rates in the Arts and Humanities department improved after the department moved from a system in which advising was provided by non-faculty staff to a faculty advising system.<sup>63</sup>

Experts such as Wes Habley of ACT, Inc. argue that whether it is provided by faculty or by non-faculty staff, advising services should be a collaborative effort that integrates the services of multiple institutional entities (Figure 1.4). Coordinating advising services across campus units helps to ensure that are "available at times when, and in places where, students make educational decisions."<sup>64</sup>

<sup>59</sup> "Implementation and User Adoption of Integrated Planning and Advising Services." Community College Research Center. <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/research-project/integrated-planning-and-advising-services.html>

<sup>60</sup> "A Matter of Degrees: Practices to Pathways," Op. Cit., pp. 13, 20.

<sup>61</sup> [1] Crockett, D. and V. Gordon. "Academic Advising: The Pivotal Point in Assisting Students to Attain Educational and Career Goals." Noel-Levitz, 2007. pp. 11-12. <http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/advising-testing/upload/09-12-Powerpoint.pdf>

[2] McArthur, R. "Faculty-Based Advising: An Important Factor in Community College Retention." *Community College Review*, 32, 2005.

[http://www.atlantic.edu/program/academic/mcarthur/faculty\\_based\\_advising.htm](http://www.atlantic.edu/program/academic/mcarthur/faculty_based_advising.htm)

<sup>62</sup> Crockett and Gordon, Op. Cit., p. 21.

<sup>63</sup> McArthur, Op. Cit.

<sup>64</sup> Habley, W. "Academic Advising: Critical Link in Student Success." Retention 2010: Educational Policy Institute's International Conference on Student Success, 2010, p. 46. <http://www.educationalpolicy.org/events/r10/Presentation%20Slides/Wes%20Habley.pdf>

**Figure 1.4: Integrating Academic Advising Services**

Source: Educational Policy Institute<sup>65</sup>

The Alamo Colleges in Texas have implemented a three-tiered advising system that provides targeted support for students in different phases of their academic careers.<sup>66</sup> The first tier provides pre-enrollment advising that includes orientation, placement assessments, and post-assessment consultations. The second tier is post-enrollment advising that includes case management from a dedicated advisor, a student success course, and early alert for struggling students. The final tier is advising for students with 30 credits or more, in which students are paired with both an advisor and a faculty mentor. Students seeking transfer to a four-year institution declare an intended transfer institution and work with their advisor

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>66</sup> "A Matter of Degrees: Practices to Pathways," Op. Cit., p. 29.

and mentor to ensure all transfer course requirements are fulfilled, while students seeking employment receive support in developing a career plan and building a portfolio/résumé.<sup>67</sup>

### *INTERVENTION FOR STRUGGLING STUDENTS*

Recent evidence suggests that intensive or “intrusive” advising for academically struggling students can increase the likelihood that such students will persist. For example, CCCSE found that **alert and intervention systems, which provide a mechanism for faculty to identify struggling students and intervene to offer support, have significant and wide-ranging positive effects on engagement among students who struggle academically.** Specifically, these systems improved engagement on all five CCSSE benchmarks.<sup>68</sup>

Zane State College in Zanesville, Ohio recently instituted an intensive advising program for struggling students. Under this program, once a student is identified as being at risk of dropping out, advisors use a variety of means to establish contact with the student, including email, phone calls, Facebook messages,<sup>69</sup> and (if all else fails) in-person visits to the student’s courses.<sup>70</sup> While previous intervention plans at Zane State College also encouraged students to meet with an advisor, the current approach makes the recommendation much stronger: according to Stacie Mahaffey, director of Zane State College’s Student Success Center, “It was implied as a mandatory meeting.... We didn’t say you had to come in, but it was implied.”<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> “A Matter of Degrees: High-Impact Practices for Community College Student Engagement,” Op. Cit., p. 32.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>70</sup> Abdul-Alim, J. “Report: ‘Intrusive Advising’ Among Best Practices for Community College Student Success.” *Diverse Education*, February, 2012. <http://diverseeducation.com/article/16812/>

<sup>71</sup> Mahaffey quoted in: Ibid.

## SECTION II: PROGRAM PROFILES

The following section provides detailed descriptions of exemplary retention programs at community colleges. These profiles provide additional information about how institutions have implemented some of the evidence-backed strategies described in Section I of this report.

### COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF BALTIMORE COUNTY

The Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) in Maryland enrolls a total of 68,301 students while employing 450 full-time faculty.<sup>72</sup> The following profile describes two of CCBC's retention-oriented initiatives that have received national attention and recognition in recent years.

#### *ACCELERATED LEARNING PROGRAM (ALP)*

CCBC offers a basic writing course known as the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP), which incorporates elements of both fast-track developmental education and the first-year learning community. Faculty members in the English department at CCBC developed ALP after observing that most students who were placed in CCBC's upper-level developmental writing course never passed first-year composition (ENGL101).<sup>73</sup>

CCBC gives students whose scores on the Accuplacer exam place them in upper-level basic writing the option of enrolling in ALP or a more traditional basic writing course. Those who opt for ALP enroll concurrently in a developmental basic writing course and ENGL101.<sup>74</sup> Those sections of ENGL101 designated as ALP sections balance the numbers of ALP students and more college-ready students who have tested into ENGL101 (i.e., 8-10 ALP students with 10-12 non-developmental students). The CCCSE's 2013 report on student engagement highlighted the program with the following description:

The 10 ALP students become a cohort. Their paired classes — English 101 and the developmental course — are taught by the same instructor, and they typically are scheduled during consecutive class periods. As a result, the ALP students and their instructor spend six hours per week together, and half of that time is in a small section of just 10 students.<sup>75</sup>

Both internal and external studies of ALP suggest it is effective in improving both success in college-level English and long-term retention.<sup>76</sup> A group of researchers at the Community

<sup>72</sup> "Key Facts." Community College of Baltimore County. <https://www.ccbcmd.edu/media/pre/keyfacts.pdf>

<sup>73</sup> Adams, P. et al. "The Accelerated Learning Program: Throwing Open the Gates." *Journal of Basic Writing*, 28:2, 2009. pp. 52-56. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ877255.pdf>

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>75</sup> "A Matter of Degrees: Engaging Practices, Engaging Students," *Op. Cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>76</sup> [1] *Ibid.* [2] Cho, S. et al. "New Evidence of Success for Community College Remedial English Students: Tracking the Outcomes of Students in the Accelerated Learning Program." Community College Research Center, December, 2012. <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/ccbc-alp-student-outcomes-follow-up.pdf>

College Research Center analyzed the program's outcomes in 2012 and found the following two indications of the program's effectiveness:<sup>77</sup>

- ALP students were more likely to attempt ENGL101 and ENGL102 than matched non-ALP students
- ALP students were more likely to remain enrolled for the following term and the following year

In a 2009 article, a group of instructors at CCBC identified eight features of ALP that are critical to the program's success in engaging developmental learners:<sup>78</sup>

- **Mainstreaming:** ALP students are placed directly into credit-bearing writing classes. This has "a powerful psychological effect for basic writers"<sup>79</sup>
- **Cohort Learning:** Cohorts of 8-10 students take ENGL101 and basic writing courses together, with the same instructor
- **Small Class Size:** ALP classes are limited to 20 students
- **Contextual Learning:** Instruction and exercises of the basic writing course is relevant to content of ENGL101
- **Acceleration:** Shorter remedial pipeline lessens opportunities for students to "leak" out of the pipeline
- **Heterogeneous Grouping:** ALP students are placed in courses with college-ready students, who "serve as role models both for writing and for successful student behavior"<sup>80</sup>
- **Attention to Behavioral Issues:** ALP instructors emphasize behaviors and attitudes required for college success
- **Attention to Life Problems:** Instructors make time to talk to ALP students about any problems students are facing outside of school, and direct students to appropriate resources

These instructors also note that because of the positive impact ALP has on success rates, the cost of the program per successful student is lower than traditional remedial programs.<sup>81</sup>

### *SCHOOL OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS: MAXIMIZING STUDENT SUCCESS*

CCBC's School of Health Professions (SHP) "employs a three-pronged, mutually-reinforcing approach to student achievement, retention, and attainment," which received a Noel-Levitz

<sup>77</sup> Cho, S. et al. Op. Cit., p. 7.

<sup>78</sup> Adams et al., Op. Cit., pp. 59-63.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

Retention Excellence Award in 2008.<sup>82</sup> The **three core elements** of SHP’s “Maximizing Student Success” initiative are the pre-entry **“Tools for Success” workshops, supplemental instruction programs,** and the **Early Alert Tutoring system.** A unique feature of the Maximizing Student Success program is the degree of students’ participation in designing, implementing, and evaluating the program. The supplemental instruction and tutoring programs both rely on advanced students to help less college-ready students succeed.

The Tools for Success program comprises a two-part workshop series and is a required component of orientation for new students.<sup>83</sup> These workshops provide “guided practice in strategic reading, note taking, study groups, test preparation, and test taking.”<sup>84</sup> The workshops also emphasize life skills and maintaining a “school/family/work/self-care balance.”<sup>85</sup>

As described in Section I of this report, supplemental instruction (SI) is a peer education program that supports students in traditionally difficult courses.<sup>86</sup> High-achieving students who have previously completed the course lead these weekly, structured study sessions and integrate multiple learning approaches to promote mastery of course content and development of general study skills.<sup>87</sup> Also drawing on the use of peer instruction, the Early Alert Tutoring system facilitates immediate and intensive instructional support for struggling students. This system requires students who fail early exams in one of their first-year courses to undergo individualized tutoring that helps students “refine, redirect, or redouble their efforts.”<sup>88</sup>

As shown in Figure 2.1, the Maximizing Student Success program has had positive impacts on the percentage of students who pass early courses after failing the first exam, the percentage who pass the first two semesters in their first attempt, and the two-year graduation rate of SHP students.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>82</sup> “A Compendium of Successful, Innovative Retention Programs and Practices: Winners of the Lee Noel & Randi Levitz Retention Excellence Awards 1989-2012.” Illinois Student Assistance Commission, 2012. p. 130. <http://www.isac.org/dotAsset/5922645b-49d9-4aa9-a172-12a093b2f252.pdf>

<sup>83</sup> Simmons, L. and E. Young. “Maximizing Student Success in Health Career Programs: Easy Strategies to Increase Retention and Graduation Rates in Allied Health Programs.” National Network of Health Career Programs in Two-Year Colleges. p. 15. [http://www.nn2.org/images/Maximizing\\_Student\\_Success\\_final-2.pdf](http://www.nn2.org/images/Maximizing_Student_Success_final-2.pdf)

<sup>84</sup> “Compendium of Successful, Innovative Retention Programs,” Op. Cit., p. 130.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

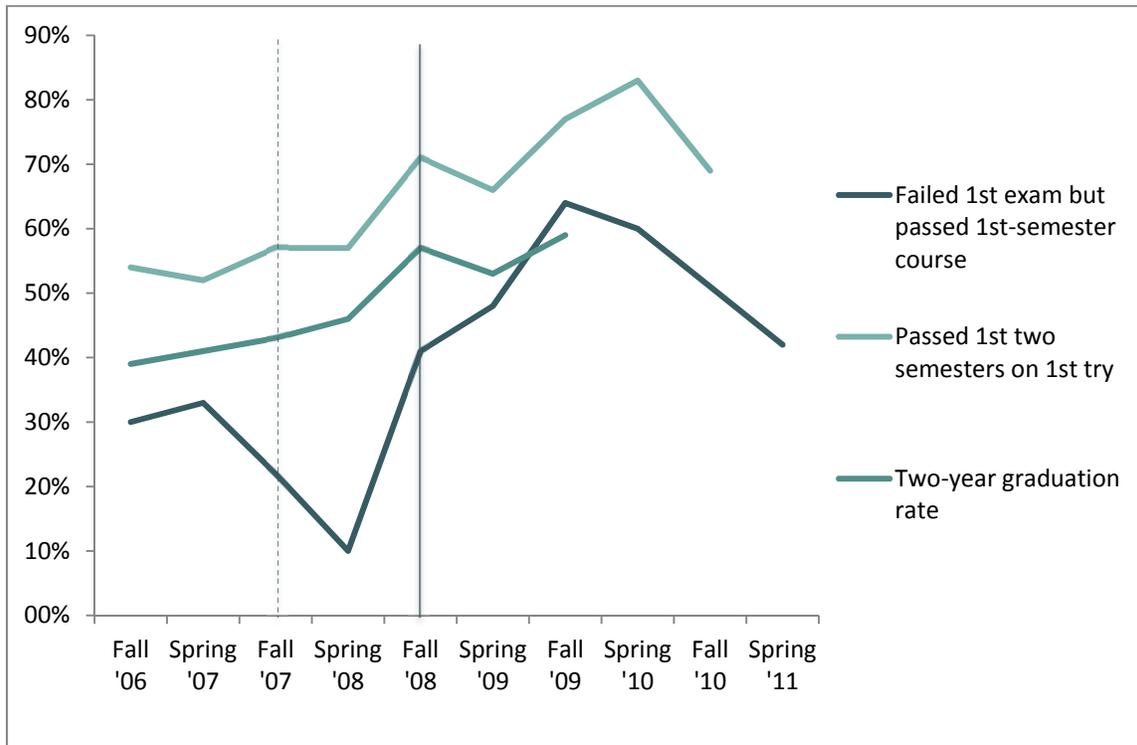
<sup>86</sup> “Supplemental Instruction.” The Community College of Baltimore County. <https://www.ccbcmd.edu/tutoring/essex/supplins.html>

<sup>87</sup> “Compendium of Successful, Innovative Retention Programs,” Op. Cit., p. 130.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Simmons, and Young, Op. Cit., pp. 12, 21.

**Figure 2.1: Student Outcomes Before and After Implementation of Maximizing Student Success Program, CCBC**



Source: National Network of Health Career Programs in Two-Year Colleges<sup>90</sup>

Dashed line: Date of program launch

Solid line: Introduction of Tools for Success and Supplemental Instruction

### **SOUTH FLORIDA STATE COLLEGE**

South Florida State College (SFSC) operates four campuses across a wide geographical area in southern Florida. With a total of 2,625 enrolled students and 68 faculty members, SFSC has an average class size of 12 and a 2013-2014 institutional budget of \$21.2 million.<sup>91</sup>

SFSC has implemented a comprehensive program known as the Guide to Personal Success (GPS) to improve student engagement, retention, and academic success.<sup>92</sup> In addition to the new student orientation described earlier in Figure 1.3, the GPS program includes a First Year Experience (FYE) Seminar along with professional development for the faculty who teach it (Figure 2.2). Students taking the FYE Seminar and faculty completing FYE training sessions may choose from both in-person and online formats.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> "Quick Facts." South Florida State College. <http://www.southflorida.edu/about/quickfacts/>

<sup>92</sup> Stephens and Revell, Op. Cit.

**Figure 2.2: Components of SFSC GPS Initiative**

PROGRAM	DESCRIPTION	TARGET POPULATION
New Student Orientation	A four-hour college orientation program mandatory for all degree- and certificate-seeking students prior to the start of their first classes	Mandatory for all students in their first term; optional for all other students.
First Year Experience (FYE) Seminar	1 credit seminar.	Required for all degree-seeking students with 15 or fewer college credits
Teaching Excellence Institute	An ongoing professional development series devoted to improving faculty and staff pedagogy and infusing active learning and technology into the classroom to improve student learning	Mandatory for faculty and staff teaching the FYE Seminar; optional for all other faculty and staff
	FYE Academy: a professional development training sequence focused on providing specialized training for the FYE Seminar	Mandatory for all FYE Seminar instructors

Source: South Florida State College<sup>93</sup>

### *FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE SEMINAR*

The FYE seminar is designed to “assist students as they make the social, emotional and cognitive leaps from high school, where motivation for learning is extrinsic, to college, where motivation for learning is intrinsic.”<sup>94</sup> SFSC pursued a collaborative approach to constructing content for the FYE Seminar, soliciting proposals from faculty and compiling a series of ready-made modules on various topics, which include lecture materials, student activities, and sample assignments.<sup>95</sup> Figure 2.3 lists the learning goals and associated outcomes for the orientation session and the FYE Seminar.

As with the new student orientation, SFSC offers the FYE Seminar at multiple times and in multiple formats in order to provide maximal flexibility for students with varying schedules and learning styles. Students may take the FYE Seminar in any of the following four formats:<sup>96</sup>

- **Intensive two-day session** (six hours each day), held the week before classes start
- **Two all-day sessions** (six hours each) during the first six weeks of the term
- **Weekly seminar meeting**, two hours each week for the first six weeks of the term
- **Weekly seminar meetings**, one hour each week for the first 12 weeks of the term

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>96</sup> Bulleted text quoted, with slight modifications for clarity, from: Ibid., p. 45.

**Figure 2.3: GPS Program Goals and Learning Outcomes, SFSC**

Source: South Florida State College<sup>97</sup>

### *PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT*

In order to increase the preparation and skill of faculty teaching the FYE seminar, and to promote faculty buy-in for the FYE initiative, SFSC offers two professional development programs, the Teaching Excellence Institute and the FYE Academy. The FYE Academy provides specific training for faculty selected to instruct the FYE seminar, while the Teaching Excellence Institute is open to all faculty and provides both opportunities for general pedagogical development and knowledge of the structure and purpose of the FYE seminar.<sup>98</sup> Figure 2.4 includes the topics of each professional development program.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., pp. 52-53.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., pp. 46-47.

**Figure 2.4: Topics for Professional Development Accompanying FYE Seminar, SFSC**

TEACHING EXCELLENCE INSTITUTE	FYE ACADEMY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Student Engagement</li> <li>▪ Active Learning</li> <li>▪ Technology in the Classroom</li> <li>▪ Learning Styles (Metacognition)</li> <li>▪ Student Diversity</li> <li>▪ Leading Effective Classroom Discussions</li> <li>▪ Developing Critical Thinking Skills</li> <li>▪ Classroom Management</li> <li>▪ Cooperative Learning</li> <li>▪ Assessment and Evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Standardized Course Documents and Procedures</li> <li>▪ Textbook Orientation</li> <li>▪ Online Resources</li> <li>▪ FYE Handbook</li> <li>▪ Cengage Learning Faculty Presentations</li> <li>▪ Cengage WebEx Discussions</li> <li>▪ Cengage Student Success Webinars</li> <li>▪ Creating Out-of-Classroom Experiences</li> <li>▪ Knowing Your Campus</li> <li>▪ FYE Course Assessment Strategies</li> </ul>

Source: South Florida State College<sup>99</sup>

Faculty must complete the FYE Academy before becoming certified to teach the seminar.<sup>100</sup>

**ASSESSMENT**

SFSC’s GPS program includes a comprehensive long-term assessment plan. Prior to launching the GPS program, SFSC employed one of CCCSE’s surveys, the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) to assess areas of greatest need and establish a baseline of students’ perceptions against which to compare future results.<sup>101</sup> Ongoing assessment will incorporate data from the CCSSE survey, additional student surveys and focus groups, and student performance (Figure 2.5).

**Figure 2.5: GPS Program Assessment Plan, SFSC**

ASSESSMENT TOOL	PRE-PLAN			IMPLEMENTATION			YEAR 1			YEAR 2			YEAR 3			YEAR 4		
	FALL	SPRING	SUMMER	FALL	SPRING	SUMMER	FALL	SPRING	SUMMER	FALL	SPRING	SUMMER	FALL	SPRING	SUMMER	FALL	SPRING	SUMMER
SENSE Survey	✓												✓					
CCSSE Survey		✓												✓				
Student Focus Groups		✓		✓			✓			✓			✓					
Student Opinion Survey									✓									
Program Review					✓			✓						✓				
3-Year Formative Evaluation														✓				
Summative Evaluation																		✓

Source: South Florida State College<sup>102</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 48.  
<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 50.  
<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 8.  
<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

## TALLAHASSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Tallahassee Community College (TCC) enrolls 13,509 students and has a student-to-faculty ratio of 26 to 1.<sup>103</sup> Two aspects of TCC's retention efforts are particularly effective: TCC's mandatory orientation program and its integrated learning center that centralizes a wide variety of student support services.

TCC introduced a revised orientation program in 2008 designed to “[help] students understand the college’s expectations, their own role in being successful, and the roles of others at the institution.”<sup>104</sup> Attendance is required for all students, and TCC’s **fall-to-spring retention rate rose from 80 to 84 percent after implementing mandatory orientation**. Students could attend a full-day or half-day session, and could attend with or without a family member. TCC saw higher fall-to-spring retention rates among students who attended the full-day session (85 percent, compared to 78 percent among those who attended the half-day session) and among those who attended with a family member (90 percent versus 84 percent).<sup>105</sup> Because the orientation needs of adult learners differ from those of first-time-in-college students, TCC has plans to begin offering separate, more targeted orientation sessions for different student populations.<sup>106</sup>

The William J. Law Jr. Learning Commons is another initiative and campus resource that has benefitted retention at TCC. The Learning Commons “centralizes learning and technology support and provides resources for all students across the curriculum.”<sup>107</sup> Staff at the Learning Commons provide individual and small-group technology instruction and research assistance for students in their first two years. The program also draws significant support from faculty, who incorporate the Learning Commons into their courses by using the space for meeting with students and other activities that strengthen students’ learning strategies and technology skills.<sup>108</sup> TCC has found that by centralizing these various support services, it is able to provide more extensive support to a much larger number of students. Retention rates are also significantly higher among students who regularly use the Learning Commons’ resources.<sup>109</sup>

## CALIFORNIA ACCELERATION PROJECT

The California Community Colleges’ Success Network (3CSN) implemented the California Acceleration Project (CAP) in 2011 in response to high proportions of students requiring remedial education and long developmental sequences in both math and English.<sup>110</sup> CAP’s

<sup>103</sup> “Tallahassee Community College.” National Center for Education Statistics.

<http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?q=tallahassee+community+college&s=all&id=137759>

<sup>104</sup> “A Matter of Degrees: Engaging Practices, Engaging Students,” Op. Cit., p. 11.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> “Specific State Campus-Based Student Retention Programs with Measurable Results.” Illinois Student Assistance Commission. pp. 10-11. <http://www.isac.org/about-isac/map-advising-workgroup/documents/Specific%20State%20Campus-Based%20Student%20Retention%20Programs.pdf>

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Hern and Snell,” Op. Cit., pp. 3, 8.

leaders sought to “redesign remediation,” and built the developmental education program around four key elements:<sup>111</sup>

- **Shorten the remedial pipeline:** replace the remedial sequence with a single course that leads directly to the college gatekeeper course
- **Rethink placement:** allow students at all placement levels to enroll in the accelerated remedial course
- **Align remediation with college courses:** in English, integrate reading and writing. In math create an alternative remedial path for students in majors that are not math intensive
- **Maintain the rigor of the college-level course:** accelerated developmental classes include the same content and learning goals as the college-level course

In order to attain these objectives, the CAP program provides extensive professional development for instructors in order to support improvements to both pedagogy and curricula for developmental courses.<sup>112</sup> Professional development resources provided by CAP include workshops and online course materials (including sample assignments and activities and videos of accelerated course instructors in action).<sup>113</sup> Project leaders provide these resources in order to facilitate the following changes in the way educators at community colleges approach developmental education:<sup>114</sup>

- Replace discrete sub-skill drill with high-challenge college-level tasks
- Emphasis on low-stakes collaborative practice on meaningful college-level tasks
- Just-in-time remediation when needed
- Attention to the affective side of learning

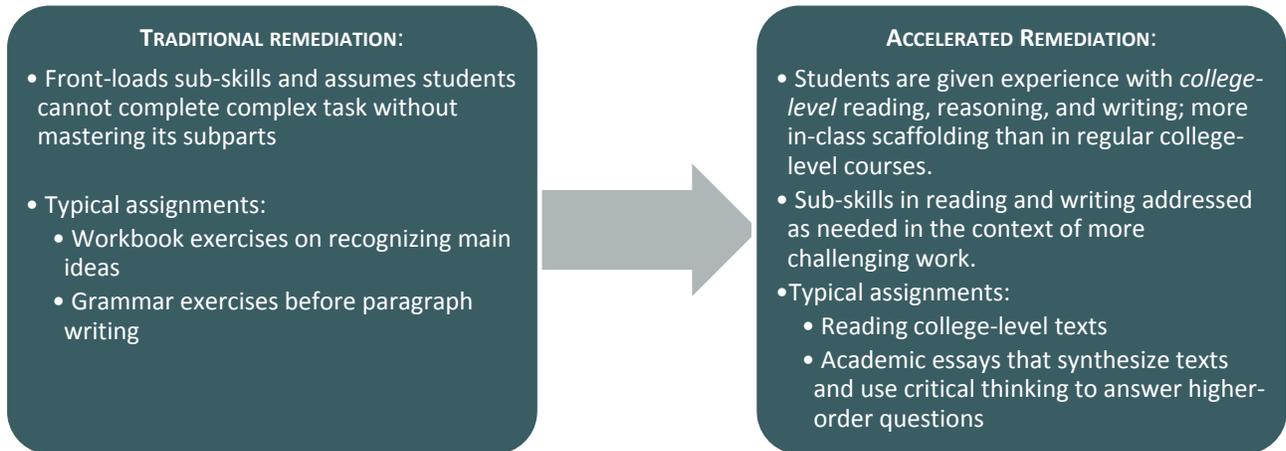
Figures 2.6 and 2.7 summarize the differences in pedagogical design between traditional approaches to remediation and the accelerated model that CAP has used successfully.

<sup>111</sup> Quoted, with some modifications for readability, from: Ibid., p. 6.

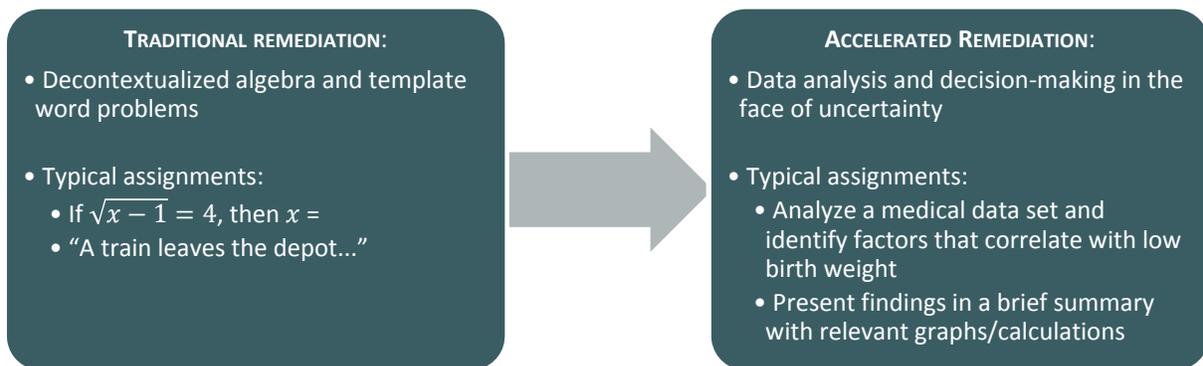
<sup>112</sup> Ibid., pp. 2, 5, 7.

<sup>113</sup> Online resources are available at: “Teaching Accelerated Courses.” California Acceleration Project.  
<http://cap.3csn.org/teaching/>

<sup>114</sup> Hearn and Snell, Op. Cit., p. 7.

**Figure 2.6: Traditional vs. Accelerated Remedial English Courses**

Source: The California Intersegmental Articulation Council<sup>115</sup>

**Figure 2.7: Traditional vs. Accelerated Remedial Math Courses**

Source: The California Intersegmental Articulation Council<sup>116</sup>

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 14-16.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 21-23.

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