



**NON-COURSE COMPETENCY-
BASED DEVELOPMENTAL
EDUCATION: CHALLENGES,
INTERVENTIONS,
AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

A Report to the Texas Legislature
as Required by Rider 34,
General Appropriations Act,
82nd Texas Legislature

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Division of P-16 Initiatives



Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

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Mission of the Coordinating Board

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's mission is to work with the Legislature, Governor, governing boards, higher education institutions and other entities to help Texas meet the goals of the state's higher education plan, Closing the Gaps by 2015, and thereby provide the people of Texas the widest access to higher education of the highest quality in the most efficient manner.

Philosophy of the Coordinating Board

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board will promote access to quality higher education across the state with the conviction that access without quality is mediocrity and that quality without access is unacceptable. The Board will be open, ethical, responsive, and committed to public service. The Board will approach its work with a sense of purpose and responsibility to the people of Texas and is committed to the best use of public monies. The Coordinating Board will engage in actions that add value to Texas and to higher education. The agency will avoid efforts that do not add value or that are duplicated by other entities.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age or disability in employment or the provision of services.

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Executive Summary

The 82nd Texas Legislature, through its General Appropriations Act, Section 34, page III-52 (hereinafter called "Rider 34") directed the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to research the most effective and efficient combination of developmental education interventions for implementation statewide. Rider 34 continued the 81st Texas Legislature's similar mandate, made through its General Appropriations Act, Regular Session, Section 59, page III-63 (hereinafter called "Rider 59"). As a result of Rider 59, Texas public institutions of higher education were eligible in fall 2010 to receive formula funding for non-course competency-based developmental education interventions¹. Non-course competency-based efforts, which differ from the traditional 16-week, course-based model, are centered on the needs of the individual student and require a shorter period of developmental education. Non-course competency-based interventions offer another effective avenue for increasing student persistence, reducing tuition costs for the student, and possibly reducing instructional costs for the institution.

To underscore its interest in non-course competency-based interventions, the 82nd Texas Legislature included two additional directives in its General Appropriations Act, Section 41, page III-54 (hereinafter called "Rider 41") and Section 52, page III-55 (hereinafter called "Rider 52").

Rider 41 states the following:

"It is the intent of the Legislature that developmental education will be offered and conducted to address specific student developmental needs by non semester length developmental education interventions rather than semester length developmental education coursework beginning September 1, 2012."

Rider 52 directed the Coordinating Board to implement and support demonstration projects at Texas community and public technical institutions and required the institutions to use technology and diagnostic assessments to determine students' needs and college readiness and to use educational methods, including non-course based, that would improve developmental education outcomes.

Although the intent of the Legislatures was clear and efforts to educate institutions about non-course competency-based interventions are under way, many Texas public colleges and universities remain unsure about what constitutes non-course competency-based developmental education. Additionally, institutions are unsure about how to schedule non-course competency-based interventions for students, and how to identify non-course competency-based options for formula funding reimbursement. A review of the 2012 Developmental Education Program Survey (DEPS) data found that although some institutions are offering non-course competency-based interventions, few are reporting these interventions for formula funding.

In response to Rider 34, the Coordinating Board is following three strategies: inform, require, and evaluate.

¹ Also known as non-course-based or non-semester-length options or interventions

First, the Coordinating Board will continue to inform institutions about non-course competency-based interventions by

- Hosting informational webinars;
- Posting information to developmental education listservs;
- Hosting sessions at events sponsored by Texas Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (TACRAO),² Texas Community College Teachers Association (TCCTA),³ Texas Association for College Admission Counseling (TACAC),⁴ and other organizations with a stake in developmental education at Texas public institutions of higher education; and
- Creating a clearinghouse that provides examples of non-course competency-based interventions.

Secondly, the Coordinating Board will require that all Texas public institutions of higher education with developmental education programs offer, by spring 2013, at least one non-course competency-based intervention in at least one developmental education discipline area. The timeline in Appendix B illustrates the Coordinating Board's plan for increasing the required number of non-course competency-based interventions offered by institutions.

Finally, the Coordinating Board, with information obtained through DEPS and Coordinating Board's annual Coordinating Board Management (CBM) reports, will evaluate the fiscal and instructional effect of non-course competency-based interventions on student performance outcomes.

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² TACRAO is a nonprofit, voluntary, professional educational association of cooperating collegiate-level institutions. It strives to advance professionally the work of the offices of admissions, records, registration and other related functions among institutions of higher learning.

³ TCCTA is comprised of educators from every teaching discipline, as well as counselors, librarians, and administrators from all public and independent two-year colleges in Texas.

⁴ TACAC is a non-profit educational organization comprised of secondary counselors, college admission counselors, independent educational consultants, and other educational professionals who work with students in the transition from high school to college. The organization provides a variety of professional networking opportunities for members and engages in research pertinent to the organization.

Introduction

Texas higher education institutions deliver developmental education primarily through a traditional course-based model. Most students enroll in a 16-week, full-semester course regardless of the amount of remediation required. As a result, a student who is close to the meeting the state's minimum standards for college readiness as outlined in the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (hereinafter referred to as the "Coordinating Board") rules for the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) must study material already mastered. This redundancy needlessly increases tuition costs for the student and possibly instructional costs for the institution. Also, students enrolled in courses that require them to review previously mastered material are likely to lose motivation to persist and complete remediation, much less the work needed for an academic credential.

Institutions that recognize students' varied needs provide them with alternate pathways, such as non-course competency-based interventions. These interventions can accelerate students through remediation or allow them to avoid traditional developmental education coursework. Prior to Rider 59⁵ in the General Appropriations Act of the 81st Texas Legislature in 2009, institutions that diversified their remediation options beyond traditional coursework funded those innovations through locally generated resources or external funding provided by philanthropic organizations. Rider 59 allowed institutions to support non-coursed-based remediation efforts with state formula funding beginning in fall 2010.

In 2011, Rider 34⁶ in the General Appropriations Act of the 82nd Texas Legislature continued the efforts of Rider 59 from the 81st Legislature. This legislation allotted the state more time to gather information on the fiscal and instructional impact of non-course competency-based interventions. Under Rider 34, institutions may continue to submit the number of non-course competency-based remediation contact hours or the credit-hour equivalent to the Coordinating Board for reimbursement. In spite of this funding, institutions of higher education in Texas continue to deliver developmental education predominantly through a traditional 16-week, course-based model.

This report, submitted as a requirement of Rider 34, provides updated information on the implementation of non-course competency-based remediation and some of the challenges that have hindered its expansion at institutions of higher education. Additionally, the report highlights a few promising non-course competency-based interventions. Finally, the document concludes with recommendations, including some from the 2012-2017 Statewide Developmental Education Plan that promote the increase use of non-course competency-based interventions, in response to Rider 34.

⁵ See Appendix A for full text of Rider 59.

⁶ See Appendix A for full text of Rider 34.

Developmental Education Interventions

In a 2009 working paper published by the Texas Higher Education Policy Institute, Holcombe and Alexander differentiated course-based and non-course based developmental education. Course-based interventions were tied to a traditional 16-week college course while non-course competency-based interventions⁷ included an array of innovative interventions centered on the needs of the individual students. Using these descriptors, these interventions are innovative, learner-centered and less than 16 weeks in length.

Interventions for improving the success of students in developmental education include (1) strategies to improve students' skills before they enter developmental education; (2) strategies that reduce time and/or the content of developmental education courses; (3) programs that contextualize basic skills with vocational skills or academic coursework; and (4) strategies that enhance the supports for students such as advising or tutoring (Rutschow & Schneider, 2011). While many of the interventions lack the support of rigorous research showing their direct influence on the success of students, quasi-experimental designs of other interventions have been shown to support student achievement; these interventions include the mainstreaming of underprepared students into college-level courses while providing additional support, modularized or compressed developmental interventions which accelerate learning, or contextualized basic skills education within workforce training programs (Rutschow & Schneider, 2011).

Over the last several years, the Coordinating Board has collected information, through its Developmental Education Program Survey, on non-course competency-based remediation programs offered at Texas public two-year and four-year institutions.

Developmental Education Program Survey (2011, 2012)

Despite the information on non-course competency-based remediation provided by the Coordinating Board staff in various regional and statewide meetings and webinars during the 2010-2011 academic year, many Texas public colleges and universities remained unsure about what constitutes non-course competency-based remediation. Additionally, institutions are unsure about how to schedule non-course competency-based interventions for students, and how to identify non-course competency-based options for formula funding reimbursement. To determine the level of understanding and assist institutions of higher education with

Proposed Definition of Non-Course Competency-Based Developmental Education Interventions:

Interventions that use innovative learning approaches designed to address a student's identified weaknesses and effectively and efficiently prepare the student for college-level work. These interventions must be overseen by an instructor of record, must not fit traditional course frameworks, and cannot include advising or learning support activities already connected to a traditional course. Interventions may include, but are not limited to, tutoring, supplemental instruction, or labs.

⁷ Also known as non-course-based or non-semester length options or interventions

implementation of non-course competency-based options, the Coordinating Board’s 2011 Developmental Education Program Survey (DEPS)⁸ asked institutions to identify non-course competency-based options they were using on their campuses.

Most of the institutions that reported using a form of non-course competency-based remediation identified summer bridge programs (30 institutions) and academic support/ learning assistance outreach programs (30 institutions). However, the outreach programs were also offered to the general student population while the bridge programs were focused specifically on serving developmental education students. Sixteen institutions reported using pre-assessment workshops designed to prepare students for one of four Coordinating Board-approved TSI assessments, and three institutions identified tutoring or advising opportunities under the federal TRIO program (e.g. Student Support Services, Upward Bound). From the responses on the 2011 DEPS, it was unclear whether any of the interventions were offered to students prior to enrollment in developmental education.

In the 2012 DEPS, the Coordinating Board also asked institutions to report on the fiscal and instructional impact of their non-course competency-based interventions for students placed in developmental education. Just over 47 percent of the 97 responding institutions reported using non-course competency-based interventions, but only eight institutions (all two-year colleges) reported these non-course options for formula funding reimbursement.

Institutions Offering Non-course Competency-based Options⁹ (NCBO) in at Least One Subject Area

| | |
|----------------------------------|---------------|
| All Institutions | 47.40% |
| Universities | 46.70% |
| Community and Technical Colleges | 47.80% |

The 2012 DEPS provided the Coordinating Board information on the variety of ways institutions used non-course competency-based developmental education. Based on this

information, the Coordinating Board in summer 2012 proposed a definition of non-course competency-based developmental education interventions. If adopted by the Coordinating Board in October, the definition will appear in the TSI rules and become effective in early spring 2013.

The findings on non-course competency-based developmental education in the 2011 and 2012 DEPS led the Coordinating Board to require all postsecondary institutions with developmental education programs to offer non-course competency-based interventions for their lower-skilled students. The timeline for implementation of non-course competency-based interventions can be found in Appendix B.

⁸ The DEPS provides information on (1) the organization of developmental education programs; (2) the nature of academic advising for developmental education students; (3) the monitoring of the academic performance of students in developmental education; (4) the support services for developmental education students including assessments; and (5) the professional development of faculty who teach in these programs.

⁹ Also known as non-course-based or non-semester-length options and interventions

Non-course Competency-based Options¹⁰ at Texas Institutions in 2012

Several community colleges and universities in the state are implementing non-course competency-based interventions for developmental education students. The Pre-Assessment Workshop is by far the most common. However, other interventions include short-term, targeted tutoring in mathematics, writing, or reading and open labs with non-student access to online support for independent math and writing support.

Pre-Assessment Workshops

Several of the demonstration projects funded by Rider 52 at both universities and community colleges involve test preparation workshops for first-time-in-college students. Because of its success over a decade, El Paso Community College's Pre-testing Retesting Educational Preparation (PREP) program has become a model for many of the demonstration projects. PREP provides placement test preparation services through video instruction and online test preparation in a formal lab setting on campus. In 2010-2011, the PREP program expanded its recruiting to include non-traditional adult students from ESL, Adult Education, and GED programs.

The PREP Specialist is a vital component of PREP. The specialist is a college advisor, advocate, and transition coach prior to a student beginning in PREP and continues once the student enrolls at the college. The college's PREP Specialist participates in the Adult Education Transition Advisory Committee and serves as a point of contact for students who have completed their GED and/or who have been referred from the adult education "Explore College" workshops. From these interviews and various assessments used in adult education programs, the PREP Specialist advises students to take the developmental summer bridge program or the PREP program. The bridge program prepares students for college and transition to higher levels of developmental coursework, if necessary, while the PREP program provides students with higher-level skills information on test-taking strategies as well as online practice tests for the ACCUPLACER. During the PREP workshop, the PREP Specialist helps students better understand the enrollment process at the college, helps them with admissions and financial aid applications, prepares them for placement testing, and assists them with class registration.

PREP focuses primarily on providing placement test preparation prior to students' first enrollment at the college. PREP offers pre-testing overview workshops, diagnostic evaluation of basic skills, computer-assisted instruction, and referrals. PREP Specialists conduct interviews, develop Individualized Preparation Plans, and follow up with students through an intensive case management approach. Of the 1,692 students who attended PREP workshops in 2007-2008, 57 percent placed at a higher level of developmental mathematics, 58 percent at a higher level in developmental reading, and 64 percent improved well enough in writing to move up at least one course level. On average, it took student 12 hours to complete a total of eight learning modules. From fall 2009 to summer 2010, the percentage of PREP students who advanced at least one level in developmental education coursework was 65 percent in math, 65 percent in reading, and 47 percent in writing. According to information found on the Developmental

¹⁰ Also known as non-course-based or non-semester-length options and interventions

Education Initiative (DEI)¹¹ web site, El Paso Community College now serves more than 3,000 students in the PREP program, and is on track to continue adding 500 or more students each semester.

As interventions were implemented, the percentage of college-ready students enrolling at El Paso Community College increased slightly, and the number of students testing into developmental education declined dramatically. More underprepared students are enrolling in courses in only one or two subject areas, thus showing a promising improvement in college readiness.

Open Labs

The open math lab or Math Emporium is another example of a successful a non-course competency-based developmental education model. A dedicated case manager, who interviews and talks at length to the student about their academic and career goals, might advise the student (1) to attend a PREP-type program to improve their test-taking strategies and better understand the design of the assessment, or (2) to attend an open math, reading, or writing lab where a student can go through lessons at their own pace. The software used in these non-course competency-based interventions allows students to build on prior knowledge, increase their understanding of core concepts, and monitor their own learning. In these labs, faculty are on hand to answer questions, provide just-in-time instruction to small cohorts having similar problems, and to act as advisors and mentors to students.

The AAccess Learning Center at Amarillo College is an example of an open-entry/open-exit lab. In the lab, students can take pre-assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics, target their weaknesses through a combination of self-study and faculty instruction, and finally post-test to determine readiness to either move to a higher level of developmental education or to enroll in credit-bearing coursework. After revising the developmental mathematics curriculum in 2007 to address accelerating students through developmental education using a non-semester-length option, Amarillo College piloted the accelerated, online approach. Of the 24 students who entered the pilot, 83 percent improved their understanding of math concepts and placed at a higher level in mathematics. Seven of these students placed into College Algebra. Notably, students who had intermediate or more advanced skills in math, rather than very basic skills, recorded the largest point increase on the ACCUPLACER assessment. As might be expected, this group required fewer hours of review and advanced through several levels in fewer weeks.

Intensive College-Readiness Programs

Twelve community colleges partnering with federally funded adult education programs offer 120 hour, eight-week intensive college-readiness programs designed to prepare recent GED recipients and traditional high school graduates (more than three years out of school) for college coursework. Although these projects are not yet complete, preliminary results show that they effectively prepare recent GED graduates for enrollment and success in college. Of the 1,260 adults served in these programs over the last 24 months, 87 percent who entered the program completed it. The performance of 34 percent of the 479 students completing the

¹¹Achieving the Dream, & MDC. (2012, August 18). *Blog: The DEI Blog: Accelerating Achievement*. Retrieved from DEI Online: <http://deionline.blogspot.com/2011/08/whats-up-with-dei-el-paso-community.html>

program improved enough on the mathematics portion of the Texas Higher Education Assessment to pass the state minimum college-readiness score of 230, and the performance of 37 percent improved enough on the reading portion of the THEA to pass the state minimum college-readiness score of 230. Finally, students who completed the 2009 Intensive Summer Program for General Education (ISP-GE) enrolled in and successfully completed college-level courses faster than a matched comparison group. Of the 81 participants from the 2009 ISP-GE cohort who could be tracked, more than half entered college in fall 2009. Of these 43 students, 100 percent successfully completed their first college-level mathematics course in fall 2009, compared to 79 percent of a matched comparison group. Moreover, 95 percent of these ISP-GE students successfully completed their first college-level reading course in fall 2009, compared to 68 percent of a matched comparison group; and 95 percent successfully completed their first college-level writing course, compared to 70 percent of a matched comparison group. Features of these programs include dedicated transitions coordinators, a mandatory non-credit college success course, individual and cohort career and academic advising, college faculty and staff connections as guest speakers or as program mentors, and computer literacy courses (i.e., navigating college computer systems for students including college email, Blackboard¹² sites, etc.).

Conclusion and Recommendations

General Appropriations Act riders authorized by the 82nd Texas Legislature offer guidance for the future of developmental education in Texas. Institutions must offer more than traditional 16-week full semester courses. Instead, instruction must meet the individual needs of each student and require a shorter amount of time in developmental education. With the Coordinating Board's help, institutions must prepare for this significant change in how they do operated developmental education programs. By applying the following three strategies, the Coordinating Board can rally the support, scale the interventions, and evaluate the impact.

Strategy 1: First, the Coordinating Board will continue to inform institutions about non-course competency-based interventions by:

- Hosting informational webinars;
- Posting information to developmental education listservs;
- Hosting sessions at events sponsored by Texas Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (TACRAO), Texas Community College Teachers Association (TCCTA), Texas Association for College Admission Counseling (TACAC), and other organizations with a stake in developmental education at Texas institutions of higher education; and
- Creating a clearinghouse that provides examples of non-course competency-based interventions.

Strategy 2: Next, the Coordinating Board will require that all Texas public institutions of higher education with developmental education programs offer, by spring 2013, at least one non-course competency-based intervention in at least one developmental education discipline area. The timeline in Appendix B illustrates the Coordinating Board's plan for increasing the required number of non-course competency-based interventions offered by institutions.

¹² Blackboard is a computer software system used to manage online, hybrid, and distance learning

Strategy 3: Finally, the Coordinating Board, with information obtained through DEPS and the Coordinating Board's annual Coordinating Board Management (CBM) reports, will evaluate the fiscal and instructional effect of non-course competency-based interventions on student performance outcomes.

Additionally, the Coordinating Board fully supports goals and recommendations identified in the 2012-2017 Developmental Education Statewide Plan to promote the increased use of non-course competency-based developmental education interventions. While all of the goals and recommendations could be applicable to Rider 34, these will have the greatest effect for scaling non-course competency-based developmental education:

- **Goal 2:** Require institutions with developmental education programs to use technology, to the greatest extent practicable consistent with best practices, to provide developmental education to students effectively and efficiently.
- **Goal 3:** Scale promising practices and/or programs that improve access, acceleration, and success of underprepared students.
- **Goal 4:** Improve the availability and quality of academic and career advising and counseling services for underprepared students.
- **Goal 5:** Increase the preparedness of developmental educators.
- **Goal 6:** Continue to improve the quality and effectiveness of developmental education programs in Texas.
- **Goal 7:** Improve the assessment and placement of first-time-in-college (FTIC) students.

Recommendation 1: Continue to promote scaling of acceleration models that are non-course competency-based, integrated, take advantage of new technologies, and enable successful outcomes leading to the award of more certificates, transfers, and degrees, along with other workforce and personal enrichment goals.

Recommendation 2: Continue to promote and fund the professional development necessary to support quality and effectiveness in teaching and learning, advising, and support services for underprepared students, including the study of the impact of a statewide developmental educator credential.

Recommendation 3: Provide the necessary time and opportunity for institutions to select, scale, and implement the numerous research-based recommendations and best practices to allow for meaningful and purposeful change that is lasting, sustainable, and effective.

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APPENDICES

**Appendix A:
General Appropriations Act Riders**

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General Appropriations Act, House Bill 1, 81st Texas Legislature (2009), Section 59 (page III-63)

Funding for Non-Semester-Length Developmental Education. Out of funds appropriated above, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall approve non-semester-length developmental education interventions (including course-based, non-course based, alternative-entry/exit, and other intensive developmental education activities) in the Lower Division Academic Course Guide Manual before August 31, 2009. Approved non-semester length developmental education interventions shall be eligible for formula funding beginning in fall 2010 and subject to limitations prescribed by law.

Institutions shall analyze the fiscal and instructional impacts on student outcomes for both semester-length and non-semester-length developmental education interventions. The institutions shall prepare a report to the Board no later than June 1, 2010. The Board, in conjunction with the Legislative Budget Board and institutions of higher education, shall use existing performance measures and data to assist in the evaluation of student outcomes for these interventions, including but not limited to, student success in first college-level course by subject, persistence, transfer, and degree or certificate completion.

The Board shall analyze and compare all institution reports to determine the most effective and efficient combination of developmental education interventions and make recommendations to the Legislative Budget Board and the Governor before January 1, 2011.

General Appropriations Act, Senate Bill 1, 82nd Texas Legislature (2011), Section 34 (page III-52)

Funding for Non-Semester-Length Developmental Education. Institutions shall analyze the fiscal and instructional impacts on student outcomes for both semester-length and non-semester length developmental education interventions (including course-based, non-course based, alternative-entry/exit, and other intensive developmental education activities). The institutions shall prepare a report to the Higher Education Coordinating Board no later than June 1, 2012. The Board, in conjunction with the Legislative Budget Board and institutions of higher education, shall use existing performance measures and data to assist in the evaluation of student outcomes for these interventions, including but not limited to, student success in first-college-level-course by subject, persistence, transfer, and degree or certificate completion.

Out of funds appropriated above, the Board shall analyze and compare all institution reports to determine the most effective and efficient combination of developmental education interventions and make recommendations to the Legislative Budget Board and the Governor before January 1, 2013.

General Appropriations Act, Senate Bill 1, 82nd Texas Legislature (2011), Section 41 (page III-54)

Intent Concerning Developmental Education Interventions. It is the intent of the Legislature that developmental education will be offered and conducted to address specific student developmental needs by non semester length developmental education interventions rather than semester length developmental education coursework beginning September 1, 2012.

General Appropriations Act, Senate Bill 1, 82nd Texas Legislature (2011), Section 52 (page III-55)

Developmental Education. Funds appropriated above in Strategy E.1.1, Developmental Education Program, \$2,000,000 in general revenue for fiscal year 2012 and \$2,000,000 in general revenue for fiscal year 2013 shall be used for the purpose of implementing and supporting demonstration projects at community colleges and public technical institutions. The programs would use technology and diagnostic assessments to determine students' needs and college readiness and use educational methods, including non-course based, that would improve developmental education outcomes. Out of funds appropriated to this strategy, the Higher Education Coordinating Board will study the issue of developmental education focusing on researching best practices to implement statewide and submit a report to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Speaker of the House of Appropriations, the Chair of the Senate Finance Committee, the Chair of House Appropriations, Senate Committee on Higher Education and House Committee on Higher Education before January 1, 2013. Any balances remaining as of August 31, 2012 are hereby appropriated for the same purpose for the fiscal year beginning September 1, 2012.

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**Appendix B:
Non-course Competency-based¹³
Developmental Education
Implementation Timeline**

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¹³ Also known as non-course-based or non-semester-length options and interventions

Phase-In Timeline for Implementation of Non-course Competency-based Interventions

As of June 27, 2012, preliminary survey data show 47% of public community and technical colleges and universities with developmental education programs reported having at least one non-course competency-based intervention in which students were enrolled.

All institutions must prepare to offer at least one non-course competency-based intervention in all three of the developmental education disciplinary areas and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

Institutions are directed to enroll all students who are on the edge of being college ready (bubble score students), including ESOL, into non-course competency-based interventions to accelerate student's time in developmental education.

Fall 2012

Spring 2013

Fall 2013

Spring 2014

Fall 2014

The remainder of the institutions (25%) must offer at least one non-course competency-based intervention by Spring 2013 in **at least one** developmental education disciplinary area.

Active enrollment of students in **all three** developmental education disciplinary areas and **ESOL**.