



POLICY STATEMENT

Higher Education Faculty and Staff Working in Learning Assistance-Related Fields

TOPIC: Developmental Education

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Developmental education programs have been cast as contributors to increased costs or ineffectiveness of postsecondary education. In fact, developmental education programs and courses at postsecondary institutions constitute a reasoned response to the larger problems in education, such as the woeful effects of poverty, ineffective secondary schools, and ill-conceived standards.

Programs

- Developmental education is the integration of courses and support services guided by the principles of adult development and learning [Boylan, H., & Bonham, B. (2014). *Developmental education: Readings on its past, present, and future*. New York, NY: Bedford/St. Martin's; Saddlemire, J. R. (1974). *The future of student affairs*. Presentation to the ACPA Convention, Chicago, IL].
- Although national debate in the United States has focused on the cost of college education, developmental education is a reasonable response to the current demographics of postsecondary enrollment. Current statistics reflect that 68% of public community college students and 39% of those enrolled at public universities take developmental courses. [Chen, X, & Simone, S. (2016), *Remedial course-taking at U.S 2-year and 4-year public institutions: Scope, experience, and outcomes*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics].
- Developmental education incorporates courses and services that promote effective college study strategies, such as time management, notetaking, memory techniques, and test-taking strategies, enabling students to make the transition to higher education.
- Modern professional developmental educators by necessity employ creative, dynamic, and effective methods that reflect the best current knowledge about the brain and teaching and learning.
- Developmental education is also the only widespread postsecondary initiative that attempts to address the problem of ESL (English as a Second Language) students. Failing

to address ESL at the postsecondary level essentially creates an elitist postsecondary environment that privileges a select portion of the graduating secondary population.

- The annual cost of developmental education in the U.S. is about \$1.13-billion out of a \$234.8-billion higher education budget. This amounts to .048%, or less than half of one percent, of the postsecondary budget [Pretlow, J., & Wathington, H. (2011). Cost of developmental education: An update on Breneman and Haarlow. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 35(1), 2-13].

Courses

- More than 60% of those teaching remedial courses are adjunct faculty [Bailey, T. R., Jeong, D. W., & Cho, S. W. (2009). *Referral, enrollment and completion in developmental education sequences in community colleges* (CCRC Working Paper No. 15). Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University. http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/referral-enrollment-completion-developmental_V2.pdf]. This suggests that those who teach remedial courses are underpaid and under-supported at their institutions. In order for remedial courses to be successful, resources must be assigned to train and support the faculty teaching them.
- Developmental education is the only widespread initiative at the postsecondary level that exclusively focuses on reading, writing, and math skills, skills that are universal and absolutely essential to any successful postsecondary experience.
- Claims that remedial courses are a barrier to college completion are inaccurate. Recent research suggests that income inequality—not remedial coursework—is the cause of low completion rates [Avery, C., Dynarski, S., & Turner, S. (2020). Low-income students lose ground. *Science (American Association for the Advancement of Science)*, 370(6521), 1141–1141. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.abf9375>]. Further, recent research from Harvard University indicates that taking remedial courses is not a significant barrier to student graduation [Kane, T. J., Boatman, A., Kozakowski, W., Bennett, C., Hitch, R., & Weisenfeld, D. (2020). Is college remediation a barrier or a boost? *Education Next*, 20(2). <https://www.educationnext.org/college-remediation-barrier-boost-evidence-from-tennessee/>].

Therefore: Organizations representing faculty and staff affiliated with learning assistance and developmental education in higher education support full funding for developmental education programs and courses and moreover recommend increased funding to research classroom methods and the efficacy of educational interventions. Because the landscape in higher education demographics is not likely to change soon, developmental education must become a higher priority.