

## MEMORANDUM



**DATE:** September 11, 2009  
**TO:** House Appropriation Subcommittee on Community Colleges  
**FROM:** Ben Gielczyk, Fiscal Analyst  
**RE:** Developmental and Remedial Education at Michigan's Community Colleges

In response to recent community college appropriation subcommittee discussions on developmental education, the following memo provides a brief overview of community college developmental education at both the state and national level. At the state level, specific attention will be given to funding provided through the At-Risk Student Success Program provided for in the community college budget and overall reported expenditures on developmental education at Michigan's community colleges.

### **Background Information**

Through their open door admission policies, community colleges have customarily provided access to postsecondary education for millions of Americans who would otherwise not have the opportunity due to various obstacles. However, a consequence of the open door admission policy is an increased prevalence of weak academic skills among the student population. Despite their charge to instruct students on college-level material, a majority of the students at community colleges are entering college with academic skills, in one or more areas, that are inadequately developed for college-level coursework.

The *Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count*<sup>1</sup> initiative found that approximately 60 percent of community college students enroll in at least one developmental education course. However, the percentage of students arriving at community colleges with insufficient academic skills is likely much higher due to some schools not mandating development courses for those students with skill deficiencies and others finding ways to exempt students even if they meet the requirement for developmental education.

Delivery of developmental education is most prevalent in the following areas: mathematics, English (including reading and writing), and student development. Student development courses often include freshmen seminars, critical thinking, study strategies, orientation courses, and other reading, writing, and low-level math courses. Other developmental services provided by community colleges include assessment, placement, orientation, tutoring, advising, counseling, peer support, study skills training, and learning assistance centers.

When looking at development education courses discretely, a 2006 National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) indicated that approximately 71 percent passed developmental reading courses, 68 percent passed developmental writing courses, but only 30 percent passed developmental math courses in which they enrolled. More often students are referred to a sequence of developmental education courses because they are deemed to be more than one level below college level coursework. When looking at developmental courses as a sequence of courses, less than one half of all students referred to developmental education complete their recommended sequence in any given subject area. However, across both statistical samples, developmental education in mathematics has the lowest student success rate.

As the need for improving the method of delivery of developmental/remedial education increases, there has been a growing debate on the appropriate medium. Specifically, questions have arisen over whether pre-college coursework is appropriate on college campuses. Others have argued that developmental education should be promoted at community colleges because it expands educational opportunities for those students unprepared for college coursework. In addition, the need for developmental education has often been attributed to the gap between a student's high school curriculum and college readiness. However, statistics have shown that

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.achievingthedream.org/default.tp>

developmental education with respect to retraining workers, re-educating older students, and English as a second language (ESL) students often accounts for a majority of the developmental/remedial coursework that community colleges offer.

### **Michigan Developmental Education: A Snapshot**

A recent performance audit (May 2009) titled Developmental Education at Michigan's Community Colleges found that between the fall of 2005 and the winter of 2007, on average 22 percent of students were enrolled in at least one developmental education course at any given time. Of all the developmental education courses taken, 52 percent were in mathematics, with writing accounting for 12 percent, reading accounting for 10 percent, and English accounting for 9 percent.

Although every Michigan community college provides developmental and remedial coursework, testing, placement, and enrollment policies lack uniformity. Even when the same test is implemented to determine student eligibility for developmental education, institutions are often able to choose their own cutoff scores. This lack of uniformity among schools can lead to students who are similarly situated academically spending varying periods of time in developmental education. Moreover, the varying policies obfuscate what constitutes college preparedness, which can impact students' ability to succeed at the college level.

According to Activities Classification Structure (ACS) data, Michigan community colleges reported total expenditures of \$28.6 million for developmental/remedial education between July 2007 and June 2008. This amounted to approximately 2.4 percent of the \$1.2 billion in total expenditures and 5.4 percent of instructional expenditures for community colleges for fiscal year (FY) 2007-08. Developmental education costs at Michigan's community colleges generally consist of expenditures for salaries and wages, capacity, and various support services.

### **At-Risk Student Success Program**

In order to address the developmental student population at Michigan's community colleges, the At-Risk Student Success Program was first authorized as a grant in the FY 1989-90 community college appropriation act (Public Act 175 of 1989). The at-risk student success program was continued in the FY 2008-09 community college appropriation act with community colleges receiving \$3.3 million for at-risk students. According to the act, grant funding under the program is used to address the special needs of at-risk students or for equipment or upgrades of information technology hardware or software that is associated with the operation of a program assisting at-risk students. Prior to FY 2007-08, language in the community college appropriations act allowed community colleges to use at-risk student success appropriations on equipment and technology not associated with at-risk student programs. Changes in the FY 2007-08 appropriations act revised the language to state that at-risk student success appropriations used for equipment or information technology hardware or software "must" be used on the "operation of a program designed to address the needs of at-risk students." At-risk students are defined as those students meeting one or more of the following criteria:

- (a) are initially placed in 1 or more developmental courses as a result of standardized testing or as a result of failure to make satisfactory academic process;
- (b) are diagnosed as learning disabled; or
- (c) require English as a second language (ESL) assistance.

All community colleges provide an annual summary to the Department of Energy, Labor, and Economic Growth (DELEG) of "all accomplishments under, expenditures for, and compliance with" the at-risk program.

The at-risk student success program appropriation provides funding to each institution through both a base grant and a funding formula portion. All 28 community colleges in the state of Michigan receive a base grant of \$40,000. The remaining appropriation is distributed to each college "on a proration utilizing the sum of the

most recent 3 years developmental/preparatory contact hours divided by the sum of the 3-year total contact hours at each college." Table 1 provides a ten-year history of at-risk student success funding at Michigan's community colleges.

Please contact me if you have questions about this information.

c: Mitch Bean, HFA Director  
Mary Ann Cleary, HFA Deputy Director

**Community College At-Risk Student Success Program Funding History  
FY 2000-01 through FY 2009-10**

<b>College</b>	<b><u>FY 2000-01</u></b>	<b><u>FY 2001-02</u></b>	<b><u>FY 2002-03</u></b>	<b><u>FY 2003-04</u></b>	<b><u>FY 2004-05</u></b>	<b><u>FY 2005-06</u></b>	<b><u>FY 2006-07</u></b>	<b><u>FY 2007-08</u></b>	<b><u>FY 2008-09</u></b>	<b><u>FY 2009-10*</u></b>
Alpena	\$121,725	\$104,004	\$85,654	\$68,700	\$72,300	\$76,300	\$78,600	\$80,500	\$80,200	\$83,000
Bay de Noc	105,324	98,650	93,194	82,400	83,900	91,300	100,800	76,600	62,800	69,100
Delta	110,504	110,240	109,215	99,400	99,700	97,100	97,900	99,400	104,500	106,400
Glen Oaks	131,210	135,832	138,528	127,500	125,600	123,600	117,500	115,100	112,500	111,300
Gogebic	78,617	78,902	78,171	71,500	70,700	66,200	62,400	58,200	58,600	56,300
Grand Rapids	76,714	74,179	88,959	98,000	111,500	117,200	122,100	128,700	132,300	133,300
Henry Ford	168,324	164,807	163,814	146,500	146,000	146,300	151,900	159,200	161,900	163,300
Jackson	114,933	113,768	113,121	101,800	98,100	102,000	105,000	113,800	120,900	132,800
Kalamazoo Valley	118,490	113,499	116,085	100,200	93,800	89,700	89,400	91,100	92,000	92,000
Kellogg	157,285	158,343	156,823	143,000	146,200	155,100	159,500	167,400	163,600	152,600
Kirtland	145,724	158,732	169,343	146,600	133,000	125,800	124,300	129,000	125,400	128,400
Lake Michigan	194,902	192,554	186,759	162,100	155,000	154,900	155,800	155,100	157,200	147,000
Lansing	134,738	157,864	162,796	147,600	142,600	139,800	134,500	143,800	153,500	157,000
Macomb	90,272	91,038	92,395	84,400	83,600	83,600	83,300	84,300	84,400	84,200
Mid Michigan	123,549	129,419	138,950	124,000	126,800	134,400	142,200	147,900	141,400	133,600
Monroe	102,673	99,275	99,550	90,700	91,300	94,000	97,500	103,900	105,400	104,100
Montcalm	70,131	71,694	69,465	67,800	67,200	66,700	66,700	66,000	75,000	75,600
Mott	105,617	109,157	111,102	101,900	100,700	102,600	103,800	105,700	106,300	113,300
Muskegon	212,002	213,016	209,919	185,300	183,300	149,700	118,500	81,800	78,700	81,100
North Central	178,833	178,336	156,702	121,300	117,500	115,900	117,200	116,200	111,100	109,800
Northwestern	120,835	120,677	129,025	129,700	124,600	123,100	118,200	122,600	122,400	122,500
Oakland	164,112	159,354	157,358	141,700	144,000	144,600	147,300	147,500	148,900	146,900
St. Clair	77,130	80,413	88,500	88,500	92,000	93,400	92,000	110,500	124,800	123,100
Schoolcraft	148,852	150,164	152,307	134,800	130,400	129,000	130,000	128,500	127,300	123,500
Southwestern	186,227	180,632	180,889	152,400	141,500	134,800	138,600	145,100	150,700	152,300
Washtenaw	148,858	161,709	170,388	157,200	158,400	161,700	159,800	153,700	140,300	127,300
Wayne County	158,329	149,384	142,398	129,500	161,200	174,900	172,400	147,400	132,600	146,200
West Shore	146,193	136,460	130,693	118,200	121,800	129,000	135,500	143,700	148,000	146,700
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$3,692,103</b>	<b>\$3,692,102</b>	<b>\$3,692,103</b>	<b>\$3,322,700</b>						

\*Proposed FY 2009-10 At-Risk Student Success Program appropriations.