



**COLLABORATING
TO
STRENGTHEN STUDENT PREPARATION**



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Task Force on Remedial Education
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Overview

Introduction. Academic basic skills are the foundation upon which adults build successful careers. Technological change creates an increased demand for more highly educated workers and perpetuates the need for continuous skill upgrading and retraining. Hence, higher levels of literacy in reading, writing, and mathematics are assumed for high wage employment and are necessary to position an individual for further advancement. Those who lack sound academic skills become increasingly less prepared to compete for meaningful employment. (Wagner, 2000) Therefore, student preparation and remedial education are crucial components in promoting student success in both higher education and the workplace.

The Illinois Community College System is student centered and sharply focused on providing effective learning opportunities for students. Locally governed colleges deliver programs and services to equip students with the knowledge and skills to achieve their educational and career goals.

Background. System partners are working together to enhance student access and opportunity. The Illinois Community College System Center for Policy Development identified student preparation and remedial education as a focus area and identified a policy fellow to assist with project development and coordination.

A Remedial Education Task Force was convened to help identify priority needs for remedial education in Illinois and advance the project. There was broad systemwide participation in the Remedial Education Task Force (see Appendix A). The group examined information about remedial education from national sources, Illinois reports, and reviewed promising initiatives in other states. At its December 2000 meeting, the Task Force heard three presentations: Redefining Remediation, Investing in the Future: College Readiness in Illinois, and Themes Among Selected Recent Remedial Education Studies and Reports. Related research highlights are furnished as additional background.

Related Research Highlights. The research literature provides evidence that the type and/or level of remediation students require can be useful in identifying those most seriously at academic risk. National and state studies, like the one conducted by the Maryland Higher Education Commission (1996), establish that the greater the amount of remediation required by students, the lower their success rate in terms of retention, graduation, and transfer. Adelman (1996) found that students who took three or more remedial courses had the lowest degree completion rates. However, it is important to note that recent studies such as the Illinois cohort analysis (1998) have found that completion of remedial courses does have a positive effect on educational outcomes such as cumulative grade point average, ratio of credit hours attempted to credit hours earned, and persistence.

The need for remedial education is a concern both among recent high school graduates and those who do not attend college directly from high school. Information from national databases reveals that almost one-half of the students who take remedial courses are five or more years beyond the traditional age of high school graduation. (Adelman, 1996)

The research literature indicates that students' academic preparation tends to follow a hierarchical order: most prepared in reading, prepared in writing, and least prepared in mathematics (SREB, 1991). Students who are under prepared in math only are the most successful at improving required skills, but those who need three or more remedial courses or who need to improve basic skills in more than one subject are at considerably greater risk of not succeeding in attaining their educational goals. Reading deficiencies often signal comprehensive literacy problems. (Adelman, 1996; Weissman, Silk & Bulakowski, 1997).

Critical Areas to Address and Related Pivotal Issues

The report identifies critical areas to address and related pivotal issues that impact the delivery of quality remedial education instruction. These areas and issues were influenced by recommendations from selected recent national and statewide remedial education studies, materials from the Council on Standards in Higher Education (CSHE) and the National Association for Developmental Education (NADE). The topics are intended to provide the framework for a comprehensive and systematic approach to program development and validation. The areas and issues should encourage self-evaluation at the local program level and promote further discussion and dialogue about remedial education systemwide.

Further Align Student Entry-level Practices. Best practice indicates that standardized tests provide the greatest uniformity in assessing basic skills among incoming degree-seeking students who cannot otherwise demonstrate through objective means that they possess math, reading, and communication skills to perform college-level work.

Agree on Student Placement Parameters. Students should be required to take developmental courses upon college enrollment. Further, students should not be allowed to enroll in courses where their academic skill level puts them at high risk for failure. Yet students should be allowed to enroll in those courses where they have the requisite skills to succeed. Permitting students to enroll in those courses where they possess the requisite academic skills that correspond with the original reasons for choosing to pursue higher education can provide individuals with an incentive to persevere.

Reinforce P-16 Collaboration. Collaboration among colleagues through P-16 partnerships can help diminish the need for remedial education among recent high school graduates. Colleges should renew efforts to engage in regularly scheduled active dialogue and discussion with regional P-16 partners to improve academic preparation among recent and future high school graduates.

Promote Earlier Awareness of Rising Academic and Workplace Standards. Local P-16 partnerships should create a process that promotes earlier recognition of rising academic standards among parents and students in elementary and secondary schools. Earlier awareness of college entrance and workplace skill requirements should be a part of the strategy for reducing the need for remediation among recent high school graduates. All parties could benefit from an increased level of understanding that preparation in the early grades can either open or limit opportunities for future learning.

Develop Strategies for Earlier Intervention. Local P-16 partnerships should redouble their efforts to identify and implement targeted approaches that address academic deficiencies

sooner rather than later in the educational process to reduce the need for remedial education among recent high school graduates.

Build Capacity for Intervention While Still in High School. Provide additional opportunities to improve weaknesses in basic skills prior to a student's exit from high school. The new Prairie State Achievement Exam taken at the junior year in high school will include the ACT college entrance exam and two of ACT's eight Work Keys exams which measure applied mathematics and reading skills as well as enhancements focusing on the Illinois Learning Standards.

Align High School Graduation and College Entrance Requirements. Move toward closer alignment between high school graduation standards and college entrance standards. High school graduation requirements are a minimum of a year behind in three of the four academic areas and two years less in social studies. Start by raising the high school graduation requirement in math.

Enhance Feedback to High Schools. Students benefit from college efforts to furnish specific feedback (math, reading, and communication) to area high schools about the extent to which their graduates needed remediation.

Seek Innovative Approaches That Shorten Skill Building Time Lines for Adults. Nearly one-half of the community college students enrolling in remedial education courses are five years or more out of high school. For some individuals, refresher courses or other short intensive courses may be part of the solution to get their skills back up to speed.

Strengthen Linkages Between Adult Education/English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) and College-Level Coursework. Each year, thousands of individuals successfully complete adult education programs and earn general equivalency degrees (GEDs). According to the U.S. Census (1996), Illinois is expected to gain one million people through international migration between 1995 and 2025. Helping GED completers and individuals for whom English is their second language transition into college-level coursework should be a priority.

Fortify Student Tracking Systems. Effective student tracking is needed to assess the extent to which those students receiving remediation are benefitting from the interventions. Colleges are asked to develop or update their plan for strengthening student tracking systems that includes remedial education students.

Intensify Efforts to Develop Comprehensive Student Support Systems. As high school graduation standards and college admission standards are raised, there is a corresponding need to strengthen the safety net that student support services provide for those who require assistance with their basic academic skills. Although out of necessity, there are limits on the support colleges can provide, many students who need to enroll in remedial coursework have both academic and nonacademic needs (advisement/counseling, tutoring, financial aid, childcare, healthcare, transportation, etc.) which require attention. Individuals knowledgeable about community and government-funded support systems and services can be an asset in addressing nonacademic needs.

Accelerate Implementation of Innovative Instruction Design and Delivery. Computer-aided instruction, delivery of courses via the internet, and other innovative instructional design and delivery strategies can benefit some students seeking to remediate their basic skills. Adapting

instruction to accommodate student learning styles can also be part of the solution to strengthening basic skills.

Revitalize Professional Development. A comprehensive faculty and staff development program for remedial educators provides opportunities for keeping skills current and acquiring new ones. Both full- and part-time instructors can benefit from these professional development opportunities. Further integrating technology in the classroom, addressing varied learning styles and applying other innovations to the delivery of remedial coursework are some of the areas where professional development can make a difference. Discipline-specific professional organizations, current practitioner mentors, and teacher preparation programs can make contributions to professional development for faculty.

Next Steps:

Step 1: Develop a “Tiered” Standards Based Approach. It is proposed that, in consultation with interested parties, a small workgroup be convened to further develop standards for remedial education courses and programs in Illinois. A self-assessment tool based on a tiered approach would be created for use by the colleges in evaluating their own remedial education structure and performance. The self-assessment instrument would be built around the Critical Areas to Address and Related Pivotal Issues identified in this report. Rising levels in the tiers would correspond with more comprehensive program structures and movement toward, or attainment of, elevated performance. Related efforts by national professional groups and initiatives undertaken in other states would be considered as the project progressed in Illinois.

Continued efforts by system partners to address these areas and issues should strengthen remedial education systemwide and make a positive difference for the students we serve. Any standard development process should allow sufficient flexibility for professionals at the local level to pursue the standards using innovative and creative approaches.

Step 2: Investing in Solutions to Remedial Education

Along with developing standards for remediation, the Illinois higher education system, especially community colleges, will need to examine institutional and statewide commitment to remediation. Investing resources in P-16 partnerships, in necessary remedial programs, and in comprehensive support systems can bring long-term economic benefits. Greater student preparedness for college will reduce the need for remediation. For those needing assistance, higher program standards and better quality remediation means more success for students in higher education.

COLLABORATING TO STRENGTHEN STUDENT PREPARATION

Report

In 2005, three-quarters of all employment will demand one or two years of postsecondary education; just 4.5 percent will require a high school diploma or below; and the remaining 20.5 percent will call for a bachelors degree or higher. (U.S. Department of Labor, 1999)

At the beginning of the new millennium, the ability to acquire new knowledge and skills is extremely important and its significance is growing. Those who lack sound academic skills become increasingly less prepared to compete for meaningful employment. (Wagner, 2000) Success in the workplace requires independent learning skills, including the ability to acquire, understand, and synthesize information; deal effectively with abstract concepts; and perform applied problem solving. These skills are built

upon a solid foundation of math, reading, communication skills, and an ability to use technology. Hence, academic preparation and foundational skills are crucial components in promoting student success in both higher education and the workplace.

The Illinois Community College System is student centered and sharply focused on providing effective learning opportunities for students. Locally governed colleges deliver programs and services to equip students with the knowledge and skills to achieve his/her goals.

System partners are working together to enhance student access and opportunity. The Illinois Community College System Center for Policy Development is a joint initiative of the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), the Presidents Council, and the Illinois Community College Trustees Association (ICCTA) to identify critical issues and create policy platforms that enable colleges to proactively address them. The Center for Policy Development Advisory Committee, which includes leadership of the Presidents Council, the Presidents Council Curriculum Committee, and staff members from both ICCB and ICCTA, identified student preparation and remedial education as crucial components in promoting student success. A policy fellow was identified to assist with project development and coordination.

Background. A Remedial Education Task Force was convened to help identify priority needs for remedial education in Illinois and advance the project. There was systemwide participation in the Remedial Education Task Force, including representatives from the following groups: remedial educators, trustees, presidents, chief academic officers, chief financial officers, and institutional researchers (see Appendix A) The group met three times between April and December 2000 and examined information about remedial education from national sources, Illinois reports, and reviewed promising initiatives in other states. They also reviewed and commented on materials between meetings. At its December 2000 meeting, the Task Force heard three presentations: Redefining Remediation, Investing in the Future: College Readiness in Illinois, and Themes Among Selected Recent Remedial Education Studies and Reports (see Bibliography). Discussion followed and areas to address and build a standards-based process in Illinois were identified.

Themes. Themes among the recommendations from selected recent remedial education national and statewide studies were examined by the Remedial Education Task Force. The work of these authors helped the Task Force sort through options for moving toward issue resolution and move toward the establishment of standards (see Appendix B). This section captures several themes which emerged at the state and national levels that the Task Force

viewed as particularly applicable to pressing issues in Illinois.

Remedial education should be elevated on the community college agenda. Effective remedial programs promote quality college wide by offering further assurances that students in college-level courses have the skills to succeed. Hence, remedial education courses can extend real educational access to individuals by developing their foundational academic skills. An interest exists in establishing a more common baseline for college-level work systemwide. Part of elevating remedial education should involve investigating ways of acquiring additional funding for remedial education. Colleges constantly struggle with the need to adequately fund remedial education while supporting the needs of general and other specialized instructional program areas.

In Illinois during fiscal year 2000, remedial credit hours accounted for 8 percent of the total midterm credit hours reported by the community college system. Remedial unit cost per credit hour for fiscal year 2000 was \$164.65 compared to Baccalaureate unit cost of \$172.91 and total average unit cost per credit hour of \$172.51. Hence, Remedial unit cost was 4.8 percent below Baccalaureate and 4.6 percent below total average unit cost per credit hour. “The price of not remediating under prepared students is more than Illinois or any other state can afford.” (IBHE, 2000) Creative approaches to funding remedial education merit further investigation.

A recent study on community college remediation found that students who were successfully remediated became productively employed. (McCabe, 2000)

Investments in remedial education can pay dividends for the individual and society in terms of an elevated quality of life, promoting civic participation, and improved attachment to the labor force. (McCabe, 2000; The Institute for Higher Education Policy March, 1998; Resek, et. al., 2000) Business and employer partners can contribute by helping establish and validate program outcomes.

Education at all levels must contribute to helping individuals prepare for gainful employment.

The research literature provides evidence that the type and/or level of remediation students require can be useful in identifying those most seriously at academic risk. National and state studies, like the one conducted by the Maryland Higher Education Commission (1996), establish that the greater the amount of remediation required by students, the lower their success rate in terms of retention, graduation, and transfer. Adelman (1996) found that students who took three or more remedial courses had the lowest degree completion rates.

Results from the Illinois (1998) cohort analysis indicate that successful completion of remedial courses appears to positively effect educational outcomes. In terms of cumulative grade point average, ratio of credit hours attempted to credit hours earned and persistence (students who enrolled in one or more remedial courses) compared favorably to students who did not seek remediation. In addition, within the group of students who enrolled in remedial coursework, those who successfully completed all courses attempted had higher persistence rates and were more likely to graduate than those who did not. It is also positive to note that the vast majority of students in Illinois who enrolled in remedial courses appeared to need remediation in only one subject area and enrolled in three or less courses in that subject.

The need for remedial education is a concern both among recent high school graduates and those who do not attend college directly from high school. Information from national databases reveals that almost one-half of the students who take remedial courses are five or more years beyond the traditional age of high school graduation at 18. (Adelman, 1996)

Similarly, information from a recent study using ICCB administrative databases reveals that students 22 years of age and above accounted for 48.9 percent of the remedial students. (ICCB, 1998)

One way to address the need for remedial education among recent high school graduates is to strengthen the educational pipeline. Students benefit when educators collaborate to provide smoother transitions and stronger linkages across and among educational levels. P-16 partnerships can be a powerful part of the solution in identifying and implementing approaches to further align expectations and standards in secondary and postsecondary education. Strategic interventions when students initially show signs of falling behind provide another opportunity for the P-16 system to make a difference for students.

Evidence from Southern Regional Education Board states suggests that students are less likely to need remedial courses if they complete a core of challenging academic courses in high school and take a high-level mathematics course in their senior year. (Abraham & Creech 2000)

Similarly, according to Adelman (1999), among all pre-college curricula variables reviewed, the highest level of math studied in secondary school has the strongest continuing influence on degree completion. Finishing a course beyond the level of Algebra 2 (e.g., trigonometry or pre-calculus) more than doubles the odds that a student who enters postsecondary education will complete a degree. A phased approach to

further align high school graduation standards with college admission standards can be part of diminishing remedial education among recent high school graduates. Start by raising the high school graduation math requirement. Furthermore, providing additional subject matter-specific feedback to high school officials about recent graduates' basic academic skill deficiencies can help target secondary school program improvement initiatives which should benefit students.

Assessing student basic academic skills upon community college entry is an important part of a comprehensive effort to deliver remedial instruction to those who can benefit from it. Multiple approaches to entry-level based on a common thread can address this need.

Many colleges already use computer-adaptive testing products. As test takers respond to test items, a computer-adaptive test "adapts" itself to test takers by selecting the next item on the basis of student performance on preceding items. A correct answer leads to the next higher level related question. An incorrect response leads to a series of items between the one missed and the last item successfully answered. These tests provide a of students' skills with a high degree of precision using only a fraction of the questions involved in a more traditional "linear" computerized and paper and pencil tests. Two widely recognized computer-adaptive tests include the College Board's Accuplacer (available via the internet) and ACT's COMPASS/ESL. Colleges not using computerized adaptive placement tests are encouraged to further investigate the benefits associated with these products from the variety of vendors who offer them.

As higher education continues to educate an ever-growing proportion of the population, there is every reason to conclude that remediation will continue to be a core function of colleges and universities. (Phipps, 1998)

Placing students in remedial coursework in those areas where they require skill building to be successful makes sense. The research literature indicates that students' academic preparation tends to follow a hierarchical order: most prepared in reading, prepared in

writing, and least prepared in mathematics (SREB, 1991). Students who are under prepared in math only are the most successful at improving required skills, but those who need three or more remedial courses or who need to improve basic skills in more than one subject are at considerably greater risk of not succeeding in attaining their educational goals. Reading deficiencies often signal comprehensive literacy problems. (Adelman, 1996; Weissman, Silk & Bulakowski, 1997). Limiting access to courses which require the skill where remediation is needed has merit. At the same time, students should be allowed to participate in courses where they have demonstrated skills and their true interests lie while they address weaknesses in other basic skill areas.

Within higher education, greater alignment between remedial courses and related college-level courses can contribute to more positive student outcomes. The AACC (2000) supports fostering linkages among components of remedial curricula (e.g., reading, writing, computation, and computer skills) and nonremedial curricula to promote across-the-curriculum requirements for active skill development and regular demonstration of performance and progress.

Efforts by educators to identify and replicate or adapt remedial course designs, support services, and delivery strategies that show promising results can pay dividends. Implicit in this process is an ongoing effort to assess which interventions seem to be contributing to positive outcomes at the local level.

Student tracking systems both local and statewide are viewed as useful tools in the process. Incorporating appropriate technology and having an array of approaches for delivering instruction tailored to individual needs and learning styles is encouraged.

Furnishing students with comprehensive support services to promote learning can make a difference. For some students, this may require addressing both academic and nonacademic needs (e.g., advisement/counseling, tutoring, financial aid, childcare, healthcare, transportation, etc.).

In the delivery of remedial education, people make the difference. Dedicated, intelligent, creative, and empathetic people working in structures that support and value their efforts are the key component in making a difference for students enrolled in remedial education courses.

CRITICAL AREAS TO ADDRESS AND RELATED PIVOTAL ISSUES

The following section of the report identifies critical areas to address and related pivotal issues that impact the delivery of quality remedial education instruction. In addition to the themes among recommendations from selected recent national and statewide remedial education studies, materials from the Council on Standards in Higher Education (CSHE) and the National Association for Developmental Education (NADE) influenced the identification of these areas and issues. Identified topics are meant to provide the framework for a comprehensive and systematic approach to program development and validation. The areas and issues should encourage self-evaluation at the local program level and promote further discussion and dialogue about remedial education systemwide.

Incoming Student Assessment

There are multiple ways to assess the basic skills of incoming students. Attaining a common level of rigor in varied entry-level processes provides further assurances that degree-seeking students possess the skills for success. Standardized college placement test results (e.g., ASSET, Accuplacer) are the preferred method of entry-level for degree-seeking students. Other objective ways of measuring student skills among degree-seeking students include standardized college entrance test results (e.g., ACT, SAT); Prairie State Achievement Exam results; and prior college degree attainment. These objective measures can address academic competency assessment. Colleges not using computerized adaptive placement tests are encouraged to further investigate the benefits associated with these products. In keeping with the national AACC Board recommendations, institutional academic quality is enhanced when basic academic skill levels are documented for all students who plan to enroll in any course where those specific basic skills are required.

Build Consensus on Skills Entry-level Strategies. Best practice indicates that standardized tests provide the greatest uniformity in efforts to assess basic skills among incoming degree-seeking students who cannot otherwise demonstrate through objective means that they possess math, reading, and communication skills to perform college-level work. Concordance tables should be distributed equating scores across standardized tests to help college officials better appreciate how their “cut scores” compare to those in use at other colleges. Additionally, correlations computed among different standardized tests scores (ASSET, Accuplacer, ACT, etc.) can assist college officials in their efforts to interpret different measures of student preparedness. Having common scores can inform discussions about the desirability of moving toward more uniform standards systemwide for determining what constitutes adequate student preparation for success in college-level courses. Gathering and disseminating the different “cut scores” on standardized tests in use across the system can allow for more informed policy development.

A holistic approach to assessing individuals who test low in multiple areas can be beneficial since a number of underlying factors can present themselves as basic skill deficiencies (e.g., an undiagnosed hearing problem, an undiagnosed vision problem, a learning disability, etc) In some cases correcting vision or hearing problems can allow a student to move forward quickly.

Student Placement

Agree on Student Placement Parameters. Students should be required to take developmental courses upon college enrollment. Further, students should not be allowed to enroll in courses where their academic skill level puts them at high risk for failure. Yet students should be allowed to enroll in those courses where they have the requisite skills to succeed. Permitting students to enroll in those courses where they possess the requisite academic skills that correspond with the original reasons for choosing to pursue higher education in the first place can provide individuals with an incentive to persevere.

Collaborating to Improve Academic Preparation Among Recent High School Graduates

Emerging education issues among states . . . The biggest change has been the new focus on P-16 education as a single system. We have become much more involved in efforts to define expectations for high school graduates, to seek new solutions to remediation problems, and to improve the preparation of teachers. (SHEEO, 2000)

Reinforce P-16 Collaboration. Collaboration among colleagues through P-16 partnerships can help diminish the need for remedial education among recent and future high school graduates. A recent State Higher Education Executive Officers survey (Russell, 2000) identified promoting and strengthening P-16 system linkages as one of the top five issues states are facing. Addressing

the need for remedial education among recent high school graduates is an integral part of these discussions.

The National Association for Developmental Education (NADE) supports initiatives that lead to partnerships across ALL levels of education as well as in communities and the workplace. (NADE,2000a)

Colleges should renew efforts to engage in regularly scheduled active dialogue and discussion with regional P-16 partners to improve academic preparation among recent high school graduates. Expanding partnerships between community colleges and universities also builds capacity for delivering remedial education. Working together to arrive at solutions that

benefit students remains the goal of all these efforts.

Promote Earlier Awareness of Rising Academic and Workplace Standards. Local P-16 partnerships should create a process that promotes earlier recognition of rising academic standards among parents and students in elementary and secondary schools. Infusing an earlier awareness among youngsters and their parents/guardians about the elevated academic standards required for college entrance and workplace success should be a part of the strategy for reducing the need for remediation among recent high school graduates. All parties could benefit from an increased level of understanding that preparation in the early grades can either open or limit opportunities for future learning. Initiatives that increase the level of parental involvement in the learning process are welcomed.

Develop Strategies for Earlier Intervention. Local P-16 partnerships should redouble their efforts to identify and implement targeted approaches that address academic deficiencies sooner rather than later in the educational process to reduce the need for remedial education among recent high school graduates. The opportunity for earlier intervention exists to address low performance in basic academic skill areas. Test results from the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) exams identify early in the educational process and at points throughout middle and secondary school those students who are performing below expected levels. The earlier the need for remediation is identified, the earlier deficiencies can be corrected which can allow individuals to develop their skills at the accepted rate.

Build Capacity for Intervention While Still in High School. Provide additional opportunities to improve weaknesses in basic skills prior to a student's exit from high school. The new Prairie State Achievement Exam taken at the junior year in high school will allow another chance to identify and provide remediation to students prior to high school graduation. The exam

measures high school students' progress in meeting the Illinois Learning Standards in reading, writing, math, science, and social science. The test will include the ACT college entrance exam and two of ACT's eight Work Keys exams which measure students' mathematics and reading skills applied to workplace situations.

Align High School Graduation and College Entrance Requirements. Move toward closer alignment between high school graduation standards and college entrance standards (see Appendix C for a comparison of current college entrance core curriculum and high school graduation requirements). High school graduation requirements are a minimum of a year behind in three of the four academic areas and two years less in social studies. As the bar continues to be raised for student performance in high school, it is prudent to provide support services and safety nets to assist students who need supplemental instruction and tutoring. The goal is to bring all students along and strive to avoid any unintended consequences that accentuate the divisive movement toward a society of educational "haves" and "have nots".

A phased-in process to align standards would allow for an orderly transition. Research suggests that raising the high school graduation math requirement may be a good starting point. One recent national study attempted to quantify the increase in dropouts that can accompany elevated high school graduation standards and encourages strengthening support services as graduation requirements are raised. "An average increase in stricter high school graduation standards resulted in a 3 to 7 point jump in the high school dropout rate, equivalent to up to 65,000 more dropouts a year nationwide. Higher standards put more students at risk of dropping out . . . states may look for more ways to identify students at risk and consider instituting or adapting existing programs to support students before they drop out." (Lillard & DeCicca, 2000)

Enhance Feedback to High Schools. Students benefit from college efforts to furnish feedback to area high schools about the extent to which their graduates needed remediation and the specific academic areas involved. Information should be timely and subject-specific (math, reading, and communication) to promote discussion and help further align standards.

Shorten Time Lines for Adults Who Require Assistance with Basic Skills

Seek Innovative Approaches That Shorten Skill Building Time Lines for Adults. Nearly one-half of the community college students enrolling in remedial education courses are five years or more out of high school. Colleges should provide multiple approaches to the delivery of remedial education courses. For some individuals, refresher courses or other short intensive courses may be part of the solution to get their skills back up to speed. The more rapidly that remediation can occur, the more quickly the student can move on with their studies. Thoughtful, inventive, and flexible (self-adjusting) curriculum should be designed to meet students' varied abilities. Students who are able to quickly address basic skill deficiencies generally will be more motivated to remain in college.

Strengthen Linkages Between Adult Education/English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) and College-Level Coursework. Each year, thousands of individuals successfully complete adult education programs and earn general equivalency degrees (GEDs). ESL accounted for over one-half (54.8 percent) of the students in adult education courses during fiscal year 2000. According to the U.S. Census State Population Rankings Summary (1996), Illinois is expected to gain one million people through international migration between 1995 and 2025. Nationwide, Illinois is projected to experience the fifth largest net international migration gain.

Helping GED completers and individuals for whom English is their second language transition into college-level coursework provides additional opportunities for increasing skills and earnings. As community colleges welcome additional GED recipients, the colleges are encouraged to explore ways of supplying GED providers with performance information on their former students to allow them to further evaluate and enhance the instruction they furnish to students.

Student Tracking Systems

Fortify Student Tracking Systems. Effective student tracking is needed to assess the extent to which those students receiving remediation are benefitting from the interventions. Community college and public university data and student tracking systems are generally already well developed. The most recent Performance-Based Incentive System funding figures tell us that statewide about two-thirds of all remedial hours attempted are earned. Colleges are asked to develop or update a plan for strengthening student tracking systems that includes remedial education students.

The AACC Board Statement on Remediation encourages the regular and systematic evaluation of remedial courses and programs to assess student performance, review average course completion time, evaluate student performance in follow-up courses, and compare graduation rates of students requiring remediation in one or more skills with those who did not.

Student Support Services

Provide comprehensive support services to meet students' academic and personal needs. (AACC, 2000)

Intensify Efforts to Develop Comprehensive Student Support Systems. Workplace success continues to demand higher skill levels. All students deserve the opportunity for adequate preparation to enable them to compete successfully in an environment requiring higher level thinking and communication skills and the ability to use technology effectively. As high school graduation standards and college admission standards are raised, there is a corresponding need to strengthen the safety net that student support services provide for those who require assistance with their basic academic skills. Roueche & Roueche (1999) identified faculty mentors and peer support groups as important parts of the critical safety net for under prepared students. Focusing on supportive service that include diagnosis and counseling as a way of understanding and dealing with the problems students are facing can be a key to helping them reach their goals. Adequate services need to be in place to provide individuals with the opportunity to succeed. Sufficient opportunities for tutoring and meaningful skills practice should be available to students enrolled in remedial coursework. Although out of necessity, there are limits on the support colleges can provide, many students who need to enroll in remedial coursework have both academic and nonacademic needs (advisement/counseling, tutoring, financial aid, childcare, healthcare, transportation, etc.) which require attention. Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs established that higher order growth needs are not fully attended to until basic needs are adequately addressed. Individuals knowledgeable about community and government-funded support systems and services can be an asset in addressing nonacademic needs.

Nearly one-half (48 percent) of recent Illinois high school graduates taking the ACT exam had not completed a college preparation sequence. (IBHE, 2000)

Innovative Instructional Design and Delivery Strategies

Accelerate Implementation of Innovative Instruction Design and Delivery. Computer-aided instruction, delivery of courses via the internet, and other innovative instructional design and delivery strategies can benefit some students seeking to remediate their basic skills. Adapting instruction to accommodate student learning styles can also be part of the solution to strengthening basic skills. The use of technology intensive learning tools has a better chance of working when built on a solid foundation of a strong partnership between the education professional and the individual who needs to strengthen his/her basic skills. Oftentimes students in remedial courses have not been particularly successful in parts of their previous educational experiences. Particularly among younger students, repeating the same type of instruction that they have had negative experiences with for the past several years can exacerbate retention problems. Many respond well to personal attention from their instructors and adaptive learning strategies. Students in remedial coursework are looking for a style of instruction and delivery approach which will lead them to success rather than continue past failures

The AACC Board Statement on Remedial Education encourages instructional activities designed to develop critical cognitive and affective skills; provide significant instruction and practice in reading, writing, computation, and speaking; attend to student motivation, interest, and attitude; address study skills and other competencies required in entry-level, follow-up courses; and offer approaches to accommodate diverse learning styles.

Professional Development

Revitalize Professional Development. Establishing a comprehensive faculty and staff development program for remedial educators provides opportunities for keeping skills current and acquiring new ones. Both full- and part-time instructors can benefit from these professional development opportunities. Further integrating technology in the classroom, addressing varied learning styles, and applying other innovations to the delivery of remedial coursework are some of the areas where professional development can make a difference. Relatedly, professional development among all faculty about the college's remedial education offerings and services can be beneficial to promote greater awareness of how remedial education affects students and can strengthen the linkages between remedial and college level courses. Discipline-specific professional organizations, current practitioner mentors, and teacher preparation programs can make contributions to professional development for faculty.

Next Steps

The National Association for Developmental Education (NADE) advocates . . . regularly engaging in a process of evaluation that includes the use of professional standards that have been developed within the field. (NADE, 2000b)

Proposed Development of a “Tiered” Standards Based Approach. It is proposed that, in consultation with interested parties, a small workgroup be convened to further develop standards for remedial education courses and programs in Illinois. A self assessment tool based on a tiered approach would be created for use by the colleges in evaluating their own remedial education

structure and performance built around the Critical Areas to Address and Related Pivotal Issues

identified in the report. Rising levels would correspond with more comprehensive program structures and movement toward, or attainment of, elevated performance. As work progresses in Illinois, consideration should be given to similar efforts by the Council on Standards in Higher Education (CSHE), the National Association for Developmental Education (NADE), and initiatives undertaken in other states.

The number of levels may vary by topical area. If a three-level structure is selected, the levels could be structured in the following manner. Level one would indicate an alignment with essential policies and practices for the effective delivery of remedial education. Level two would demonstrate alignment with essential policies and practices; add essential data collection and incorporate the use of data for program planning and improvement. Level three, in addition to meeting the first two levels, would involve the validation of student success on essential criteria.

As an example, standards for the tests used in skills assessment might consist of the following:

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Level 1 | College uses a standardized test to assess student academic skills. |
| Level 2 | College uses a standardized test to assess student academic skills
Assessment data are used to refine cut scores.
Feedback appropriate information to facilitate curricular change. |
| Level 3 | College uses a standardized test to assess student academic skills <u>at entry and students in remedial courses are post-tested when exiting a remedial course.</u>
Assessment data are used to refine cut scores.
Feedback appropriate information to facilitate curricular change.
Assessment data show that cut scores accuracy and minimize placement errors. |

Using the example from levels as given here, a college that is at Level One for assessment testing might use the Accuplacer (or an equivalent test selected from a list of standardized tests), and the college would share placement scores for comparative purposes. For the same institution to achieve a Level Two standard, college officials would demonstrate that they had completed an analysis of test scores and, as necessary, were planning or had completed changes in cut scores as needed based on the analysis. To meet the Level Three standard, the institution would demonstrate that any changes made in the cut scores contributed to highly accurate placement decisions (minimized false positive and false negative placement decisions) to a level that would be acceptable in relation to data furnished by other colleges.

This section attempts to provide an overview of the concept which is to develop reasonable standards that strengthen remedial education at each college. The aim is to provide enhanced courses, programs, support services, and opportunities for students who can benefit from remedial education. A similar standard-setting process would be need to be undertaken for each Critical Area to Address and Related Pivotal Issue identified earlier.

Remedial education is inexpensive. Remedial education is essential to quality. The successfully remediated go onto higher quality jobs. Remediation has positive life effects. McCabe (2000).

Closing Comments

To move forward and strengthen student academic preparation requires a collaborative effort between educational partners. The Remedial Education Task Force focused its efforts on identifying the following Critical Areas to Address and Related Pivotal Issues:

- ▶ Further Align Student Assessment Practices
- ▶ Agree on Student Placement Parameters
- ▶ Reinforce P-16 Collaboration
- ▶ Promote Earlier Awareness of Rising Academic and Workplace Standards
- ▶ Develop Strategies for Earlier Intervention
- ▶ Build Capacity for Intervention While Still in High School
- ▶ Align High School Graduation and College Entrance Requirements
- ▶ Enhance Feedback to High Schools
- ▶ Seek Innovative Approaches That Shorten Skill Building Time Lines for Adults
- ▶ Strengthen Linkages Between Adult Education/English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) and College-Level Coursework
- ▶ Fortify Student Tracking Systems
- ▶ Intensify Efforts to Develop Comprehensive Student Support Systems
- ▶ Accelerate Implementation of Innovative Instruction Design and Delivery
- ▶ Revitalize Professional Development

Continued efforts by system partners to address these areas and issues should strengthen remedial education systemwide and make a positive difference for the students we serve. As standards are developed, they should allow sufficient flexibility for professionals at the local level to pursue them using innovative and creative approaches.

Academic basic skills are the foundation upon which adults build successful careers. Technological change creates an increased demand for more educated workers and perpetuates the need for continuous skill upgrading and retraining. Hence, higher levels of literacy in reading, writing, and mathematics are assumed for high wage employment and are necessary to position an individual for further advancement. Student preparation and remedial education are crucial components in promoting student success in both higher education and the workplace. As McCabe (2000) points out, remedial education is a solid investment both for the individual and for society. To remain a competitive power in the global marketplace, we cannot afford to leave anyone behind.

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* Reports used to identify Themes Among Recommendations from Selected Recent National and Statewide Studies of Remedial Education.

Appendix A
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Appendix B

**THEMES AMONG RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SELECTED
RECENT NATIONAL AND STATEWIDE STUDIES OF REMEDIAL EDUCATION**

1. Elevate Remedial Education on the Community College Agenda
2. Establish and Maintain Effective Remedial Programs to Provide Real Access and Promote Quality Across the College
3. Provide Adequate Funding
4. Strengthen Linkages
 - A.– Between Remedial and Related College Level Courses
 - B. – P-16 and Community Organizations
 - C. – Employers and the Public
 - D. – Teacher Preparation Programs
 - E. – Discipline-Specific Professional Organizations and Current Practitioners
5. Align Secondary and Postsecondary Standards and Expectations
 - A. – Pipeline Issues – Earlier Awareness of Standards and Earlier Intervention
 - B. – Move Toward Aligning High School Graduation Standards with College Admission Standards
6. Assessment
 - A. – Strengthen Feedback to High Schools About Foundational Academic Skill Deficiencies Among Recent Graduates
 - B. – Identify and Replicate Remedial Courses/Strategies That Work
7. Institutional Policies to Support Effective Remedial Education Program Design
 - A. – Strengthen Assessment of Foundational Academic Skills
 - B. – Strengthen Placement in Remedial Coursework
 - C. – Prohibit Dual Enrollment in Those Courses Requiring Skill Where Remediation is Needed
 - D. – Review and Revise Other Enrollment Policies for Students Requiring Remediation
 - E. – Identify and Implement Innovative Instructional Design Strategies
 - F. – Furnish Comprehensive Support Services
 - G.– Address Staff Development
8. Statewide Policies to Support Effective Remedial Education Program Delivery
 - A. – Testing and Criteria for Admission to Remedial Education
 - B. – Expand State Level Student Tracking Systems

Appendix C

**COMPARISON OF CURRENT COLLEGE ENTRANCE CORE CURRICULUM AND
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS**

Knowledge Areas	College Entrance Core Curriculum Requirements	High School Graduation Requirements
English	4 years (written, oral, and English literature)	3 years language arts
Social Studies	3 years (history and government)	2 years social science (at least 1 year of history or history and government)
Mathematics	3 years (introductory through advanced algebra, geometry, trigonometry, or fundamentals of computer programming)	2 years (one may be related to computer technology)
Sciences	3 years (including laboratory)	1 year
Electives	2 years foreign language, music vocational education or art	1 year (art, music, foreign language*, or vocational education)

* includes American sign language

SOURCE: Illinois Board of Higher Education (October 2000)