1. During the current academic year at this college, in which of the following ways, if at all, have you been involved in a structured experience for new students (sometimes called a “freshman seminar” or “first-year experience”)? (Mark all that apply)

   a. Planning/designing  
   b. Coordinating/supervising  
   c. Teaching/facilitating  
   d. Advising/referring students into the experience  
   e. Training faculty  
   f. Training or mentoring student tutors  
   g. I am not involved


This volume presents thirteen institutions identified in 2002 as “institutions of excellence” in recognition of their work with first-year students. Selected institutions offer holistic, multi-faceted first-year programming; use data to inform decision making; and extend services to a large portion of their entering students—particularly those from underserved populations. Strong administrative leadership and inter-departmental faculty and staff involvement in first-year efforts are other cornerstones of the work highlighted here.

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2. In your work directly with students in a freshman seminar or first-year experience, which of the following modalities have you employed when carrying out those activities? (Mark all that apply)
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   b. Online interaction (such as mediated lectures, forums, chat)
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3. During the current academic year at this college, in which of the following ways, if at all, have you been involved in an organized learning community (two or more courses that a group of students take together)? (Mark all that apply) NOTE: A learning community may or may not be integrated with a freshman seminar or first-year experience.
   a. Planning/designing
   b. Coordinating/supervising
   c. Teaching/facilitating
   d. Advising/referring students into the experience
   e. Training faculty
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The authors present best practices in postsecondary education for optimal student success through examples of programs and policies at 20 four-year institutions. These exemplars were identified by the Documenting Effective Educational Practice (DEEP) project for their graduation rates and National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) scores. Drawing on previous promising practices literature, the authors outline promising practices in terms of institutional mission, standards for student performance, time on task, balancing academic challenge with support for students, emphasis on early months and first year of study, respect for diversity, integration of prior experience, ongoing practice, active learning, assessment and feedback, student collaboration, and out-of-class contact with faculty. These categories are further condensed into six “properties and conditions common to educationally effective colleges” (p. iii). Learning communities at several DEEP institutions are highlighted throughout the book, and are posited as methods to honor different learning styles, build community (especially at large institutions), provide student employment, and foster inter-departmental collaboration.

Developmental programs are necessary in post-secondary education, yet the institution of developmental education has long been criticized for its lack of standardization, positive student outcomes, and critical self-assessment. Regardless of arguments about where and when remediation should take place, the bulk of developmental education takes place in community colleges, and at least half of the students entering two-year colleges do so with deficiencies in basic skills. Standardized tests are typically used to place students into developmental education, and according to 1996 NCES figures, 75% of community colleges say that remedial courses are required for students who test into them. However, placement requirements are often not firm enough, and the authors recommend making both assessment and placement truly mandatory. Other recommendations include increasing structure and support within developmental programs. Orientation should be required, and mentoring, tutoring, and activities fostering personal connections between students and the college need to be integrated into institutions’ developmental programs. Connections between students and the college should ideally be established before the post-secondary years, with institutions reaching out to high schools and junior high schools when possible. Outcomes for developmental students can also be improved by monitoring enrollment to ensure that students are entering classes in which they can be successful. Late registration should be abolished, the number of hours working students can take each semester should be limited, and students should be prevented from simultaneously enrolling in developmental and college-level courses in the same skill area. The authors encourage implementing innovative supports like learning communities, supplemental instruction, and short-term preparatory courses, while underscoring the importance of investing in quality faculty and evaluating program outcomes.


This comprehensive volume on learning communities presents historical context, models and institutional examples, and information about implementing learning communities at the post-secondary level. Learning communities are presented as a student-friendly, cost-effective means of fostering liberal education and community.

There are multiple iterations of the learning community model, which involves two or more linked courses enrolling a common cohort of students. Two stand-alone courses can be linked without altering their content; freshman seminars lend themselves to this type of pairing, thus providing an ongoing orientation experience for students in the linked courses. Courses can also be linked or clustered to highlight interdisciplinary connections or to allow students to work on basic skills in one course while taking a second content-driven course. In these instances, faculty generally modify courses to utilize examples and activities relevant to the course with which theirs is paired. Team-taught learning communities involve greater levels of faculty collaboration and course modification: all courses share a common syllabus and projects and themes are comprehensive. Team-taught learning communities can include seminars, experiential learning, and service projects.

In addition to providing examples of learning community configurations and structures, the authors present possibilities for further developing learning communities in the areas of adult basic education and ESL. They also provide advice on creating and improving learning communities, emphasizing the importance of assessment, continuous improvement, and working towards scale.
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In addition to providing examples of learning community configurations and structures, the authors present possibilities for further developing learning communities in the areas of adult basic education and ESL. They also provide advice on creating and improving learning communities, emphasizing the importance of assessment, continuous improvement, and working towards scale.
5. During the current academic year at this college, in which of the following ways, if at all, have you been involved in college orientation? (Mark all that apply)

NOTE: College orientation may or may not be integrated with other programs such as a first-year experience or student success course.

a. Planning/designing
b. Coordinating/supervising
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This article presents the results of interviews with 60 community college students who participated in college orientation courses at ten different community colleges in two states. Topics for the interview and a related checklist filled out by participants were culled from a document review of course syllabi at the colleges. All but two of the students interviewed were white, and students’ average GPA was 3.13. Interviews were conducted anywhere from two semesters to three years after students had participated in their orientation courses.

All students had participated in face-to-face orientation courses, all but two of which were a semester in duration. Lecture was the predominant teaching methodology, with most courses also integrating guest lecturers and field trips to various campus locations. While most students reported that the course provided good preparation for college, not all were convinced that they personally needed the course, and most recommended the course but did not think that it should be mandatory. All students reported that the courses in which they participated addressed study skills, home/work/school balance, and
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Developmental programs are necessary in post-secondary education, yet the institution of developmental education has long been criticized for its lack of standardization, positive student outcomes, and critical self-assessment. Regardless of arguments about where and when remediation should take place, the bulk of developmental education takes place in community colleges, and at least half of the students entering two-year colleges do so with deficiencies in basic skills. Standardized tests are typically used to place students into developmental education, and according to 1996 NCES figures, 75% of community colleges say that remedial courses are required for students who test into them. However, placement requirements are often not firm enough, and the authors recommend making both assessment and placement truly mandatory. Other recommendations include increasing structure and support within developmental programs. Orientation should be required, and mentoring, tutoring, and activities fostering personal connections between students and the college need to be integrated into institutions’ developmental programs. Connections between students and the college should ideally be established before the post-secondary years, with institutions reaching out to high schools and junior high schools when possible. Outcomes for developmental students can also be improved by monitoring enrollment to ensure that students are entering classes in which they can be successful. Late registration should be abolished, the number of hours working students can take each semester should be limited, and students should be prevented from simultaneously enrolling in developmental and college-level courses in the same skill area. The authors encourage implementing innovative supports like learning communities, supplemental instruction, and short-term preparatory courses, while underscoring the importance of investing in quality faculty and evaluating program outcomes.
7. During the current academic year at this college, in which of the following ways, if at all, have you been involved in a student success course (such as a student development, extended orientation, study skills, student life skills, or college success course)? (Mark all that apply) NOTE: A student success course may or may not be integrated with a freshman seminar/first-year experience or learning community.
   a. Planning/designing
   b. Coordinating/supervising
   c. Teaching/facilitating
   d. Advising/referring students into the experience
   e. Training faculty
   f. Training or mentoring student tutors
   g. I am not involved


This volume presents thirteen institutions identified in 2002 as “institutions of excellence” in recognition of their work with first-year students. Selected institutions offer holistic, multi-faceted first-year programming; use data to inform decision making; and extend services to a large portion of their entering students—particularly those from underserved populations. Strong administrative leadership and inter-departmental faculty and staff involvement in first-year efforts are other cornerstones of the work highlighted here.

The Community College of Denver (CCD), one of two two-year institutions selected, distinguishes itself in several areas. Assessment and advising begin for some students at local high schools, and all entering students without ACT/SAT scores or a previous college degree are required to take the Accuplacer placement test. A combination of federal and private funds supports three levels of advising for low-income, first-generation, and minority students. Student services are provided case-management style, and are recorded in a central database. CCD offers learning communities for its first-generation students and uses grant monies to fund professional development, ensuring the quality of instruction for its first-year students. LaGuardia Community College, in Queens, New York is characterized by its innovative and interdisciplinary environment. Universal first-year practices, such as convocation, common readings, and a required new student seminar connect students to academic advisors and to the institution as a whole. Preparatory and “second-chance” programs between academic sessions allow students to strengthen skills and re-take placement tests and course exams. Learning communities foster success among developmental and ESL students; internal studies show that students are more likely to pass LaGuardia developmental and ESL courses in clusters than when taking them a course at a time. As at CCD, faculty involvement is paramount: instructors mentor students, promote the spread of new technology, and collaborate to realize new courses.

This article presents the results of interviews with 60 community college students who participated in college orientation courses at ten different community colleges in two states. Topics for the interview and a related checklist filled out by participants were culled from a document review of course syllabi at the colleges. All but two of the students interviewed were white, and students’ average GPA was 3.13. Interviews were conducted anywhere from two semesters to three years after students had participated in their orientation courses.

All students had participated in face-to-face orientation courses, all but two of which were a semester in duration. Lecture was the predominant teaching methodology, with most courses also integrating guest lecturers and field trips to various campus locations. While most students reported that the course provided good preparation for college, not all were convinced that they personally needed the course, and most recommended the course but did not think that it should be mandatory. All students reported that the courses in which they participated addressed study skills, home/work/school balance, and financial aid. Institutional programs, policies, and services; clubs and organizations; and time management were mentioned in 90% of courses.


This qualitative study explores student experiences in student success courses at two urban community colleges. Forty-four non-randomly sampled students were interviewed during their first semester in college; follow-up interviews were conducted with 36 of the original participants. Of the 44 original participants, 31 participated in their respective institution’s student success course and 13 did not. Student success courses are structured differently at the two institutions from which participants came: at one college the course is not required, but all full-time students entering the college immediately after high school are automatically enrolled in the course; at the other college the course is a graduation requirement for all students, regardless of their enrollment status.

Students considered their student success courses to be generally helpful, although the few that did not find the course helpful had taken it during their second semester of college. Students who had participated in the course tended to know more about student services at their college than non-participants who were interviewed. Students mentioned having better time management skills as a result of the course, and student success course participants were more likely to participate in tutoring than non-participants. One of the major benefits of course participation was the relationships students formed with course instructors, who served as sources of information and advising to success course students.

This comprehensive volume on learning communities presents historical context, models and institutional examples, and information about implementing learning communities at the post-secondary level. Learning communities are presented as a student-friendly, cost-effective means of fostering liberal education and community.

There are multiple iterations of the learning community model, which involves two or more linked courses enrolling a common cohort of students. Two stand-alone courses can be linked without altering their content; freshman seminars lend themselves to this type of pairing, thus providing an ongoing orientation experience for students in the linked courses. Courses can also be linked or clustered to highlight interdisciplinary connections or to allow students to work on basic skills in one course while taking a second content-driven course. In these instances, faculty generally modify courses to utilize examples and activities relevant to the course with which theirs is paired. Team-taught learning communities involve greater levels of faculty collaboration and course modification: all courses share a common syllabus and projects and themes are comprehensive. Team-taught learning communities can include seminars, experiential learning, and service projects.

In addition to providing examples of learning community configurations and structures, the authors present possibilities for further developing learning communities in the areas of adult basic education and ESL. They also provide advice on creating and improving learning communities, emphasizing the importance of assessment, continuous improvement, and working towards scale.


In addition to the math and language skills cultivated in developmental education courses, community college students often need help with study skills, goal-setting, and other behaviors. This brief presents an analysis of a Florida Department of Education data set includes records for all students who entered Florida community colleges for the first time in the fall of 1999. Students were tracked across 17 terms with attention to student success course participation and academic achievement. Over the course of the study, 36% of the sample enrolled in a student success course; of those, 79% passed the course. Student success courses and requirements about who takes them vary across the colleges in the study. Nonetheless, there is a positive relationship between student success course participation and completion of an academic credential for both non-remedial and remedial students. However, tables showing the marginal effects of student success course completion on different student populations within the study show a negative correlation between student success course participation and credential completion for both Black and Hispanic students; these findings go unexplained in the brief.
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9. During the current academic year at this college, in which of the following ways, if at all, have you been involved in an accelerated course or a fast-track program (learning experience designed to move students through coursework in order to complete their educational goals more quickly)? (Mark all that apply)
   a. Planning/designing
   b. Coordinating/supervising
   c. Teaching/facilitating
   d. Advising/referring students into the experience
   e. Training faculty
   f. Training or mentoring student tutors
   g. I am not involved


This chapter reviews the literature on developmental education in community colleges and finds that much work remains, particularly with regard to placement, student support, and understanding students who place into the lowest developmental levels. Bailey cites 2008 Achieving the Dream data and a study by Attewell, Lavin, Domina, and Levey (2006) suggesting that more than half of community college students participate in developmental education, and notes that lack of standardization in placement tests and standards makes it plausible that the percentage of students in need of developmental education is actually higher.

Bailey highlights multiple gaps in the research on developmental education. The effect of developmental education on students is difficult to measure among differences in placement, programming, and students themselves. Statewide studies of developmental education are inconclusive as to developmental education’s effect on students. The most reliable results relate to students at the developmental/non-developmental margin; few look at the effects of developmental education on students placing into its lowest levels. While developmental education can be improved by integrating mandatory assessment, counseling, and specialized programs such as learning communities, there is little direct evidence of the effectiveness of such programs, leading Bailey to note that it may be just as beneficial to allow developmental students to simply enroll in credit level courses.

While Accuplacer and Compass are the tests most commonly used to place students in developmental education, assessment and placement policies vary at the state and institutional levels. There is little correlation between placement test scores and later educational outcomes, and Bailey suggests that the scope of placement testing should be widened from a narrow focus on mastery of skills within a sequence to a broader view of whether students possess the abilities needed to succeed in college. Bailey recommends moving past a developmental/non-developmental dichotomy toward a model of supports for all students. His final recommendation also relies on a somewhat untested approach, that of accelerating developmental education for students with the largest skill deficiencies.

At least half of community college students will enroll in a developmental course, yet as the authors’ work with 2003-2007 Achieving the Dream data reveals, the pathways through developmental education are complex and include multiple stopping-out points. Records from 57 colleges in seven states show that only 33% of students referred to developmental math and 46% of those referred to developmental reading complete their developmental sequence. This is, in part, because almost one in three students referred to developmental education never enroll in a developmental course, opting instead for the first credit-level, or gatekeeper, course in their area of remediation. Seventy-two percent of these students will pass the gatekeeper course, compared to only 27% of those who enroll in a developmental course prior to attempting the gatekeeper.

The authors find a veritable “developmental ‘obstacle course’” facing students (p. 267): many who stop out of their developmental sequences do so without having ever failed or withdrawn from a developmental class; others complete their developmental sequences but simply fail to enroll in the next-level gatekeeper course. Although no data on accelerated or fast-track developmental education are presented, the authors suggest accelerated remediation as one possible solution to the lengthy and incomplete pathways revealed by this study.


This report explores promising practices in promoting transitions from Adult Basic Education (ABE) to credit-level work. Although numerous studies point to the correlation between higher educational attainment and increased income, the majority of ABE students fail to pursue post-secondary studies, and those who do struggle to achieve and persist. Four areas of ABE practice that contribute to successful post-secondary transitions are described: organizational and administrative, program components, staff development, and instruction. Supportive organizational leadership is key, particularly in implementing short refresher courses and transition programs, identifying funding, and creating articulation agreements.

Integrating ABE course information on future earnings prospects and specific steps in the post-secondary education pathway can help adult students successfully transition. Information about the post-secondary environment can also be transmitted via orientations; mentoring and tutoring opportunities and personalized, case management-style advising. Aligned assessment is also key to facilitating the transition to post-secondary study. All too often ABE programs and community colleges rely on different assessments to measure student learning and determine course placements. A well-trained, dedicated ABE staff is key—the authors recommend employing full-time instructors for ABE and developing and compensating these educators on par with their community college counterparts in academic departments. Whenever possible, ABE curriculum should be aligned with post-secondary academics and skills. Recommendations include integrating life and study skills, career planning, and community college-level academic content into ABE courses. Course length can be modified, as in
modular courses, and accelerated learning is highlighted as a “promising strategy” (p. 42) for students in ESL, GED, and vocational tracks.


Recent trends in developmental education include a move towards accelerated models in which courses are redesigned to facilitate earlier student entry into college-level courses. Edgecombe reviews studies on different developmental education models. The recent shift toward accelerated developmental education and the local, small-scale nature of implementation means that many of the results of the studies reviewed suffer from small sample sizes, questions about the reliability and validity of results, and uncertainty over the long-term retention of materials learned under the accelerated model.

Course formats reviewed include: compressed models, in which two sequential courses are taken in one semester rather than two; paired courses, in which the same cohort of students enrolls simultaneously in two related courses, one developmental and one credit-bearing; and curricular redesign, in which course content is revised and reorganized to eliminate redundancies and maximize the use of classroom time. Other methods for moving developmental students more quickly toward mastery and credit accumulation include mainstreaming students into credit-level courses while offering supplemental supports such as labs and extra class meetings. Contextualization is another option, and incorporates basic skills instruction into vocational courses on an as-needed basis. Many of these models are preaced on the idea that traditional developmental education covers too much, and that, for the sake of expediency, developmental students should be taught only those skills needed to allow them to succeed in the courses required for their degree program.

This comprehensive review also covers the areas of assessment and placement, student recruitment, faculty resistance, and financial stability, among others. The piece concludes with a call for further research to build upon the “promising, though not plentiful” evidence currently available on accelerated developmental education (p. 35).


This report outlines the framework for the Jobs for the Future/Achieving the Dream Developmental Education Initiative. The initiative unites community colleges and policy makers in Connecticut, Florida, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas, and Virginia with the shared purpose of improving developmental education outcomes in their states and institutions. Actors have committed to engage improvement efforts with attention to data and performance measurement, developmental education innovation and redesign, aligned pre-k –16 expectations, assessment and placement, and finance.
Developmental programs are necessary in post-secondary education, yet the institution of developmental education has long been criticized for its lack of standardization, positive student outcomes, and critical self-assessment. Regardless of arguments about where and when remediation should take place, the bulk of developmental education takes place in community colleges, and at least half of the students entering two-year colleges do so with deficiencies in basic skills. Standardized tests are typically used to place students into developmental education, and according to 1996 NCES figures, 75% of community colleges say that remedial courses are required for students who test into them. However, placement requirements are often not firm enough, and the authors recommend making both assessment and placement truly mandatory. Other recommendations include increasing structure and support within developmental programs. Orientation should be required, and mentoring, tutoring, and activities fostering personal connections between students and the college need to be integrated into institutions’ developmental programs. Connections between students and the college should ideally be established before the post-secondary years, with institutions reaching out to high schools and junior high schools when possible. Outcomes for developmental students can also be improved by monitoring enrollment to ensure that students are entering classes in which they can be successful. Late registration should be abolished, the number of hours working students can take each semester should be limited, and students should be prevented from simultaneously enrolling in developmental and college-level courses in the same skill area. The authors encourage implementing innovative supports like learning communities, supplemental instruction, and short-term preparatory courses, while underscoring the importance of investing in quality faculty and evaluating program outcomes.


At the time of writing, at least 250 colleges and universities in the United States offered accelerated learning courses, the majority of them geared towards working adults. As a departure from the traditional paradigm for college courses, accelerated learning is the subject of a number of questions and doubts: does it signify a “commodification of learning” (p. 7)? Are quality and quantity of materials sacrificed in order to save time? What are the effects of accelerated courses on student retention of learning? A review of the literature suggests that time is one of many factors needed for learning to take place. The author cites several studies suggesting equal or even greater learning outcomes for students in accelerated courses; however, it is important to note that most of these studies do not employ like comparisons: adult students in accelerated courses are compared to traditional students in semester-long versions of the same course. It is also important to note that most of the courses cited in this article come from college- and university-level undergraduate business management programs.


This volume on best practices in the community college highlights examples from finalists for the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. The prize honors exemplary efforts to promote degree completion and transfer; ensure equitable student outcomes, use assessment to improve learning, and work with the labor market prospects of students in mind.
Well-defined college and career pathways, careful progress monitoring, and committed instructors are all key to success. Developmental education is important to this equation as well, but in light of its poor track record, developmental education is being re-thought, with models such as accelerated, emporium, and modular courses currently implemented at prize-winning institutions. Levels of success, however, vary. Students in emporium developmental courses earn higher test scores than their counterparts in normal accelerated courses, but in some cases both models produce similar course retention rates. Students in the CUNY system’s accelerated developmental pilot reach greater proficiency than their peers in regular developmental education courses; however, instructors in the program receive special training which may be critical to the accelerated program’s higher success rates. New developmental models necessitate new questions, such as how well current placement tests align to new courses, and how institutions can properly train and staff developmental programs in the face of late enrollment by large portions of developmental students. Some colleges have successfully paired remedial and credit-level courses and offer refresher courses prior to placement testing, particularly for adult learners returning to the classroom. The k-12 educational system can be a model for the community college with its emphasis on self-assessment, continuous improvement of teaching, student-centered methodologies, and teacher accountability for student results. College leadership is important in encouraging an institutional culture of self-study and accountability and in connecting programs to local labor market needs.
10. In your work directly with students in an accelerated course or a fast-track program, which of the following modalities have you employed when carrying out those activities? (Mark all that apply)
   a. Face-to-face interaction
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Developmental programs are necessary in post-secondary education, yet the institution of developmental education has long been criticized for its lack of standardization, positive student outcomes, and critical self-assessment. Regardless of arguments about where and when remediation should take place, the bulk of developmental education takes place in community colleges, and at least half of the students entering two-year colleges do so with deficiencies in basic skills. Standardized tests are typically used to place students into developmental education, and according to 1996 NCES figures, 75% of community colleges say that remedial courses are required for students who test into them. However, placement requirements are often not firm enough, and the authors recommend making both assessment and placement truly mandatory. Other recommendations include increasing structure and support within developmental programs. Orientation should be required, and mentoring, tutoring, and activities fostering personal connections between students and the college need to be integrated into institutions’ developmental programs. Connections between students and the college should ideally be established before the post-secondary years, with institutions reaching out to high schools and junior high schools when possible. Outcomes for developmental students can also be improved by monitoring enrollment to ensure that students are entering classes in which they can be successful. Late registration should be abolished, the number of hours working students can take each semester should be limited, and students should be prevented from simultaneously enrolling in developmental and college-level courses in the same skill area. The authors encourage implementing innovative supports like learning communities, supplemental instruction, and short-term preparatory courses, while underscoring the importance of investing in quality faculty and evaluating program outcomes.

At the time of writing, at least 250 colleges and universities in the United States offered accelerated learning courses, the majority of them geared towards working adults. As a departure from the traditional paradigm for college courses, accelerated learning is the subject of a number of questions and doubts: does it signify a “commodification of learning” (p. 7)? Are quality and quantity of materials sacrificed in order to save time? What are the effects of accelerated courses on student retention of learning? A review of the literature suggests that time is one of many factors needed for learning to take place. The author cites several studies suggesting equal or even greater learning outcomes for students in accelerated courses; however, it is important to note that most of these studies do not employ like comparisons: adult students in accelerated courses are compared to traditional students in semester-long versions of the same course. It is also important to note that most of the courses cited in this article come from college- and university-level undergraduate business management programs.


This volume on best practices in the community college highlights examples from finalists for the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. The prize honors exemplary efforts to promote degree completion and transfer; ensure equitable student outcomes, use assessment to improve learning, and work with the labor market prospects of students in mind.

Well-defined college and career pathways, careful progress monitoring, and committed instructors are all key to success. Developmental education is important to this equation as well, but in light of its poor track record, developmental education is being re-thought, with models such as accelerated, emporium, and modular courses currently implemented at prize-winning institutions. Levels of success, however, vary. Students in emporium developmental courses earn higher test scores than their counterparts in normal accelerated courses, but in some cases both models produce similar course retention rates. Students in the CUNY system’s accelerated developmental pilot reach greater proficiency than their peers in regular developmental education courses; however, instructors in the program receive special training which may be critical to the accelerated program’s higher success rates. New developmental models necessitate new questions, such as how well current placement tests align to new courses, and how institutions can properly train and staff developmental programs in the face of late enrollment by large portions of developmental students. Some colleges have successfully paired remedial and credit-level courses and offer refresher courses prior to placement testing, particularly for adult learners returning to the classroom. The k-12 educational system can be a model for the community college with its emphasis on self-assessment, continuous improvement of teaching, student-centered methodologies, and teacher accountability for student results. College leadership is important in encouraging an institutional culture of self-study and accountability and in connecting programs to local labor market needs.
11. At the beginning of the current semester/quarter, in your selected course section, which of the following methods, if any, did you use to administer an in-class assessment to determine your students’ preparedness to succeed in the course? (Mark all that apply)
   a. A written assessment
   b. An oral assessment
   c. An online assessment
   d. A computer-assisted assessment
   e. None of these


This report explores promising practices in promoting transitions from Adult Basic Education (ABE) to credit-level work. Although numerous studies point to the correlation between higher educational attainment and increased income, the majority of ABE students fail to pursue post-secondary studies, and those who do struggle to achieve and persist. Four areas of ABE practice that contribute to successful post-secondary transitions are described: organizational and administrative, program components, staff development, and instruction. Supportive organizational leadership is key, particularly in implementing short refresher courses and transition programs, identifying funding, and creating articulation agreements.

Integrating ABE course information on future earnings prospects and specific steps in the post-secondary education pathway can help adult students successfully transition. Information about the post-secondary environment can also be transmitted via orientations; mentoring and tutoring opportunities and personalized, case management-style advising. Aligned assessment is also key to facilitating the transition to post-secondary study. All too often ABE programs and community colleges rely on different assessments to measure student learning and determine course placements. A well-trained, dedicated ABE staff is key—the authors recommend employing full-time instructors for ABE and developing and compensating these educators on par with their community college counterparts in academic departments. Whenever possible, ABE curriculum should be aligned with post-secondary academics and skills. Recommendations include integrating life and study skills, career planning, and community college-level academic content into ABE courses. Course length can be modified, as in modular courses, and accelerated learning is highlighted as a “promising strategy” (p. 42) for students in ESL, GED, and vocational tracks.


Student support services are vital to the success of community colleges in serving and graduating students, and must be ready to adjust and assume new roles in their work with at-risk students. This means that community college personnel must innovate and reach beyond institutional borders, collaborating with high schools to successfully bridge students to the college, and connecting with
business and community groups that can provide mentoring and scholarship opportunities. Assessment can pinpoint students most in need of intervention, and should be consistently implemented institution-wide. Placement should not be based solely on test scores – it must be validated by instructors and moderated by the background and experiences of students themselves. The purposeful use of technology, advising, and counseling allow student support services to influence and monitor registration, course attendance, and enrollment in subsequent semesters. The author discusses alternative models of orientation, such as first-semester experiences, the integration of orientation material into course syllabi, and the inclusion of family in orientation. Student support services’ traditional counseling role can and should be revised to include teaching, collaboration with faculty, career orientation, and greater accountability for student results.


The literature has historically linked class attendance to improvements in academic performance, although some new studies challenge this correlation. The authors move beyond asking whether attendance improves performance to discuss the literature on why students may not attend class and what instructors can do to keep learners in the classroom. Although many instructors question student motivation when attendance is low, factors such as student work, low faculty expectations of attendance, and access to course materials through technology are all reasons students may choose to not attend class. While instructors cannot change some of these external factors, the authors encourage them to examine what they can do to motivate students to attend. The substance of classroom activities is within the instructor’s locus of control, and attendance improves in an engaging classroom. Students must see a value in the material presented, which must expand upon rather than reproduce information available in readings, handouts, and PowerPoint presentations. Classroom activities that engage students by providing instant assessment, opportunities for group learning, and discussion are the best ways to help students find value in attending class.
12. Which of the following, if any, is your MOST COMMON action based on results of your in-class assessment if a student is under-prepared? (Mark only one.)
   a. I recommend to a student that he/she use tutoring or other academic support services
   b. I recommend to academic advising or student services that a student be placed in another course or level
   c. I adjust my course pedagogy or approach
   d. I advise a student to drop the course
   e. Other
   f. Please briefly explain ___________________________


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13. During the current semester/quarter at this college, about what percentage of the students in your selected course section registered AFTER the first class session?
   a. None
   b. 1–10%
   c. 11–25%
   d. 26–50%
   e. More than 50%


Freer-Weiss’ analysis of 785 first-time student admissions files at an open-enrollment college confirms many of the trends attributed to late applicants in the community college literature. Late applicants tend to be older males who have more academic deficiencies, hold a GED rather than a high school diploma, and aspire to an associate’s rather than a four-year degree. No correlation between specific racial/ethnic identities and late application is found; however, minorities make up less than 20% of the admissions files analyzed, with the vast majority of those being African American. It is possible that more detailed information would emerge from a sample with a larger number of minority cases. A small number of cases also limits the results regarding the academic achievement of late applicants. The author does find a correlation between late enrollment and attrition, particularly for those students applying three weeks or less prior to the beginning of the academic term.


The authors compared the academic outcomes associated with early, regular, and late registration for 251 students at a west Texas community college during the fall 1998 semester. Late registration was associated with a higher rate of course withdrawals, lower semester-to-semester persistence, and a lower GPA. Both early and regular registrants showed more positive outcomes in terms of course completion, persistence, and GPA, with no clear advantage to registering early versus simply registering on time.


The Milwaukee Area Technical College is a multi-campus metropolitan institution serving a student population of 53,000, of which a high proportion are minority (44%, mainly African American and Hispanic), academically disadvantaged (37%), and/or economically disadvantaged (31%) students. The college has an open access mission and depends on enrollment-based state funding; however, concerns over late course enrollments, student difficulty in accessing financial aid, and the persistence and academic performance of late applicants led the college to implement an application deadline during the 2005-2006 academic year. Differences between early and late applicants were analyzed.
During the fall 2005 semester, 12,121 students applied prior to the application deadline, and 757 students were late applicants. Several statistically significant differences were observed between these two groups. Although there were no differences in the gender or race/ethnicity of early vs. late applicants, late applicants tended to be older, to have waited for some time after high school to apply to the college, to be part-time students, and to have a greater rate of application for financial aid. These students also had lower academic outcomes than those who registered early: their GPA was .26 lower, and 5% fewer credits were accumulated during the semester. Whereas 74% of early registrants achieved good academic standing for the semester, only 69% of late registrants did so. Early registrants also persisted at a greater rate: their term-to-term retention was 69%, while that of late registrants was eight percentage points lower. The authors note that the characteristics associated with late registrants may be tendencies of the type of student who tends to register late rather than consequences of late registration, and urge caution in concluding that increasing the proportion early registrants will automatically improve academic outcomes for those students.
14. For your selected course section, do you have a course attendance policy that specifies the adverse impact on students’ grades for missing class?
   a. No
   b. Yes


Proposing a positive relationship between class attendance and academic performance makes sense: students who attend class engage with course material regularly and often, and do so through different modalities than peers who cram before exams and rely solely on books or online content. To see whether this logic is backed by research, Crede, Roch, and Kiesczynka perform a meta-analysis of articles mentioning a correlation between class attendance and class grades or GPA. The studies included in this analysis took place between 1927 and 2009 and include data from 28,034 post-secondary students. After considering several possible relationships among attendance, student characteristics, and grades, the authors find that both student characteristics and attendance are important contributing factors to course outcomes.


The author studied the relationships among prior academic record, college course attendance, course grade, and college grade point average using data from 263 University of Minnesota General College students. All students were enrolled in a spring semester introductory biology course at the General College, which prepares students who have not met all of the University of Minnesota’s admissions requirements for eventual transfer to the four-year university. Among the majority of participants, prior academic record and attendance were only weakly correlated; only those students with the highest academic precedents tended to attend class more regularly. However, regardless of academic precedents, low class attendance was strongly correlated with low GPAs in the first semester and poor grades in the biology course in question, suggesting the importance of class attendance in academic performance.


This study of class attendance among undergraduates in the University of Florida’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences shares the results of a survey of student attendance patterns and reasons students do not attend class. Over 90% of students agreed that the primary reason they miss class is because the instructor does not take attendance. The following two reasons were personal, and related to emergencies (the second most common reason) or illness (third most common reason). Other factors related to instructional quality also appeared among the top ten reasons students miss class, including instructors who do not know the course content (number six); the availability of course material elsewhere, particularly online (number nine); and poor lecture quality (number ten). These findings led the authors to recommend that instructors take several steps to improve attendance in their courses,
including recording attendance for every class period, knowing presenting course materials clearly, and planning quality course sessions.
15. In which of the following ways, if any, have you communicated the attendance policy to the students in your selected course section? (Mark all that apply)
   a. I’ve orally explained the policy to my students
   b. I’ve included the policy on the course syllabus
   c. I’ve posted the policy on a course website, blog, etc.
   d. I’ve sent the policy in an email to my students
   e. I’ve sent the policy in a text message (SMS message) to my students
   f. I’ve posted the policy or sent it via social networking tools (such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace)
   g. I had students sign the syllabus or attendance policy as a contract or mutual understanding of expectations


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16. What is the nature of the adverse impact on students' grades for missing class (not assignment deadlines) in your selected course section? (Mark all that apply)
   a. Attendance is tied to a participation score or grade
   b. I deduct a given number of points from the final grade for each missed class
   c. I deduct a given number of points after a preset number of classes have been missed
   d. Other
   e. Please briefly explain ___________________________


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17. How often during your selected course section do you ASSIGN group learning experiences that REQUIRE students to interact with a specific group of peers DURING class to complete group assignments or projects?
   a. Very often
   b. Often
   c. Sometimes
   d. Never


This volume presents thirteen institutions identified in 2002 as “institutions of excellence” in recognition of their work with first-year students. Selected institutions offer holistic, multi-faceted first-year programming; use data to inform decision making; and extend services to a large portion of their entering students—particularly those from underserved populations. Strong administrative leadership and inter-departmental faculty and staff involvement in first-year efforts are other cornerstones of the work highlighted here.

The Community College of Denver (CCD), one of two two-year institutions selected, distinguishes itself in several areas. Assessment and advising begin for some students at local high schools, and all entering students without ACT/SAT scores or a previous college degree are required to take the Accuplacer placement test. A combination of federal and private funds supports three levels of advising for low-income, first-generation, and minority students. Student services are provided case-management style, and are recorded in a central database. CCD offers learning communities for its first-generation students and uses grant monies to fund professional development, ensuring the quality of instruction for its first-year students. LaGuardia Community College, in Queens, New York is characterized by its innovative and interdisciplinary environment. Universal first-year practices, such as conversation, common readings, and a required new student seminar connect students to academic advisors and to the institution as a whole. Preparatory and “second-chance” programs between academic sessions allow students to strengthen skills and re-take placement tests and course exams. Learning communities foster success among developmental and ESL students; internal studies show that students are more likely to pass LaGuardia developmental and ESL courses in clusters than when taking them a course at a time. As at CCD, faculty involvement is paramount: instructors mentor students, promote the spread of new technology, and collaborate to realize new courses.


True information literacy requires students’ active involvement with learning. Hennessy and Evans advocate for the integration of group learning into the community college classroom as a way to promote authentic learning and foster connections between students from diverse backgrounds. Small group learning is associated with increased academic performance, student self-esteem, and student self-concept in the literature. Group learning can be cooperative or collaborative in nature; cooperative learning tends to be more formal and instructor-guided,
with an emphasis on recall or synthesis as the final product of learning. Collaborative learning allows students to “actively engage in the teaching and learning process” (p. 97) by allowing group members to guide more of the learning process and its outcomes. Examples of group learning methods are presented, as are considerations for implementing group learning, including group size, the creation of “positive interdependence” among group members (p. 102), and the need to model effective discussion and critique methods for students before group work begins. Although dedicating classroom time to group learning may meet with resistance from faculty uncomfortable with releasing some classroom authority and control, the authors suggest that community colleges are well-positioned to promote this pedagogical change thanks to their status as learning-centered, inclusive institutions.


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19. How often during your selected course section do you ASSIGN group learning experiences that REQUIRE students to study together OUTSIDE of class?
   a. Very often
   b. Often
   c. Sometimes
   d. Never


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This comprehensive text reviews literature on theories of student development and the ways in which college affects students’ lives. Areas of impact include intellectual, social, and emotional growth; sociopolitical change; socioeconomic and career change; and overall effects on quality of life. Topics reviewed include: computer-based instruction, which has a positive impact on student learning when compared to traditional teaching methods; active learning, which is associated with greater gains in knowledge than traditional learning methods; cooperative learning, which is more effective than competitive learning methods; supplemental instruction, which has a positive impact on student learning and persistence. Although backed by less research than other topics, learning communities are
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Developmental programs are necessary in post-secondary education, yet the institution of developmental education has long been criticized for its lack of standardization, positive student outcomes, and critical self-assessment. Regardless of arguments about where and when remediation should take place, the bulk of developmental education takes place in community colleges, and at least half of the students entering two-year colleges do so with deficiencies in basic skills. Standardized tests are typically used to place students into developmental education, and according to 1996 NCES figures, 75% of community colleges say that remedial courses are required for students who test into them. However, placement requirements are often not firm enough, and the authors recommend making both assessment and placement truly mandatory. Other recommendations include increasing structure and support within developmental programs. Orientation should be required, and mentoring, tutoring, and activities fostering personal connections between students and the college need to be integrated into institutions’ developmental programs. Connections between students and the college should ideally be established before the post-secondary years, with institutions reaching out to high schools and junior high schools when possible. Outcomes for developmental students can also be improved by monitoring enrollment to ensure that students are entering classes in which they can be successful. Late registration should be abolished, the number of hours working students can take each semester should be limited, and students should be prevented from simultaneously enrolling in developmental and college-level courses in the same skill area. The authors encourage implementing innovative supports like learning communities, supplemental instruction, and short-term preparatory courses, while underscoring the importance of investing in quality faculty and evaluating program outcomes.


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20. How often during your selected course section do you ASSIGN group learning experiences that REQUIRE students to study together DURING class?

a. Very often
b. Often
c. Sometimes
d. Never


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21. How often during your selected course section do you ASSIGN group learning experiences that REQUIRE students to collaborate using technology-mediated methods (such as forums, blogs, wikis, social networking tools, multiplayer games)?
   a. Very often
   b. Often
   c. Sometimes
   d. Never


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22. In your selected course section, do you REQUIRE students to be involved in an internship, apprenticeship, clinical placement, or other “hands-on” learning experience beyond the classroom?
   a. No
   b. Yes


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23. In your selected course section, do you REQUIRE students to be involved in service learning (community service as part of a regular college course)?
   a. No
   b. Yes


In this monograph for the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), Brownell and Swaner review research on the five high-impact educational practices set forth by Kuh in 2008: first-year seminars, learning communities, service learning, undergraduate research, and capstone courses and projects. In order for practices to achieve positive student outcomes, goal-driven program design and good implementation are often more important than any specific practice; several of the studies cited by Brownell and Swaner (2010) find that purposeful content and quality instruction are what truly lead to positive outcomes.

The authors cite Barefoot's (1992) typology of first-year seminars, noting that first-year seminars generally focus on orientation, academics, a specific discipline, or basic study skills. A number of studies link first-year seminars to positive outcomes in persistence and graduation rates, although there are gaps in the literature, particularly regarding outcomes for specific student sub-populations. Learning communities have also shown positive outcomes in the literature in terms of grades and student persistence, although there are questions about the sustainability of these results in the long term. The literature on learning communities currently includes a mix of research on different types of learning communities and different student target populations; more study needs to take place to clarify the emerging positive outcomes. Service learning is also linked to positive student outcomes in academic achievement, civic engagement, and personal growth, although the authors note that more research is needed on service learning and underserved student populations. Undergraduate research, though potentially linked to graduation rates and graduate school enrollment, is also an area for further research. The available literature on capstone courses and projects relies on student self-reports, and greater delineation of these experiences’ desired outcomes is needed. The authors close with several recommendations for strengthening the body of research on high-impact practices, among them the need to look beyond grades and persistence for other possible positive outcomes.


While “service learning [SL] pedagogy requires a paradigm shift for many community college educators” (p. 841), the practice promotes student retention and persistence, and can foster positive relations between institutions and the communities in which they are located. In Northern Virginia Community College’s (NOVA) Drive to Excellence (DTE) SL course students gained work experience while providing low-cost automotive repairs to the low-income clients of DTE community partner programs. Like all successful SL programs, DTE connected a community need (for low-cost car care) to a curricular goal (hands-on student learning providing workplace readiness). During its operation, from spring 2010 to summer 2012, 86% of students in the program met requirements for workplace and technical competency, and 45% of participants found related employment within six months of program
completion. There were also benefits to the clients of community partner programs, who used cars to save money and search for employment. Hayward notes that sustainability is a concern with all SL programs, in terms of funding for operations and personnel for management of community partnerships. One possible solution is to create a cost-sharing agreement with community partners. On the student side, colleges need to consider whether students will spend time and money on a SL course that, while valuable, may not be a requirement for their degree program.


Research at four-year colleges has connected service learning to increased civic awareness and engagement among students, particularly when civic engagement is defined as an awareness of and involvement with community issues. In 2003 the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) received a grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service to create sustainable service learning programs in the community college. As the grant evaluator for the project, Prentice surveyed students in courses incorporating service learning and in similar courses lacking a service learning component at 32 AACC grantee community colleges. Demographically, students enrolled in service learning courses tended to be under 25 years of age, enrolled part-time, and working full-time. They were more likely than non-service learning students to be caretakers of others in their home but less likely to have previous volunteer experience. While students in both service learning and non-service learning courses showed similar levels of civic engagement at the beginning of the course, by the course’s end there was a statistically significant difference in levels of civic engagement between students who had and had not participated in the course incorporating service learning. These results confirm previous findings from four-year colleges, leading Prentice to recommend that civic learning continue to be defined in terms of involvement with community issues—rather than in terms of political involvement alone—and that community colleges include more faculty members in service learning initiatives.
24. In your selected course section, is supplemental instruction (extra class sessions with an instructor or experienced student) available to students?
   a. No
   b. Yes

25. In your selected course section, do you REQUIRE students to be involved in supplemental instruction (extra class sessions with an instructor or experienced student)?
   a. Yes, for all students
   b. Yes, for some students, depending on academic performance
   c. No, participation is optional


This study tracks 63 students participating in two general psychology classes during the fall of 2012 and spring of 2013 at El Centro College, an urban community college in Dallas, Texas. Classes used the same content, format, and assessments. During the course, students had the option of attending supplemental instruction (SI) study sessions. Sessions were led by a student who had completed the course with an A or B and had a minimum 3.0 GPA. SI leaders participated in interviews and, once chosen, attended pre-semester and ongoing training sessions and met weekly with course instructors. Twenty four of the 63 students enrolled in the general psychology courses attended SI study sessions, with attendance ranging from one to 12 study sessions. The median attendance was five sessions, and the mode seven sessions. Eighty-three percent (20/24) of the SI session participants passed the course with grades of A, B, or C, compared to a 64% pass rate (25/39) among the non-SI session participants.


Supplemental instruction (SI) provides peer-guided support to students in specific college courses, usually those that have proven particularly difficult to pass. The SI model was developed at the University of Missouri, and focuses on improving student learning, decreasing course attrition, and increasing graduation rates. SI distinguishes itself from other student supports in its course-specific, rather than student-specific nature. The literature on SI’s relation to student success shows mixed results; the voluntary nature of SI participation makes effects of the practice difficult to study, as student motivation is correlated with both SI participation and the academic outcomes SI is expected to influence. Oja’s data on SI and academic performance comes from students in 30 course sections in various disciplines at a single community college. SI attendance in the sections studied ranged from 17% to 93%, and did not appear to be related to student ethnicity or gender. The author’s data showed a correlation between cumulative GPA and SI attendance and term GPA and SI attendance. GPA and SI attendance also varied with the passing rate for the course in which SI instruction was attended. However, SI attendance did not appear to vary with student persistence. The author concludes by recommending SI for its relationship to academic success; however, it is important to ask whether SI and academic achievement co-vary because of their relationship to student motivation, as noted earlier in the article.

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26. In your selected course section, which of the following modalities have you employed for providing that supplemental instruction? (Mark all that apply)
   a. Face-to-face interaction
   b. Online interaction (such as mediated lectures, forums, chat)
   c. Social networking technologies (such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace)


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27. Which of the following statements describe actions you have taken in regard to students who have been struggling academically during the current semester/quarter in your selected course section? (Mark all that apply)
   a. I've communicated with students directly during class
   b. I've contacted students directly outside of class
   c. I've notified someone else in the college who contacts students as part of a systematic early academic warning system
   d. I've contacted someone else in the college who then contacts students as part of an informal intervention process
   e. I have referred students to college tutoring services
   f. I have required that students participate in college tutoring services
   g. Other
   i. Please briefly explain: ________________


ACT’s 2010 What Works in Student Retention survey was completed by Chief Academic Affairs Officers at 305 institutions. This report highlights retention-related practices respondents rated as the largest contributors to student persistence on their campuses. Nearly sixty-percent of respondents have a campus staff member dedicated to retention efforts; in the majority of cases this person is the Chief Student Affairs Officer. Respondent colleges reported a mean first- to second-year retention rate of 56% and a degree completion rate of 27%. Over half of colleges had no set retention goal and no set degree completion goal at the institutional level.

Respondents considered the level of student readiness for college work, student study skills, financial resources, student commitment to earning a degree, and student motivation to succeed as the primary factors contributing to student attrition. On the other end of the spectrum, respondents rated the largest on-campus contributors to student retention as campus reading centers/labs, tutoring centers/labs, tutoring services, assessment-based course placement, required developmental/remedial coursework, and offering an increased number of academic advisors. Colleges in the highest and lowest quartiles for student retention differed in their likelihood of offering on-campus retention-related services. Among highly-rated retention-promoting services, colleges in the highest quartile for retention rates were at least 10% more likely to offer certain specific services including reading centers/labs, comprehensive assistance centers/labs, an increased number of academic advisors, advising integrated into first-year transition programs, and required developmental coursework.


This volume presents thirteen institutions identified in 2002 as “institutions of excellence” in recognition of their work with first-year students. Selected institutions offer holistic, multi-faceted first-year programming; use data to inform decision making; and extend services to a large portion of their entering students—particularly those from underserved populations. Strong administrative leadership and inter-departmental faculty and staff involvement in first-year efforts are other cornerstones of the work highlighted here.
The Community College of Denver (CCD), one of two two-year institutions selected, distinguishes itself in several areas. Assessment and advising begin for some students at local high schools, and all entering students without ACT/SAT scores or a previous college degree are required to take the Accuplacermplacement test. A combination of federal and private funds supports three levels of advising for low-income, first-generation, and minority students. Student services are provided case-management style, and are recorded in a central database. CCD offers learning communities for its first-generation students and uses grant monies to fund professional development, ensuring the quality of instruction for its first-year students. LaGuardia Community College, in Queens, New York is characterized by its innovative and interdisciplinary environment. Universal first-year practices, such as convocation, common readings, and a required new student seminar connect students to academic advisors and to the institution as a whole. Preparatory and “second-chance” programs between academic sessions allow students to strengthen skills and re-take placement tests and course exams. Learning communities foster success among developmental and ESL students; internal studies show that students are more likely to pass LaGuardia developmental and ESL courses in clusters than when taking them a course at a time. As at CCD, faculty involvement is paramount: instructors mentor students, promote the spread of new technology, and collaborate to realize new courses.


Student support services are vital to the success of community colleges in serving and graduating students, and must be ready to adjust and assume new roles in their work with at-risk students. This means that community college personnel must innovate and reach beyond institutional borders, collaborating with high schools to successfully bridge students to the college, and connecting with business and community groups that can provide mentoring and scholarship opportunities. Assessment can pinpoint students most in need of intervention, and should be consistently implemented institution-wide. Placement should not be based solely on test scores – it must be validated by instructors and moderated by the background and experiences of students themselves. The purposeful use of technology, advising, and counseling allow student support services to influence and monitor registration, course attendance, and enrollment in subsequent semesters. The author discusses alternative models of orientation, such as first-semester experiences, the integration of orientation material into course syllabi, and the inclusion of family in orientation. Student support services’ traditional counseling role can and should be revised to include teaching, collaboration with faculty, career orientation, and greater accountability for student results.