

Description of Pre-College/Remedial Programs at Washington's Public Baccalaureate Institutions

Compiled by: Council of Presidents' Office, April 2007

In 2005-06, of 10,745 first-year students in the public baccalaureate institutions who were recent in-state high school graduates, 425 (4.0%) were enrolled in remedial English, and 1043 (9.7%) in remedial math. Students who have passed all of their core college preparatory courses in high school come to us from a wide variety of high schools, large and small, public and private, in and out of state, and from a wide variety of family and personal circumstances. Teaching emphases, level of conceptual understanding versus memorized facts and formulas, and student interest in the subject all affect how much a student retains and can apply to later classroom situations.

Colleges and universities have a responsibility to provide strong support to those students whom we admit as qualified to begin college, but who still need to develop skills in some disciplines in order to succeed. Each college and university approaches this challenge differently, depending on its mission, location, admissions standards, and the needs of its students and their programs of study. The wide variability among the institutions in the numbers served by remedial courses reflects primarily the different approaches employed by the institutions to serve the needs of underprepared students.

As one example of how institutions are meeting the needs of students, Washington State University assessment data from the mid-90's led to the development of a tutorial in place of separate remedial coursework in English Composition, in order to provide the varying levels of support needed. Students whose placement score indicates under-preparation for the demands of college writing are required to take an additional one-credit tutorial, attached to their regular, college level English Composition course, over one or two semesters, depending on need.

Often, students are encouraged to take remedial and other pre-college work at community colleges. Through their community college math consortium, the University of Washington enrolls about 200 students in Math 098, Intermediate Algebra, in community colleges, in addition to those included in these tables. These students meet their classes on the University campus but are instructed by community college faculty. Tuition is paid to the community college, and FTEs are not reported for state funding by the University of Washington. Some of these students are recent graduates of Washington high schools. Similarly last year, 450 students at WSU who required remedial math, including some recent graduates of Washington high schools, took the course from, and paid tuition to, the Spokane Community Colleges' Institute for Extended Learning, which offers the course on the WSU campus for these students.

Non-state funded English enrollments at the University of Washington represent ESL courses needed by non-citizen, non-native English speakers. Students are identified initially by low SAT Verbal scores, with confirmation through an English diagnostic test.

In addition, there are non-credit opportunities for students to develop the necessary skills. At Western Washington University, students placing below college-level math are required to take a remedial introductory algebra course for which they receive no credit.

The Evergreen State College does not offer courses in math and writing for developmental students. Nevertheless, a proportion of students who are admitted at Evergreen have developmental needs in basic academic skills such as writing and quantitative reasoning. Currently, identified developmental students are required to do additional work to address areas of deficiency. This additional work at Evergreen is embedded within regular academic programs (classes). To support the efforts that faculty make within programs, Evergreen also provides additional services that help students improve their skills. These services include the Writing and the Quantitative Reasoning Resource Centers, with extensive connection to classes for first-year students, and specialized advising services for First Peoples, minority students, first generation students, low-income students, and students with disabilities.

At Central Washington University, a freshmen scoring below 500 on the math or verbal SAT test (or comparable ACT scores) must pass a placement test to be eligible for freshmen composition or mathematics. The ACT COMPASS test is used to assess readiness for freshmen composition, as is the state mathematics placement test for college-level mathematics. A student whose score on a placement test is too low is required to take the appropriate remedial English or math course(s) before retaking the test. Central Washington University offers the remedial courses because there is not a community college in Kittitas County. These courses do not count toward graduation.

Remedial course enrollments at Eastern Washington University are a direct result of policy that (a) requires all students who do not meet rigorous minimum standards in the Math and English placement exams to enroll in skill-appropriate individual courses designed to raise their proficiency to college level; and (b) makes provision for offering these courses through the regular on-campus college structure. This policy differs from some other 4-year institutions in the state in that enrollment in remedial courses at Eastern is required.