Strategies to Help Postsecondary Students in Developmental Education
Recommendations from the What Works Clearinghouse practice guide

Recommendation 1
Use multiple measures to assess postsecondary readiness and place students.
- Explore potential additional measures that faculty and administration believe might inform placement.
- Use a pilot period to study the placement rates and success rates of students involving different placement methods at your institution.
- After implementation, investigate the effects of the multiple measures policy on desired student outcomes over time.
- Consider how college-readiness policies and practices in your state and local area impact the parameters of decision-making and implementation of multiple measures.

Recommendation 2
Require or incentivize regular participation in enhanced advising activities.
- Recruit and train advisors.
- Require or incentivize in-person advising meetings.
- Require or incentivize students to meet with advisors frequently and over a longer period of time.
- Use early alert systems to identify the students who most need enhanced advising.

Recommendation 3
Offer students performance-based monetary incentives.
- Design and structure payments of students’ performance-based incentives to yield students a net financial gain.
- Distribute payments incrementally, according to specific desired performance benchmarks.
- Target incentives to low-income students.
- Provide student support services, in conjunction with performance-based incentives.

Recommendation 4
Compress or mainstream developmental education with course design.
- Obtain faculty leadership support for rethinking course structures and policies to efficiently support students in mastering developmental education skills and earning college credits.
- Provide systematic professional development and support for faculty to implement new accelerated course models.
- Offer support to faculty for differentiating instruction to students of varied levels of academic preparedness in their classes.
- Mobilize and communicate targeted supports for students’ specific instructional needs.

Recommendation 5
Teach students how to become self-regulated learners.
- Encourage students to improve their estimation of their current capabilities.
- Integrate monitoring and reflecting on the learning process with coursework or course content.
- Present students with examples and models of how to monitor and reflect on the course subject matter.

Recommendation 6
Implement comprehensive, integrated, and long-lasting support programs.
- Develop a strong, collaborative organizational structure that uses data to inform practice.
- Clearly communicate expectations to students. Require or incentivize in-person advising meetings.
- Design course enrollment strategically.
- Decide which student support services will be provided and how to ensure that students participate.
- Provide performance-based monetary incentives and other financial supports.

Discover how you can put these recommendations into practice by utilizing the implementation checklists available in the What Works Clearinghouse resource:
Strategies for postsecondary students in developmental education – A practice guide for college and university administrators, advisors, and faculty.

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