

Testimony on S. 118

An act relating to remedial education for postsecondary students

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Thank you Senator Champion for bringing attention to this issue via this bill. We all want to see increased student achievement, we know that this is a process of continuous improvement, and we value being transparent about the barriers to student success and enlisting multifaceted support to address them. At the VSC and particularly CCV, as an open-access institution, we're committed to meeting students at their starting point and helping them achieve their postsecondary education goals.

- We have a great deal of data already from the Agency of Education and the VSC that points to the need to address college readiness for many of our high school students.
- There has been a significant amount of research and data development at CCV, ongoing initiatives to increase awareness among high school students, and improvements CCV has been making to its remediation approaches.
- Given what we know and what we've been doing, we would like to see efforts continue to be directed at developing robust data going forward.

We very much support Section 2 of the proposed bill and look forward to collaborating with the Secretary of Education.

The remedial education report as currently proposed in Section 1 would require significant manual effort to reconstruct historical data that are not aligned with other definitions currently in use nationally and within the VSC, nor would this reconstructed data contribute to our evaluation of current improvement efforts.

It is our recommendation that Section 1 instead direct the AOE, in collaboration with the VSC and UVM, to create a plan for developing a shared framework for data collection, analysis, reporting, and ultimately, planning and evaluating new improvement strategies.

What we already know: The Agency of Education data show that a significant number – in some cases a majority - of students are not meeting 11th grade level

expectations for English and math skills, so the challenge of supporting these students postsecondary success is one we all share.

HS Students Who are NOT Proficient in Mathematics & Reading (2013 NECAP of Grade 11 students, most recently available <i>statewide</i> scores)			
	Math	Reading	Writing
All Students	65%	26%	45%
Non Free/Reduced Lunch Students	55%	18%	36%
Free/Reduced Lunch Students	82%	41%	63%

Source: NECAP Standardized Tests, VT Dept. of Education

The Agency has also begun tracking postsecondary enrollment through national clearinghouse data and has published this by high school. We know that, for example, the graduating class of 2013 had a postsecondary enrollment of 60.5%. Taken together, this means some of Vermont's graduating seniors are continuing on to college without having college-ready skills.

Current practice at the VSC: all institutions assess incoming students' academic skills and place them accordingly in appropriate-level courses. For the four-year institutions, on average approximately 20% of incoming students place into pre-college developmental coursework in either English, math, or both; for CCV, that rate is approximately 50%. At the four-year institutions, up to one semester of developmental coursework is provided; at CCV, up to a two-semester sequence is provided for students with the greatest need.

Current improvement strategies: There are several strategies currently in place at CCV to improve the success of all new students, but particularly those who may be identified as needing remediation.

- When it comes to course selection, CCV uses a **Directed Self-Placement (DSP)** process. This process was initiated for students entering CCV in spring 2014. Students work with an advisor to discuss not only scores but course expectations and the student's attitudes, behaviors, and commitments that impact their success via a self-assessment. The advisor then makes recommendations as to which courses to start with but the ultimate decision and responsibility rests with the student. The Education Commission of the States highlighted CCV's work with DSP in a 2014 report.
- To prepare students to do their best when taking their Accuplacer assessment, CCV was chosen by the New England Board of Higher Education's Developmental Math Demonstration Project to implement **an online self-paced tutorial in basic math and algebra** (utilizing Khan Academy resources) so students can practice their skills anytime they want or need the refresher, potentially eliminating the need to take a full-semester developmental math course.

- CCV also created an **accelerated pathway** for students to enroll in a college-level course (the first-semester seminar) and a developmental support course (Reading & Writing for College) at the same time, so that students could get the support they need and earn college-level credits in the same semester.
- To improve understanding among K-12 students and families about postsecondary readiness, CCV uses its signature **Introduction to College Studies** class. For over 10 years, with substantial philanthropic support, CCV has provided a free 13-week course to high school students, now open to sophomores, juniors, and seniors, that includes academic skills assessment and guidance on postsecondary readiness. CCV works closely with high school guidance counselors and other staff to identify students who would most benefit from the guidance and development offered by this course. This summer, VSAC will provide limited grant funding of dual enrollment vouchers for students completing ICS who may be motivated to succeed in strengthening their academic skills by enrolling in a developmental course outside of their high school environment.
- Early evidence suggests **Dual Enrollment** is a promising strategy for increasing the aspiration of Vermont students. 84% of students using dual enrollment vouchers from 2011-2013 are now enrolled in college, and of those, half attend college within the VSC.

Data: Developing data sets to help us understand the needs and experiences of students who require pre-college skill development is a substantial undertaking. From 2009-2013, CCV participated in the Lumina Foundation's Achieving the Dream national initiative, developing data on student success, including achievement differences by gender, age, income level, and remediation needs. CCV earned Leader College status in 2011 for improvements in its student retention rate.

Longitudinal data sets such as the one proposed in S. 118 take significant time and resources to develop. They are best developed according to shared frameworks and data definitions, such as those utilized by Achieving the Dream and the NEBHE Developmental Math Demonstration Project, in conjunction with nationally accepted metrics for evaluating student progress.