



# The Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges

PRESENTED TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

DATE: September 20, 2015

SUBJECT: Basic Skills Informational Presentation		Item Number: NA	
		Attachment: Yes	
CATEGORY:	Academic Affairs	TYPE OF BOARD CONSIDERATION: Information only	
Recommended By:	 Pamela D. Walker, Vice Chancellor	Consent/Routine	
		First Reading	
Approved for Consideration:	 Brice W. Harris, Chancellor	Action	
		Information	X

**ISSUE:** According to the *2014 Student Success Scorecard: State of the System Report* 74.4% of entering California community college students are unprepared for college-level coursework in English and/or mathematics. Further, system wide data indicate that students who enter college unprepared for the rigors of college-level coursework are 30% less likely to achieve a successful outcome—such as earning a degree, certificate, or transferring to a four-year college or university—than college-ready students. These striking statistics describe the fundamental challenge that California community colleges face as we work to help students meeting their educational objectives.

**BACKGROUND:** A Basic Skills student is one who enters college at least one course below college-level English, math or in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. The colleges offer these students pathways, through either noncredit or credit instruction, to help them prepare to take other credit courses towards a certificate, associate degree, or sufficient units to transfer. (*Background cont.*)

**RECOMMENDATION:** This item is presented to the Board of Governors for information and discussion.

**(Background cont.)**

Through the years, the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office has led numerous efforts in support of developing programs for underprepared students to be successful in college-level work. These efforts were infused with the realization that this important work is essential to the mission of the California Community Colleges and ultimately the social and economic success of California. These efforts to improve the outcomes of unprepared students in the California community college laid the foundation for the Basic Skills Initiative (BSI) which became a reality in 2007.

In 2007 Assembly Bill 194 established the BSI and for the first time provided ongoing funding for the purpose of improving outcomes of students who enter college needing at least one course below college ready in English as a Second Language (ESL), mathematics, English reading or English writing. The 2007 legislation, sponsored by the Chancellor's Office, identified allowable categories of expenditure and a working group was convened to develop guidelines for those expenditures. The resulting guidelines specified that resources be targeted toward program and curriculum planning and development, advisement and counseling, supplemental instruction that all are directly related to the enhancement of Basic Skills offerings.

As the BSI was taking shape, the California Community College Board of Governors and the Chancellor's Office were also developing a new System Strategic Plan to chart a path forward for promoting the success of our students. This convergence of events led the key tenets of the BSI—leveraging research-proven effective practices to improve outcomes for students entering college unprepared for college-level work—to be embedded in the emerging System Strategic Plan. During this time, significant collaboration by faculty groups, including the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, the Community College League of California, the Chancellor's Office, and state leaders helped to establish a statewide policy and fiscal framework to drive improvements in Basic Skills.

The BSI allocates ongoing funding to colleges to support Basic Skills improvement, through activities including the provision of related professional development. Colleges are required to submit annual progress reports to demonstrate adoption of Basic Skills strategies in support of student success. These resources have been essential to spurring improvements in Basic Skills strategies and have led to slow but steady improvements in remedial completion rates since the BSI was established. Unfortunately, however, this funding is not sufficient for the scale of the problem, and further has not been reliable with funding levels ebbing and flowing with the state's fiscal condition. In the program's first year, BSI allocations were over \$33 million and professional development was over \$1.5 million but those funds have been reduced in the intervening years. In 2015-16, funding allocations for these purposes are \$19 million and \$1.2 million, respectively.

Through the framework of the BSI, colleges also learned about innovative educational strategies through work of the Research and Planning Group (RP Group) which developed resources and training opportunities where college personnel could learn about best practices in basic skills education. Of note was the release of the 2007 report *Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California Community Colleges* also known as the "Poppy Copy" which reviewed significant studies and identified 26 effective practices in four broad categories.

During this same period, the Chancellor's Office awarded a competitive professional development grant to Foothill-De Anza Community College District, which then worked with the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges to produce a website and extensive best-practices guide called the *Basic Skills Handbook*. The handbook delineated specific skills and strategies to improve all aspects of the student-college relationship.

The California Community Colleges Student Success Network (3CSN) is the current statewide professional development component of the BSI. This project, awarded to the Los Angeles Community College District under a competitive grant, provides professional development, leadership, and technical support to advance innovation in the Basic Skills programs. 3CSN's mission is to develop leaders in California community colleges who have the capacity to facilitate networks of faculty, staff, and students for curricular and institutional redesigns in support of increased student access, success, equity, and completion. 3CSN has grown into a truly transformative organization that has launched the California Acceleration Project, Habits of Mind, Reading Apprenticeship, Cohort Tracker, and other groundbreaking efforts that have helped to disseminate and scale up innovative Basic Skills models across the California community colleges.

In 2013, the Chancellor's Office released *Basic Skills Completion: The Key to Student Success in California Community Colleges—Effective Practices for Faculty, Staff and Administrators*. This report, developed in collaboration with the Basic Skills Advisory Committee and with input from committed faculty, staff, and administrators from across the system, provided a comprehensive list of the support services available to colleges and administrators and provided numerous examples of innovative instructional and student support strategies that colleges in California and across the country have adopted to improve success. These strategies range from contextualized basic skills, to learning communities, to first-year experience programs that have produced research-validated improvements in student outcomes.

As these resources and innovative models were developed, the California Community College system has used conferences, workshops, and publications—to promote the spread of effective practices between colleges. These activities have been a collective effort of key groups across the system, including the Chancellor's Office, RP Group, Academic Senate of California Community Colleges, the Community College League of California, and many others.

The BSI and related efforts have succeeded and raising the profile of this critical educational challenge on our campuses, as well as in state and national policy discussions. An ever increasing number of educational leaders from across the community college system are actively engaged and involved to implementing innovative and effective strategies. This work has yielded slow but steady progress in "moving the needle" on completion for Basic Skills Students. In the most recent State of the System Report, completion rates for Basic Skills students in the English, mathematics, and ESL categories all continued a multi-year pattern of small and steady improvement. Completion rates improved as follows: Remedial English increased from 42.9% to 43.6%; Remedial Math increased from 30.0% to 30.6%; and Remedial ESL increased from 26.2% to 27.1%. Over the past 5 years, the Remedial Math completion rate has increased a total of 3 percent and the Remedial English Rate has increased a total of 2

percent. While these increases are incremental, the steady upward pattern indicates that the changes that are occurring at the campus level are working.

Despite these numerous initiatives and an emerging pattern of improvement in student outcomes, much work remains to be done in advancing and scaling-up innovative and effective Basic Skills strategies. One of the stated goals of the BSI was for the California community colleges to gather practices with high effectiveness rates and implement these approaches to reach all students needing Basic Skills education. However, on many campuses only small scale, pilot programs have been implemented. While many colleges are discussing and encouraging acceleration, flipped classrooms, and more effective assessment, other colleges have only begun to adopt practices that have been shown to improve student outcomes for Basic Skills students.

### **NEW INITIATIVES AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES:**

The recently enacted 2015-16 State Budget established the Community Colleges Basic Skills and Student Outcomes Transformation Program which allocates an additional \$60 million dollars in one-time funding for colleges to adopt or expand the use of evidence-based models of academic assessment and placement, remediation and student support that accelerates the progress of underprepared students toward achieving postsecondary education and career goals. Working together, the Academic Affairs and Institutional Effectiveness divisions of the Chancellor's Office will see that these one-time resources along with the existing, ongoing Basic Skills funds are used to support adoption of effective, data-proven strategies to improve student outcomes in Basic Skills.

These efforts to update and improve Basic Skills strategies are occurring at an opportune time. In the past two years, the state has provided the colleges with significant new resources through the Student Success and Support Program (SSSP) and Student Equity Program (SEP). These new programs are intended to improve the full continuum of services and programs that students experience, from instruction to student support. In this context of renewed investment, there is a tremendous opportunity for the new Basic Skills initiatives to spark transformative changes on our college campuses and yield significant improvements in student outcomes at a faster rate than we have been experiencing in recent years.

The 2016-2017 System Budget request will seek additional ongoing funding for the BSI to advance this opportunity to scale-up effective practices. For the foreseeable future, the colleges will continue to encounter large numbers of entering students who are unprepared for college-level work. Helping these students become prepared for college-level work and then meet their educational goals will remain a central challenge for our colleges.

The Board of Governors is provided two documents of interest on Basic Skills to review:

- California Community Colleges Success Network (3CSN) Overview
- Basic Skills Completion: the Key to Student Success in the California Community Colleges—Effective Practices for Faculty, Staff, and Administrators