



Crossing the Divide: Making a Difference with Policy Research



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ASHE Graduate Student Policy Seminar

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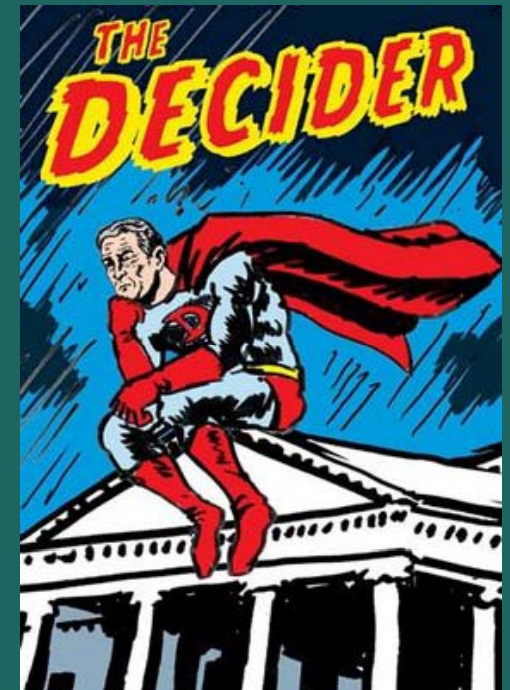
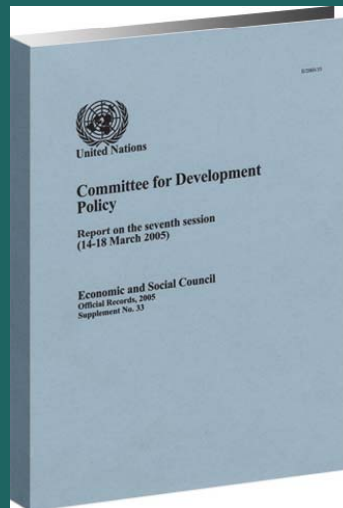


	Academic Research	Policy Research
Orientation	Theory	Action
Core Value	Scholarliness	Pragmatism
Goal	Explanation	Affect policy
Agenda	From discipline	Policy community
Timeline	When finished/right	When needed
Methods	Formal/disciplinary	Eclectic/creative
Audience	Discipline colleagues	Stakeholder publics
Conclusion	Discussion/further research	Recommendations for policy

How Research is Used in Policymaking

Ideal (as in “doesn’t happen”):

- Solve a problem
- Change opinions
- Choose the best option





How Research is *Actually* Used in Policymaking

- Raise awareness of a problem
- Clarify nature of problem
- Contradict conventional wisdom
- Point to interventions or solutions
- Justify a position on an issue

Examples: Research to Reframe and Clarify Problems

- Community colleges – it can't only be about access
- Accountability – institutional outcomes don't add up to meeting state needs
- Funding models – we get what we pay for
- Remedial education – more of the same won't work
- Transfer – it may not mean what we think it does
- Data – we don't have measures of intent, student progress, etc.



Characteristics of Good Policy Research

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National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education

- California's community colleges have an affordability problem and it has nothing to do with tuition

Stanford University Bridge Project

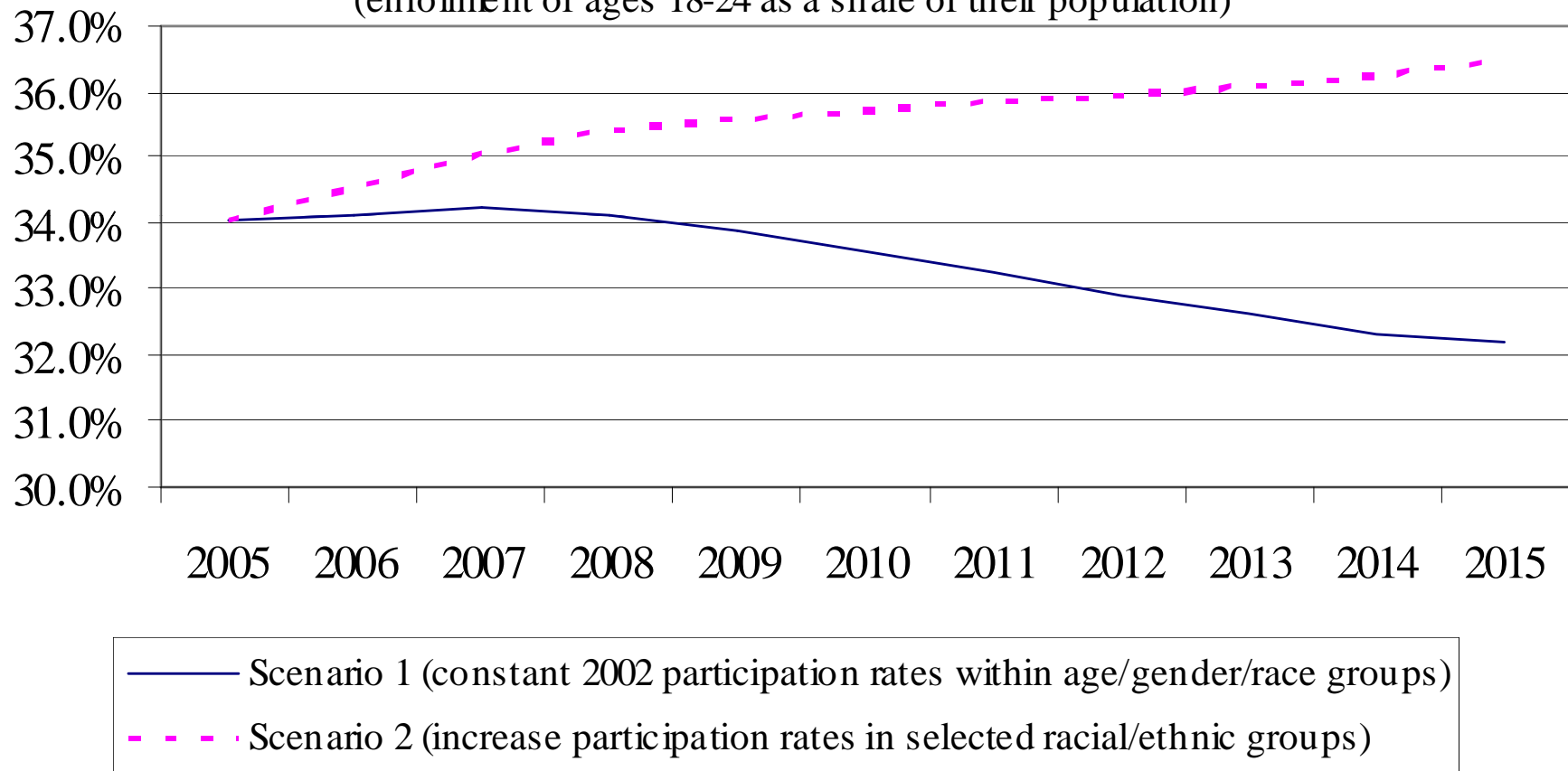
- College policies on testing and placing students send powerful signals to high school students about what to do to prepare to be college ready

Community College Research Center

- Tipping point for workplace value of postsecondary college is 1 year of study *with* credential

Figure 1: Alternate Projections of Undergraduate Participation Rates

(enrollment of ages 18-24 as a share of their population)



Analytical Techniques – finding a way through complexities and missing data

Example: how can CA meet higher education costs over the next 10 years?

- Three sources: state, tuition, efficiency
- What would have to happen if only one source?
How likely is that?

Example: tracking student progress through milestones with missing data?

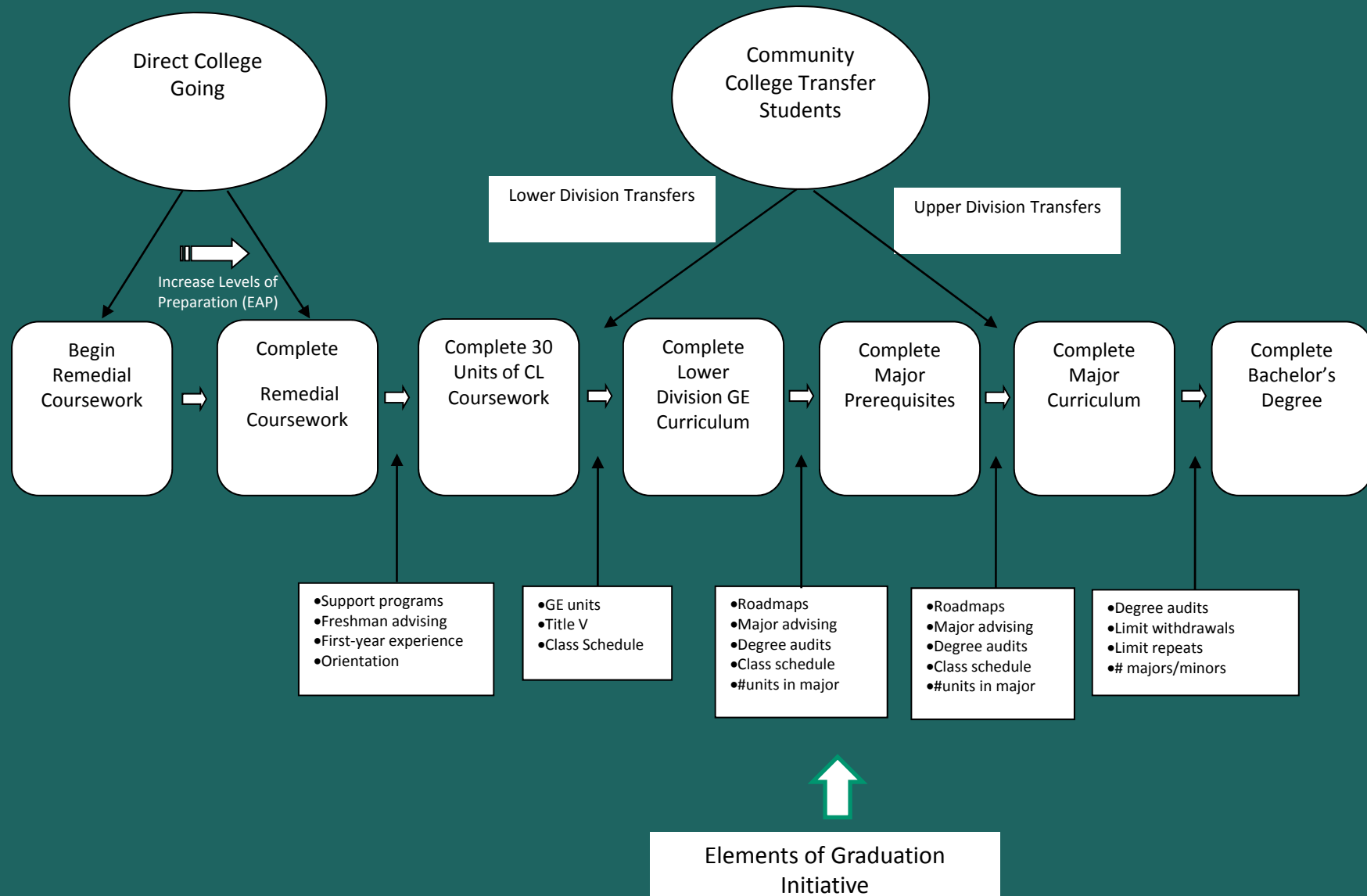
- number of lower division credits earned => lower division units attempted x first year credit completion ratio
- completed general education=> complete 15 lower division courses
- compare to results with more complete data

A Non-Higher Ed Example

Predicted Consequences of Alternative Term Limit Reforms

			Low		Quality of	Political
	Oversight	Diversity	Corruption	Stewardship	policy	feasibility
Consecutive Terms	good	good	bad	good	good	bad
Extend Limits	good	ok	ok	good	good	bad
Repeal Limits	good	bad	bad	good	good	bad
Root Problems	good	good	good	bad	good	ok
Leave the Law As	bad	good	good	bad	good	good
12 Year Plan	good	ok	ok	good	good	ok

Framework for Analyzing Impact of CSU Graduation Initiative





Analytical Techniques – Common, Tempting, but Problematic

- Examine only successes
 - Study transfer students to see what helped them be successful
- “Best practices”
 - By what standards? Compared to what?
- Case studies
 - May be inapplicable to subject environment (e.g., totally different governance structure)
- Identify causal variables with no policy relevance



Recommendations - Common Pitfalls

Good problem explanation but...

- “Implications” – no recommendations
- Vague
- Impractical
- Not policy relevant (practice, not policy)



Actual Recommendation

- The state of ____ needs to confront and resolve the remediation problem as well as the issue of second-language learning, to address the many students admitted to colleges with deficiencies in basic skills (including English for recent immigrants). As in Recommendation 3, an “experimenting approach” to determine good practices from the variety of practices would be helpful; for example, the current XYZ initiative will probably generate a variety of approaches, and they could be examined for their relative effectiveness. The solution to the remediation problem will surely come in some combination of improved high school instruction and better approaches to basic skills and ESL programs in colleges, including promising practices like learning communities, linked courses, and more balanced pedagogies. In addition, remediation practices in high schools, community colleges, and four-year colleges have developed independently, and sharing methods across these three levels might produce new approaches.



Claiming Common Ground Recommendations

States should use four policy levers:

- Alignment
- Incentives
- Accountability
- Student data systems



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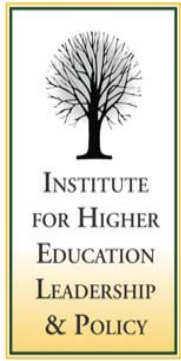
It Could Happen “Achievable Agenda”

- Allow districts to retain fee revenue on top of state appropriation
- Reduce portion of base allocation that is driven by 3rd week enrollments
- Modify the 50 percent law to...
- Require students to make academic progress as a condition for renewal of their fee waivers



Effective Communication of Policy Research

- The obvious: no jargon, executive summary
- Consistent use of language – don't make reader relearn along the way
- Use visuals – but wisely – to tell the story (not only to present data but to simplify)
- Get out and talk about it!



Case Study: IHELP Student Success Research

- *Rules of the Game* – February, 2007
 - Policies are impeding completion
- *Beyond the Open Door* – August, 2007
 - We know what works: research literature
 - CCC policies work against student success
- *Invest in Success* – October, 2007
 - Finance policies are misaligned with priorities – we are not buying success
 - A new funding approach can improve outcomes
- *It Could Happen* – February, 2008
 - Recommend “Achievable Agenda”

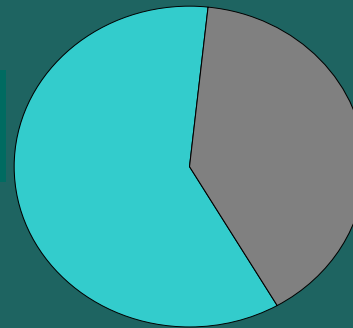
Incoming CCC Students
1999-2000

Policies to
Promote Access



520,407
Students

Degree-
Seekers: 60%



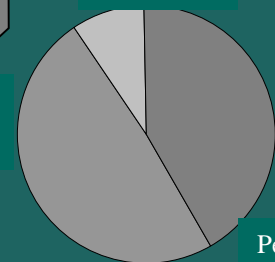
Non-Degree-
Seekers: 40%

206,373
Students



Job Skills:
49%

Basic
Skills: 9%

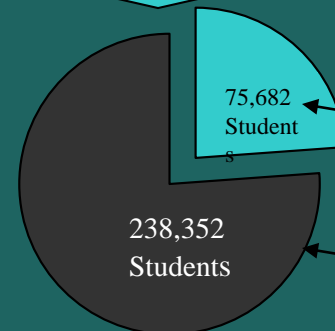


Personal
Enrichment:
42%

Policy Barriers
to Completion



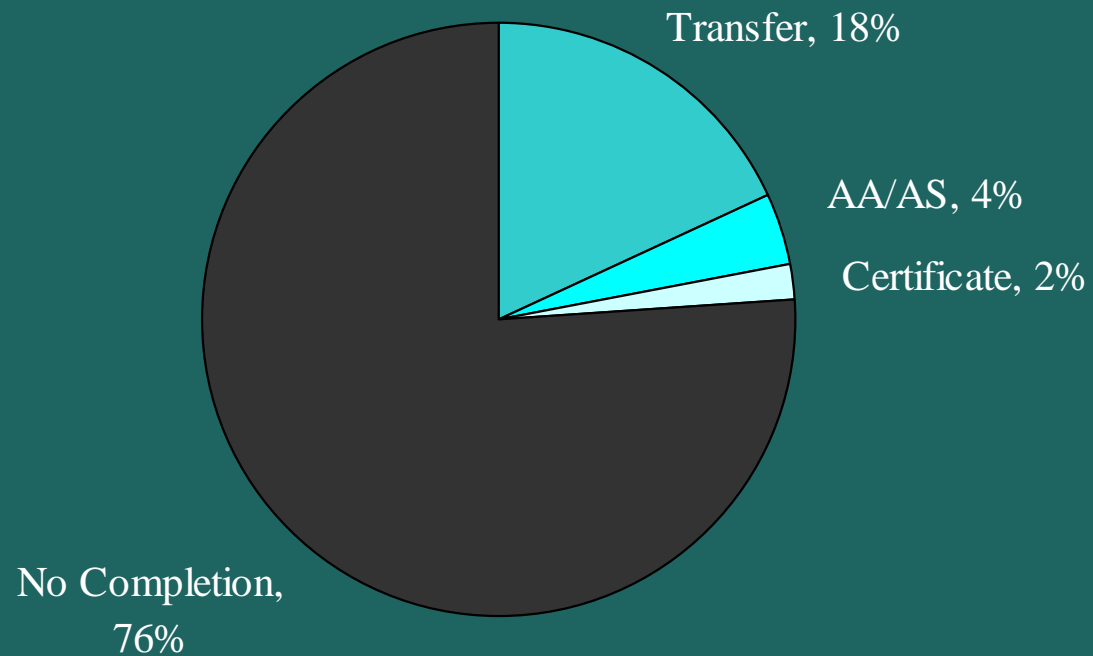
314,034
Students



Complete
Certificate, Degree
or Transfer within
6 Years: 24%

Do Not Complete
within 6 Years: 76%

Highest Completion Among Degree-Seekers After Six Years

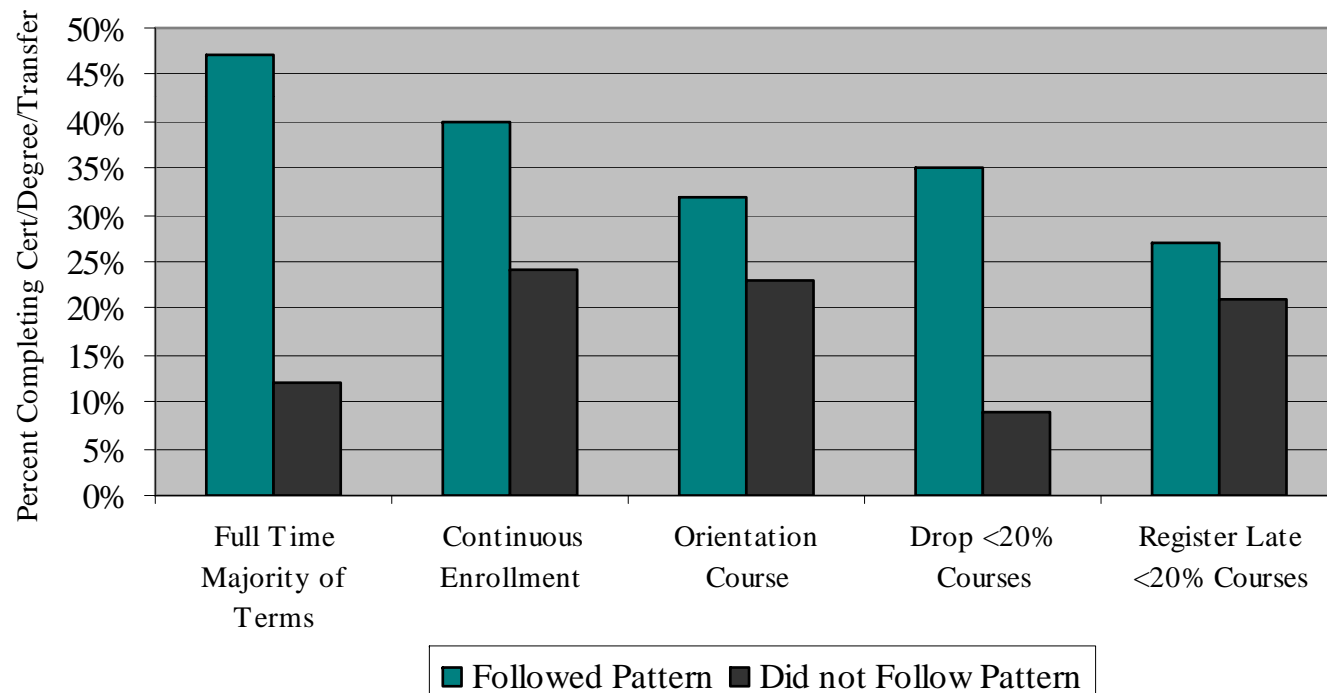


Completion Rates Worse for Certain Groups

- 33% for Asian students
 - 27% for white students
 - 18% for Latino students
 - 15% for black students
-
- 27% for students age 17-19
 - 21% for students in their 20s
 - 18% for students in their 30s
 - 16% for students age 40 or older

Enrollment Patterns Matter – Especially Full-Time

Figure 8: Certain Enrollment Patterns are Related to Higher Completion



California State University, Sacramento



We Know What Works

- Increased college readiness
- Early success/basic skills
- Clear goals and pathways
- Effective enrollment patterns
- Intensive student support
- Using data to inform decisions



But Policies Inhibit Completion

- Enrollment-based funding
- Restrictions on how funds are used
- Student fees
- Financial aid
- Academic policies
- Student support policies



Enrollment-Based Funding

Incentives:

- Minimize emphasize on college readiness
- Voluntary assessment/placement/remediation
- Few course prerequisites
- Late registration
- Postpone assignments/exams
- Minimize offering of high cost programs

Policy Reform:

- Incorporate incentives for success into funding formulas
- Incentives for high-cost/high-need programs

Restrictions on Use of Funds

Incentives:

- Decisions based on compliance rather than student and community needs
- Under-invest in student support and outreach
- Under-invest in classes that students need – especially remedial courses
- Spend scarce time and money documenting and justifying inputs instead of outcomes

Policy Reform:

- Increase flexibility in use of resources
- Base accountability on outcomes, not inputs

Academic Policies

Incentives:

- Students attempt classes for which they may not be prepared
- Colleges under-invest in needed remedial course offerings

Policy Reform:

- Mandatory assessment/placement/orientation
- More prerequisites
- Enroll in academic programs
- Structured programs and pathways
- Better advisement re: academic programs

	Readiness	Access	Affordability	Completion	Workforce	Efficiency
Proposition 98	-	-		-	-	-
Apportionments	-	+/-		-	-	-
Growth	-	+/-		-	-	-
Categoricals:						
Matriculation	-	+/-		-	-	-
EOPS		+	+	+	+	-
DSPS		+		-		-
PT Faculty		+/-		-		-
Fin Aid Admin		+	+	-		+/-
Expenditure restrictions:						
50% instruction	-	+/-		-	-	-
75% / 25%		-		+/-	-	-
60% part time		-		-	-	-
2 semester temporary		-		-	-	-
Student employment			-	-		-
Fees:						
Lack of policy		-	-	-		
Low fees		+/-	+/-	-	-	-
Waivers		+	+/-	-	-	-
Revenue offset		-		-	-	-
No fee non-credit	+	+/-	+	+/-	+	-
Prohibit fees	-	-		-		-
Financial Aid:						
BOG waivers	-	+/-	+	-	+/-	-
Cal Grant	+/-	+/-	+/-	+	+/-	+/-
No integration		-	-	-		-



Things we can't accomplish when enrollment is rewarded over success

- Mandatory assessment/placement
- Enforced prerequisites
- Mandatory orientation/student success courses
- Remove spending constraints on student support services
- Increase revenue from non-needy students



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So what happened?

Legislative activity underway in many areas:

- Change official count to end of term
- Relax hiring restrictions in nursing
- Deregulate (pilot colleges)
- Consolidate categorical programs
- More common assessments

Policy debate has been re-framed: completion
is no longer questioned as goal



Bridging the Gap: Lessons Learned

- Political environment is critical
- Be careful with choice of words and tone
- Quality of research must be unassailable
- Report style is key – but publishing the report is only the beginning (if you're lucky)
- Most important audience may not be policymakers (even with goal to affect policy)