High School-to-Postsecondary Connections and Postsecondary Readiness

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Structure of presentation

I. History of the separation between K-12 and postsecondary

II. Policy levers to connect the systems

III. Drilling in on assessment and placement: One-Shot Deal report
   a. Research questions
   b. What did we do?
   c. What did we find?
   d. Dissemination and Impact
Historical Disconnect

- Greater separation between secondary and postsecondary than in most countries.
- Curricula and assessments developed separately.
- Governance is completely separate between systems.
- Often difficult to track students across systems (disconnected data systems).
- Finance is separate.
- Few incentives for collaboration.
- Many programmatic efforts in place, few systemic approaches.
What Happens Once Students Start in Community College?
One-Shot Deal: Main Questions

• What are the current assessment and placement policies in California’s community colleges?

• What did students know about assessment and placement policies and practices prior to entering into a community college in California (retrospectively)?

• How do students experience those policies and practices?

• What kind of variability is there regarding policies/practices and students’ knowledge/experiences?
What did we do?

• Review of five community colleges’ assessment and placement materials and websites

• Focus groups with students at five community colleges (28 focus groups, 257 students)

• Community college counselor interviews (N=12)

• Survey of matriculation officers statewide (N=73)
What did we find?

- Students view matriculation as a one shot deal

- High school preparation:
  - Low expectations
  - Lack of information about community colleges

- Assessment of incoming students:
  - Uninformed about assessments and unaware of content and format
  - Unaware of stakes
Findings, continued

- Counseling
  - High student-counselor ratios
  - Long wait lines and limited attention
  - More satisfaction with dedicated programs

- Post-assessment confusion
  - Uneven enforcement of rules
  - Inconsistent policies across colleges
  - Lack of clarity about retake policies
  - Confusion about “multiple measures”
  - Student frustration and impact on aspirations
Framing of the recommendations

“These recommendations are directed...toward ensuring that more students experience components of matriculation not as a series of one-time, disjointed events, but more as an integrated process that engages students in early preparation activities; provides practice tests and early diagnostic assessments; offers tailored online support, guidance, and career and educational planning, as well as in-person individual counseling; provides course placement through transparent policies and practices that students understand; and offers accelerated opportunities for students to fill specific academic gaps and otherwise complete basic skills more quickly.”
Recommendations: Work Across K-12 and Community Colleges

• Early outreach to middle and high schools
• Connecting high schools and community college curricula
• Sending clear messages (requires uniformity)
Recommendations: Experiment with Innovations

- Diagnostic assessments
- Counseling practices (electronic/online)
- Boot camps
- Developmental education models
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One-Shot Deal can be accessed at:
www.wested.org/online_pubs/OneShotDeal.pdf