Strategies for Transformative Change

DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION REDESIGN

Transformative Change Initiative Overview

The Transformative Change Initiative (TCI) is dedicated to assisting community colleges to scale-up innovations that improve student outcomes and program, organization, and system performance.

Transformative Change Definition

TCI defines transformative change as follows: Raising the individual, organizational, and system performance of community colleges to unprecedented levels without sacrificing their historic commitment to access and equity.

COETC is online at http://cccscoetc.weebly.com.

Developmental Education Redesign and the Colorado Online Energy Training Consortium

The Colorado Online Energy Training Consortium (COETC) is a 15-member, statewide community college consortium with dual goals. The first goal is to expand opportunities for students to gain access to employment in the state's energy sector by providing new online/hybrid programs of study. The second goal is the redesign of developmental education (DE) to accelerate students' passage of gatekeeper courses. Information in this report was gathered from interviews and documents obtained during site visits in Fall 2013 at Front Range Community College and Community College of Denver.

Developmental Education Redesign Definition

DE courses provide students with the quantitative literacy, algebraic math, and/or English/reading skills needed to succeed in college coursework. The COETC's DE redesign involves replacing the traditional sequence of DE courses with courses that employ acceleration, modularization, and contextualization. Specifically, this model is designed such that all students complete their DE coursework in one semester as compared to three or more semesters. Additionally, integrated coursework in Composition and Reading replaces the previously separate English and Reading courses. The COETC colleges are utilizing curricula that have been realigned to reflect the competencies required for students to succeed in college coursework in their career pathway. The COETC's DE model also creates opportunities for students to be concurrently enrolled DE and college level coursework.

Major Themes

- **Participatory change.** The DE redesign in COETC colleges is being directed by a statewide Developmental Education Task force that has representatives from each of the 15 COETC colleges. At the college level there are steering committees of administration, faculty, and staff working concurrently and collaboratively with the state's Task force. This representation has allowed the state to tap the collective expertise of the members of the Task force, as well as create a balance between uniform adoption of the DE redesign throughout the state while allowing leeway for localized adaption at each college. This representation has helped the Consortium to minimize the resistance that often results from mandated change and allowed for a concerted effort among administration and faculty.

- **A culture of innovation.** Innovation is an integral part of the culture at COETC colleges. Administrators, faculty, and staff are encouraged to identify and adapt evidence-based practices that address barriers to students' success. Engagement with innovation is encouraged by administration through designated institutional resources and reinforced through faculty and staff evaluations. Where possible, innovations

that bear evidence of success are institutionalized, promoting a cycle of innovation and learning that supports both incremental and transformative change. As part of the development of the DE redesign the Task force reviewed strategies utilized in 11 previous initiatives from across the nation (e.g. FastStart, IBEST, CAP, ALP). This review led to the adoption of acceleration, contextualization, mainstreaming, and career pathways as strategies central to the DE redesign.

- **Communities of practice.** A central facet of the DE redesign is that administrators, faculty, and staff in COETC colleges work collectively through scheduled and emergent interactions that are centralized around a shared commitment to student success. This work is cross-disciplined, requiring the buy-in and collaboration of faculty from DE and non-DE disciplines. Frequent communication across multiple disciplines allows the faculty to engage in reforms that extend beyond the individual classroom with the aim of transforming DE as a system. The COETC colleges reinforce these activities through faculty learning communities, peer feedback and mentoring, and redesigned onboarding of new faculty.

Evolving Curriculum Paradigms. The COETC's DE redesign includes changes in DE curricula that has involved the colleges reframing their DE practices. First, the curriculum for math as been re-conceptualized to increase the emphasis on the students' knowledge of quantitative concepts to support computational skills. Second, curriculum has been developed integrating English and reading DE areas. These changes have fostered an environment wherein faculty are encouraged to think beyond their discipline and to develop a greater understanding of how the foundational skills provided in their classroom are aligned with and support curricula in a wide range of programs of study across the campus.

Redesigning Curriculum. The redesigned DE curricula include the incorporation of a variety of pedagogical strategies including emphasizing critical thinking, project-based learning, and learning that is tailored to reflect students' career paths (contextualized and aligned curriculum). Accelerating the curriculum not only reduces the time spent in DE courses but it also supports retention efforts by reducing exit points that occur between courses. Modularized courses allow for the course content to be tailored to reflect the skills and knowledge needed by students for their career path and it can support integration of DE in college-level courses as "just-in-time" learning. Finally, Learning Communities are formed from a pairing of a DE studio course with college-level (transfer) course allowing students to start work toward a career path while building foundational skills in English/reading and/or math.

> "It [DE redesign] is a forward-thinking process. It has a lot of elements of formative research, including piloting, in order to make sure you have proof of concept. We have discovered at Front Range, that you can't template any of these interventions for every campus."
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> Matt Stillwell, College Composition and Reading Faculty Front Range Community College, Larimer Campus

In May 2013, Community College of Denver opened its 87,000 sq. ft. Confluence building. Designed to serve as a centralized location for student services, Confluence houses the colleges DE classes and services.

Intrusive Advising. The COETC colleges have integrated intrusive advising as a concurrent strategy in the DE redesign. Intrusive advising at COETC colleges consists of frequent contact between students in DE courses and an advisor who assists students in gaining academic and non-academic supports both on and off campus. Intrusive advisors strive to develop a relationship with students that reinforce the students' value as members of their campus' community. The intrusive advising strategy has been adapted differently at individual COETC campuses to reflect variations in the size and needs of the local DE population, the resources/services available to students (on and off campus), the physical location and space available to offer services, as well as the existing campus structures and relationships.

Re-conceptualizing College Readiness. Prior to the redesign, students enrolled in DE courses and students enrolled in college-level courses were viewed as two separate populations, where students in DE were viewed as not being prepared for college-level courses. Under the redesign the DE courses have not only been aligned with career pathways, the colleges have looked for ways to support students in taking DE coursework and college-level coursework concurrently. These efforts serve three goals: 1) shorten the time to credential completion, 2) provide students with opportunities to reinforce and immediately apply the foundational skills taught in DE, and 3) assist students to establish and maintain their identity as a college student.

> "The redesigned developmental mathematics courses are more tailored to their degree path, whether that be in CTE, Liberal Arts, or STEM."
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> Sara Pangle, Assistant Professor/ Chair of Mathematics at Community College of Denver

Soft Landing. Changes in financial aid necessitated that COETC colleges drop their lowest level of DE math courses. These courses previously served all students whose assessment scores were lower than those required to enter the redesigned DE courses. In order to provide an affordable educational option for these students, some COETC colleges have developed Soft Landing course(s) for this student population. One example is Community College of Denver's Accuplacer Prep Lab. The lab is available to students whose assessment scores are below that required for DE courses or for students who wish to take a preparatory course before taking the Accuplacer assessment. For a small semester-based fee, students gain access to a lab that is open on weekdays, which includes individualized, computer-assisted lessons, and in-person tutoring. The aim of the lab is to assist students to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to test into the redesigned DE or credit-level courses.

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AT ILLINOIS