

**Academic Preparation Initiative  
Developmental Studies Redesign Project  
Tennessee Board of Regents and Education Commission of the States  
2008 Report**

Since July 1, 2007, the project director changed from Dr. Houston Davis to Dr. Paula Short, TBR vice chancellor for academic affairs. Facilitation and monitoring of the project is delegated to Dr. Treva Berryman, TBR associate vice chancellor for academic affairs.

The goal of this initiative is to reform the Developmental Studies curriculum, teaching and learning methods, and assessment strategies. The redesign is following the model provided by the National Center for Academic Transformation (NCAT) and targets English (reading and writing) and math. Progress was made toward the objective of developing innovative instructional and administrative efficiencies to broaden access to higher education. Seventeen of the 19 colleges and universities in the TBR system submitted a total of 28 proposals to participate in the pilot to redesign reading and/or writing and math — six proposals, four in math and two in English were funded through the FIPSE grant to continue through the NCAT process of redesign. Details of these pilots and how they are progressing are provided on the annual report links.

Plans to implement the pilots were developed during fall 2007. This included facility renovation, purchase of computers and software, developing modules, and reassigning faculty workload. The first of three semesters of pilot intervention was completed spring semester 2008. NCAT led a third workshop with the members of the redesign teams (faculty and administrators) from each pilot institution on June 7, 2008. Each pilot team presented their results. Of the six pilots, three reported significant improvement in student learning and retention and reduced costs. One community college reported that the completion rate for the elementary algebra course increased from 50.3% before to 69.5% in the pilot. In addition, the course GPA increased from 1.90 to 2.88 on a 4.0 scale, and the percentage of students passing the course with a “C” or better increased from 61.9% to 79.8%. Similar results were reported for the intermediate algebra course. The one university-based pilot reported a 29.38% improvement in student success rate in one math course and a 37.13% success rate in the other math course as a result of the pilot. Another community college reported that students in basic mathematics in the traditional and redesign groups exhibited no significant difference in course completion; however, grades did improve. Algebra students performed significantly better in the redesign group. These three pilots reported a reduced cost per student. The other three pilots had mixed results with improvement in some sections and not in others. All of the design teams faced unanticipated problems in the implementation phase, but worked to identify solutions — some short-term and some long-term. For example, one pilot went from nine modules to 12 modules to better accommodate varied levels of preparation required in different career tracks or disciplines. Four of the six pilots had to identify a new registration process and how to track student data manually since the new BANNER system could not accommodate all the needs. All of the pilot teams are using the summer to refine plans, revise modules if needed, train faculty and prepare for the second round of pilots in the fall semester 2008.

A significant result of the project is that several TBR colleges and universities, because of participation in the NCAT grant application process and training, decided to pilot new interventions for developmental education using institutional funds to support their redesign. NCAT helps monitor the grant funded pilots, but it has been a challenge to approve, monitor and facilitate some of these non-grant funded pilots. We are working to ensure that appropriate controls for statistical analyses are a part of the non-grant funded pilots so that they can be appropriately evaluated and contribute to the data-based decision-making process resulting in the final redesign recommendations and policies.

Another objective of this initiative is to align curriculum on a state level between high schools and colleges, and between two-year and four-year postsecondary programs to ensure continuing academic progress. TBR appointed 20 representatives to the system-wide DSP Redesign Task Force. While most of the representatives are faculty who teach either math, reading or writing, there also are representatives from financial aid, administration of student and academic affairs, and a college president. The task force meets once or twice each semester and communicates via e-mail and conference calls as needed between meetings. Four subcommittees are working with each committee being chaired by a member of the task force. These subcommittees are: 1) math curriculum redesign, 2) English curriculum redesign, 3) assessment, and 4) funding redesign. The first three subcommittees are working with national standards within the discipline, the new Tennessee high school standards approved by the state department of education to be implemented in the fall of 2008, and the ACT College Readiness Standards. Two-year and four-year institutions are represented on the task force and on all subcommittees. A high school teacher is represented on the math subcommittee. The new high school standards were presented at a meeting of the task force in 2007. Task force members participated in the statewide annual P-16 conference and the statewide ACT State Organization conference. At these meetings, we have made presentations to inform task force members of other initiatives working toward these same objectives. These include initiatives working to improve teacher quality, improve articulation, evaluate general education competencies, as well as the *American Diploma Project*.

Modularization and increased diagnostic assessments will enable institutions to customize remediation to best suit the needs of individual students. The ECS assists the subcommittees and task force by providing national data and links to research. This information is being evaluated and considered as we worked toward recommendations for best practice and new policy. One initial recommendation that has been made and is supported by state level and institutional administrators is that the focus of remediation will no longer be in the past. Prior to this initiative, developmental education was intended to address whatever was missed or forgotten from high school. In the future, the focus will be to address the competencies needed to insure the opportunity for academic success in whatever career curriculum or field of study the student chooses. Developmental education should be recognized as a necessary academic support throughout the education process, rather than a curriculum to be satisfactorily completed before allowing students to pursue their educational goals.

One of the goals of the project is to disseminate information that may benefit other states and institutions. Presentations of each of the six grant-funded pilots were made at the 2nd Annual NCAT Conference in Orlando, Florida on March 16-18, 2008. Presentations have been given for the Council for Post-Secondary Education in Kentucky, the National Association for System Heads, the League of Innovation, the Education Commission of the States and soon will be presented at the State P-16 Summer Institute sponsored by EdTrust. ECS will launch a website to share information on the project by August 2008. The Lumina Foundation's journal, *Focus*, will feature one of the grant-funded pilots later this year. Presentations have been shared with leaders and administrators within the TBR system. Those participating in the project are being encouraged to document their experiences and to publish articles at the conclusion of the project. In addition, the TBR has been invited to join the "Access to Success" project at NASH/EdTrust.

Some of the advantages of redesign reported by the pilot institutions are increased student and faculty engagement, scheduling advantages, improved attitudes of students and faculty, improved outcomes and the ability to meet the needs of individuals instead of a group. Challenges to implementing change include: 1) providing effective student advising, financial aid and transfer to other institutions when a modular format is used, 2) identifying optimal assessment and placement tools and standards, 3) reassigning staff and faculty workload, 4) orientation and training for faculty and students using new technologies and processes, and 5) monitoring progress and analyzing data.

It is too early to provide evidence of adaptation or adoption by other institutions or organizations. However, as can be seen by the number of requests to share information about the project, it is obvious that other states and institutions of higher education are watching this project and seeking to duplicate any success as they struggle with the same challenges of increasing access, college readiness, and retention more effectively and efficiently. Also, we are seeing a more positive attitude toward the use of technology and even some excitement about the potential impact such change can bring. In general, it appears that the redesign process will likely carry over into other disciplines, resulting in increased student engagement and enhanced learning outcomes. Faculty members are reading more and talking more about the role of technology in education.

The most significant challenges are coordination and communication to maintain involvement and encourage input from all 19 TBR institutions. All 13 community colleges and six universities have a designated campus contact. Every institution is represented on either the task force or a subcommittee; most institutions have two or more participants. Faculty representation is critical to the success of each pilot and the entire project. Faculty expertise will drive the successful development of the modules and effective delivery. New technologies cannot be effective unless the faculty use them to ensure student engagement. Technology provides the opportunity for educators to individualize student learning and to work with students at whatever level is needed rather than "teach to the middle" and hope that most of the students' needs have been addressed.

Each grant-funded pilot had to develop a specific evaluation plan with the ability to benchmark progress against prior outcomes from the developmental studies program at

that institution. Typically, there is an end-of-course or end-of-intervention assessment that utilizes questions or problems or activities that are common to the before and after redesign. Each non-grant-funded pilot has been asked to do the same, but thus far, the data have not been requested. Evaluation of the grant-funded pilots has been appropriate and followed as initially planned through the NCAT process. At the system level, the task force continues to work with the institutional research staff to evaluate data available and/or needed from all institutions. Dr. Karen Paulson from NCHEMS provides the external evaluation. She is working with the project director and facilitator over the summer. A comprehensive report will be submitted to FIPSE in September 2008.

Each quarter, a status report on the project is given to the faculty sub-council, student affairs sub-council, academic sub-council, and president's council. These groups provide the shared governance structure for the state board of regents. Through good communication and active involvement of each TBR institution, the redesign project is expected to be endorsed and supported so that the benefits and the redesign process can be sustained after grant funding has ended. Also, the Financial Funding Subcommittee continues to work toward identifying an alternate model to fund developmental studies that will enable the maximization of limited resources to provide for increased access to higher education and improved student recruitment, retention and graduation.