

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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**A Report on the  
Findings and Recommendations  
for the  
Delivery of Remedial College Courses**

**Presented to the  
Joint Standing Committee on  
Education and Cultural Affairs**

**February, 2008**



The 123rd Legislature through Public Law, Chapter 240, Part UUU directed the Commissioner of Education Susan Gendron, along with the University of Maine System, and the Maine Community College System, to conduct a review of collected data on remedial course taking and its impact on the students who take those courses.

### **PART UUU**

**Sec. UUU-1. Study.** The Commissioner of Education shall convene a working group to study the current offering of remedial college courses at the University of Maine System and the Maine Community College System. The Commissioner shall invite participation from the Maine Compact for Higher Education, the Maine Adult Education Association, the MELMAC Education Foundation, the Maine Community College System, the University of Maine System, the Mitchell Institute, and other interested parties. The study must include a review of the process used to determine whether students need to take one or more developmental courses, the number of students that are required to take remedial courses while taking classes within the University of Maine System or the Maine Community College System each year, how much financial aid is used by students to take the remedial courses, what the graduation rate is of those students who have taken remedial courses, what developmental courses are offered by the Maine Community College System and the University of Maine System, and whether similar courses are offered or could be offered by Maine's adult education programs.

**Sec. UUU-2. Report.** The working group shall provide a report to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs with findings and recommendations for changes in the delivery of remedial college courses no later than February 1, 2008.

### **Directive**

A working group of specific constituents was established and chaired by Commissioner Gendron as described in Chapter 240, Part UUU. Data was presented to the group on December 18, 2007. These reports were based on the following questions posed by the 123<sup>rd</sup> Maine Legislature:

1. What is the process used to determine whether students need to take one or more developmental courses?
2. What is the number of students that are required to take remedial courses while taking classes within the University of Maine System or the Maine Community College System each year?
3. How much financial aid is used by students to take remedial courses?
4. What is the graduation rate of those students who have taken remedial courses?
5. What developmental courses are offered by each of the Systems?
6. Are similar courses offered or could they be offered by Maine's adult education program?

## **Participants**

- Henry Bourgeois, Executive Director, Maine Compact for Higher Education
- Becky Dyer, Director, Adult Education, Maine Department of Education
- Heidi Farber, Executive Director, Maine Higher Education Council
- John Fitzsimmons President, Maine Community College System
- Susan A. Gendron, Commissioner of Education
- Wanda Monthey, Policy Director and Team Leader, Maine Department of Education
- Richard Pattenaude, Chancellor, University of Maine System
- Colleen Quint, Executive Director, The Senator George J. Mitchell Scholarship Research Institute
- Jacqueline Soychak, Policy Director and Team Leader, Maine Department of Education
- Rob Wood, Co-Director, Adult Education, Portland Public Schools

## **Summary of Committee Member Meetings and Reports**

**Limitations of Data Systems** The Maine Community College System (MCCS) and the University of Maine System (UMS), as well as the Department of Education, lack robust data systems that allow these institutions to collect valuable data to track key indicators regarding student performance. During the next five years, these systems are making significant investments that will move from record keeping data bases to research data systems in order to provide greater insights into questions such as:

- How much financial aid is used by students to take remedial courses?
- What is the graduation rate of those students who have taken remedial courses?

A federal grant was recently received by the Maine Department of Education to build a longitudinal data system with unique student identifiers that will interface with the UMS and the MCCS and allow for the tracking of students K-16, as well as interfacing with the Departments of Labor and Corrections. It is of great importance that each of the systems data bases be able to interface with one another. The data presented at the meeting was collected by hand involving a significant investment of time and in some cases only provides a snapshot from data collected at one campus and includes approximations or estimations. Despite this challenge, the data collected was a worthwhile exercise and the ensuing conversation was beneficial to all of the participants.

**What is the process used to determine whether students need to take one or more developmental courses?** Students taking remedial courses at either the MCCS or the UMS are doing so based on specific needs that have been identified in reading, writing, and math. The MCCS and the UMS do not count these courses towards graduation requirements. Accepted students into one of Maine's seven community colleges are required to take the ACCUPLACER assessment. The scores are used for academic counseling and course placement. Results are analyzed, and applicants may be advised to enroll in preparatory courses and/or receive assistance at an adult education center in the region.

Commissioner Gendron discussed making ACCUPLACER available to every high school student at least once during their secondary career. Used as a formative assessment, ACCUPLACER can provide valuable feedback on the knowledge skills that students need in preparation for post secondary education. The committee discussed the need to publicize ACCUPLACER cut scores that are used by MCCS and UMS campuses so that information can be used by students as well.

Below are tables identifying the *current* testing process used at the different University of Maine campuses for writing and mathematics. Students now pay regular tuition for remedial courses and may count them toward residence requirements and scholarship aid, but cannot count them toward graduation requirements. In recognition of that, taking into account that students who take remedial courses are already on campus, and the negative perception of those courses, the UMS plans a major restructuring of remedial education.

Instead of offering non-100 level remedial classes, the UMS will bring conformity to the curriculum and award credit by increasing the content levels taught in those classes to include college level content and give full credit which will count towards graduation. This is the practice at the University of Maine, Orono campus, and in the Fall of 2008, the University of Southern Maine is planning to phase out their current remedial classes and combine the content of remedial and current credit bearing courses for those who would have traditionally been enrolled in the remedial courses. Current courses will be phased out and replaced with four-credit courses that meet proficiency and will count towards the student's degree. The campuses will continue to have developmental labs where all students can go for help if needed.

**University of Maine System  
Developmental Coursework Process – Writing**

University	SAT Cut-Off	Placement Test
UM	N/A	In- Class Diagnosis
UMA	530	Accuplacer
UMF	490	Local Test
UMFK	500	Accuplacer
UMM	480	Accuplacer
UMPI	500	Accuplacer for Reading; Writing Sample
USM*	550	Local Test

**University of Maine System  
Developmental Coursework Process – Mathematics**

University	SAT- Cut-Off	Placement Test
UM	N/A	Local Test
UMA	500	Accuplacer
UMF	450	Local Test
UMFK	500	Accuplacer
UMM	470	Accuplacer
UMPI	490	Accuplacer
USM*	480	Accuplacer

\*Selection methodology under review

**What is the number of students that are required to take remedial courses while taking classes within the University of Maine System or the Maine Community College System each year?** The

level of remedial courses taken in Maine is below the national norm; however, it was agreed that Maine can do better. 25% of first-time, first-year UMS students currently take a remedial course which is below the national average of 28%. Numbers vary by institution and reflect the different student populations each university serves and the numbers can change from year to year. Factors such as the economy and differences in criteria for placing students in courses can affect the differences between students enrolling in college courses. Institutions with higher rates tend to attract more part-time, non-traditional students who have been out of school for a time and take remedial courses to refresh their knowledge on a particular subject.

The committee reviewed the following chart detailing the number of first-time, first year matriculants enrolled in less than 100 level remedial courses in the Fall of 2007 in the MCCC:

Community College	Total First Time Matriculated	Unduplicated Number First Time Matriculated Taking Remedial Courses	From the Unduplicated Number Those Taking More Than One Course
CMCC	668	347	127
EMCC	441	365	119
KVCC	276	34	2
NMCC	196	84	24
SMCC	1031	603	157
WCCC	193	80	9
YCCC	489	159	33
	<b>3294</b>	<b>1672</b>	<b>471</b>

Maine Community College System President, John Fitzsimmons reported that the most frequently needed developmental courses in Maine's community colleges are in math with 44% or 1,450 first time matriculated students needing assistance. The percentage of students requiring assistance in reading and writing is far less with 14.03% or 462 students taking reading courses and 10.08% or 332 students taking writing courses.

**The need for transparency between secondary and post secondary education.** Several times during the meeting, participants discussed the need for greater transparency between high schools and the post secondary level. The report, "From High School to College: Removing Barriers for Maine Students" issued by The Senator George J. Mitchell Scholarship Research Institute states "there is a lack of awareness, particularly among parents and students, that similar math, reading, and writing skills are needed for success both at college and in the workplace," and that more work needs to be done to prepare non-honors and advanced students for college level and workplace expectations. Henry Bourgeois of the Maine Compact for Higher Education raised the issue that high schools do not track their graduates remediation, persistence or retention rates at the post secondary level. Heidi Farber of the Maine Higher

Education Council reiterated the importance of building a feedback loop that would help to create a seamless system. Participants agreed that it would be very valuable for every high school faculty, school board members, as well as students and parents to understand how their graduates perform at the post secondary level and in the workplace. Colleen Quint from the Mitchell Institute raised the question as to whether or not there could be agreed upon cut off scores on the Accuplacer or other agreed upon measures so that students both in high schools and in adult education know whether or not they were meeting thresholds of preparedness. The ultimate goal is to have more students prepared for post secondary education without remediation.

**How much financial aid is used by students to take remedial courses?** Both Chancellor Pattenaude of the University of Maine System and President Fitzsimons of the Maine Community College System noted that student information or administrative computing systems could not readily provide data to accurately answer this question. Both stated that student financial aid comes in the forms of gifts, grants, work study programs, and loans. Students may use these dollars for any purpose related to education, not just to pay tuition costs. These funds can be used to purchase books or pay for living expenses. The percent of a student's expenses covered by federal financial aid at one community college campus, Central Maine Community College (CMCC) in Auburn, ranges from a low of 25% to a high of 43%. In an effort to respond to the Legislature's request, President Fitzsimons chose to use 40% in order to provide an estimate. Using that estimate, the President stated that if 40% of the financial aid a student receives from federal sources would cover the cost of attendance, the amount of financial aid used by students for remedial courses at CMCC is estimated to be around \$50,000 annually.

Chancellor Pattenaude estimated that if one quarter of a student's credits are remedial coursework, the amount of financial aid used by students who take remedial courses would be approximately \$1.6 million system-wide for the UMS.

Only those students that are matriculated in a degree granting program are able to receive financial aid. The majority of students taking remedial courses are matriculated students and remedial coursework is considered a part of their course of study and are thus able to use federal financial aid to pay for those courses. State aid from the university's budget is not used to pay for remedial courses.

Both the Chancellor and the President pointed out that, remedial courses are self-funded courses. Once there is no longer a demand for remedial coursework the courses can be eliminated. The overall goal should be to eliminate remedial courses, however until this goal is met the MCCS and UMS need to offer remedial courses to their students.

**What is the graduation rate of those students who have taken remedial courses?**

The MCCS began to collect data tracking students enrolled in remedial courses in 2006. At this point in time no data is available to gauge the graduation rates of these students. The current UMS student database cannot accurately track remedial student progression. Of the UMS campuses that could provide a Fall 2000 remedial student cohort, the graduation rate varies between 34% and 73%. These rates are consistent with the rest of the UMS student body graduation rates. Research published by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation was briefly discussed by the group and points to the conclusion that the more remedial courses a student takes the less chance that student has to graduate with a degree.



**What developmental courses are offered by the each of the Systems?**

**Developmental Courses Offered by MCCS**

Central Maine Community College- Auburn

1. Basic Writing
2. Reading Workshop II
3. Intro to Academic Reading
4. Intro to Academic Vocabulary

Eastern Maine Community College-Bangor

1. Intro to Writing I
2. Intro to Writing II
3. College Composition
4. Reading Skills
5. Reading/Study Skills I
6. Pre- Algebra

Kennebec Valley Community College-Fairfield

1. Basic Writing
2. Basic Math

Northern Maine Community College-Presque Isle

1. Developmental Reading
2. Developmental Writing
3. Math Fundamentals
4. Essential Math
5. Elementary Algebra
6. Introduction to Composition
7. Introduction to Communication

Southern Maine Community College- So Portland

1. College Reading Skills
2. Basic Writing II
3. Numerical Mathematics
4. Introduction to Algebra

**Developmental Courses Offered by UMS**

University of Maine

1. Introduction to Academic Reading
2. Pre- Algebra
3. Introductory Algebra
4. Intermediate Algebra

University of Maine- Farmington

1. Basic Algebra
2. Basic Mathematics
3. Bridge Algebra
4. Bridge Math
5. Bridge English
6. Bridge Biology

University of Maine- Fort Kent

1. College Reading
2. Introductory Writing

University of Maine- Augusta

1. Algebra I
2. Basic Writing
3. Foundations of Mathematics
4. Introduction to Algebra (Part I)
5. Introduction to Algebra (Part II)
6. Reading for Understanding
7. Writing Improvement

University of Southern Maine

1. Developmental Mathematics
2. Elementary Algebra
3. Seminar in Life Long Learning
4. Transition to College

## **Developmental Courses Offered by M CCS**

### Washington County Community College-Calais

1. Introduction to College Communications
2. College Writing
3. Preparatory Mathematics
4. College Mathematics

### York County Community College- Wells

1. Basic Math Skills
2. Basic Algebra
3. Reading and Writing Workshop

## **Developmental Courses Offered by UMS**

### University of Maine at Presque Isle

1. Algebra I
2. Elementary Algebra
3. Foundation for College Mathematics
4. Foundation for College Science
5. Foundation for College Composition
6. Foundation for College Reading

### University of Maine at Machias

1. Foundation of Mathematics
2. Algebra I
3. Arithmetic for College Students MOD
4. Basic Writing
5. Developmental Writing Lab

### **Are similar courses offered or could they be offered by Maine's adult education program?**

Statewide adult education is growing access to remedial and developmental courses throughout the State and working successfully to meet the goal of preparing more adults for post secondary educational opportunities.

### **FY 2007 College Transition Pilot Project Data**

In FY 2007 six pilot projects were funded with State funds with a total of 669 enrollments

- 222 (33%) of the 669 enrollees completed their goals
- 170 (76.5%) of the 222 enrollees who completed their goals achieved a minimum cut score on the Accuplacer
- 97 (57%) of those with a minimum cut score enrolled part-time in a post secondary institution
- 68 (40%) of those with a minimum cut score enrolled full-time in a post secondary institution
- 28.8 years was the average age of the participants
- 93 participants had previously attended college

This data reflects only those numbers in comprehensive College Transition Programs and does not reflect learners who participated in individual college prerequisite courses at local adult education sites.

### **FY 2008 Maine College Transition Program**

Twenty-two College Transition Programs were funded in FY 2008 with an average grant of \$30,000. Funds were allocated based on population without a college degree by county. There are Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) signed between community colleges and the adult education programs in their catchment areas. While these MOUs are different for each region, faculties from the adult education programs and the cooperating community colleges work together to align the curriculum to an agreed upon syllabus. Through this important work adult education programs are providing remediation and

working to overcome travel issues and other barriers that prevent adults from attending community colleges. At this time there are no MOUs that exist on a statewide scale with the University of Maine System or any of the individual campuses.

**Adult Education College Transition Program Sites**

York	Cumberland
• Sanford	• Portland
• South Berwick	• Bridgton
• Old Orchard Beach- Saco	• Windham
• Bar Mills (split with Gorham)	• Gorham (split with Bar Mills)
Penobscot	Somerset
• Bangor	• Fairfield
• Newport	
	Oxford
Androscoggin	• Oxford Hills
• Lewiston	
	Franklin
Kennebec	• Farmington
• Capitol Area	
	Piscataquis
Hancock	• Piscataquis Valley Consortium
• Flanders Bay	
	Washington
Aroostook	• Machias
• Aroostook County Consortium	
	Waldo
Sagadahoc	• Belfast
• Merrymeeting	
	Knox
Lincoln	• Rockland
• Wiscasset	

Seven programs received grants over five years from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation which resulted in the following:

- 471 (68.8%) of Nellie Mae funded program enrollees completed their goals
- 358 (76%) of those went on to college

## Summary of Committee Member Findings and Recommendations

### Findings:

1. There is a critical lack of data at all levels on the impact of readiness and enrollment in remedial courses.
2. The level of remediation in Maine is just below the national norm, but Maine can and should do better for its citizens.
3. Remedial courses are self-funded courses. If the demand is no longer there the courses will no longer be offered.
4. The long term goal should be to eliminate remedial courses but until there is no longer a demand the MCCS and the UMS need to offer remedial support to their students.
5. There needs to be a greater transparency between post secondary and adult education.
6. More State aid cannot move to adult education because a majority of the courses at MCCS and UMS are funded by federal financial aid dollars.

### Recommendations:

1. Build more robust data systems that will create a seamless system for Maine students.
2. Increase knowledge around the importance of adult education as a step for many of Maine's adult learners.
3. Improve communication within and among the UMS and the MCCS adjunct faculty and adult education.
4. Provide greater transparency between high schools and post secondary institutions.
5. Identify and publicize cut off ACCUPLACER scores and other benchmarks defining college readiness in the UMS and the MCCS.
6. Develop academic performance reports so that high schools know whether or not their students need remediation and whether or not their students graduate with a post secondary diploma.
7. Enhance communication between post secondary faculty and high school faculty regarding expectations of the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in Maine's community colleges and universities.
8. Provide access to different resources for different students so that the goals of reducing remediation rates and improving post secondary degree attainment can be achieved.
9. Continue discussions around improving transition to college coursework through the implementation of the PK-20 Council.