



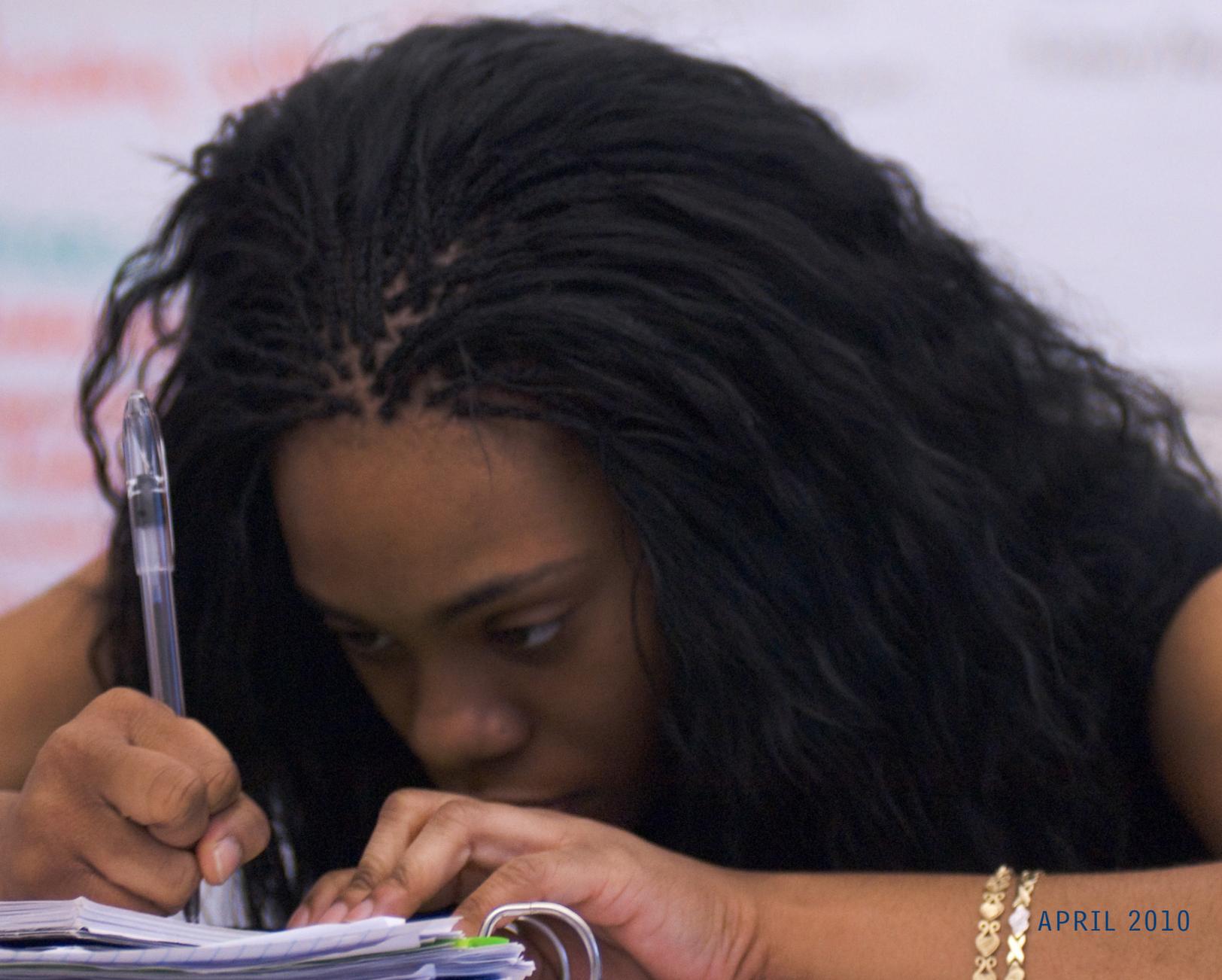
DEVELOPMENTAL  
EDUCATION  
INITIATIVE

Accelerating Achievement



JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

# THE DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION INITIATIVE: STATE POLICY FRAMEWORK & STRATEGY



APRIL 2010



## STATE POLICY AS A DRIVER OF INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION

### THE PROBLEM

**DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION AS TRADITIONALLY DELIVERED DOES NOT APPRECIABLY INCREASE COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS' CHANCES OF EARNING CREDENTIALS OR DEGREES. FEW STUDENTS WHO ARE MORE THAN ONE LEVEL BELOW COLLEGE PROFICIENCY EVER COMPLETE THEIR DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS, LET ALONE EARN COLLEGE CREDITS OR A DEGREE. MANY LEAVE COLLEGE WITHOUT TAKING ANY CLASSES UPON BEING REFERRED TO MORE THAN ONE DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION COURSE. FOR MOST STUDENTS, IT IS SIMPLY NOT AN OPTION TO TAKE A YEAR OR MORE OF DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION BEFORE GETTING DOWN TO THE BUSINESS OF EARNING THE CREDENTIALS AND DEGREES FOR WHICH THEY ENROLLED.**

**THIS BROKEN MODEL OF REMEDYING STUDENTS' ACADEMIC DEFICIENCIES IS NOT SUSTAINABLE IN AN ERA OF TIGHT BUDGETS, SWELLING ENROLLMENTS, AND PRESSURE FOR MORE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR RESULTS. NEW APPROACHES AND OPTIONS ARE NEEDED FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE ACADEMICALLY UNDERPREPARED TO MEET EDUCATION AND CAREER GOALS.**

### THE SOLUTION

State policy can play a critical role in supporting the improvement of outcomes for underprepared students. States can create policy conditions that encourage the identification, dissemination, and implementation of strategies that improve outcomes for students who test into developmental education. They can provide incentives for institutions to test and refine bold new delivery and instructional models—and to scale up what works. For example, states can help institutions identify whether students who test multiple levels below college proficiency might be better served by models that integrate developmental curricula with college-level work and/or occupational training leading to an industry-recognized credential. Or following recent research evidence, state policy can provide incentives for determining whether students who narrowly miss the cut score might be more successful entering directly into first-year college-level courses, but with targeted academic and student services supports. If these new approaches improve outcomes, states can use policy to accelerate their dissemination and support broad-scale implementation. Equally important, states can remove barriers that limit institutions' ability to adopt more flexible and efficient models for strengthening students' basic skills.



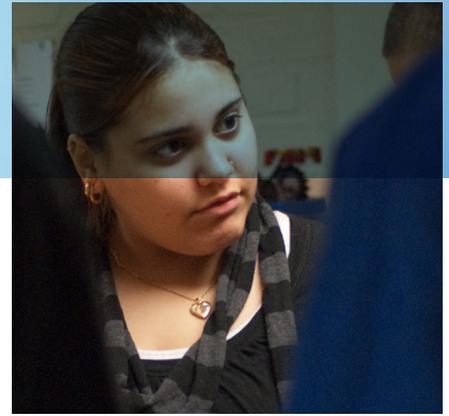
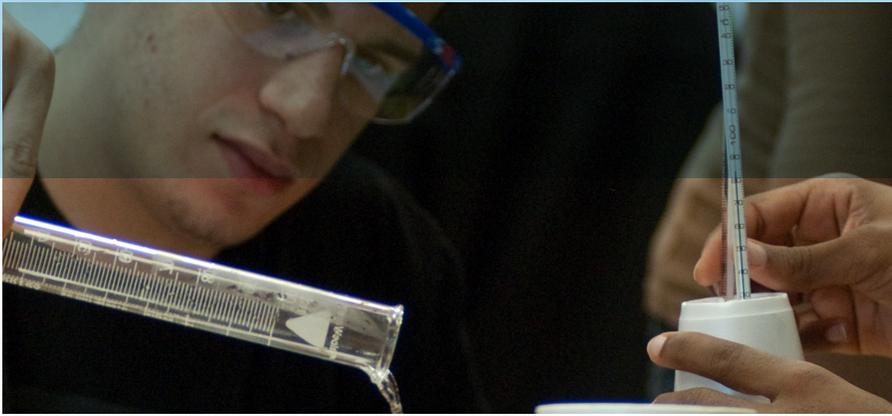
## FRAMEWORK FOR STATE POLICY ACTION TO IMPROVE DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION DELIVERY AND OUTCOMES

During the past few years, the 16 states participating in the Achieving the Dream student success initiative collaborated to map the highest-impact policy levers for driving improvements in student persistence and completion. These levers were specified in *Building Support for Student Success*, published by Jobs for the Future. A self-assessment guide was created to help states identify how their state- and system-level policies compared to the ideal policy set laid out in the framework.

In 2009, six of the first states involved in Achieving the Dream joined together to focus more intently on policies to support dramatic improvements for students whose assessment scores indicate the need for remediation. These six states—Connecticut, Florida, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas, and Virginia—are committed to an aggressive policy and capacity-building agenda to support their community colleges' efforts to improve success rates for students in need of developmental education.

The Developmental Education Initiative builds on the foundation of Achieving the Dream, adapting it to the particular challenges associated with helping students in need of developmental education move efficiently and effectively toward their postsecondary credential goals. The framework specifies the levers that state policymakers have at their disposal to support more effective ways of changing the organization and delivery of developmental education—and public expectations of individual and institutional success. It provides states with a clear, efficient guide for organizing and prioritizing their efforts to collaborate with, support, and prod local institutions to:

- > Reduce the need for developmental education among incoming students through better alignment with K-12 systems (*Aligned Expectations P-16*);
- > Set goals for improved institutional outcomes, use appropriate performance indicators to measure progress, and make progress transparent to key stakeholders (*Data and Performance Measurement*);
- > Accurately assess college readiness and place students in need of developmental education in courses and interventions that maximize their chances of college success (*Assessment and Placement*);
- > Redesign developmental education courses and sequences to help students avoid developmental courses if possible, have easier access to flexible delivery options, and get the academic and non-academic supports they need to move quickly toward proficiency and success in credential programs, (*Developmental Education Innovation/Redesign and Integration of Academic and Support Services*); and



- > Remove barriers and create incentives for institutions to introduce, test, and scale up innovations that significantly improve results (*Finance*).

(See Developmental Education Initiative State Policy Framework & Strategy Graph, page 5.)

The Developmental Education Initiative's state policy framework is a powerful tool to help states assess and improve the coherence and impact of the policies that shape institutional and individual decisions about course-taking, persistence, and completion. This mapping and alignment of policies is critical to efficient and effective policy interventions that drive better outcomes for underprepared students.

However, the initiative's state-level policy efforts go beyond establishing a framework to specification of a strategy that each participating state has agreed to implement during the next three years. This strategy has three related components:

- > **A data-driven improvement process** that ensures the right conditions for institutional innovation;
- > **A state-level innovation investment strategy** that provides incentives for the development, testing, and scaling up of effective models; and
- > **Policy supports** that facilitate the implementation of new models and encourage the spread of successful practices.

Developmental Education Initiative states will report the same intermediate and final measures for the progress of students who place into developmental education across all their institutions. They will identify sources of financial support for high-leverage innovations that can improve student outcomes (from new or reallocated state funds, and federal or private sources) and use those funds to help institutions test and scale up promising practices and policies. They also will identify high-impact policy changes that are needed to remove barriers to institutional innovation and to encourage institutions to implement research-based interventions that promise better results.

This strategy requires significant engagement from state policymakers, leaders, and higher education stakeholders. It depends upon the transparency of comparable data across institutions; honest conversations among a state-level network of institutional innovators; access to design information on research-based practices and policies that have been tested in-state or elsewhere, and that promise to increase success among underprepared students; and creative revision of policy rules and incentives to minimize barriers and maximize support for institutional innovation and transformation. Critical to this strategy is the deepening of states' capacity to support the change process by strengthening state- and institution-level research; developing knowledge and effective management of effective practices and policies; supporting cross-institution, statewide learning networks; using established leadership and professional development opportunities to reinforce and

# DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION INITIATIVE STATE POLICY FRAMEWORK & STRATEGY

## POLICY FRAMEWORK

### Data and Performance Measurement

- > Intermediate benchmarks
- > Comparative effectiveness analysis
- > Statewide platform for sharing results for continuous improvement
- > Public reporting of developmental education results
- > Performance incentives

### Developmental Education Innovation/Redesign

- > Accelerated delivery strategies
- > Supplemental instruction
- > Learning communities
- > Student success course/orientation
- > Case management
- > Technology-based instruction
- > Learning assistance (academic advising, tutoring)

### Aligned Expectations (P-16)

- > Definition of college readiness
- > Aligned standards and expectations
- > Early assessment
- > Remediation prior to enrollment
- > Curricular alignment

### Assessment and Placement

- > Standardized assessment and placement policies
- > Diagnostics to differentiate need and intervention
- > Policies prescribing early elimination of academic deficiencies
- > Alternatives to developmental education for students near a certain cut score

### Finance

- > Funding equity with college-level courses
- > Weighted funding strategies
- > Financial aid for persistence
- > Financial aid eligibility

## POLICY STRATEGY

**A data-driven improvement process** that encourages innovation by making institutional performance more transparent through the regular collection, analysis, and dissemination of a consistent set of indicators:

- > Identify key intermediate and final success indicators disaggregated by subgroups, particularly students' levels of remedial need.
- > Establish baseline data for institutional and state-level success rates for students placed into developmental education.
- > Benchmark and publicly share institutional outcomes as part of a statewide process for continuous improvement.

**A state-level innovation investment strategy** that helps states align and coordinate financial support from multiple sources to provide incentives for the development, testing, and scaling up of effective models for helping underprepared students succeed:

- > Establish demonstration grants that provide resources and support for alternative delivery of developmental education.
- > Seek and secure funds from state and external sources to support an innovation agenda.
- > Fund research and dissemination of results that can guide and reshape institutional approaches to improving outcomes in developmental education.

**Policy supports** that provide overarching support for underprepared students and facilitate implementation and scale-up of promising models and practices:

- > Remove policy barriers, such as rigid census dates and seat-time requirements, that hinder innovation efforts.
- > Spur and grow effective institutional policies and practices.
- > Establish incentives and rewards through states' accountability systems for institutions that improve outcomes for students who test into developmental education.

## OUTCOME

**HELP STATES ACCELERATE THE CREATION AND SCALE OF NEW SOLUTIONS THAT DRAMATICALLY IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS WHO TEST INTO DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION.**

accelerate the improvement agenda; and managing toward explicit policy and student-outcome goals developed by state leadership teams.

Additional detail on each of the three components of the initiative's strategy is provided below.

### **DATA-DRIVEN IMPROVEMENT PROCESS: FROM ANECDOTE TO SYSTEMATIC USE OF EVIDENCE**

Quality data on what works for students who place into developmental education are limited. Many disseminated “best practices” are based on weak evidence. Much more strategic and targeted research is needed to identify strategies that can have a broad and powerful impact.

States will need to strengthen their longitudinal student data systems in ways that enable them to track outcomes and reveal which institutions are getting better results. This is an important first step in identifying promising models and pathways based on evidence of institutional performance and student progress. At the heart of this approach is a state-led data-driven improvement process that includes the right mix of success indicators, goals, incentives, and technical assistance and program implementation supports.

The identification of an economical set of indicators is a critical early step in creating a strong foundation for improving outcomes of students placing into developmental education. Agreement on basic final outcome indicators, including completion and transfer, is needed. Where possible, employment outcomes would also be helpful. Agreement on the needed disaggregation categories, including age, income, race/ethnicity, gender, and level of developmental education need, is also necessary for informed innovation efforts. Key intermediate indicators that can help identify interim strengths or areas for improvement might include:

- > Completion of a developmental education course sequence;
- > Enrollment and completion in first college-level math and English courses;
- > Pass rate in both remedial and college-level courses; and/or
- > Continuous year-to-year and term-to-term enrollment.

As part of the improvement process, states should use these indicators to assess current performance, establish a baseline, set performance goals, and monitor and report results. This process allows states to use powerful benchmarking strategies to help identify institutions that are getting positive results—with special attention to results among different subgroups—so that their practices can be studied, documented, and spread to other institutions where warranted.

Moving from anecdote to evidence in order to identify successful models and pathways requires an intentional and systemic process. States should embed this assessment and benchmarking process in a robust platform to support

**WITH SPECIAL ATTENTION TO RESULTS AMONG DIFFERENT SUBGROUPS ... THEIR PRACTICES CAN BE STUDIED, DOCUMENTED, AND SPREAD TO OTHER INSTITUTIONS WHERE WARRANTED**

innovation and the spread of best practices. A state-level innovation platform should include regularly scheduled meetings of institution-level innovators—both in-person and via technology—to share results and lessons learned from testing and implementing new models. This kind of systematic collaboration between state-level policymakers, campus leaders, and frontline instructional and support staff is a core element of a robust state-level policy strategy to improve outcomes in developmental education.

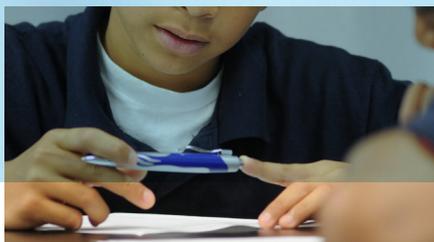
### **INNOVATION INVESTMENT STRATEGY: SUPPORTING AND EXTENDING INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS**

A second core element of a robust state policy strategy to improve outcomes in developmental education is an innovation investment strategy. By this, we mean a concerted state-led effort to identify and mobilize resources to test innovative approaches for improving persistence and completion of students who place into developmental education. The traditional course-based delivery of developmental education is ineffective for too many students who test into it. For students whose placement scores are near the cut score, this model unnecessarily delays their entry into college-level courses by requiring them to receive instruction for content areas that they have already mastered. Additionally, students with particularly low placement scores are provided with course-based interventions when they often require more accelerated instruction and comprehensive support services in order to reach college readiness.

However, community colleges continue to rely on existing approaches to placement, course sequence and structure, and instructional methods, largely because existing funding systems and policies drive them toward these approaches. States that want to improve student outcomes significantly need to create incentives for institutional efforts to develop and test new approaches that might require changes in traditional policies around the academic calendar, funding rules, and instructional delivery. Institutions need financial support and policy flexibility if they are to re-imagine and re-engineer the first-year experience for academically underprepared students. States can play a lead role in changing the policy environment in ways that support tested or promising program and course innovations.

Particularly promising innovation directions include those that shorten the time that students spend in developmental education. These include models that embed developmental education within college-level coursework where needed and models that blend developmental education with occupational training that leads to industry-recognized credentials. Examples of such innovative models include:

- **Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST)** in Washington State, which integrates English as a second language (ESL) and adult basic education (ABE) with professional-technical skills instruction to accelerate acquisition literacy and workforce skills to dramatic effect. A 2009 Community College Research Center evaluation found that when compared with a matched student population, students participating in I-BEST were 17 percent more likely to improve their scores on the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System test, 23 percent more likely to earn college credit, 17 percent more likely to persist into their second year, and 40 percent more likely to earn an occupational certificate. The Washington State Board for Community and Technical College is now adapting the I-BEST model to improve outcomes in developmental education.

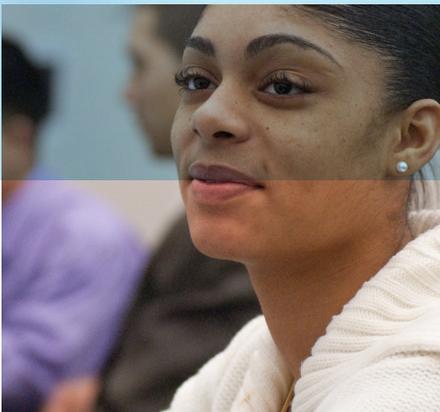


- > **FastStart** at the Community College of Denver, which allows developmental education students to take modules of two different courses in the same semester. FastStart is designed to address low retention and success rates among developmental education students. The FastStart model accelerates their progress through both a traditional class setting and a self-paced option with an open-entry/open-exit structure that is offered in a lab setting. A 2009 evaluation of performance in the intermediate-level, accelerated developmental math course (MAT060-090) found that over 70 percent of students passed successfully to a “college-ready” level compared to about 50 percent of the baseline group.
- > **El Paso Community College’s** comprehensive strategy to reduce the need for developmental education. Several different ambitious collaborations with local school districts and The University of Texas at El Paso have enabled EPCC to align standards and expectations; provide early assessment and retesting options; and expand dual enrollment options, including an early college high school model. EPCC reports a 24 percent decrease in the need for developmental reading and a 37 percent reduction in the need for developmental writing between spring 2006 and spring 2008.

State efforts to align and secure a combination of state, federal, private, and other funding sources for innovation can seed and test pilots and demonstrations of alternative methods for delivering developmental education, allowing institutions to test “big ideas” that evidence suggests might be effective in improving outcomes. States can structure rigorous selection processes through RFPs or other means that drive interested institutions to demonstrate interest, capacity, and readiness to design, implement, and test innovations. They also can fund research and dissemination of results that can reshape institutional and state priorities over time. In addition to setting the selection criteria to ensure that colleges have the commitment and capacity to implement effectively, state-led investment strategies can also target resources toward innovations that address critical economic, social, and demographic needs.

## **POLICY SUPPORTS: STATE POLICIES TO SUPPORT INNOVATION AND SYSTEMIC EFFORTS TO IMPROVE STUDENT OUTCOMES**

As institutions try to do things differently, they inevitably encounter policy barriers that hinder their efforts. Thus, the third core element of a robust developmental education improvement strategy is state-level policy support that removes barriers to improvement and addresses gaps in support of what works. For instance, institutions implementing strategies that are not tied to the traditional academic calendar (such as open-entry/open-exit delivery models) can run afoul of student census data deadlines. This can impact state data collection efforts, which in turn can complicate or derail institutional



funding allocations, tuition and fees, and student financial aid. For innovation to gain traction and move beyond boutique exceptions, state policy must provide flexibility for institutions to try new approaches that do not track to traditional academic timelines, delivery models, and funding structures.

Strong policy supports are needed to spur and grow institutional efforts that create new approaches to improving developmental education outcomes. State policy can play an important role in creating the conditions for robust, well-designed, and executed innovation by establishing:

- > Improved outcomes in developmental education as a public priority;
- > Statewide performance goals based on an economical set of developmental education success indicators that are transparent and visible in their accountability systems; and
- > Incentives and rewards for institutions that are effective in meeting developmental education improvement goals and incentives for student persistence, such as performance-based scholarships.

Innovation does not happen in isolation—states have an important role to play in supporting innovations that appear promising, reallocating resources away from innovations that do not, and disseminating lessons from institutional practice across colleges in a state so that states and institutions are working in unison to drive practice and policy toward greater student success over time. As we have seen in national initiatives focused on improving postsecondary student success (e.g., Achieving the Dream, Breaking Through, Bridges to Opportunity, and Shifting Gears) states can play a driving role in accelerating innovation by creating peer-learning platforms that connect institutional innovators to share outcome results, document and disseminate evidence-based best practices, and work to continuously improve outcomes.

**INNOVATION DOES NOT HAPPEN IN ISOLATION— STATES HAVE AN IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY IN SUPPORTING INNOVATIONS**



## JFF SERVICES TO PARTICIPATING STATES

JFF has developed a robust suite of technical assistance services to help state-level efforts improve outcomes for students who place into developmental education. JFF's services will help state community college system offices, departments of higher education, coordinating boards, and community college associations establish and advocate for policy conditions needed to improve outcomes and build capacity to support colleges that are testing and implementing more effective ways of serving underprepared students. Over the course of the initiative, these support services for state teams will include:

DATA-DRIVEN IMPROVEMENT	INVESTMENTS IN INNOVATION	POLICY SUPPORTS FOR BETTER OUTCOMES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Assistance in identifying key state-level developmental education success indicators, including intermediate success indicators, developmental education course sequences, gatekeeper courses, and others that indicate which students are on the path to completion.</li> <li>&gt; Assistance in data collection, benchmarking outcomes, evaluation and analysis, including identification of the highest performing institutions using methods to disaggregate outcomes for high-priority subgroups.</li> <li>&gt; Assistance with data studies and analyses of outcomes for special populations.</li> <li>&gt; Assistance in developing a state-level, data-driven improvement process for sharing results and disseminating evidence-based best practices, including templates and tools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Strategic guidance to states in the selection of high-potential demonstration models.</li> <li>&gt; Development of tools and resources to assist states in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses associated with different developmental education improvement strategies.</li> <li>&gt; Assistance in developing RFP, selection, implementation, and evaluation processes for state, federal, and privately funded developmental education redesigns and demonstrations.</li> <li>&gt; Assistance in the creation of a state-level <i>Innovation Dissemination Platform</i> featuring protocols, templates, and tools that help states systematically connect institutional innovators to each other in formal peer-learning networks that provide data support and documentation, codification, and dissemination of evidence-based practices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Assessment of enabling conditions for policy change to identify baseline and opportunities.</li> <li>&gt; Strategic advice and consulting on planning and implementing a state-level developmental education improvement strategy.</li> <li>&gt; Assistance in the development of value-added accountability measures and performance incentives.</li> <li>&gt; Model language for legislation and policy waivers to smooth the implementation of innovations.</li> <li>&gt; Analysis of feasibility for scaling effective designs, including cost effectiveness.</li> </ul>





## DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION INITIATIVE

Accelerating Achievement

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count is a national initiative to help more community college students succeed, particularly students of color and low-income students. The initiative works on multiple fronts—including efforts on campuses and in research, public engagement, and public policy—and emphasizes the use of data to drive change. Achieving the Dream was launched in 2004, with funding provided by Lumina Foundation for Education. Seven national partner organizations work with Lumina to guide the initiative and provide technical and other support to the colleges and states. For more information, please visit [www.achievingthedream.org](http://www.achievingthedream.org).



## JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

Jobs for the Future identifies, develops, and promotes new education and workforce strategies that help communities, states, and the nation compete in a global economy. In over 200 communities in 41 states, JFF improves the pathways leading from high school to college to family-sustaining careers. JFF coordinates the effort to improve policies in the states that are participating in Achieving the Dream.

**[WWW.JFF.ORG](http://WWW.JFF.ORG)**



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