REPLACING REMEDIATION WITH READINESS

David T. Conley
Professor, University of Oregon
Director, Center for Educational Policy Research
CEO, Educational Policy Improvement Center
Rethinking “Remedial”

- Current definition is deficit-driven and specified by a very few data points, sometimes only one data point.
- All students who fail to exceed the cut point are assumed to be unprepared to succeed in college.
- By extension, all students who are “non-remedial” are presumed to be college ready.
- Neither of these assumptions is strictly true.
- If the focus remains on reducing the remedial rate, the larger issue of being college ready will never be engaged.
- Instead, if each student is considered to be both ready and not ready for college to varying degrees, a rethinking of “remedial” becomes necessary.
**What Constitutes Readiness?**

- Studies of entry-level college courses contrast *eligible* with *ready*.
  - Eligibility is not designed to gauge readiness.
- College is much different from high school in significant ways that are not fully accounted for by state standards and assessments, HSGPA, and entrance exams.
- Readiness consists of four key dimensions, not simply content knowledge.
TRACKING READINESS FOR AN INDIVIDUAL STUDENT

This student is likely to have a GPA and test scores that make her or him eligible for college. However, the student may nevertheless struggle in entry-level courses.
THE PLACEMENT TEST PROBLEM

- Two basic types: commercial, home-grown
- May be subject to misclassification errors near the cut scores
- Not necessarily representative of the full skill set students need for success in most entry-level courses
  - E.g., specialized reading skills and strategies, data analysis and interpretation
- Overemphasized by policymakers as a measure of readiness
STUDENT READINESS PROFILES

- In place of remedial/not remedial
- Each student would have a profile
- Profiles would gauge readiness in all four dimensions
- Colleges would use profile data to provide necessary support services to incoming students
- Individual students would use profiles to identify services they needed
EXAMPLE DATA FOR PROFILE

- Content knowledge
  - Consortia assessments of Common Core
  - State end-of-course exams
  - Better placement tests
  - Better hs and college in-class measures

- Key cognitive strategies
  - Complex in-class tasks and assignments
  - Culminating projects with specified criteria
  - Diagnostic tasks as a placement component
**Example Data for Profile**

- **Academic behaviors**
  - Teacher reports
  - Student self-reports
  - Inferred from complex tasks, assignments

- **Contextual skills & awareness**
  - Knowledge tests, required website tutorials
  - Student self-reports
  - Inventories of support services accessed
IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

- Wider range of data in all four dimensions
- Ability to transmit data from secondary to postsecondary system
- Institutional commitment to use profile data as framework for support services
- Expectation or requirement for students to access support services
- Student willingness to use profile to enhance readiness
OTHER USES

- Comprehensive profiles offer much better data on readiness for policymakers
- Profiles promote better connections between high schools and colleges
- Postsecondary faculty can refer to class profiles when designing and adapting courses to meet student needs
- Profile can also set the baseline for the value-added of postsecondary programs
Download event materials and learn how to participate in the online follow-up discussion:

www.PostsecondaryResearch.org/conference/afterevent.html