



In 2013, the Florida Legislature passed Senate Bill (SB) 1720, which called for all developmental education offered in the state to be accelerated, using one or more of the following instructional strategies: 1) co-requisite, 2) modularization, 3) compression, or 4) contextualization. The law also mandated changes in advising and student supports, and established meta-majors, which are a collection of academic programs that have common or related content. In addition, recent graduates of Florida public high schools (entering 9th grade in 2003-04 or later and graduating with a standard diploma) and active-duty military members are now exempt from assessment and placement into developmental education. Exempt students may still elect to be assessed, but they have the option to decline any referrals to developmental education. Students who do not meet the exemption criteria are required to be assessed, and if determined to have need must be presented with options for developmental education instruction. Colleges' responses to the legislation have varied greatly, with many examples of innovation. The goal of this series is to document how colleges have responded to SB 1720 in order to highlight the decisions and processes colleges consider when implementing developmental education reform at scale.

Like many community colleges in Florida and across the country, the College of Central Florida had begun to experiment with new models of developmental education prior to the passage of Senate Bill 1720. In an interview with faculty, administrators, and staff, Central Florida representatives described their approach to SB 1720 in light of the changes that had already begun. Their areas of focus included adapting gateway English and math courses, and making significant changes to the college's advising structure.

## BEFORE SENATE BILL 1720

In the years before Senate Bill 1720 passed, the College of Central Florida dedicated energy and resources to improving success rates for underprepared students through its 2005-2006 Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). This work gained momentum when the college received a Title III grant to improve student success in 2008, and again in 2010, when it received support from the National Center for Academic Transformation and the Florida Developmental Education Initiative to redesign developmental education. As part of its overall strategy, the college centralized all developmental education programs and services under one department called Academic Foundations.

In 2010, the college set out to redesign developmental education so that students could get the remediation they need in one semester or less. The design change would impact a large number of students at the college; of the 1500 new students they see each year, 70 percent were testing into the lowest level of developmental math, and about half were placing into developmental English courses.

For their redesign, Central Florida adopted the Emporium Model, which allowed for more time on task, less lecture, and more time in a computer lab with each student working on specific areas of weakness. The two levels of developmental math were combined into one course and divided into nine modules that could be completed over the course of one semester. The college's two developmental courses in both English and reading were compressed and offered in eight-week terms, and instructors began using Pearson's MyWritingLab and MyReadingLab to diagnose skill levels and target deficiencies. Contact hours were reduced from four credit hours to three; the math modules reduced total math credit hours from six to three.

The leaders of the initiative chose to bring it to scale and implement it college-wide in fall 2011. "In hindsight it was foolish and smart," observed the dean of academic foundations. While it was very challenging,

### Quick Facts

**Location:** Ocala, FL

**Campuses:** 4

**Setting:** Suburban

**Total Enrollment:** 13,108

#### Student Demographics:

- Average age: 27
- Gender: 61% female, 36% male
- Race/ethnicity:
  - » African-American: 13.9%
  - » White: 58.8%
  - » Hispanic: 12.7%
  - » Asian or Pacific Islander: 2.2%
  - » Not reported: 12.4%

Source: Enrollment statistics: [www.cf.edu/community/aboutcf/facts](http://www.cf.edu/community/aboutcf/facts); 2015 interview

"if we hadn't decided to scale it all at once, we might never have done it." The redesign led to increased success rates for developmental education students, and according to one administrator, "uniquely positioned" the college to deal with SB 1720.

## RESPONSE TO SENATE BILL 1720

Central Florida staff stressed that they are supportive of the goals of Senate Bill 1720, but are concerned about the impact of the exemptions and elimination of any pre-enrollment assessment. One administrator said he couldn't understand how the legislature could assume everyone was college ready "just because they were declared to be." Nonetheless, they quickly

got to work with their statewide colleagues to develop strategies for implementation. Statewide groups organized through the Division of Florida Colleges provided forums to plan and share strategies. Within the college, cross-functional teams combining faculty and staff from student affairs and academic affairs were set up to prepare for implementation in fall of 2014.

## REDESIGNED COURSE OFFERINGS

### ENGLISH

In addition to the compressed English and reading developmental courses introduced in 2011, Central Florida created two integrated reading and writing courses as part of its redesign plan. A number of other changes focused on the college's gateway courses. Staff and faculty assumed that exempt students entering ENC 1101 would need remediation to succeed at college-level coursework. To address this need, they integrated the use of MyWritingLab, applying elements of the Emporium Model they had previously applied to developmental education. MyWritingLab includes an online diagnostic test to determine student skill levels, and builds an online remediation program of up to 15 modules. Most students who entered ENC 1101 in fall 2014 took all 15, and were required to complete them by week 12 of the 16-week course. Faculty members were trained in the individualized learning methods necessitated by the model through several trainings that occurred over a semester in early 2014.

Next the staff and faculty reviewed the content of ENC 1102, which had been designed as an introduction to literature course. After much of ENC 1101 was changed to focus on remediation, they decided to remove the literature components from ENC 1102 and rebuild it as a writing argument course. Some staff and faculty were not pleased with the shift away from literature. The majority, however, concluded that since their goal was "to build college students, not English majors" students would be better served by an intensive focus on writing argument. The redesigned course also included research skills content that had been part of ENC 1101.

While some instructors are still uneasy about the changes, in general, college representatives reported that the changes have come to be viewed as very positive. "It was good for us," said one administrator.

"It had been too many years since we had looked at those courses."

### MATHEMATICS

In addition to the three-credit modularized math course introduced in 2011, Central Florida introduced a two-credit compressed math course offered over five weeks and a one-credit, three-week modular course. As with the English department, the faculty and staff of the math department believed they needed to change the gateway math courses if they wanted to prevent spikes in failures or withdrawals. They decided to introduce an initial assignment using Pearson's MyMathLab that would ensure that students in the gateway math courses had basic math skills, such as converting percentages, fractions, and decimals. The original plan allowed students three attempts, and if they failed on the third attempt, they would have to see the instructor who would suggest that they consider enrolling in developmental math instead. The plan also gave students who were very close to passing the option of taking the last modules in the developmental math sequence followed immediately by intermediate algebra in the same semester. By so doing, they would be able to catch up to their classmates by the second semester.

## STUDENT ADVISING

Central Florida redesigned its advising and orientation programs to accommodate the additional time needed to advise a growing number of students who are exempt from assessment and placement into developmental education. Prior to Senate Bill 1720, much of the orientation and registration process was done with large groups, and individual advising was optional. Advising is now a mandatory part of the registration process. To manage the volume of new advisees and ensure that students understand their course options, the staff now begins registration for the fall semester—which includes a meeting with an advisor—on June 15. With no placement test to rely on, advisors review each student's transcript, course history, and grades prior to their meeting, which has increased from 15 minutes to 45 minutes for each session. Rather than one large orientation session, the college has added a mandatory online orientation for all new students as well as a series of mini-orientations that occur in July and August.

Beginning in fall 2015, as part of the college's 2016 QEP, all first time students will be advised through the entire first year. After a student completes orientation, the admissions advisor will direct him or her to a "first-year success specialist" who provides information and guidance around the college's "prescribed pathway" (for non-exempt students) and "elective pathway" (for exempt students). After students complete 24 credit hours, their first-year advisor will hand them off to an advisor in the department of the students' major to provide guidance specific to the meta-majors.

## PRELIMINARY RESULTS

As of JFF's interview in June 2015, Central Florida did not yet have any data to determine how the exempt students have done under the new system. One data point the college has looked at is the passing rate for students in MAT 1033 compared to students in other gateway courses. They noted that it is within 3 percent of success rates for other college-level courses, despite the impression that math faculty had that MAT 1033 students were doing poorly. They also noted a drop of 20 to 25 percent in developmental education enrollment rates, which they expect will continue to go down as more students qualify for the exemption.

A member of the institutional research department explained the challenges with data collection, noting that the required IT system changes have lagged behind implementation of the law. For example, not all students have yet been flagged as exempt or nonexempt, despite the state's requirement. He explained that determining exemption status is complicated and time-consuming, involving a review of a large number of variables in each student's records. In addition, they are still unable to generate reports to see how students are doing under the new policy, since students who opted in and those who opted out of developmental education have not been flagged. Lacking this important outcome data, the college will instead be comparing the completion rates in gateway courses prior to and following the passage of SB 1720.

The college also reported that during the first year of implementation, very few students who were close to passing the initial assessment in MAT 1033 chose the option of taking the last modules in the developmental math sequence in that semester because they were not aware of this option. In response, the college

is working to develop a more effective process of notification and advisement in those situations.

## LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

Central Florida staff observed that through the implementation process they have learned more about the professional development needs among staff. They noted that advisors are still adjusting to the degree of influence they now have on students' decisions. Said one, "They were very comfortable with prescriptive advising. 'Your score is x, so here's where you go.' It's been hard for the advisors because suddenly they have the power to influence students."

The staff of Central Florida pointed to several successes, including the statewide collaboration that occurred between all staff of academic and student affairs. They are pleased that as a group they got quickly to a place of accepting the dictates of the legislation and committing to building an effective implementation. They also believe that the changes in the gateway courses are good ones for students. The professional development has also enhanced the faculty's skills so they can manage new methods such as flipped classrooms and other technology-enhanced approaches. They pointed to the implementation of online tools as another success. While early in the implementation of the online coursework students complained that they "couldn't learn that way" and faculty was also skeptical, the systems are now widely accepted by students and faculty alike.

These challenges and successes have informed the college's next steps going forward. To help advisors with the changes Senate Bill 1720 has brought, they plan to identify technological tools that can be used to manage their caseloads, and to offer more training. They are also looking at introducing career exploration tools to help students choose a pathway of study early. In addition, Central Florida plans to add two new advisors and refine the process for advising students who are not doing well during the initial math assignment.

Based on concerns that students will avoid taking gateway math and English courses until later in their course of study, the college is moving toward a policy that would require that math and English be taken in

the first two semesters. In addition, they continue to redesign developmental education, with plans to build out a co-requisite model to enable students to pursue college-level courses while enrolled in developmental education. They are also discussing making changes to developmental math courses so that they are not all algebra-based. While there is not agreement among the staff about making that change, they have reduced the algebra requirements in gateway courses. Prior to SB 1720's passage, they decided that MAT 1033,

which focuses on intermediate algebra, is no longer a prerequisite for statistics and liberal arts math.

Finally, Central Florida staff continues to express satisfaction with the changes made to developmental education courses. Anecdotally, they have seen that for students who are not exempt, or for those who opt to take them, the redesigned courses have resulted in students passing more quickly. They eagerly await the results of the changes, when the official data are available in the fall.

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