



As a companion to its publication *New Rules: Policies to Strengthen and Scale the Game Changers*, Complete College America (CCA) offers the following detailed policy language as an educational resource for state and institutional policymakers in its Alliance.

The language has been provided electronically so that it may be modified as needed to meet a state, agency or institution’s formatting conventions for formal policies. As a nonpartisan, nonpolitical 501(c)(3) organization, CCA can offer technical assistance on higher education policies and information on policy outcomes and their empirical success. CCA takes no position in favor of or in opposition to any particular piece of legislation concerning higher education.

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15 to Finish

Framing Statements

WHEREAS, significant percentages of students take longer than two years to earn an associate degree and four years to earn a baccalaureate degree.

WHEREAS, an additional year of college costs roughly \$150,000 in additional tuition as well as foregone income and retirement savings.¹

WHEREAS, the minimum credits required for full-time status is less than the number required for on-time graduation.

WHEREAS, many full-time students are unaware that they will not graduate on time if they do not complete 15 credits each semester or take courses in the summer.

WHEREAS, the state and its postsecondary institutions routinely advise students about how many courses they should take and how many courses they need to qualify for financial aid.

WHEREAS, the state and its postsecondary institutions have an obligation to help student minimize their long-term costs and graduate faster whenever possible.

WHEREAS, postsecondary institutions can create an on-time incentive structure using banded tuition and offering non-monetary benefits for students completing at the on-time pace.

Definitions

On-time progress: completion of 30 academic credits within a period of 12 months.

Banded tuition: A tuition structure in which full-time students are charged the same dollar amount for 12 to 18 credits per semester.

Action Steps: State Policy*15 to Finish Campaign*

- The state higher education coordinating agency shall coordinate an informational campaign to notify postsecondary students that to graduate with an associate degree in two years or a baccalaureate degree in four years they must complete a minimum of 30 credits per year.

¹ <https://www.nerdwallet.com/blog/loans/student-loans/victory-lap/>

- Public postsecondary institutions shall make the campaign information available to students and academic advisors.
- Public postsecondary institutions shall report to the state higher education coordinating agency the percentage of students enrolling in and completing 30 credits each academic year.

Financial Aid Standard

- A recipient may renew state financial aid only if the student successfully completes at least thirty credit hours or the equivalent during the last academic year in which the student received state financial aid or at least thirty credit hours or the equivalent during the last academic year in which the student was enrolled in postsecondary education.
- If a student does not meet these conditions for renewal, the agency that administers financial aid may allow credits earned during high school through dual credit, advanced placement and international baccalaureate courses to supplement the credits earned during the previous year in determining eligibility for renewal.
- The agency that administers financial aid shall annually notify all recipients of the credit requirements for renewal.
- The agency that administers financial aid shall establish a process for a student to appeal for renewed eligibility if the student failed to meet the renewal criteria due to extenuating circumstances.

Credit Caps

- Public postsecondary institutions shall restrict the number of credit hours required for graduation to 60 in the case of associate degree programs or 120 in the case of a baccalaureate degree programs.
- As an exception to that requirement, a public postsecondary institution may require additional credit hours under the following circumstances:
 - Program accreditation requires additional credit hours
 - The program is built to confer more than one degree upon graduation
 - The state higher education coordinating agency has approved additional credits for any other reason

Action Steps: Institutional Policy

- The postsecondary institution shall implement banded tuition. Part-time students shall continue to be charged tuition based on the number of credit hours taken.
- Students who are charged banded tuition but take fewer than 30 credits in the traditional academic year are entitled to receive free summer tuition for the difference between the number of credits they took and 30.
- Academic advisors shall advise full-time students that they are expected to enroll in at least 15 credit hours per semester unless they plan to take courses in summer.

- Financial aid packages shall be created based on a standard of 15 credit hours per semester.
- The provost shall monitor course capacity to ensure that students who want to take 15 credits have sufficient courses in which to enroll.
- The postsecondary institution shall grant the following to students who are making on-time progress:
 - Priority registration period that occurs before other students are allowed to register
 - Housing selection period that occurs before other students are allowed to select their housing arrangements
 - Parking pass that allows the student to park in locations not available to other students that are closer to campus buildings

Corequisite Support

Framing Statements

WHEREAS, more than half of community college students are assessed as not being ready for gateway mathematics and English courses upon enrollment in a postsecondary institution.

WHEREAS, low-income and minority students are even more likely to be assessed as not college-ready.

WHEREAS, students who are assessed as not college-ready have historically been required to enroll in a series of remedial courses that cost them money, do not count toward their degree requirements and extend the time needed to graduate.

WHEREAS, many students successfully complete remedial courses but fail to enroll in and complete both their remedial and gateway courses, indicating a system design flaw which causes student attrition.

WHEREAS, institutions that deliver academic support while student are enrolled in college-level gateway courses as a corequisite rather than a prerequisite eliminate this point of attrition.

WHEREAS, nationally only 22 percent of remedial students complete the gateway course, but students who instead receive corequisite support do so at a rate of 60 percent or more.

WHEREAS, the state educational attainment goal can only be reached if the state eliminates student attrition caused by prerequisite remediation and reduces the time and cost required to earn a degree or credential.

Definitions

Gateway course: the first postsecondary mathematics or English course that a student takes that fulfills the mathematics or English degree requirement for the student's program of study.

Remediation: coursework or other activities that are: (1) designed for students who are assessed to be in need of additional support to succeed in college-level gateway courses in mathematics or English and (2) required to be completed before a student may enroll in the gateway course for that subject.

Corequisite support: coursework or other activities that are: (1) designed for students who are assessed to be in need of additional support to succeed in college-level gateway courses in mathematics or English and (2) administered in the same academic term in which the student is enrolled in the gateway course for that subject.

Action Steps: State Policy

- Public postsecondary institution shall replace 100 percent of remediation with corequisite support by 20XX.
- Postsecondary public institutions shall ensure sufficient course offerings to allow 100 percent of students to complete their gateway course in mathematics and English within the first year of enrollment.
- If a gateway course in mathematics or English is not made available to a student, the postsecondary institution shall issue a credit on the student's account in an amount equal to the cost of the gateway course.
- If needed, the State may consider appropriating funds to support transition costs associated with implementing corequisite support by the target date established by policy.

Action Steps: Institutional Policy

- Faculty shall provide corequisite support instead of remediation for students for all gateway mathematics and English courses the institution offers.
- Beginning with academic year 20XX, no student shall be required to enroll in remediation.
- Faculty shall ensure sufficient course capacity to allow all students to enroll in gateway mathematics and English courses during the students' first year of enrollment.
- Advisors shall advise students to enroll in gateway mathematics and English courses during the students' first year of enrollment, regardless of whether or not the student has been assessed to be college-ready upon entry.

Math Pathways

Framing Statements

WHEREAS, international comparisons place the United States 27th in mathematical competency with a particular weakness in modeling and interpreting real-world mathematical scenarios.²

WHEREAS, mathematicians across the country have long held that college algebra is designed to prepare students for calculus, not to cultivate general quantitative literacy.

WHEREAS, data from states show that college algebra has significantly lower success rates than other gateway math courses, including calculus.

WHEREAS, 60 percent of students who take college algebra never go on to take a calculus course.

WHEREAS, students who take only one math course in college should take a rigorous course that prepares them to navigate an increasingly data-driven world.

Definitions

Gateway math course: the first postsecondary mathematics or English course that a student takes that fulfills the mathematics or English degree requirement for the student's program of study.

Math faculty group: a group of mathematics faculty members that consists of one faculty member for each public postsecondary institution, selected by the president or provost of the institution.

Action Steps: State Policy

- The state higher education coordinating agency shall publicly report:
 - the number of students enrolling in each gateway math course
 - the percentage of students in each gateway math course who complete the course with a grade of C or better
 - the percentage of students in each gateway math course who change their academic program after having enrolled in the gateway math course
 - the percentage of students in each gateway math course who graduate after having enrolled in and completed the gateway math course

² <https://www.oecd.org/unitedstates/PISA-2012-results-US.pdf>

- Each public postsecondary institution shall submit to the state higher education coordinating agency any data that the agency deems necessary to publicly report on the current student performance related to the gateway math course success, implementation and effectiveness of current efforts.
- The state higher education coordinating agency shall convene the math faculty group to examine the information reported by the state higher education coordinating agency and develop recommendations for a statewide approach to postsecondary mathematics.
- The math faculty group shall develop an agreed-upon set of learning outcomes for each math pathway.
- The state higher education coordinating agency shall publish the recommendations of the math faculty group and deliver a copy to the president of each public postsecondary institution.
- The state higher education coordinating agency shall establish a plan to ensure transferability of gateway math courses after public postsecondary institutions implement the recommendations of the math faculty group.

Action Steps: Institutional Policy

- Faculty shall develop a quantitative reasoning course and a technical math course using the learning outcomes agreed upon by the math faculty group and apply courses to program requirements in non-STEM disciplines consistent with the newly established math pathways.
- The mathematics department shall ensure that there is a pathway into STEM disciplines for students who enter college without having had access to pre-calculus or calculus coursework in high school.
- The assessment of college readiness for incoming students shall be examined and revised as needed to ensure alignment to the new math pathways.

Structured Schedules

Framing Statements

WHEREAS, 74 percent of the nation's student population is non-traditional—older, working full-time or with dependents of their own³.

WHEREAS, non-traditional students who balance their academics with work and family obligations face logistical challenges and added costs compared to younger students living on campus.

WHEREAS, if schedules change term to term and students cannot rearrange work, childcare and transportation to accommodate the new schedule, these students will face disruptions in attendance that make them less likely to graduate.

Definitions

Structured Schedule: a postsecondary schedule of classes that meets the following conditions:

- **Predictable:** The times and days of the week the student must be on campus for each academic term of the program are presented to the student upon enrollment
- **Consistent:** The times and days of the week the student must be on campus are the same each academic term from initial enrollment to graduation
- **Consolidated:** The time in between classes held on the same day is minimized

Non-traditional student: a student who meets any of the following criteria:

- The student is over the age of 23
- The student has dependents
- The student has served in the armed forces
- The student does not reside in campus housing
- The student works full-time

High enrollment program: an academic program offered by a postsecondary institution in which 10 percent or more of the total student population is enrolled.

Action Steps: State Policy

- Not later than the academic year beginning in 20XX, public postsecondary institutions with a student population that is at least 50 percent non-traditional students shall create and offer structured schedules for each of its high enrollment programs.

³ <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2015/2015025.pdf>

- The structured schedules offered to full-time students shall include 30 academic credits per year and lead to graduation within two years for an associate degree or four years for a baccalaureate degree.
- If a high enrollment program has a student population of at least 50 percent part-time students, the public postsecondary institution shall develop structured schedules that lead to graduation within:
 - Three years for an associate degree or five years for a baccalaureate degree if the schedule does not utilize year-round enrollment
 - Two years for an associate degree or four years for a baccalaureate degree if the schedule utilizes year-round enrollment

Action Steps: Institutional Policy

- Faculty shall create on-time and extended-time (150%) structured schedules for all academic programs serving non-traditional students.
- The Provost shall ensure that general education course offerings are sufficient to support structured schedules developed by other departments.
- The institution shall enroll students into structured schedules as a default.
- Academic advisors shall inform students enrolled in structured schedules that their schedule will not change from enrollment through graduation.
- Students who indicate that they cannot enroll in the program because of the structured schedule shall instead meet with an academic advisor each term before enrolling in courses to devise a customized academic plan.

GPS

Framing Statements

WHEREAS, significant percentages of students take longer than two years to earn an associate degree and four years to earn a baccalaureate degree.

WHEREAS, an additional year of college costs roughly \$150,000 in additional tuition and foregone income and retirement savings.⁴

Default Degree Maps

WHEREAS, students who are provided with a customized degree map upon enrollment are less likely to take classes that do not count for graduation and more likely to graduate on time.

WHEREAS, students are more likely to register for the courses listed on their degree map if they are prompted to do so as the default in the registration process.

Informed Choice

WHEREAS, it is crucial that college students plan their postsecondary course of study around career aspirations, life goals, aptitude and interests.

WHEREAS, about 80 percent of U.S. college students change majors at least once.⁵

WHEREAS, students who change majors later in their academic career are more likely to need additional semesters to graduate and less likely to graduate at all.⁶

WHEREAS, faculty have the opportunity to embed career exploration as a structured, pre-enrollment experience for all students to help them find the right major earlier, saving time and money and increasing the likelihood students will graduate.

Intrusive Advising

WHEREAS, degree maps, default registration and embedded career exploration allow academic advisors to focus their efforts on students who are most in need of support, strengthening the crucial function of advising and improving student outcomes.

⁴ <https://www.nerdwallet.com/blog/loans/student-loans/victory-lap/>

⁵ National Center for Education Statistics

⁶ Education Advisory Board

Definitions

Degree map: a plan for graduation that explicitly states the courses a student will take in each academic term to ensure graduation in the student's chosen field of study within a given timeframe.

Critical path course: a course that is required for graduation and cannot be exchanged for another course.

On-time graduation: completion of an associate degree in two years or a baccalaureate degree in four years.

Excess credits: postsecondary academic credits in which a student enrolls that are in excess of 75 in the case of associate degree programs or 135 in the case of a baccalaureate degree programs.

Postsecondary career outcomes report: a published report that details the following information for each academic program of study offered by a particular campus:

- Median salary of graduates within one (1) year
- Median salary of graduates within five (5) years
- Median salary of graduates within ten (10) years
- Median salary of students who enrolled in the program but did not complete a degree or credential
- Top five career fields in which graduates are employed
- Other information determined to be important for students to understand their career pathways

Action Steps: State Policy

Degree maps and guaranteed critical path courses

- A public postsecondary institution shall create a degree map for each resident and nonresident student upon enrollment.
- A student's degree map shall be customized to incorporate:
 - postsecondary credit the student earned before enrolling in the postsecondary institution
 - courses the student must complete as a pre-requisite to one or more critical path courses
- For full-time students, the degree map shall be built to ensure on-time graduation.

- For part-time students, the degree map shall be built to ensure graduation within:
 - Three years for an associate degree or five years for a baccalaureate degree if the degree map does not utilize year-round enrollment
 - Two years for an associate degree or four years for a baccalaureate degree if the degree map utilizes year-round enrollment.
- The public postsecondary institution shall ensure that its course registration process either:
 - prevents students from registering for courses not prescribed by their degree maps unless a student has written consent from an academic advisor, or
 - provides each student with the student's degree map each term as a part of the registration process, if the postsecondary institution is unable to secure technology to support the process described in the preceding bullet.
- The public postsecondary institution shall ensure that critical path courses necessary for a student to comply with the student's degree map are available for the student during the academic term prescribed by the degree map.
- If a critical path course prescribed by the degree map is not made available to a student, the public postsecondary institution shall issue a credit on the student's account in an amount equal to the cost of the unavailable critical path course.
- The public postsecondary institution shall monitor and annually report to the state higher education coordinating agency the following:
 - the percentage of students who enrolled in each of the courses prescribed by their degree maps in the academic term prescribed by their degree maps
 - the percentage of students who completed each of the courses prescribed by their degree maps in the academic term prescribed by their degree maps
 - the percentage of students who did not enroll in one or more of the courses prescribed by their degree maps because the course was not made available to them

Excess credit tuition discount

- A student is entitled to a discount of 25 percent on tuition and fees charged for excess credits if the following conditions are met:
 - The excess credits are necessary for graduation
 - The excess credits are not taken for the sole purpose of:
 - completing a double-major
 - completing a minor
 - completing an associate degree that requires more than 60 credits for graduation or a baccalaureate degree that requires more than 120 credits for graduation based on accreditation standards
 - earning an additional degree or credential
 - completing a course that the student previously failed

- The student has earned at least 75 percent of the student's postsecondary academic credit from the public postsecondary institution the student currently attends
- The student has not changed the student's chosen field of study after the first academic year in which the student was enrolled

Postsecondary Career Outcomes Report

- The state higher education coordinating agency, in consultation with the agency that maintains postsecondary data (if not the same), the agency that maintains workforce data and the agency that maintains tax revenue data, shall annually publish a postsecondary career outcomes report.
- The agency that maintains postsecondary data, the agency that maintains workforce data and the agency that maintains tax revenue data shall submit the information to the state higher education coordinating agency that is required to publish the postsecondary career outcomes report.
- The state higher education coordinating agency shall not report any information that is in violation of state and federal privacy laws.

Action Steps: Institutional Policy

- All students at the postsecondary institution shall have as part of their first semester or pre-enrollment requirements a process, course, or seminar designed for students to explore the various disciplines within their general interest area and learn about career options for those disciplines.
- Students shall declare either a major or an interest area upon admission. Students shall be required to declare a major or a different interest area upon completion of the interest area exploration course.
- The postsecondary institution shall establish a registration process that prompts students to register for the courses listed on their degree map for a given academic term as the default.
- Students shall not be permitted to register for courses that are not listed on their degree map without written permission from an academic advisor.
- The postsecondary institution shall notify a student's academic advisor if the student meets any of the following criteria:
[insert conditions for intrusive advising set by the institution]
- Academic advisors shall contact students who meet these criteria and develop a plan with the student to keep the student enrolled and progressing toward a degree or credential.