



As a companion to its publication *New Rules: Policies to Meet Attainment Goals and Close Equity Gaps*, Complete College America (CCA) offers the following detailed policy language as an educational resource for state and institutional policymakers in its Alliance.

Policymakers looking to scale reform in their states can use this as a starting point for drafting formal policies that support college completion and equity.

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.

WHEREAS, helping many more students graduate on time makes more efficient use of public resources and improves the return on investment in higher education for students and taxpayers alike.

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.

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

Action Steps: State Policy

- 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.
- The state higher education coordinating agency shall convene academic advisors from postsecondary institutions for training on the campaign.
- Postsecondary institutions shall make the campaign information available to all students in prominent locations and events.
- Each year, postsecondary institutions shall report to the state higher education coordinating agency the percentage of students enrolling in and completing 30 credits per academic year.
- 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

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 and STEM careers, 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 course that a student takes that fulfills the mathematics 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 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 produce the report referenced in the previous bullet.
- The state higher education coordinating agency shall convene a 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 postsecondary institution.
- The state higher education coordinating agency shall establish a plan to ensure transferability of gateway math courses after postsecondary institutions implement the recommendations of the math faculty group.

Action Steps: Institutional Policy

- Faculty shall develop a quantitative reasoning course, a statistics 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 offer sufficient sections of each gateway math course so that students can enroll in the mathematics course aligned to their program.
- 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.

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, the assessments used to evaluate college readiness have been proven to be less effective than high school performance measures in predicting college readiness.

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.

Multiple Measures Placement: Utilization of one or more of the following in the placement of students into English and mathematics courses: (1) high school coursework, (2) high school grades, (3) high school grade point average.

Action Steps: State Policy

- Postsecondary institution shall replace 100% of remediation with corequisite support by 20XX.
- A postsecondary institution shall maximize the probability that a student will enter and complete gateway courses in English and mathematics by using multiple measures placement.
- Multiple measures placement shall apply in the placement of all students in such a manner so that either of the following may occur:
 - Low performance on one measure may be offset by high performance on another measure.
 - The student can demonstrate preparedness and thus bypass remediation based on any one measure.
 - When high school transcript data is difficult to obtain, logistically problematic to use, or not available, a postsecondary institution may use self-reported high school information or guided placement, including self-placement for students.
- A postsecondary institution shall not require students to enroll in remedial English or mathematics coursework that lengthens their time to complete a degree unless placement research that includes consideration of high school grade point average and coursework shows that those students are highly unlikely to succeed in gateway courses in English and mathematics.

Action Steps: Institutional Policy

- Faculty shall provide corequisite support instead of remediation for 100% of students by 20XX.
- The institution's placement policy shall include use of multiple measures placement.
- No student shall be required to take remediation once corequisite support is available to all students.

Momentum Year

Framing Statements

WHEREAS, a student's first year in college substantially influences whether or not the student will graduate;

WHEREAS, students who complete 15 credits in the first semester are 6.4 percentage points more likely to graduate;

WHEREAS, students who complete gateway math and English during their first year are 16 to 24 percentage points more likely to graduate;

WHEREAS, students who complete at least nine credits in their major or academic interest area during their first year are 20 to 40 percentage points more likely to graduate;

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of state and university leaders to facilitate student momentum to graduation by building a structured first-year course schedule proven to improve outcomes.

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.

Academic Interest Areas: six to eight categories of the available majors at a postsecondary institution that are grouped by similarity of content and career path.

Momentum Year Activities: completion of the following during a student's first 12 months of enrollment in a postsecondary institution: (1) gateway mathematics and English courses, (2) nine credits in the student's major or academic interest area, and (3) a total of 30 credits.

Action Steps: State Policy

- 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.
- The state higher education coordinating agency shall convene academic leaders from each of the public postsecondary institutions to develop a list of suggested academic interest areas that institutions may use to execute a Momentum Year strategy.

- The agency that administers financial aid shall notify all FAFSA filers of the following:
(1) Momentum Year Activities dramatically improve their likelihood of graduating, and
(2) the percentage of students at each postsecondary institution that completes each of the Momentum Year Activities. This report shall also be distributed to high school guidance counselors.
- A financial aid 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.

Action Steps: Institutional Policy

- As a matter of academic policy, students shall complete Momentum Year Activities in their first academic year.
- Students shall declare either a major or an interest area upon admission.
- 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 that the institution's policy is that they must complete Momentum Year Activities in the first year and assist students in selecting courses that are aligned with this policy.
- Financial aid packages shall include information about the renewal requirement of completing 30 credits per year.

Academic Maps & Proactive Advising

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.³

WHEREAS, students who are provided with a customized academic 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 academic map if they are prompted to do so as the default in the registration process.

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.⁴

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.⁵

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

WHEREAS, academic 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.

Definitions

Academic 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.

³ <https://www.nerdwallet.com/blog/loans/student-loans/victory-lap/>

⁴ National Center for Education Statistics

⁵ Education Advisory Board

Transfer Program: a programmatic area in which significant numbers of students first obtain an associate degree and transfer to a baccalaureate program.

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

Transfer Core: a 30-credit block of courses that satisfy the general education learning outcomes required for completion of an associate or baccalaureate degree.

Transfer Pathway: a 60-credit associate degree that will articulate, without alteration, to a related baccalaureate program and be applied toward the student's baccalaureate requirements such that student begins baccalaureate work in junior standing.

Conflicting Time Block: a scenario in which a critical path course prescribed by a student's academic map is offered in only one time block and another critical path course is also only offered in the same time block, making it impossible for a student to enroll in both.

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 career pathways associated with programs of study.

Action Steps: State Policy

- Postsecondary institutions shall create an academic map for each resident and nonresident student upon enrollment.
- A student's academic 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 academic map shall be built to ensure on-time graduation.
- For part-time students, the academic map shall be built to ensure graduation within:
 - Three years for an associate degree or five years for a baccalaureate degree if the academic map does not utilize year-round enrollment
 - Two years for an associate degree or four years for a baccalaureate degree if the academic map utilizes year-round enrollment.

- Each postsecondary institution shall ensure that its course registration process either:
 - prevents students from registering for courses not prescribed by their academic maps unless a student has written consent from an academic advisor, or
 - provides each student with the student's academic 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.
- Each postsecondary institution shall ensure that critical path courses necessary for a student to comply with the student's academic map are available to the student during the academic term prescribed by the academic map.
- A course is not considered to be available to a student if the course is (1) filled before the student is able to enroll, or (2) part of a conflicting time block.
- If a critical path course prescribed by the academic map is not made available to a student in the academic term prescribed by the academic map, 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 academic maps in the academic term prescribed by their academic maps
 - the percentage of students who completed each of the courses prescribed by their academic maps in the academic term prescribed by their academic maps
 - the percentage of students who did not enroll in one or more of the courses prescribed by their academic maps because the course was not made available to them
- The state higher education coordinating agency, in collaboration with public postsecondary institutions, shall, not later than 20XX, work together to create a transfer core for all students and transfer pathways for each transfer program.
- The state higher education coordinating agency, in collaboration with postsecondary institutions, shall determine the transfer programs in which to develop transfer pathways.
- 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.
- The postsecondary institution shall establish a registration process that prompts students to register for the courses listed on their academic map for a given academic term as the default.
- Students shall not be permitted to register for courses that are not listed on their academic 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.

A Better Deal for Returning Adults

Framing Statements

WHEREAS, 74 percent of the nation's student population is non-traditional—older, working full-time or with dependents of their own⁶.

WHEREAS, the attainment goals set by state and national leaders cannot be met unless significantly more adults and other non-traditional students return to higher education and complete a degree or credential.

WHEREAS, these students have long been asked to choose between making life-altering sacrifices to attend full-time or attending part-time with a much lower chance of graduating and greater long-term costs.

WHEREAS, higher education structures, from class scheduling to advising, were designed to meet the needs of traditional-aged students and have seldom been updated to reflect the needs and demographics of the current student population.

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.

WHEREAS, adult students enter college with college-level, credit-worthy knowledge, but often no clear process for demonstrating and transcribing it.

WHEREAS, coaching models have proven to improve results for adult students by helping them re-enroll, navigate institutional policies and processes, and prepare for their next career steps.

WHEREAS, employers and community partners benefit greatly from the strengthened workforce that results from improved educational attainment and have a level of influence with the adult population unmatched by state government or postsecondary institutions;

WHEREAS, potential adult students cannot simply be invited back to a system not designed for them, but must instead be offered a better deal altogether if we are to meet our postsecondary attainment goals.

⁶ <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2015/2015025.pdf>

Definitions

Non-traditional student: a student who meets any of the following criteria: (1) The student is over the age of 23, (2) the student has dependents, (3) the student has served in the armed forces, (4) the student does not reside in campus housing, (5) the student works full-time.

Redesigned Schedule: a course schedule designed for non-traditional students that includes (1) shorter academic terms, (2) year-round enrollment including summer terms, (3) consistent times and days on campus from the enrollment to graduation, and (4) thirty credits per academic year.

Credit for Competency: postsecondary academic credit awarded for college-level, credit-worthy knowledge a student has upon enrollment, which is granted using any combination of the following methods: (1) examination, (2) evaluation of a portfolio of work, (3) conversion of a previously-earned workforce certification to academic credit, (4) other methods developed by the faculty of the postsecondary institution.

Academic Coach: an individual who is responsible for assisting a specific set of students with (1) reenrolling in a postsecondary institution, (2) complying with the policies and procedures of the postsecondary institution, (3) planning for and securing employment after graduation, and (4) dealing with unforeseen circumstances that arise during an academic term that make it more difficult for the student to complete coursework.

Better Deal Institution: a postsecondary institution that has established programming for non-traditional students that includes: (1) a redesigned schedule, (2) a standard process through which every student has the opportunity to earn credit for competency, and (3) an assigned academic coach for each student. The postsecondary institution must have a plan in place to scale up the programming to meet demand to be designated a Better Deal Institution.

Potential Returner: an individual who (1) is a resident of [state name], (2) earned course credit from a postsecondary institution before 20XX, (3) has not earned a certificate, associate degree or baccalaureate degree as of 20XX, and (4) has not been enrolled in any postsecondary institution since 20XX.

Reengagement Campaign: a project administered by the state higher education coordinating agency to send targeted outreach to potential returners encouraging them to complete an associate or baccalaureate degree or a technical certificate by 20XX.

Action Steps: State Policy

- Not later than 20XX, the state higher education coordinating agency shall initiate a reengagement campaign.
- The state higher education coordinating agency shall identify Better Deal Institutions and prominently promote them through the reengagement campaign.

- The state higher education coordinating agency may promote Better Deal Institutions that are located in a different state if students within the state can access their programs remotely.
- Postsecondary institutions shall provide student record data to the state higher education coordinating agency for use in the reengagement campaign.
- The state higher education coordinating agency may not release confidential student record information to any individual or entity that is not permitted access to the record information under the federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g et seq.).
- The state higher education coordinating agency, in consultation with the postsecondary institutions shall annually report to the legislature the number of state residents who: (1) received targeted outreach through the reengagement campaign; (2) reenrolled in a postsecondary institution; (3) earned an associate or baccalaureate degree or a technical certificate from the postsecondary educational institution.

Action Steps: Institutional Policy

- Faculty shall create redesigned schedules that are built around the availability of non-traditional students, as revealed using student surveys, course enrollment patterns, or other analytical approaches.
- The Provost shall ensure that general education course offerings are sufficient to support redesigned schedules developed by other departments.
- The institution shall enroll non-traditional students into the redesigned schedule as a default and inform students that their schedule will not change from enrollment to graduation.
- Non-traditional students who indicate that they cannot enroll in the program because of the redesigned schedule shall instead meet with an academic advisor each term before enrolling in courses to devise a customized academic plan.
- The institution shall assign an academic coach to each student enrolled in the redesigned schedule.
- The faculty shall adopt a clear policy on credit for competency that includes the methods for earning credit, the courses these credits replace, and the cost to students.
- The faculty shall develop and administer a process to ensure each student enrolled in the redesigned schedule is educated about the avenues to earn credit for competency and the process the student must follow to be awarded credit within each avenue. Faculty shall include time for students to complete these processes as part of the academic program.
- If a student has not been enrolled for at least two years, courses the student previously failed shall be excluded from the calculation of the student's Grade Point Average for the purpose of admissions and graduation. However, the failed courses may not be counted toward graduation requirements or total credits earned.