



Florida Developmental Education Reform

How Colleges are Paving the Pathways
to Student Success

FLORIDA
COLLEGE ACCESS NETWORK

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Introduction

In 2013, the Florida Legislature passed Senate Bill (SB) 1780, which dramatically changed how Florida's state colleges support students who need extra academic help to succeed in college-level courses.¹ Before the law, all incoming students were required to take assessment tests to gauge whether they were academically ready for college-level courses.

Students who fell short were required to take developmental courses, which did not earn them college credit. This meant that some students had to take one or more semesters of developmental classes before ever earning college credit.

Under Florida SB 1720, certain students no longer have to take the tests or the developmental courses, and can enroll directly into classes that earn them college credit. Beginning with the fall semester of 2014, the legislature tasked Florida's public state colleges to redesign developmental education course delivery. Where the traditional delivery model resulted in students taking multiple semesters of non-credit bearing courses, institutions now had to use one of four instructional strategies to shorten the time to student success:

- **Co-requisite** developmental instruction or tutoring which supplements credit instruction while a student is concurrently enrolled in a credit-bearing course. For example, a student would be enrolled in a credit-bearing course and take a related lab/course to supplement their learning.
- **Compressed** developmental instruction accelerates student progression from developmental instruction to college-level coursework by reducing the length of the course. Course delivery is more intense and courses are offered in a variety of shortened timeframes to allow students to progress quickly. For example, a course that was originally scheduled to meet once a week for 16 weeks could meet twice a week for 8 weeks.
- **Modularized** developmental instruction is customized and targeted to address specific skills gaps through courses that are technology-based and self-paced. Course material is divided into sub-unit parts and allows students to master targeted skill area deficiencies. For example, one three-credit course could be converted into three one-credit courses, each targeting a different set of concepts to master.
- **Contextualized** developmental instruction is content related to a student's program of study or meta-majors. For example, if a student were studying business or education, their writing prompts and or math would be related to those areas.²

Institutions also were required to offer enhanced advising to newly-enrolled students to help them navigate their coursework and decide whether to opt in to developmental education classes. To guide students on academic pathways that helped them successfully complete a credential without the time and expense of unnecessary courses, institutions were also required to implement “meta-majors.” “Meta-majors” are groupings of degree programs meant to help students select core courses that align with their academic and career goals.

How Colleges are Paving Pathways to Student Success

To bridge the preparedness gap, Florida colleges have stepped up, providing students with extra academic supports to help them succeed in credit-earning courses. These supports are essential to ensure the legislature’s goal is realized: for Florida college students to successfully complete a credential, efficiently and at low-cost, that sets them on a path to a rewarding career.

Daytona State College’s English Studio and Miami Dade College’s math academic supports are just two examples of how Florida colleges are implementing Florida developmental education reform.

According to Dr. Tom LoBasso, President of Daytona State College, “The English Studio exemplifies Daytona State’s commitment to innovative practices that provide the right support to all students when they need it most — ultimately helping them thrive academically and in life. This project shines a spotlight on how we serve the students who put their trust in us to help them succeed.”

Miami Dade College President Dr. Eduardo J. Padrón notes, “As one the largest institutions in the country, Miami Dade College is dedicated to providing all students an exceptional learning environment that not only challenges them, but supports and empowers them to attain their academic and career goals. FCAN’s student stories showcase MDC’s commitment to math coursework directly related to students’ programs of study, providing them with additional support when needed to set them up for success in and out of the classroom.”

Read about each program in the following report and visit deved.floridacollegeaccess.org to view videos and hear students’ perspectives on these programs in their own words.

Small Classes Make a Big Difference for Daytona State Students

Cheyanne Gillespie didn't exactly dread her English classes at Key West High School, but she certainly didn't approach the subject with the same gusto she had for mathematics.

"I was extremely good at math, so I took a ton of math classes," Cheyanne said. The 21-year-old student is currently enrolled at Daytona State College where she is studying to become a nurse. "With English, I was ok at it. I was better at the creative aspect of it and constructing and annotating essays based off of literature because it was kind of analytical work."

Daytona State College served 26,613 students during the 2017-18 school year, according to the Florida Department of Education.³ The college was established in 1957 and currently has seven locations throughout Volusia and Flagler counties, including five campuses — Daytona Beach, DeLand, Deltona, New Smyrna Beach-Edgewater, Flagler-Palm Coast — the Advanced Technology College, and the News-Journal Center.



Cheyanne - 21
Nursing

Although English classes aren't Cheyanne's strong suit, she is one of 130,000 students taking ENC1101: Introduction to Composition in the Florida College System.⁴ That includes 4,227 ENC1101 students at Daytona State during the 2017-18 school year.⁵ The course is a requirement for all associate's and bachelor's degrees at public colleges and universities.

To help bolster her chances of success, Cheyanne also enrolled in ENC0055L: The English Studio, a weekly, guided, non-credit bearing, one-hour lab that ENC1101 students at Daytona State may take as a co-requisite. The English Studio is made up of a facilitator and no more than 12 students.

In addition to helping with her composition class, the English Studio also helped her become acclimated to her new collegiate environment.

"The main aspect that was helpful for me, other than the peer editing, was being able to decode what my (composition) professor wanted from me," Cheyanne said.

DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION REFORM — SB 1720

The English Studio was implemented at Daytona State after the Florida legislature passed Senate Bill 1720 in 2013, which made developmental education optional for most students at the state's 28 Florida College System institutions.

Before SB 1720, incoming college students were required to take a college placement test like the P.E.R.T. (Postsecondary Education Readiness Test), the ACT or the SAT. Students testing below the "college ready" cut-off scores were required to enroll in non-credit developmental education classes with the intention of getting the instruction and support needed to be successful in college-level coursework.

In 2012-13, over 138,000 students were enrolled in developmental math, reading, or writing courses at Florida College System institutions.⁶ Given the open access mission of Florida's state and community colleges and the support many incoming students need, the passing of SB 1720 posed significant challenges for the administrators and faculty tasked with implementing the changes.

COLLEGES RESPOND TO REFORM

The bill was a mandate for colleges to ditch the status quo and provided the opportunity to test new models of instructional delivery and support, like the English Studio at Daytona State College, implemented in Fall 2014.

Elizabeth Barnes, a faculty member in the college's School of Humanities and Communication and Chair of Academic Support, said Daytona State was uniquely positioned to get the Studio up and running in response to the new legislation.



"We already had a robust student support structure with a history built on remedial support," Barnes said. In fact, full-time learning and writing specialists from the Academic Support Center and Writing Center facilitate the majority of the Studios offered, in addition to tutoring and running workshops and test prep sessions.

Dana Davidson, Associate Director of the Academic Support Center, is responsible for coordinating the English Studio. She says the college's strength lies in its ability to consider what students need as they work toward their desired degrees.

"I feel like we do really well in terms of meeting students where they're at," Davidson said. "We realize students have a lot more going on, and you've got to try and address some of those needs first to help them be successful in school."

WHO BENEFITS FROM THE ENGLISH STUDIO?

The English Studio serves students with diverse backgrounds, ranging from recent high school graduates to adults who are returning to college after years in the workforce. Almost one-third (31.8%) of the English Studio's 418 students during 2017-18 were age 25 or above. Additionally, 67.5% of those English Studio students received some form of financial aid.⁷

"Oftentimes, these are students who haven't gotten good feedback," Barnes added. "They're the ones we're advocating for because they're a little bit outside of the mainstream."

Donetta McFarlane is a 35-year-old single mother of 4 who initially stopped going to school in the 8th grade.

After earning her GED last year, Donetta is at Daytona State pursuing an Associate in Arts and wants to become a paralegal.

"I love doing research," Donetta said. "I wanted to increase my income, so I came here."

However, returning to a classroom for the first time in more than 20 years proved daunting. Donetta said the English Studio went a long way toward easing that transition.

"My regular classes have a lot more students, so I don't talk and I don't ask questions," Donetta said. "With the Studio, there's less than 10 of us, so I feel more comfortable talking."



Donetta - 35
Paralegal Studies

Prior to the reform, these students would have been placed in as many as 16 hours of developmental coursework before enrolling in ENC1101. In Fall 2013 — the final semester under the previous developmental education model — Daytona State dev ed students were passing ENC1101 at a rate of 55%. Following the introduction of the English Studio in Fall 2014, students who took the Studio and ENC1101 in the same semester passed ENC1101 at a rate of 62%. The pass rate for Fall 2017, the most recent fall term for which pass rate data are available, was 67%.⁸

In 2015, the English Studio was chosen for one of eight case studies published by Jobs for the Future titled "Innovations in Developmental Education Redesign." Barnes and Davidson were invited to discuss the Studio at the Division of Florida Colleges Connections Conference in May 2015. The duo was also recognized as Learning Resources Commission Exemplary Practice Recipients at the Association of Florida Colleges Annual Conference in November 2015.

Although the English Studio is unlike any other classes students take, Davidson believes its status as a co-requisite for a gateway course like ENC1101 has contributed to its success.

"The studio is optional, but it works because they sign up for it, it's on their schedule, they're paying for it, and they're getting a grade," Davidson said.

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Cheyenne, the nursing student from Key West, said the English Studio exceeded her expectations.

"I was told it was pretty much a study hall for English, but it ended up being much more helpful," she said. "Study halls are quiet. You don't have teachers, and you don't ask questions."

OVERCOMING THE LANGUAGE BARRIER

During her time in the English Studio, Cheyenne became friends with Jessica Orjuela, a 19-year-old student from Colombia. About 22% of English Studio students during 2017-18 were Hispanic, which was higher than the overall proportion of Hispanic students enrolled at Daytona State (17%) in Fall 2017.⁹ And while 63% of the college's Fall 2017 enrollment was white, that figure dipped to 43.5% among English Studio students.¹⁰



Jessica - 19
Finance or International
Communications

Jessica says the Studio was an immense help in her composition class.

"When it comes to essays, I can sometimes struggle to get my point across," said Jessica, who is interested in studying either finance or international communications. "My entire life happens in Spanish other than when I'm in school. It becomes hard to think about how to get a point across in English versus just having to think in Spanish."

Jessica attended private school during elementary, middle, and high school, so the environment within the English Studio felt more familiar.

"It was a lot easier to get one-on-one time with a teacher and get the help that I needed to be ahead in class," she said. "I can speak math all you want, but I still struggle a little with English. I would hope I could take what I learned here (in the Studio) with me to other places."

Although Jessica has lived in Florida most of her life and is fluent in English, the English Studio also benefits international students for whom writing in English may be a challenge.

Mamadou Nianj — a 21-year-old student from Senegal who is fluent in French, Wolof, and English — moved to the U.S. in order to pursue his dream of being a commercial pilot. He is one of many Florida students taking advantage of the state's 2+2 articulation policy, starting at a state or community college with a guarantee of admission to a public university once he completes his Associate in Arts degree.

Mamadou plans to transfer from Daytona State to either the University of Central Florida or University of Florida to pursue a business degree.

"As a pilot, you only need to have your pilot's license, so the business degree is like my backup plan," Mamdou said.

After previously visiting family in the area during summer vacation, Mamadou settled in Daytona Beach last year. Out of the three languages he speaks, English was the one that he had to work on the hardest upon arriving in the U.S.

"ENC1101 was my first real English class and there were writing rules I didn't know about that were different from the (French) system I learned," said Mamadou, who had studied English for seven years in Senegal. He took part in an accelerated, six-week version of the Studio last summer. "I wasn't used to learning this way. That was one of the main reasons I took the English Studio."

Another popular transfer destination for Daytona State College students is Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, a private college that specializes in aviation and aerospace programs located less than a mile from Daytona State's main campus.



Mamadou - 21
Business

Guilherme Gobbo Pilotto, who moved to Daytona Beach from Brazil in Fall 2016, is working on his Associate in Arts at Daytona State with the goal of transferring to Embry-Riddle to study aerospace engineering. Guilherme is in his second year at Daytona State and took the English Studio during his first semester.



Guilherme - 19
Aerospace Engineering

"I'd done six years of English classes (in Brazil), but when I got here it was totally different," Guilherme said about adjusting to life in the U.S.

"I felt like I couldn't speak well. I did the studio during my first semester and it really helped me understand how classes worked."

His initial plan was to enroll at Embry-Riddle, but the school's \$47,000 price tag proved to be too expensive.

But despite having a clear career path he wanted to pursue, Guilherme knew he had to succeed in his English classes for both academic and practical reasons.

"By the time I was taking ENC1101, I was also taking Chemistry, where I had to write term papers," he said. "The English Studio really helped me a lot."

SAFETY IN (SMALLER) NUMBERS

Smaller class environments like the English Studio can help students who are first in their family to attend college — or are new to the area like Guilherme — socialize, gain confidence, and learn how to interact with instructors.

Ben Graydon is an English professor in his ninth year at Daytona State. He serves as a facilitator in the English Studio.

"It's basically a weekly, scheduled, group Writing Center session," Graydon said. "Some students will, especially those first few weeks, just lean back and sort of wait and see. Eventually, the students start thinking, 'This girl next to me is getting an hour of free help', and they start getting more involved."

Graydon said these small group sessions have been especially valuable for students who might not realize some of their peers are also struggling with a particular aspect of their studies or college life.

"These group sessions are really nice because a lot of students feel like they're the only ones who aren't measuring up in certain facets," he said.

Though many students have found the English Studio course helpful, the course is optional. The responsibility of guiding students who will benefit the most from the sort of support offered by the Studio falls on the shoulders of academic advisors, who have seen their role evolve over the last five years.

SB 1720 required institutions to offer enhanced advising services to newly-enrolled students to help them navigate their coursework

"Before [SB 1720], it was 'These are your test scores, this is the class you're going into,'" said Joshua Poniatowski, Assistant Director of Advising at Daytona State College. Today, students have a choice of whether to opt into developmental education or co-requisite courses like The English Studio.

SB 1720 required institutions to offer enhanced advising services to newly-enrolled students to help them navigate their coursework. Because most students are now exempt from taking college placement exams, Poniatowski and the other advisors at Daytona State now utilize multiple additional measures to schedule classes, including students' GPA and performance in previous courses.

"There wasn't that flexibility to have those sorts of conversations," said Poniatowski, referring to his talks with students regarding their course options prior to SB 1720. "If they can see that we're trying to make sure they're successful in their classes, then an hour a week (for the English Studio) is really not that big of a time commitment in retrospect."

Daytona State continues to offer a variety of resources — including an 84,000-square-foot Student Center/Workforce Transition Building that is currently under construction and scheduled to be completed in 2019 — to ensure all its students, including those in developmental education, are ready to meet the needs of the workforce after they graduate.

"We have a population of students that needs different support," Davidson said. "They need extra support."

Miami Dade College Lays New Paths to Math Success

Sandra Beauburn is taking another shot at realizing her version of the American Dream.



Sandra - 33
Early Childhood Education

The 33-year-old Miami resident was born in Haiti, but has lived in Florida since 2006. Sandra previously attended Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts, but the restaurant business proved to be a poor match.

"I wanted to open my own business and be a cook, but I didn't like it. I didn't like the schedule, and I didn't get to spend time with my daughter," Sandra said. She decided to switch gears and is currently pursuing a degree in early childhood education at Miami Dade College. "I love children and the schedule that comes with (a career in) education. I want to be better, and I want to set a good example for my daughter."

Miami Dade College is the largest institution in the Florida College System (FCS), serving 114,021 students during the 2017-18 school year, according to the Florida Department of Education.¹¹ The college opened in 1960, and its eight locations — Hialeah, Homestead, InterAmerican, Kendall, Medical, North, West, and Wolfson campuses — also combine to make it one of the largest colleges in the nation.

As part of the requirements for the Early Childhood Education degree, Sandra must complete six math credits. That means she's forced to reacquaint herself with an old scholastic foe that seemingly has little to do with her chosen career path.

"My father was my math teacher once, and he made it very strict," Sandra said. "I'm good at math, but I don't like it."

Despite her family's mathematical pedigree, Sandra hadn't taken a math class in well over a decade. To help make up for her time away from the classroom, Sandra enrolled in MDC's MAT0029/MGF1106: Developmental Math for Statistics/Math for Liberal Arts I, an alternative to the traditional college algebra track. All of MDC's MAT0029 sections are compressed and offered in an eight-week format followed by an eight-week MGF1106 college-credit bearing course in the same term, except when they are offered as six-week classes during the summer.

The first half of the 16-week term (MAT0029: Developmental Math for Statistics) is a developmental education course that functions as an overview of fundamental math concepts, allowing students to get their feet wet. The second half (MGF1106: Math for Liberal Arts I) is a college-level math course with credits that count toward students' degrees.

"It's good...it's basic," Sandra said. "It's kind of a brush-up and review of everything you need to know."

DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION REFORM — SB 1720

In 2013, the Florida Legislature passed Senate Bill 1720, which made developmental education optional for most students at the state's 28 Florida College System (FCS) institutions.

Before SB 1720, incoming college students were required to take a college placement test like the P.E.R.T. (Postsecondary Education Readiness Test), the ACT or the SAT. Students testing below the "college ready" cut-off scores were required to enroll in non-credit developmental education classes with the intention of getting the instruction and support needed to be successful in college-level coursework.

In 2012-13, over 138,000 students were enrolled in developmental math, reading, or writing courses at FCS institutions.¹² Given the open access mission of Florida's state and community colleges and the support many incoming students need, the passing of SB 1720 posed significant challenges for the administrators and faculty tasked with implementing the changes.

Researchers at Florida State University's Center for Postsecondary Success (CPS) conducted site visits to nine FCS institutions between October 2017 and April 2018 to study how SB 1720 was being implemented.

The study — Meeting the Needs of Students: Site Visit Report of the Fourth Year of Developmental Education Reform in the Florida College System — praised the institutions' efforts to "adapt to the FCS's diverse population of students and their needs."¹³ Miami Dade College is a Hispanic Serving Institution: the college's student population during Fall 2017 was 70% Hispanic, 14% black, and only 6% white.¹⁴

COLLEGES RESPOND TO REFORM

The CPS study also lauded campus personnel's "cycle of continuous improvement to promote student growth and development."

Courses such as MAT0029/MGF1106 have helped students like Sandra, who is pursuing a non-STEM major. MAT0029/MGF1106 can lead her and others through a successful math pathway that satisfies their degree requirements while avoiding a potential obstacle in the form of algebra courses they don't need for their majors. Students who want to take the developmental MAT0029 course at MDC must enroll in the college's compressed MAT0029/MGF1106 class.

Nicholas Schur, Chair of the Math Department at Miami Dade College's Kendall campus, said the school had begun to develop MAT0029/MGF1106 prior to SB 1720 being passed.

"We weren't totally influenced by the legislation, but the legislation did make the program happen faster," Schur said. "The scale of the program became much larger than what was anticipated at the very beginning."

SB 1720 also had an impact on the way the college presents MAT1033: Intermediate Algebra, a pre-requisite for college-level math courses.

"1033 has always been an elective credit course because it neither counts as a math credit nor as a dev ed credit," Schur said. "It's basically material covered in the high school curriculum, and it's kind of preparing students to be college math-ready."

Since recent high school graduates and active duty military personnel are no longer required to take college placement tests following the passage of SB 1720, Schur said many incoming students are electing to take MAT1033 versus signing up for a non-credit developmental education course.

"They are advised to take placement tests, but a lot of them don't because they have a phobia of taking a test that involves math," Schur said.

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In addition to implementing MAT0029/MGF1106 following SB1720, Miami Dade College "redesigned" MAT1033 with additional resources and streamlined processes.

"Since the course has a common syllabus for all the adjuncts, they also have common exams and common reviews. One of the benefits is that we can use our resources in an efficient manner," Schur said. "We also take tutors and bring them into the class for a more active learning approach. It's not pure lecture anymore."

Students can sign up for up to two non-consecutive hours of tutoring sessions each day. Schur said each session is capped at one hour in order to give students time to practice what they learn and come up with questions before returning for a potential second hour of tutoring.

"Most of the changes have involved adding resources, not changing what we teach," Schur said. "The actual material that we're teaching is exactly the same."

WHO BENEFITS FROM MATH REFORM AT MIAMI DADE COLLEGE?

Of the 2,515 students enrolled in MAT0029 courses at Miami Dade College during the 2017-18 academic year, the majority were Hispanic (70.1%), female (66.1%), and age 19 or below (54.8%).¹⁵

Marilyn Pimentel, a 19-year-old MDC student pursuing a psychology degree, was born in New York but grew up in the Dominican Republic. That means she has dreaded math in two different languages.



Marilyn - 19
Psychology

"In middle school, it (math) became more difficult and I think that was when I got more stressed out over math," she said. "When a professor is explaining a topic to me, I get it. But when I go do the exercise on my own or take a test, I blank out."

Marilyn enrolled in MAT0029/MGF1106, where she felt relatively at ease due to the variety of resources at her disposal.

"There's a website where you did your homework and assignments online," Marilyn said. "You learn the things you're doing wrong right away. I learned a lot."

The CPS study noted that “a significant feature of the [Florida College System] meeting student needs” involves providing help from a variety of campus sources.¹⁶

“In student success and first-year courses, or in tutoring environments in the learning centers, the college curricula aligned with student needs and learning objectives,” the study states. “These resources wed curriculum with academic support services to augment the overall support structure for students, particularly given preparedness concerns.”

Although the resources provided by MDC have been very helpful, Marilyn knows they aren’t enough to guarantee success. She believes it’s ultimately up to each student to put in the work and remain engaged.

“If you really want to do great, you’re going to make the effort to do great in your assignments,” she said. “If you don’t care, it doesn’t matter where you do your homework.”

A PERSONAL TOUCH TO HELPING ALL STUDENTS

The CPS study found that advisors, faculty, and other staff members have played a crucial role in informing students of their options following the passage of SB 1720.¹⁷

“We observed this personalized approach to student success at many institutions and among all personnel,” the study states. “The proactive approach to institutional problem-solving required that staff work to connect students with the campus resources that could help them be successful.”

Rafael Palacio is an academic advisor at MDC. In his 12 years at the college, he has also served as a tutor within the math department.

“I think we’re in a great place right now,” Palacio said of Miami Dade College’s standing post-SB 1720.

Palacio also noted that without a course like MAT0029/MGF1106, students who opt into developmental education would have to spend a semester or more trying to bridge the gap between their current math skills and what college requires them to know.

“We can take students straight from high school, close the gap for them, provide knowledge and assistance here in the lab, and help smoothly transition into a college course,” he said.

But Antonio Alonso, a math instructor at MDC for 16 years, is well aware that math-weary students in his classroom are an especially tough crowd to win over.

“It’s the subject that everyone loves to hate,” he said. “There is no one-size-fits-all solution, so the idea of having all these options works really well.”

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Florida College Access Network (FCAN) is Florida's first collaborative network committed to ensuring all Floridians have the opportunity to achieve an education beyond high school and prosper in Florida's dynamic economy. Our mission is to create and sustain a statewide network that catalyzes and supports communities to increase college and career preparation, access, and completion for all Florida students. Our vision for Florida is Goal 2025: For 60% of working-age Floridians to hold a high-quality postsecondary degree or credential by the year 2025.

As a nonpartisan organization, FCAN strives to expand knowledge of research, data, policies and practices that impact postsecondary access and attainment in Florida. This report is intended as an educational resource and does not constitute an endorsement or opposition to any specific bill or legislation.

For more research and data from FCAN, visit www.floridacollegeaccess.org/research-and-data/.




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