

**REMEDIAL EDUCATION COMMISSION**

**RESPONSE TO ACT 187 OF THE  
2011 REGULAR SESSION  
OF THE LOUISIANA LEGISLATURE**

**LOUISIANA BOARD OF REGENTS**

**AND**

**LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

December 2011

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Act 187 of the 2011 Legislature, like the Master Plan for Postsecondary Education, recognized that Louisiana must greatly increase the numbers of its citizens who hold a postsecondary education credential by creating an environment supportive to educational engagement in lifelong learning. The act created the Remedial Education Commission as a joint collaboration between the Board of Regents (BoR) and the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE):

for the purposes of studying and reviewing the data on educational services provided in public elementary and secondary schools and remedial education provided at public postsecondary education institutions, of recommending best practices and strategies to be used by public elementary secondary and public postsecondary education institutions in providing such educational services, and of recommending any necessary statutory and regulatory changes to the legislature, the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Board of Regents related to the study.

The makeup of the commission was prescribed in the law and provided a membership that represented many different perspectives on the questions of college and career readiness, remedial education options and delivery, and prospects for success in and after remediation is 'completed.' Each of the 16 commissioners brought something unique to the table.

Remedial Education Commission

<b>Name</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Dr. Jim Purcell – Chair	Commissioner of Higher Ed (BoR)
Ms. Debbie Schum – Vice Chair	Asst Superintendent of College & Career Readiness (LDoE)
Dr. Albert Davis	4-Year Institution (Nicholls University)
Ms. Amy Deslattes	HS Teacher, Rural (Westgate HS, English)
Mr. Edward Green	HS Teacher, Urban (Helen Cox HS, Math)

Mr. Keith Guice	Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE)
Dr. Etta Licciardi	LA School Boards Association
Dr. Derrick Manns	LA Community & Technical College System (LCTCS)
Senator Ben Nevers	Senate Education Committee
Mr. Dennis Raether	Nontraditional Adult Student (Northshore TCC)
Ms. Nahid Sajjadi	2-Year Institution (South Louisiana Community College)
Representative Patricia Smith	House Education Committee
Ms. Donnica Strawder	Parent of Student in Public HS (New Orleans)
Dr. Larry Tremblay	Board of Regents Representative
Dr. Ollie Tyler	Superintendent (LDoE)
Dr. Sandra Williams	LA Association for Developmental Education (BRCC)

## **OVERVIEW OF STUDY**

The commission met formally three times: on 1 and 29 September, and on 27 October. The meetings were organized to address the issues described in the act, with time included for discussion of topics of interest to the commissioners and recommendations for further action. Commissioners studied relevant publications and background materials to prepare for and follow up on meeting topics, and three commissioners attended a one-day intensive remediation institute in Chicago, sponsored by Complete College America. The commission studied state and national data on student success in remedial education; policy, practice, and delivery of developmental education; innovative approaches being tried and promoted around the country; and programs and efforts around the state to meet student needs and help them succeed in both high school and college or career.

Experts who addressed the commission included Bruce Vandal, from Education Commission of the States (Getting Past GO), who addressed best practices in remedial education policy and practice around the nation; Don Pritchard, senior consultant for client outreach for ACT; Jeanne Burns and Scott Norton from the BoR and LDE staff and experts on the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) initiative; Larry Tremblay, BoR staff with 35 years in planning and research; and Debbie Schum, LDE staff and experienced administrator responsible for college and career readiness.

## FINDINGS

Access to higher education in the United States is widespread, but access to *success* in higher education has proven to be less common and more frequently limited by a student's degree of proficiency in the core academic skills: reading, writing and mathematics. All levels of the education enterprise, K-12 through higher education, have been criticized for the inability to assure that students reach proficiency in these fundamental academic and workforce skills. A generation ago, *A Nation at Risk* (1983) documented the problems with education and in the midst of the cold war declared:

- Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world.

- If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war.
- As it stands, we have allowed this to happen to ourselves. We have even squandered the gains in student achievement made in the wake of the Sputnik challenge.
- Our society and its educational institutions seem to have lost sight of the basic purposes of schooling, and of the high expectations and disciplined effort needed to attain them. (p9)

Similar concerns were expressed in the 2006 report on higher education

commissioned by Secretary of Education Spellings which included the charge:

To meet the challenges of the 21st century, higher education must change from a system primarily based on reputation to one based on performance. We urge the creation of a robust culture of accountability and transparency throughout higher education. (p21)

President Obama has voiced a belief that regardless of educational path after high school, all Americans should be prepared to enroll in at least one year of postsecondary education or job training to better prepare our workforce for a 21st century economy. (Atch 1) Complete College America (CCA, 2011), noting that Americans don't just need to go to college—they need to *complete* college, set a goal to have six out of ten young adults in our country with a college degree or credential of value by 2020.

The Master Plan of 2011 includes the critical goal of increasing student success: to increase the educational attainment of Louisiana's adult population from less than 30% to the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) states' average of 42% by 2025. Central to reaching that goal is the work of this Remedial Education Commission to address remediation, and the targets of the Louisiana Department of

Education (LDoE) for college and career readiness: an 80% 4-year cohort high school graduation rate by 2013-14, including 72.5% graduating with the LA Core-4 preparatory curriculum (also the base for direct admission to a university), 58.1% achieving ACT sub scores that indicate readiness for college-level English and math.

Recent studies of remediation have concluded that the system of remediation in this country is framed in an academic sequence, construct and time frame that is problematic. Cronholm (1999) observed that “It is comforting to visualize remedial students in a kind of seamless progression. ...this is the view from 30,000 feet. But on the ground level the effects...can be devastating.” (p b6) Indeed, Complete College America identified the lack of quality remediation as one of the largest factors in student success and degree completion, noting that, “In spite of best intentions, remediation most often becomes the place where students fall down and drop out instead of catch up. It’s time to make major changes in remediation so that students have a real chance for the ultimate success: college completion.” (2011)

Preparation matters. Students enroll in Louisiana’s colleges and universities needing developmental work to be college-ready, and too many do not succeed.

- 24% of the 23,175 entering full-time students seeking a bachelor’s degree in Fall 2003 took a developmental course at the time of entry
  - Only 22.3% of those taking developmental courses had graduated within that same time. (50.3% of the non-remedial students graduated within 6 years.)
- 30% of the 28,009 students entering college for the first time (full-time or part-time) in Fall 2006 enrolled in at least one developmental course, but only 24%

of those students had completed a college-level course in the same subject within 2 years of starting college.

- Of that class, more than 25% of the students entering from high school (aged 17-19) needed remediation, while 60% of new students aged 25 or older enrolled in developmental courses; and 42% of the low income students (on Pell) started with developmental courses.
- In universities, 20% of the students entering in 2006 enrolled in developmental courses that fall, and 34% of those remedial students had completed a college-level course in the same subject within 2 years.
- In 2-year colleges, 63% of the students entering in 2006 enrolled in developmental courses, and only 14% of them had completed a college-level course in the same subject within 2 years of entry.

The types of developmental course students need matter, as indicated by progress in college-level course completion in the same subject area.

- 5.6% of the 28,009 entering students in 2006 enrolled in developmental English, only, and within two years of entry, 37% of those remedial students had completed a college-level English course.
- 15.7% of the entering students enrolled in developmental math, only. Within two years, only 27.0% of those remedial students had completed a college-level math course.
- Of the 8.6% of the entering students who enrolled in both developmental math *and* English, only 10.2% had completed college-level courses in those subjects after two years.

Student success in developmental education will be key to overall student success in achieving a college credential, and to the state's success in meeting Master Plan and GRAD Act goals of increasing the number of graduates. A number of ongoing national initiatives contribute to new ways of thinking about the delivery of remedial/developmental education services, many of which were included in reference materials for the commission to consider. Louisiana can draw on findings

and recommendations offered through such initiatives as: Achieving the Dream; Complete College America; Completion by Design; the Developmental Education Initiative; Education Commission of the States – Getting Past Go; and Jobs for the Future. Ongoing work on the Common Core and PARCC assessments is facilitating closer collaboration between the K-12 and postsecondary communities as “college readiness” is analyzed and codified. The focus will be on finding ways of doing things differently than the standard delivery model, e.g., through attention to remediation for college readiness in high school, concurrent delivery of developmental and college-level instruction, differentiation of basic entry-level requirements for types of college curricula, and use of modular instruction.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The Remedial Education Commission actively participated in a study of remedial/developmental education as it exists and as it is needed in the state of Louisiana and agreed on 26 recommendations to address each of the eight topical areas listed in Act 187. Cognizant of the fiscal landscape and projections, the Commission did not recommend legislation or major additions in funding: it concentrated on changes that can be made in policy and practice, with minimized new resources, by both state agencies and campus programs to deliver services.

The Commission observed that the LDoE is very aware of and engaged in addressing college and career readiness, including readiness for placement in



college-level mathematics and English. The common core standards and PARCC assessments are being developed with both secondary and post-secondary input, and LDoE transition coordinators are being trained to help inform both teachers and students of educational opportunities and the minimum admission standards for colleges and universities. Likewise, the Community and Technical College System has a plan to prepare to become the state's primary provider of developmental education services for adult and postsecondary students in 2014. The LCTCS plan echoes and supplements many of the Commission's recommendations which follow: recommendations for collaborative and individual actions, assurances, and evaluations to be addressed across the state to assist students to attain academic success, no matter the point of entry.

The recommendations offered by the Commission are designed to help both the K-12 and Higher Education communities concentrate on building success in achieving readiness for college-level work. The cost of remedial education is great both in providing the courses and in lost time and opportunities to proceed toward the college credential. The hope is that the state of Louisiana can get to a point where students need less remedial/developmental education, allowing them to concentrate on earning portable college credits and industry based certification in a timely manner.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The commission's findings and recommendations are arrayed in the order listed in Act 187.

- 1- Best practices and strategies for recognizing students needing intervention and remedial services. A review of research and innovations in developmental education indicated that there are many different approaches to teaching that can work, especially with the right teacher-advocate and the support of the campus faculty. It also suggested that, especially in math, the curriculum for the student's major may be the best indicator of which course should be the gateway to college-level work, rather than a single standard for all. Reviews of developmental indicators and course requirements and/or delivery options have yielded positive results and should be encouraged among Louisiana campuses. Because of the importance of basic academic proficiency to student success, developmental faculty and campus leaders should be encouraged to try new delivery approaches to expedite student completion of developmental needs and subsequent college-level work. The Commission recommends that:
  - a. LCTCS, as largest provider, convene all two-year college developmental education providers in the state (including LSUE and SUSLA) to review and discuss best practices;
  - b. LDoE conduct early diagnostic assessments to determine if a student needs intervention or remedial services prior to the senior year, e.g., through

administration of Explore and Plan to 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders, with follow-up interventions;

- c. Secondary and postsecondary campuses develop 'boot camp' math review programs for students prior to scheduled ACT tests (e.g., for High School students) and to administration of placement assessments (e.g., for nontraditional students before placement testing at college orientation, etc);
- d. BoR review the Statewide General Education Requirements (in BoR policy AcAf 2.16) and the Minimum Requirements for Placement into Entry-Level, College Level Mathematics and English (in BoR policy AcAf 2.18) to ensure that the definitions of entry-level coursework in the general education policy are optimal and relevant.

2- Alignment of high school graduation requirements and curricula with college

expectations. The LA Core 4 curriculum was developed by the High School Redesign Commission, with input of Regents' staff, and then adopted by the BoR in February, 2008, as the Regents' Core for university admission. The Louisiana Core and the Career Diploma programs were developed as options for students who were seeking a high school education but not university admission after graduation. All high school graduates should be college- and career-ready, and high school courses should align with college expectations, e.g., students should be skilled at writing clear, informative or persuasive arguments and solving word problems that involve the use of basic algebra. The Commission recommends that:

- a. LDoE ensure that students graduating from high school, regardless of the type of diploma earned, have basic skills to be college- and career-ready, as

evidenced by the new end-of-course exams and/or scores on the ACT, Compass, or other nationally-normed measure. Provide remediation opportunities through high school course offerings to students who cannot demonstrate readiness for college-level English or math by the end of eleventh grade;

- b. BoR adopt the Common Core Standards and PARCC Assessments as indicating college-readiness, once finalized and correlated with the current nationally normed assessments (e.g., ACT/SAT);
- c. BoR and LDoE convene faculty across all sectors (secondary and postsecondary) to discuss competencies to determine college readiness.

3- Clear remedial entrance and exit standards; transferability of credit for such

courses. Entrance standards for college-level coursework are clearly defined in BoR policy (AcAf 2.18, Minimum Requirements for Placement Into Entry-Level, College-Level Mathematics and English) and understood by LDoE and the K-12 community. The placement policy attempts to predict student readiness for success in college-level English and math from high school, but there has been no standardized measure after completion of a developmental course or series: whether the student is now ready to move on. The commission reviewed indicators in Louisiana and Kentucky and heard presentations on use of the Compass diagnostic exam and the implementation of exit assessments in the state of Arkansas. The Commission recommends that:

- a. BoR review the statewide college-level math and English placement policy (AcAf 2.18) to incorporate the PARCC Assessments, when they are finalized, and to ensure that placement measures address the preparation needed for

different curriculum categories, e.g., the math for a science or engineering major vs an English or psychology major;

- b. LCTCS, as the main provider, coordinate a review of the developmental course framework (levels), statewide, and common course/learning outcomes should be standardized for consistency across the state so that students may transfer among campuses and the receiving campus can know how to interpret the student transcripts;
- c. Remedial education providers consistently assess the effectiveness of the developmental interventions (e.g., growth in learning) and revise interventions as needed for optimum results; all developmental education courses imbed a post assessment using a nationally-normed tool correlated to the placement measures for college courses; and the data be reported to the BoR at the end of each semester for study and analysis for the purpose of determining best practices;
- d. Developmental education providers develop provisions to customize remedial education to the student: to include options for a 'personal curriculum' to meet a student's specific needs in developmental education, based on the diagnostic used, and an easy exit when the standards are met, e.g., accelerated learning; early exit exams; etc.

- 4- Strategies for reducing the need for remediation of high school graduates and increasing the college-going rate of adults. The Early Start framework (for BoR-funded dual enrollment) has been revised to require that students complete all required developmental courses before enrolling in any college level, degree credit course. Students need to address their developmental needs while in high school, so that they will be ready to progress toward their degree or credential when they begin as freshmen in college. The Commission recommends that:

High School Graduates:

- a. LDoE develop “College Preparatory” courses in English and mathematics to help remediate students who are not achieving college-readiness scores on the diagnostic used to determine placement, such as the ACT, PSAT, Plan, or End-of-Course exams. These courses will be delivered by the high school, with final ACT or Compass scores used to indicate readiness and college placement.

Adults Entering or Returning to College:

- b. GED programs be expanded to advise prospective graduates of the Compass, Asset, and other nationally normed diagnostic measures and to offer opportunities to complete the assessments before leaving the program;
- c. Developmental education classes and Adult Basic Education (ABE) centers develop modularized instruction options that can focus on adults’ specific needs and accelerate opportunities to proceed into college-level work. ABE instructors should be included in the discussion.

5- Capacity of community and technical colleges to provide remedial education

services. By 2014, students who need developmental coursework will not be admitted to any public university in the state except by exception. In Fall 2010, 17% of the entering freshmen at 4-year institutions enrolled in developmental courses (about 3,500 students). While the LDoE works to reduce the need by 2014 through new college preparatory classes, focused teaching, and dual enrollment, the 2-year colleges are preparing to meet the anticipated demand. The Commission recommends that:

- a. Each institution planning to offer developmental education after 2014 develop, by no later than May 2013, an implementation plan for expanded

developmental enrollment, with implementation to be monitored by System offices;

- b. LCTCS, LSUE, and SUSLA collect and analyze data from LDoE and from the State Educating Estimating Committee report to predict graduating class sizes and college readiness, to estimate capacity needs;
- c. Management boards encourage the development of cooperative or partnership opportunities for colleges and universities to share or refer developmental faculty resources, particularly as the developmental student population shifts to the area community colleges.
- d. T.O. allotments for developmental education instruction be transferred to two-year colleges as the universities stop teaching developmental courses.

6- Role of distance learning and other alternative delivery methods. Bruce Vandal, from the Education Commission of the States, and the Complete College America Remedial Institute described several innovative approaches to developmental education that were different from the standard sequence of courses that students complete before progressing to 'real' college. They ranged from modular learning, with students progressing at their own pace, to learning community approaches, co-enrollment in the college and developmental courses, and one-semester courses designed to address only those elements of algebra and arithmetic sequences that are directly relevant to statistics, or to finite math, or to the required college-level course. The Commission recommends that:

- a. Once the learning outcomes are standardized (item 3d), campuses be encouraged to pilot alternative delivery methods with careful data collection for pre- and post-revision analysis, for possible expansion across the state;

- b. Developmental education providers investigate the further use of technology (e.g., My Math Lab; PLATO; etc.) for the delivery of developmental education, and consortial arrangements for delivery of developmental/ remedial course material, e.g., via the “V-3 College” or LA Virtual School;
- c. Developmental education curricula prepare students for technical/computer-delivery methods: teach them to effectively use the technology; provide transition training to establish readiness for online learning.

7- Success of remedial students in terms of retention and graduation. The data in Louisiana (summarized previously) and across the nation make it clear that students who go to college unable to meet college readiness benchmarks are far too likely to become frustrated with remediation and leave college, thus giving up their aspirations for a degree. As CCA put it, “Rather than providing an on ramp to courses they need for diplomas, developmental education often is an exit.” (2011) Adult Basic Education and WorkKeys can lead to legitimate solutions for students rather than dropping out of college. The Commission recommends that:

- a. Each postsecondary institution, but particularly developmental/remedial education providers, develop an intervention plan for students who need to be redirected to an alternate workforce development training program that can meet the student’s learning needs as well as lead to a viable source of employment;
- b. As part of productivity tracking and reporting, institutions identify a career/graduation pathway for students beginning college at the developmental level and monitor progression points that illustrate student success.



8- Professional development for secondary and postsecondary remedial education faculty. The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) has published a paper that includes guidelines and recommendations that addresses teacher development to increase college and career readiness. The Commission recommends that:

- a. The LDoE, BoR and LCTCS (with LSUE and SUSLA) jointly provide professional education opportunities on an annual basis, targeted to instructors who provide developmental education;
- b. LDoE develop and provide professional education opportunities for secondary teachers to help reinforce math and writing in career and technical courses to impact (reduce) the number of students placing into developmental courses, e.g., embed technical math learning outcomes within career and technical education courses.

## REFERENCES

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