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Understanding the Implementation of Developmental Education Reform in Florida

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Executive Summary

Researchers at the Center for Postsecondary Success (CPS) have been conducting a comprehensive study on how Florida College System (FCS) institutions have implemented the developmental education reform as stipulated by Senate Bill 1720 (SB 1720). SB 1720 started a statewide developmental education reform in the Florida College System (FCS) institutions since the fall of 2014.

In this report, we present findings from our longitudinal analysis of data from a sample of seven FCS institutions where we conducted repeated site visits from fall 2014 to spring 2019. At each institution, we conducted focus group interviews with college administrators, advisors, other campus personnel, faculty members, and students. We also collected institutional documents before and during the site visits, conducted field observations of teaching and advising, and examined other documents including institutional reports focusing on developmental education reform accountability submitted to the Office of the Chancellor of the Florida Colleges System.

After five years of data collection, we sought to understand how FCS institutions implemented developmental education reform, and how the implementation changed over time. The questions guiding this analysis were:

1. How did the FCS institutions implement developmental education reform?
2. How did the FCS institutions’ implementation of developmental education reform evolve over time?

Four phases emerged from the evidence regarding the implementation of developmental education reform in Florida: Preparation, Execution, Modification, and Expansion. Each phase represents a distinct, yet overlapping, period of time where institutions planned for, implemented, or revised their actions centered on developmental education reform. Within each phase, we focus on both the technical aspects of implementation such as how FCS institutions addressed issues related to advising, instructional strategies, and student support services as well as the attitudinal aspects of the implementation as reflected in various stakeholders’ perspectives on SB 1720.

Preparation

The Preparation phase started prior to the fall of 2014, during which colleges built upon existing programs and practices and launched new initiatives to bring their colleges into compliance with SB 1720. Colleges redesigned intake procedures to allow for the sorting of students into exempt and non-exempt categories according to the definitions established in the legislation. They established new advising structures that prioritized multiple measures of documented student achievement, rather than placement test scores alone. Colleges spent time preparing and, in some cases, piloting developmental education courses taught in co-requisite, compressed, contextualized, and/or modularized modalities. Finally, they laid the groundwork for new academic support services, targeted primarily at exempt students and offered both in-person and online. During this phase, negative perspectives of SB 1720 were pervasive, but seemed to serve as motivation for faculty and staff as they prepared new ways to support incoming students, particularly those who chose to opt out of developmental education coursework.
Execution

The Execution phase of developmental education implementation started in fall 2014. Just as in the Preparation phase, institutions’ work continued to be concentrated on the four functional areas of intake and orientation, advising, curriculum and instruction, and academic support. More specifically, the Execution phase was primarily characterized by: (1) a reexamination of advising models and expansion of advising content, (2) the adoption of instructional redesign, and (3) an increase in academic support services, especially peer tutoring and online tutoring, for students. During this phase, individual perspectives of the legislation, particularly its potential impact on “academically underprepared” students provided the foundation for their behaviors and the strategies executed to simultaneously fulfill the requirements of SB 1720 and foster student success.

Modification

In the Modification phase, approximately from fall 2015-spring 2018, the initial implementation efforts posed some challenges and opportunities for improvement, and institutions made changes accordingly. Overall, the implementation brought about significant workload increases for advisors, faculty, and other campus personnel. Despite the increased workload for all involved, student enrollment and success data provided institutions with confirmation that their strategies were indeed facilitating success for many student groups, or highlighted areas for further improvement for other student populations. These data guided institutions’ approaches to resolving the challenges that arose. Changes in perspectives regarding SB 1720, and institutions’ focus shifting from first-time-in-college students and developmental education reform to college-level success led the seven colleges to innovate in many areas and make adjustments to advising, curriculum and instruction, and academic support.

Expansion

The fourth phase of implementation is Expansion, during which participants spent time reflecting on all they had learned about developmental education reform, and how such insights might inform future practices. For example, during Expansion participants continued to make minor adjustments to advising, curriculum and instruction, and academic supports for the sake of academically underprepared exempt students, but this was no longer participants’ sole focus. Instead, administrators, faculty, and advisors spoke about supporting all students, including non-exempt students and those who may be experiencing food or housing insecurity. Just as in the other phases, participants again identified collaboration as an important input and outcome of implementation. In many cases, SB 1720 was no longer a mainstay in the mindsets of constituents as the focus on student success expanded among FCS institutions.
Introduction

In the spring legislative session in 2013, the Florida legislature sought to redesign traditional developmental education through the passage of Senate Bill (SB) 1720. Most notably, this bill required the 28 Florida College System (FCS) institutions to make placement tests and developmental education (remedial coursework) optional for two specific groups of students – students who entered a Florida public school in 2003/04 or later and completed a standard high school diploma, as well as activity duty military personnel, became exempt from developmental education.

The bill included several additional provisions related to redesigning developmental education courses and requiring enhanced advising for incoming students. In terms of curricular redesign, the legislation laid out four modalities for colleges to select and implement: modularized, compressed, contextualized, and co-requisite. The Division of Florida Colleges (2015) defined the modalities for the colleges in the following terms:

1. **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.

2. **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.

3. **Contextualized developmental instruction** is related to meta-majors. For example, the course content would be presented in a way that bridges developmental instruction with courses aligned to specific degree or certificate programs.

4. **Co-requisite developmental instruction** or tutoring that 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. (pp. 1-2)

Colleges were not required to offer all four modalities simultaneously, but were asked to provide options from which students could choose.

The Center for Postsecondary Success has been studying the implementation and effects of SB 1720 since the spring of 2014. Qualitative and quantitative analyses have sought to answer questions about the experience of implementation and subsequent impact of the bill on a variety of stakeholders, including students, faculty, and staff. This ongoing work is available on the Center’s website: [http://centerforpostsecondarysuccess.org/publications/](http://centerforpostsecondarysuccess.org/publications/).

In this report, we focus on the evolution of the implementation of the developmental education reform in Florida. After five years of data collection, we sought to understand how institutions implemented developmental education reform in Florida, and how this implementation changed over time? The questions guiding this analysis were:
1. How did the FCS institutions implement developmental education reform?
2. How did the FCS institutions’ implementation of developmental education reform evolve over time?

Research Design

Data Collection and Analysis Processes

In order to better situate the methods we employed for this analysis, it is important to revisit the research design for the site visit component of our larger study. We conducted site visits to FCS institutions for five academic years of data collection, starting in fall 2014 and continuing through spring 2019. We solicited participation from FCS institutions for 1-2 day site visits where we conducted focus groups and individual interviews with administrators, faculty, advisors, students, and other campus personnel. Each institution assisted us in recruiting potential participants, as well as securing on-campus space for our sessions. All interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of participants. Overall, we collected data from field observations, institutional documents collected prior to and during site visits, and focus group and interview transcripts. In total, we visited 21 FCS institutions in order to conduct 20 individual interviews and 213 semi-structured focus groups with 1,379 participants.

Coding was conducted by multiple analysts throughout the past several years since 2014. We used pattern coding of focus group and interview transcripts to identify central ideas and properties in the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). A three-phase approach guided our data coding and analysis processes. In the first phase, we read through the field notes, institutional documents, and focus group and interview data to synopsize the chronology of policy implementation processes at each institution. During the initial phase of open coding, researchers collaboratively developed a coding framework that included 157 codes. The codes included broad codes like “legislation” and more detailed codes like “positive responses to legislation.”

Coding in phase two involved a subset of data files across participant types. During this process, the coding team engaged in a reliability-building process. Each researcher coded the files individually. Next, we ran the Kappa coefficient function in NVivo, and met as a team to discuss and compare the results. The framework developed in open coding was used to identify additional emergent themes not captured under existing codes. This process resulted in the identification of 54 additional codes.

After we achieved inter-coder reliability, in phase three, members of the team used the revised framework to code the remaining files, and to re-code and analyze the data coded in the second phase. The entire coding team met weekly to share findings and discuss emergent themes.

Researchers wrote analytic memos throughout the coding and analysis process. Memoing was used to identify salient, interesting, illuminating, or important themes in the data. Trustworthiness was established through analyst triangulation, data source triangulation (field notes, institutional documents, interviews, and focus groups), and peer debriefing with three researchers who acted as “devil’s advocates” in questioning the group’s interpretations (Patton, 2002). Member-checking was conducted with administrators from the institutions we visited.
Annually a report of overall site visit findings and individual institutional reports were prepared and shared with campus contacts. The overall report focused on overarching themes across the institutions visited that year related to implementation and occasionally a topic of interest identified by researchers or that emerged in the previous year’s site visits. Institutional reports were targeted toward developmental education reform, and other salient findings identified in the site visits for each institution specifically.

The data collection and analysis processes detailed above were repeated each year. Representative constructs from each new topic of interest were incorporated as new codes into the existing coding framework established the prior year. Codes deemed no longer relevant were discussed and removed, as necessary, from the framework. In our last year of data collection, 2018-2019, we finished with 262 codes in our coding framework.

After researchers completed all coding each year, we created a master file for that particular year. The master file contained all of the data collected and coded for that year, including interview and focus group transcripts, institutional documents, and researcher memos.

**Implementation Theme Development**

To guide our longitudinal data analysis, we conducted combined recurrent cross-sectional and trajectory analyses (Grossoehme & Lipstein, 2016). Given our interest in learning about how institutions implemented developmental education reform, we sought a qualitative data analysis framework that would allow us to examine the implementation actions of a subset of institutions from fall 2014 to spring 2019 (recurrent cross-sectional analysis), and how the implementation process changed over time for the institutions in our sample (trajectory analysis).

Our initial step in data reduction included using criterion sampling to reduce our initial sample of 21 institutions. First, we identified institutions where we had conducted at least two site visits—at least one visit during the initial years of implementation (2014-2016) and at least one site visit during the later years of implementation (2017-2019). Next, we sought variation in size and location in the state. Using these criteria, we identified a sample of seven institutions to conduct our longitudinal analysis.

For the sample institutions, we conducted 106 semi-structured focus groups and individual interviews lasting between 12 and 78 minutes. Focus groups, on average, involved 3-15 individuals. From fall 2014 to spring 2019, we interviewed 3 college presidents, 143 administrators, 153 academic advisors, 148 faculty members, 179 students, and 20 other campus personnel totaling 646 individuals. Table 1 itemizes the years sample institutions were visited and the total number of participants per major stakeholder group. More details about the sample institutions are available in the Appendix.

We conducted our longitudinal analysis in a five phase process, using NVivo to support data management. First, we created a master dataset by combining each year’s master file (2014-2019) for the sample institutions. The master file merged the coding frameworks previously used for each year’s data analysis, so we could be assured that previously used codes were available for our analysis. For each of the seven institutions data including focus group and individual interview transcripts, documents collected during site visits (course syllabi, lesson plans, field observation notes, institutional reports generated after each of our team’s site visits, institutional implementation plans, institutional Developmental Education Accountability Reports submitted
to the Office of the Chancellor of the Florida College System (2015-2018), and Chancellor’s Best Practices reports.

Table 1. Sample Institution Site Visits and Stakeholder Count

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th># of Visits (Year)</th>
<th>Presidents</th>
<th>Administrators</th>
<th>Advisors</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seagull College</td>
<td>2 (2015-2016; 2018-2019)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seahorse College</td>
<td>5 (2014-2019)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Shore College</td>
<td>2 (2015-2016; 2018-2019)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>143</strong></td>
<td><strong>153</strong></td>
<td><strong>148</strong></td>
<td><strong>179</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the second phase, we ran a Code Summary Report in NVivo to identify the number of data sources in each code and the number of times each code had been used. Namey et al (2008) suggest that the frequency with which a code was used across data sources may be the most effective indicator of breadth or pervasiveness of a coded theme. Using the Code Summary Report, we identified the codes of institution, legislation, advising, academic support services, curricula, students, and perceptions as the most relevant codes.

Next, in order to better understand how each institution’s overall implementation actions evolved over time, each of the salient codes identified above were assigned to a researcher on our team. We conducted a thematic analysis of the overarching code and its sub-codes to identify patterns across time within each institution. We allocated our weekly meetings to discuss themes within and across each salient code for the spotlighted sample institution of the week. For example, the researcher assigned to the advising code identified major themes within the code, and organized them by what happened first, next, and last at each institution (Saldana, 2003). This step laid the foundation for us to identify how implementation took place across the years of implementation.
We then used our thematic analysis to identify phases of the implementation process in the fourth step of our longitudinal analysis. The phases we identified included Preparation, Execution, Modification, and Expansion. Preparation began when the bill passed in spring 2014 to the fall 2014 kickoff, and included all of the planning and preparatory action institutions took prior to implementation. Execution began the first year of implementation, from fall 2014 to spring 2015. Modification began when colleges started to make changes to their initial implementation efforts which, for some institutions, began almost immediately. We delineated fall 2015 to spring 2018 as the modification time frame. Expansion was characterized by a shift in institutions moving beyond developmental education to areas of new focus for the coming years. Generally speaking, we observed this shift taking place during the fall of 2018 and spring of 2019. Figure 1 depicts each implementation phase found in our data. We will discuss the implementation phases in more detail in this report.

![Figure 1. Phases of Developmental Education Reform Implementation in Florida College System Institutions](image)

Each team member then created a summary of (1) institutional actions taken, (2) motivation or rationale for the actions taken, (3) challenges and potential solutions and successes that arose, and (4) promising practices institutions identified for each phase. Again, we utilized our weekly meetings to discuss themes within each phase and across each salient code for each sample institution. After every three institutions were individually analyzed, we discussed each cluster of three institutions using cross-case analysis to identity patterns across institutions. In the final phase of the analysis, researchers were guided by Saldana’s (2003) five framing questions for longitudinal data analysis. These questions helped us to identify differences between institutions, changes over time, context or intervening conditions, dynamics of institutional responses over time, and any preliminary assertions about the reasons for the changes we observed. These framing questions led us to identify the essential elements for each phase of implementation.

**The Four Phases in Florida’s Developmental Education Reform Implementation**

Our phasing of the implementation process represents the major periods of action for institutions. The phases are not discrete periods of time. Instead, the phases represent stages of the implementation process during which similar actions took place across all institutions, though not necessarily simultaneously. As some institutions were early implementers of the legislation, they advanced to the Modification phase while other institutions were still in their initial Execution phase.
Below we identify each phase and provide a high-level summary of each of the essential components related to: (a) time frame of the phase, (b) student population of interest, and (c) key characterizations related to advising, curriculum and instruction, academic support, perspectives of the legislation, and other elements contextualized for each phase. In this report, we provide an overview of each phase and the specific actions taken by FCS institutions to implement developmental education reform.

**Phase One: Preparation**
- **Timeframe:** Prior to fall 2014
- **Student focus:** exempt students, FTIC students, students enrolled in developmental education courses
- **Key characterizations:**
  - Advising Philosophy: Understanding the legislation, multiple measures introduced
  - Curriculum and Instruction:
    - Plans for developmental education courses to be offered; Identifies rationales for courses
    - Plans for college level curricular changes as needed
  - Initial Efforts (and timelines for those efforts) were compressed
  - Professional Development and Training
    - Prolific across institutions for advisors, academic support staff, and faculty
  - Workload Implications: Early work to prepare for students & implementation
    - Anticipated increased workload, hired new staff, re-credentialed or reassigned faculty
  - Reform Funding: Unfunded mandate so institutions had to reallocate existing funds to support
  - Existing Programs, Practices, & Planning: Including Quality Enhancement Plans, grant funding (Achieving the Dream, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation), federal funding (Title III) supported preparatory planning
  - Perspectives on the Legislation: Largely negative across stakeholders

**Phase Two: Execution**
- **Timeframe:** Start from fall 2014, the mandated implementation starting time, and through the first year of implementation
- **Student focus:** students enrolled in developmental education courses, and exempt/perceived “academically underprepared” students in college-level courses
- **Key characterizations**
  - Advising Philosophy: Convincing students to take placement tests & enroll in developmental education course
  - Curriculum and Instruction:
    - Implemented redesigned developmental education courses
    - Implemented redesigned college level courses
  - Workload Implications: Faculty and advisor increased workloads
  - Academic Support: Focused on providing learning supports for “academically underprepared” students
  - Perspectives on the Legislation: Negative across stakeholders
Phase Three: Modification

- **Timeframe:** After initial year of Execution, approximately from fall 2015 to spring 2018
- **Student focus:** FTIC students, non-exempt students, students in both developmental education and gateway courses
- **Key characterizations**
  - Advising Philosophy: Informing, provide relevant information for student choice
    - Issue: Heavy advisor workload
    - Solution: Hire new advisors, reallocate faculty or other campus personnel, support advising with technology
  - Curriculum and Instruction: Shift focus from developmental education courses to first level college courses modalities executed
    - Issue: Some modalities not popular among students
    - Solution: Reconsider modalities and resulting instructional strategies
    - Issue: Increased faculty workload (additional grading, individual conferencing, office hours, early alerts, etc.)
    - Solution: Increased academic support
  - Academic Support: Student populations driven, instead of institution driven
    - Institutions used student success data to identify populations who need additional support
  - Workload Implications
    - Issue: Faculty and advisors increased workload
    - Solution: Ongoing management
  - Perspectives on the Legislation: Changing due to student success data

Phase Four: Expansion

- **Timeframe:** After Modification, fall 2018 and ongoing
- **Student focus:** All students
- **Key characterizations**
  - Advising Philosophy: Informing, provide relevant information for student choice
    - Increased focus on guided pathways for advising
  - Curriculum and Instruction: Scaled-back developmental education offerings but increased talk about co-requisites
    - Continuing effort to redesign math pathways
  - Academic Support: Expanded focus on all student success
  - Perspectives on the Legislation: Continued to change, but the legislation is no longer a key focus of the constituents
Preparation: Laying the Groundwork

Defining Preparation

Prior to the passage of SB 1720 in spring 2013, many FCS institutions were engaged in ongoing curricular, instructional, and academic support programming and policy initiatives to innovate and improve outcomes for academically underprepared students, with a particular focus on developmental education. After the bill passed, institutions undertook significant efforts to amend their current practices to prepare for the specific mandates of SB 1720. We define the Preparation phase as this time period between the passage of SB 1720 in spring 2013 and the mandated starting time of implementation in fall 2014.

In this first section, we describe the planning, programs, and practices that institutions had in place related to developmental education prior to SB 1720. In some cases, these existing structures helped to expedite institutions’ responses and supported timely implementation. In other cases, institutions were forced to discontinue their work to realign with the legislative requirements. In either case, institutions were grounded in their commitment to implementing the legislation while supporting student success.

We then provide an overview of the ways that institutions planned to adapt their operations in a number of areas. Following the same order as the educational pipeline for incoming students, we begin with the changes made to intake, orientation, and advising. This is followed by a description of instructional decisions and plans for academic services to support student success. Finally, we turn our attention to the tools and resources that facilitated implementation planning—such as funding, collaboration, and training—before ending this section with a description of stakeholders’ initial perspectives on SB 1720.

Existing Programs and Practices

Nationwide, developmental education programs have long been associated with low rates of student success. Awareness of this caused FCS institutions to begin making changes to developmental education, even before required by the state of Florida. Specific pre-reform efforts included revised developmental education curricula, targeted support for courses like Intermediate Algebra (MAT 1033), required first-year experience courses, expanded advising, and increased use of technology to improve tutoring and early alert notification systems. At San Dollar College, for example, a faculty member commented that the institution had multiple, beneficial pilot programs wherein they experimented with developmental education course offerings and delivery methods. And at Surfside College, an advisor reported that, “Prior to 1720…, there were lots of things that were being implemented, and again, it’s because we knew this change [to developmental education] was coming.” Among these efforts was a new student experience course. This course was originally required only for students enrolled in developmental education courses but became required for all students in preparation for SB 1720.

Notably, some pre-reform efforts were more beneficial than others. A few years before the legislation, Seaside College planned to address imbalances in student-advisor ratios by hiring five advisors each year. Additionally, in 2012, Seaside College moved fall registration dates
earlier, from mid-summer to spring. By starting fall advising in April, a staff member explained that they were afforded more time to receive and process students’ high school transcripts. In both of these examples, pre-reform efforts supported the institution in preparing a response to SB 1720.

Participants at Seagull College had to significantly alter their pre-reform efforts because they did not align with the specific provisions of SB 1720. An administrator at the institution explained, “We were making changes to developmental math [through our QEP]. So we had gone through the whole process. We had it set up. It looked like X. And then SB 1720 came through, and it didn't look like X anymore.” In this instance, the institution “had to be very flexible and nimble and had to really rework some things” to comply with the legislation.

**Institutional Implementation Plans**

Once SB 1720 passed, colleges moved from making general improvements of developmental education to compliance with the legislation’s specific provisions. The amount of work necessary to meet all requirements varied from one college to another, but even colleges that were well prepared had significant work to complete, within a short timeframe. In the years leading up to 2013, faculty and administrators at Starfish College observed shifts in the state and national developmental education conversation, which influenced the institution’s decision to begin experimenting early on. A member of the implementation team elaborated, “We see trends that are coming: the whole idea of modularization, and those types of accelerating through the pathways, offering alternative pathways. So, we had already been working on some [developmental education reform].” However, this experimentation resulted in work that had to be re-evaluated in light of the legislation.

Institutions focused their efforts in the areas of advising, curriculum and instruction, and academic support services. As an administrator at Seahorse College reported, “When SB 1720 finally passed, we at [Seahorse College] were in a good – in a better place than most.” That being said, they acknowledged that they “had so much more still to do” when it came to institutional goals for retention and completion, particularly in the area of alternative, non-algebraic mathematics courses for students not majoring in STEM fields.

More than half of the seven colleges started to plan for implementation by reviewing state guidelines and completing the standardized implementation plan template provided by the state. The template asked schools to elaborate on six different topics: (1) their comprehensive advising plan, (2) the documented student achievements that would supplement placement testing scores, (3) developmental education strategies, (4) student costs and financial aid opportunities, (5) student success data collection, and (6) any additional policies or procedures the colleges planned on implementing as a part of the reform.

In addition to seeking clarity from the Florida College System to guide their planning efforts, institutions also researched developmental education best practices. Administrators and faculty at three colleges cited this as a crucial part of their response to SB 1720. For example, an administrator at Surfside College described their research-based approach as an “incredibly collaborative process” that started with “first taking a real good look at . . . what’s the research out there.” An administrator at Sand Dollar College similarly described their approach as
“research-based and data-informed.” To further explain, the administrator added, “We did conduct extensive research [and] produced a white paper, to gather a sense of what some of the current themes, patterns, trends in developmental education were at the time.” The time spent planning and researching developmental education best practices resulted in the institutional action taken in the areas of intake and orientation, advising, curriculum, and academic support services.

**Intake and Orientation**

At all institutions, systems and procedures for intake and orientation were put in place to facilitate a smooth implementation of the legislation in or slightly before fall 2014. The main priority of the *Preparation phase* here was to determine how colleges would verify students’ exemption status based on when and where they completed high school and/or applicable military experience. In order to sort students into the exempt or non-exempt categories, colleges prepared new policies and procedures to review high school transcripts.

Colleges with robust technological infrastructure automated this sorting process. Seagull College and South Shore College were among the institutions to do so. According to an advisor with Seagull College,

> In development, we met with instructional division for placement and leveling. We met with enrollment services who actually reviews the high school transcripts and the applications that come in. And they actually mark whether they're exempt or non-exempt. They will put the code on for us in our system.

For these institutions, the sorting process often went beyond establishing an exempt/non-exempt dichotomy and involved other, extensive revisions to processes and procedures to better reflect the new realities of post-SB 1720 operations. At South Shore College, an administrator reported,

> The first thing was [to revise] the method to stop them [students] from proceeding [with course registration] until we had their high school transcript in. We already had a… method in place to assign that block. but we would give them a term before we assigned it. So, we backed up and assigned it right away, you know, when they first came in. And then once we got their transcript, we give them an advisor flag saying, ‘You can't proceed until you see the advisor,’ unless they're college level and then we let them proceed on their own. But there was a lot of programming to help the transcripts feed in… So we had to change all of our processes to capture that and then write a program to evaluate the student to see if they were eligible [i.e., “exempt”].

Other colleges prepared advisors to sort students manually. An implementation team member at Starfish College noted, “We had to teach advisors how to read high school transcripts. We were very limited by our current student information system, so determining the exemption, an entirely manual process at this point.”

Sorting decisions held further implications for student orientations planned for fall 2014 and thereafter. For example, multiple colleges began to contemplate entirely separate orientation tracks for exempt and non-exempt students. Additionally, some institutions designed online
modules for students to complete prior to arriving at campus, as a supplement to in-person orientation and advising. These decisions regarding orientation will be explained in greater detail in the Execution phase.

Advising

Another priority of Preparation was to determine how advisors should make recommendations for developmental education and college-level courses based on students’ assigned exemption status. Focus group participants were primarily concerned during the Preparation phase about the legislation’s impact on “exempt” students. Because the legislation made placement testing optional, finding new ways to identify academically underprepared students was important to advisors so that they could properly advise and support such students.

Advisors expressed that this task would be considerably more difficult than in the past because Florida’s Postsecondary Education Readiness Test (PERT) was no longer required for all students. In the absence of PERT scores, institutions expected to use multiple student achievement indicators—namely high school GPAs and transcripts, standardized test scores (SAT/ACT), work experience, and other relevant documentation—to measure students’ readiness for college-level coursework, just as SB 1720 dictated.

Notably, Seahorse College standardized the use of multiple measures through the creation of an algorithm. According to an administrator, “back in 2012... we found that GPA and courses taken and grades were better predictors than the placement scores.” Using this information, an advisor at Seahorse College explained the process at orientation:

"We conduct the orientations. We get a list of the students that are going to be attending orientation, and then we look up their high school transcripts, their PERT scores, ACT scores, SAT scores, whatever – their tests, and then we also have an algorithm. If they don’t have test scores or we don’t have their grades there, and that’s where we pretty much – before we even go to the orientation, we have them in certain classes based on the combination of different things."

However, this move to incorporate multiple measures into the advising process did not signal the end of placement testing entirely.

Indeed, advisors planned to put considerable effort into convincing students to take Florida’s, now optional, PERT. To accomplish this, advisors reported that they would educate all students on the benefits of placement testing, either at orientation or in advising appointments. However, they acknowledged that the decision of whether or not to complete the tests would ultimately be up to students. To minimize barriers to placement testing, Seaside College included the cost of one test in the application fee for admission. Other colleges created their own placement tests—some optional and some required—to provide additional insight into students’ academic preparation. As an example, campus personnel at Starfish College planned to predict the best placement for students in terms of course level and course modality (i.e., modularized, contextualized, compressed, and co-requisite) via a customized Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces (ALEKS) diagnostic exam.
Even with all of these measures in place, almost all advisors expressed concern that a large number of their students would choose to bypass developmental education courses beginning in fall 2014. Initially, efforts at Seahorse College to discourage students from opting out of developmental education during early implementation in spring of 2014 resulted in “only 20 percent” of students doing so. According to a staff member, “So we thought, wow, this marketing strategy's working really well, you know, and they really are listening to their advisors.” However, “It didn't work so well for fall term.”

Colleges also used this time to prepare advisors for facilitating new kinds of advising sessions. At Seagull College, an implementation committee came up with scenarios to help advisors practice generating appropriate recommendations. An administrator described the process, “We—as a group, as a committee—thought of different questions, different approaches… If the cutoff score is going to be this, how do you think I should approach telling the student, ‘Well, you can still opt out’?” In other words, “if this, then this.”

Starfish College gave advisors the opportunity to learn about redesigned courses directly from math and English faculty. Advisors found this training beneficial and, as a result, felt more prepared to “have a conversation with [students] about the different options that they can take if they decide to do developmental.” Advisors also piloted a new diagnostic test designed by the math department to assist in advising: “Our own math department developed another math instrument…, and all of the advisers took it. There are 360 something concepts in it.” Having taken the test, one advisor felt that, “when we see our students' scores, we can identify much more.” Next, we describe the plans institutions made for curriculum and instruction, a major component of the reform.

Curriculum and Instruction

The main preparatory efforts completed in the area of curriculum and instruction centered on redesigning developmental education courses. Institutions focused on (1) identifying a process for making the decisions for necessary curriculum revisions, (2) selecting appropriate modalities for their campuses and articulating the underlying rationale, and (3) identifying relevant instructional strategies necessary to promote student success.

Curriculum and Instruction Decision Making

Because institutions had varying degrees of familiarity with developmental education modalities and institutional reforms in progress, the amount of work required to revamp curriculum to meet the requirements of SB 1720 varied by institution. Among the seven institutions, we observed two main paths for curricular decision-making, one initiated by college leadership and the other, a collaboration of relevant campus stakeholders.

The top-down structures of some institutions led to more unilateral decisions without input from faculty and advisors, while other institutions sought input from campus personnel in the decision-making process. A faculty member at Seaside College explained:
It's very difficult to get changes here, especially if it doesn't come from the top, and say you have to do this. You go to them and you say, we would like to change this. It's like, okay, we will consider it. Then it very rarely goes anywhere.

This lack of input from stakeholders may have been due to the short implementation timeline and/or for ease of implementation, or, as an administrator at Sand Dollar College explained the rationale for their approach, “just because of the familiarity that the administration has with the data and the needs [of the institution].”

The process for redesigning developmental education courses at other institutions typically involved a cross-divisional approach, incorporating significant collaboration grounded in research and planning. For example, Seahorse College recognized the importance of gathering individuals from multiple disciplines to explore modality options. A faculty member shared, prior to SB 1720, the institution had “different professors kind of having small-scale projects on different campuses, but nothing was uniform.” To address this, the institution sought “faculty buy-in” by agreeing to explore different options. The faculty member explained their discipline’s process:

So, we basically, as a discipline, agreed on several topics that we wanted to explore: diagnostic, modular courses, combination [co-requisite] courses, et cetera. And then faculty went ahead and signed up for a specific study group, and the faculty got together and they did research, they explored what other institutions were using internally, externally, compiled data, presented the information to the discipline in order to get the discipline to agree on what we wanted to use here at the college.

Similarly, to determine the reading skills that would be required for college-level coursework, an implementation team member at Starfish College described their process:

So, we worked with all of the divisions, all the academic divisions, and had them brainstorm what they thought the needs that they would have, what were the reading levels that they would expect, how could they get support for students who didn't have those reading levels, what could they do- co-requisite classes, different things like that. We wanted them to think about the options that they could have, and things that would work with what they want to do, and what they want to accomplish. We wanted them to be the decision makers behind that.

Despite their different paths to curricular change, colleges were overwhelmingly dedicated to their students throughout the entire redesign process. Starfish College, which had already been working on redesigning their developmental education coursework and pathways, distinguished between simply being compliant with the legislation and meeting the intent of the legislation. An administrator explained that the institution desired to “meet the letter of the law, [as well as] the intent of the law.” They continued:

Most of all, we wanted to give our students options that would benefit them. . . . It would have been much easier to just take the two courses that we already had, and either make
them compressed eight and eight, don't really change much else about them, . . . but we didn’t feel like that was right.

Modality Choices and Rationales

Most institutions, regardless of their approach to decision making, used existing research, guidance from the Chancellor’s Office of the Florida College System, and their own philosophies around developmental education to guide their modality choices. All seven institutions provided detailed implementation plans to the Division prior to the March 1, 2014 deadline. In our review of these plans, we found that the seven colleges planned to offer a combination of the four modalities detailed in SB 1720. These plans are summarized in Table 2. However, it is important to note that there existed little consensus at the time regarding the formal definitions of each of these modalities. To this point, a faculty member at Sand Dollar College explained, “Now, to fairly speak the word ‘modular’ on a state level, and even on a national level, the definition of the word is not necessarily what everybody means.”

Table 2. Planned Developmental Education Course Offerings by Modality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sand Dollar College</td>
<td></td>
<td>Compressed Co-requisite Modularized</td>
<td>Compressed Modularized</td>
<td>Compressed Contextualized Modularized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seagull College</td>
<td></td>
<td>Compressed Modularized</td>
<td>Compressed Modularized</td>
<td>Compressed Co-requisite Modularized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seahorse College</td>
<td></td>
<td>Compressed Modularized</td>
<td>Compressed Co-requisite Modularized</td>
<td>Compressed Modularized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seaside College</td>
<td></td>
<td>Compressed Co-requisite Modularized</td>
<td>Compressed Co-requisite Modularized</td>
<td>Compressed Modularized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Shore College</td>
<td></td>
<td>Compressed Modularized</td>
<td>Compressed Co-requisite Modularized</td>
<td>Compressed Modularized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starfish College</td>
<td></td>
<td>Compressed Contextualized Co-requisite</td>
<td>Compressed Contextualized Modularized</td>
<td>Compressed Contextualized Modularized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surfside College</td>
<td></td>
<td>Compressed</td>
<td>Compressed Co-requisite Modularized</td>
<td>Compressed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compressed and modularized courses were, by far, the most commonly proposed across institutions and all three subject areas. Prior to the passage of SB 1720, many colleges had experimented with these kinds of course redesigns and so, given the short timeline for implementation, they were relatively easier to adjust and re-launch in fall 2014.
At Surfside College, an administrator explained their process for deciding on which modalities to offer:

We set like a timeline for when we had to make certain decisions and we started the first couple meetings with going through research. Everyone was tasked to do research about best practices and so we brought that to the meetings and we came up with a couple of them. Because we knew we had to have at least two of the modalities, and as it stands I think we ended up doing all of them to some degree, but we were really trying to focus on the compressed and I think we looked at modularized… We created some new courses but the students really are not excited about that, but compressed I would say were the vast majority. In different ways we would we joked actually that we had hyper-compressed courses because it wasn’t just that it was a shortened time, but it was a shortened time with like reading and writing [taught together], so it was hyper-compressed so I just wanted to give you some context that we did a lot of research before we made that decision.

Compressed courses, like the integrated reading and writing course offered at Surfside College, allowed institutions to combine courses, thereby shortening the time spent in developmental education. The shortened timeframe for the compressed courses, often eight weeks, supported students completing as many as two courses in one semester. Institutions viewed compressed courses as a logical option for students who might need to complete more than one developmental education course. Administrators at Surfside College explained that the compressed modality helped students “move through the developmental sequence more quickly so that they could get to college level…”

At Sand Dollar College, a faculty member explained how the successful pilot programs offered previously used the modularized modality, and this guided the faculty’s choices for the modalities they chose to initially implement. For many colleges, the modularized modality would allow students to focus on the content they needed to learn, and the adaptive software used to support these courses, like MyMathLab, MyReadingLab, and MyWriting Lab, would help students complete the requirements for the courses.

**Instructional Strategies**

During the Preparation phase, faculty anticipated that academically underprepared students who bypassed developmental education coursework and went directly into college-level courses would struggle to master the more challenging material. As a result, faculty and administrators spent significant time developing intentional pathways and aligning course sequencing to support students’ timely and competent progression.

Diagnostic assessments, much like those used in advising, were developed to be administered during the first week of courses or early in the semester to determine students’ academic preparation. According to one faculty member at Seaside College, “Some of us decided to do a diagnostic at the beginning and try to encourage … students to say look you are not ready for this.” A participant at Seahorse College expanded:

[A diagnostic is] an assessment in the first week of class to see where they really should be. So, we can’t prevent them from registering for our class if they want to register for it,
but within the first week, they’ve been assessed to see if they really should be there or not.

In addition to the diagnostics, faculty anticipated the students’ need for additional classroom supports and planned to adjust their teaching in a variety of ways, including being available by providing more office hours, and requiring visits to the Learning Centers or Commons on campus. Institutions also planned to provide a variety of academic support services to help students be successful, which are discussed in the following section.

Academic Support Services

The fourth major component of pre-reform efforts focused on plans to expand academic support services to serve a greater number of students. Before doing so, a participant at Seahorse College commented on their approach, noting, “There was quite a bit of planning. . . One of the things that we worked on was an inventory of all the support laboratories that we had college-wide.” At many institutions, the chief concern was that, because of SB 1720, students would choose to bypass developmental education and enroll directly in credit-bearing courses in the fall of 2014 without the appropriate level of academic preparation. In response, computer labs, learning centers, and tutoring programs were all scaled-up to supplement the work of faculty teaching first level college courses.

Colleges developed extensive “refresher” workshops and boot camps that were designed to impart basic study skills and remedial course content in the areas of mathematics and English. At Seahorse College, a staff member stated, “The campus made a concerted decision that tutoring was going to be a priority, whether in the lab or in the classroom.” Taking a proactive approach, Surfside College created a targeted, summer boot camp to help those who planned to opt-out of developmental education improve their academic skills for first level college courses. To incentivize attendance at the boot camp, Surfside College offered students a $100 stipend. Workshops were also designed for students struggling with math and English competencies. In anticipation of the impact of SB 1720, Surfside College “added on a lot of new workshops that targeted the basic math skills and basic English skills that they [students] don't have yet as well.

In instances where colleges could not allocate resources to hire new staff or increase a learning center’s operating hours, technology was leveraged as a way to broaden the reach of support services. Some programs, like tutoring, were expanded to include online options to provide greater access, particularly for students who may have demanding work and/or childcare schedules. Starfish College did this by developing an online tool for students to use to “help them through some of their worst [learning] nightmares.” An administrator elaborated:

To the credit of the faculty, they stepped up and based on sound psychological principles, they developed their own system that would not overwhelm the students, was on-line, and cost the students absolutely nothing. So, they have their own system set up. They are only focusing on five grammar skills.

Another institution—Surfside College—also sought to support students virtually by piloting an online tutoring software in advance of SB 1720. After recording “significant usage” of the
tutoring services during a nine-month pilot, the institution formally adopted online tutoring as an option to support students.

A part of the planning process also involved campus personnel considering how to best advertise their services and encourage students to make widespread use of them. For example, advisors at South Shore College “created worksheets or resource lists to provide to students . . . [which included] our Career Center, as well as tutors here, [and] smart-thinking online.” At Surfside College, an administrator explained that they developed “a couple different plans” to encourage students to use the Writing Center. One plan included emailing all students who registered for ENC 1101, offering a “comprehensive consultation.” Specifically, the plan was to provide students with the opportunity to “do the diagnostic essay . . . then meet with a consultant to kind of identify what some of their problems might be and whether or not how does that impact them.” The institution also hoped to move away from hiring “professional tutors” and move to a peer mentor model, instead.

**Supporting Preparation**

To facilitate these extensive, campus-wide changes, colleges employed a number of tools and resources. Institutional efforts primarily involved creating new advising processes and procedures, redesigning developmental education courses in accordance with the bill, and scaling up academic support programs for academically underprepared students. In anticipation of the increased volume of new advising and academic support tasks, colleges: (1) hired new staff, (2) reallocated staffing resources to new positions, and/or (3) shifted some student services online. Given that the bill did not come with legislative funding, many institutions assumed the costs of these shifts. Depending on whether institutions had grant funding or other college funding available influenced how some colleges facilitated reform on their campus. Below we detail the variety of ways in which institutions supported the *Preparation phase* of implementation.

**External Support and Funding**

Six of the colleges were intentionally working towards improving developmental education outcomes in advance of SB 1720 by writing relevant goals into their Quality Enhancement Plans (QEPs). QEPs are long-term plans focused on improving aspects of institutions, usually relating to student outcomes and success, and are a crucial aspect of institutions’ accreditation processes. Embedding developmental education reform into QEP initiatives provided structure and accountability to their efforts. As one administrator explained:

> 1720 coincided almost perfectly with our five-year QEP, our SACS [accrediting body] required QEP…, which focused kind of dually on moving from a transactional advising to a progressive advising model, and then also instituting a system of early alerts for students … And it was a wonderful QEP. We rolled it [early alert] out, first to 20 percent of students in gateway courses, and then 40 percent, and so on, until now it's all students in gateway courses are being tracked and it's open to all faculty in all disciplines.

Another way that colleges were able to implement change was by leveraging external grants, which provided the funding necessary to facilitate change. Six of the colleges in our sample made use of prior funding from Title III, Title V, Achieving the Dream, Department of
Education TRIO programs, and other grants as they prepared for the required implementation of SB 1720. An administrator at Seahorse College explained how the grant funding supported the efforts in preparing for the reform. They noted, “we had been [redesigning DE] under the auspices of a number of grants” which “sort of gave us a little bit of an excuse to push something a little bit faster than we might have been otherwise able to do.” This additional funding was particularly helpful, considering SB 1720 was an unfunded mandate.

**Reallocating Staff to New Positions**

Where new money did not materialize, colleges had to find ways to do more with their current funding sources. One way they did so was by moving faculty and staff into new positions or cross-training them to support additional areas. For example, in some cases, faculty were given advising duties in anticipation of heavier advisement loads. In other cases, faculty were assigned to help with academic support services. At Starfish College, an administrator explained that certain faculty members were at “every orientation, just voluntarily in the summer even when they weren't on contract, and they just went there and talked to the students. [They] tried to help the counselors [and] tried to help the students understand what their options were.”

Colleges also anticipated that shifting enrollments would decrease the need for developmental education instructors and increase the need for college-level instructors. At least three institutions proactively helped developmental education faculty gain the credentials necessary to teach college-level coursework. An administrator at Starfish College spoke to this:

> You know, different schools hire differently. We hire a faculty who are prepared directly to work with developmental students, so they have skills to work with that kind of student, students who may not have all of the resources they need to be good students, as well as have their disciplines. They weren't necessarily prepared to teach college level. So, in order to ensure that, we went back and used college money to allow . . . 18 hours of graduate work in their disciplines, and actually some of them have moved into the college level.

Similarly, Surfside College partnered with a local university to help credential adjunct faculty members who were not currently eligible to teach college-level courses. An administrator shared that the institution paid for the credit hours because they were having “such a hard time finding qualified part-time faculty.” The foresight of these two colleges helped to prevent a shortage of qualified faculty members for college-level courses after passage of SB 1720.

**Increased Collaboration**

At all seven institutions, participants agreed that collaboration was a critical component of preparing to successfully implement SB 1720. As a participant at Seagull College shared, “We were constantly meeting and updating and disseminating information, so it was a good group effort.” Specifically, discussions that included administrators, faculty members, and representatives from advising and other student service areas were especially helpful and collaborative. An administrator at Seagull College explained, “Everyone kind of came together and said, ‘Well what about this?’ And we kind of unpacked each part.”
Committees, task forces, and advisory groups were frequently mentioned by participants, with efforts focusing on bringing together stakeholders from various functional areas of the colleges, even including institutions’ offices of information technology (IT) to develop or alter existing infrastructure to help to “bridge” or “liaise between the end user and the [Office of Information Technology].” Collaboration within campuses also included bringing together advisors, academic support staff, and faculty to disseminate information, gain perspective, and plan for implementation. For example, one institution developed a task force that brought advisors and faculty members together to better understand the content of developmental courses, how to appropriately place students in courses, and course sequences. An administrator at Starfish College described this collaboration:

We had the dev. ed. faculty and deans come over to the advisers and kind of show them what the content of each course was, what kind of student the course was ideal for, and they created a lot of very, very helpful flow charts, or different types of charts, to be able to advise students.

Some institutions with multiple campuses made efforts to ensure that representatives from individual satellite campuses were included in the decision-making process, with the goal of establishing consistency institution-wide. For example, collaboration at Surfside College included a developmental math advisory group that formed when the institution was “trying to get consistency across the college.” A staff member explained:

We were trying our best to meet college-wide. We had this developmental math advisory group which would get together and share strategies, share ideas, what are you doing on your campus, maybe we're gonna use a different book, maybe we're not.

However, this was not the case at all institutions with multiple campuses. One institution, in particular, struggled in light of leadership, organizational, and position changes. As one advisor at Sand Dollar College described, “It can seem a little bit like walking through the fog.” Advisors at this institution also desired “more streamlined processes” between campuses. An advisor elaborated, “Because we do get training as a college, and then we go back to our campus, and sometimes we’re told, ‘Well, actually, we’re going to do it this way, not how you were trained.’”

Some colleges, like Sand Dollar College, already had the necessary infrastructure in place. As a result, when it came time to plan how to respond to SB 1720 at this institution, an administrator commented that “there was an entire group of structures, faculty and adjuncts included, who took part in the senate bill design [at their institution], who had a say in what was going on, felt actively involved.”

Professional Development and Training

Another way that colleges invested in Preparation was by offering extensive training to faculty and staff. Indeed, “a lot of training” was a common refrain throughout our data. This training was primarily dedicated to helping campus personnel understand the specifics of and motives behind the legislation, as well as its impact on their day-to-day responsibilities moving forward.
Advisors, in particular, discussed receiving in-depth training on the following topics: new curricular options, placement testing and assessments, and what to expect when advising in a post-SB 1720 environment. To this point, an administrator at Seahorse College reported that campus personnel collectively completed an impressive 4,000 hours of training related to SB 1720. This time was spent covering a variety of important topics, with a clear emphasis on enrollment and advising changes:

Faculty and staff learned what an exempt student was, how to identify an exempt student. We even did training on how to have a difficult conversation with students about the fact that we think as a professional that developmental would be good for you. We did a lot of role playing. We put in multiple measures, so we had to train people what multiple measures was, how to look at – you know, how to look at the transcript information… Then people would stand up and say, “Well, I'm never going to agree to a high school transcript being better than a placement test,” and so we just did tons and tons and tons of training.

Advisors at other colleges reported a similar commitment to training. For example, South Shore College hosted periodic, all-day trainings and retreats to discuss SB 1720 advising matters for more than a year as the college moved through the Preparation and Execution phases.

However, training was not only for advisors. Looking back on the Preparation phase, a faculty member at Seahorse College reflected: “We have had tons and tons of training… It’s mandatory if you want to teach a modular course, for example. Every professor that’s teaching modular courses… had a mandatory eight-hour training, which is done over the course of two days.”

Each example presented here reflects a significant time commitment to professional development. Participants mentioned that, although it was sometimes difficult to find time for training, they were able to recognize the value in it.

**Perspectives on SB 1720**

Perspectives of the legislation were largely negative in the Preparation phase. Campus personnel commonly reported initial feelings of dread, concern, and worry, particularly for the well-being of traditional, first time in college students. Some of the primary concerns communicated by participants were related to optional placement testing, students’ ability to bypass developmental education, and accelerated course structures. In the words of one advisor, “When I first heard about the legislative change, my first thought, like everyone else, was ‘Oh god, this is going to be a catastrophe. The students are going to be failing out of college left and right.’” Although these worst-case scenarios did not come to fruition, negative perspectives certainly shaped the Preparation phase.

Some of the negative perspectives came from faculty who relayed their frustration that developmental education experts had not been consulted in the drafting of legislation. Indeed, numerous participants criticized the legislature for drafting reform without fully considering the impact that it would have on students and campuses more broadly. A faculty member at Sand Dollar College explained it in this way:
I think there was concern on behalf of our students because we work [with] students on a day-to-day basis. We know their lives. We know their strengths. We know their weaknesses. And to accelerate the classes, I think really concerned us, and whether our students would be able to be successful and learn the strategies that they need to hopefully earn a degree someday.

Negative perspectives also emerged from feelings of confusion. Specifically, participants were unclear about motives behind the bill, what was required for implementation, and the definition of specific modalities. Illustrating some of this confusion, a faculty member at Sand Dollar College shared the following reflections: “We didn’t know about it [SB 1720] beforehand, and we didn’t know why or who, we just knew that it was coming from them [the Florida legislature]. But, ‘Why would they be doing that?’ we wondered for a long time.” An advisor at Seaside College echoed these sentiments:

I just thought it was such a major, major change in terms of prep classes, developmental education in general. And what was going to be the impact? Because, I mean, there were so many unknowns! And where did this come from? And why? And just so many questions.

A faculty member expressed concern that the legislation had a “socioeconomic bias” towards low-income students, saying, “We’ve had students who've not necessarily had the best preparation, have home issues, have life issues, and they're coming with all of these burdens, and then we're saying – and we're shoving this on them.”

Some participants, however, were positive about the reform and the opportunities and options it could provide for students. For example, advisors at Starfish College shared that “giving students options was a really good thing.” Similarly, an administrator at South Shore College identified a “silver lining” to the legislation, saying, “I'm thrilled that we were able to offer some new alternative courses to 1033. So that's been a silver lining that we could finally get some more options on the table for them.” Admittedly, many of the positive or optimistic perspectives came from administrators. Indeed, an administrator at Seahorse College commented, “If you ask me, I'm an optimist. I'll get you a list, but if you ask faculty you will get a different picture, and I understand that because I am sitting here, and they're in the classroom.”

There were some who recognized that developmental education programs were in need of revision but agreed that the provisions of SB 1720 were not the right way to go about it. In the words of one faculty member, “There is a rationale for it [the legislation], but . . . the problem stays on the students not knowing things, but that's the wrong issue.”

Summary

Despite these negative perspectives, preparation still ensued. If anything, faculty and staff described working harder than ever to anticipate and preemptively address the perceived shortcomings of SB 1720 so that students would not be penalized for what one faculty member at Starfish College described as an “ill-conceived idea promulgated by people who were politicians, not educators.” As demonstrated in this section, their hard work was most evident in the areas of intake and orientation, advising, curriculum and instruction, and academic support. In the
following section about the *Execution* phase of developmental education reform, we describe how institutions built on these preparatory actions in order to carry out the directives of SB 1720.


Execution: When Rubber Meets the Road

Defining Execution

In the Execution phase, we describe colleges’ initial efforts at implementing SB 1720, starting in fall 2014. Just as in the Preparation phase, institutions’ work continued to be concentrated on the four functional areas of intake and orientation, advising, curriculum and instruction, and academic support. More specifically, the Execution phase was primarily characterized by: (1) a reexamination of advising models and expansion of advising content, (2) the adoption of instructional redesign, and (3) an increase in academic support services (especially peer tutoring and online tutoring) for students. In this section, we identify institutional perspectives, behaviors, and strategies executed to fulfill the requirements of SB 1720 and foster student success.

Intake and Orientation

During the Execution phase, the intake process commonly began with colleges determining each student’s exemption status based on high school transcripts and/or military documents. As previously mentioned in the Preparation phase, some colleges automated this task while others—at least two—completed it manually.

Once a category was assigned, students received notification about their exemption status via emails, acceptance letters, welcome packets, or at an initial advising meeting. At some institutions, the student’s status determined the next steps. For example, according to an administrator at Seaside College, students “get two different correspondences depending on whether they are exempt... If they are exempt their next step [is] orientation. If they are not exempt, their next step is to go to testing.”

Following this initial sorting, students were then required to participate in orientation. At some colleges, exempt and non-exempt students attended separate orientation sessions relevant to their academic situation. At other colleges, there was no distinction between students of different exemption statuses. Participants at Seagull, Seaside, and Starfish Colleges reported that they called attention to students’ exemption status during orientation and explained the implications of this designation for tasks like placement testing and course registration.

Several institutions reported that the legislation directly changed the way they conducted orientation. For colleges like Seaside, large group sessions were replaced by small group sessions in order to address individual student’s questions. A number of colleges also made the decision to move orientation online, either partially or fully. Participants at institutions like Seagull, Seahorse, and Seaside Colleges noted that online orientations helped campus personnel better manage the large number of incoming students they needed to serve.

Advising

Institutions anticipated that SB 1720 would significantly alter the way many FCS institutions approached academic advising. Differences in redesigned advising practices arose from institutional variation in student needs, institutional context, and availability of funding. In the
Execution phase, colleges reexamined the assignment of students and advisors and expanded the length and depth of advising session content.

**Reexamining Student and Advisor Assignment Models**

In the first year of Execution, institutions experimented with new student/advisor assignment structures to facilitate the advising process. These new models included a case management approach, student assignment to tracked advisors based on credit hours or degree progress, and faculty involvement in advising.

With less of an emphasis on developmental education following SB 1720, some colleges moved to a model whereby students were assigned to one advisor for the entire duration of their studies. According to an advisor, “[South Shore College] completely restructured advising and then wound up merging developmental advising and the AA advising and cross-trained everyone.” In other words, students at the college previously had one advisor while enrolled in DE coursework and were then assigned another advisor once they moved into credit-bearing courses. Following SB 1720, students were assigned just one advisor who helped them navigate the numerous decisions between developmental- and college-level courses, and different course modalities. Other colleges, including Seaside College and Seahorse College, made a similar move towards case management. The benefit of this kind of model, particularly in relation to developmental education reform, was that it fostered continuity and relationships between students and campus personnel. An advisor at Seaside College said:

One of the things we implemented on our campus…is case management of students who are in SLS [a Student Life Skills course]… We feel that that’s one of the good things that has come out of this reform, because we really want to build relationships with them, to get to know them, to help them understand the changes, how those changes impact them, and keep that conversation going. Because as we talk about the legislature and reducing excess credit hours, you know, we’re looking to, through that process be able to do all of that.

In contrast, Seahorse College and Surfside College used this opportunity to change to an advising model that moved students through different stages or tiers of advisement based on credit accumulation. For example, Seahorse College utilized three types of advisors (pre-college advisors, senior advisors, and college mentors) to help students at different stages in their academic journey. Pre-college advisors assisted during the onboarding admission process and provided general career advising for students. Senior advisors were responsible for the success of students in that holistic advising and networks with tutors and faculty members. Once students completed the 15 credits, they were reassigned to a college mentor (including faculty and department chairs), in order to obtain more specialized career and transfer advisement. Surfside College used a similar advising model where students began with a “teaching advisor” and then, “once the students reach 12 credit hours, at that point, they transition to a program advisor.” According to these colleges, credit-based advising structures helped move students along their academic pathways more effectively.
In addition, some colleges revisited faculty involvement in the advising process. Advisors at Surfside and Seahorse Colleges viewed the involvement of faculty as an important part of their advising model. According to an advisor in Seahorse College, because of SB 1720,

… we have more involvement from the faculty on placement and in kind of recommending the right path, which we didn't have before. It used to be only an advisor’s territory and I think that that's one of the differences. The faculty has been involved, at least for math and English for sure, and the basic skills in kind of helping us out.

**Expanded Advising Contents**

Advisors agreed that the legislative mandates made advising much more time-consuming and challenging than it was previously. Advisors widely agreed that SB 1720 added more time to typical advising sessions. Before the bill passed, an advisor from Seagull College explained, “you can average 15 minutes to a half an hour for a first-timer, where normally a half an hour would be the max.” However, advising sessions following SB 1720 would last up to three times that length. This advisor continued, “now it's 45 minutes, sometimes it's an hour…” Another advisor echoed these sentiments, further explaining:

After this bill was enacted, I think we spend a lot more time with the students, especially the first time in college, having discussions about being exempt versus non-exempt and how to – we try to have conversations to help them understand the impact of this legislation and what their choices are. I think we spend a lot more time trying to help them make better decisions. What your test scores tell us, here’s what your high school transcripts tell us. That’s not always the full picture, but at least it gives us the opportunity to have a conversation about their strengths and weaknesses and mapping their plans for future semesters. I think as a result, we spend a lot more time with students.

The reasons for this extra time commitment were numerous. First, some advisors had to spend time identifying which students were exempt and which were non-exempt. With this information, advisors then had to generate accurate recommendations for placement based on multiple measures of documented student achievement. While this process certainly took placement test scores into consideration, where available, it also involved a time intensive dive into student’s high school transcripts, work experience, military service, and current life circumstances.

**Multiple Measures for Advising**

Instead of relying solely on Florida’s Postsecondary Education Readiness Test (PERT), colleges chose to emphasize students’ high school courses taken and grades received, standardized test scores (i.e., ACT, SAT, and PERT scores if available), course type analyses (i.e., standard, advanced, IB/AIEC courses, etc.), and overall high school GPA.

At least two colleges standardized this process with the help of computer-generated algorithms. For example, in order to better provide students guidance related to college-level course selection, Seaside College developed the High School Credential report, an advising tool that
included weighted and unweighted GPA, class rank, graduation date, high school mathematics and English courses, college readiness and intensive courses, and course grades. At other colleges, advisors were trained to read students’ high school transcripts and make on-the-spot recommendations. For instance, if students at Seaside College did not pass the FCAT and one of the courses they were taking in high school was intensive math, advisors recognized that the student may not be successful in college-level courses. As one implementation team member at Starfish College shared:

We are looking at the courses you took in high school… Maybe your test scores are old, or you haven't tested, or you didn't do well on the placement test, so we are looking at that. We are looking at the courses you took in high school. The grades that you got and your high school GPA. We are looking at all of those things and trying to advise them based on that.

Regardless of method, campus personnel generally agreed that using multiple measures was beneficial in increasing the accuracy of the placement process and assessing students’ academic performance more comprehensively. In the words of one participant, “it's more holistic than it would be: here is your test scores, sign-up for these classes. It's not that you are about to do that, but it's more interactive, and then the student can have input.”

However, the use of multiple measures highlighted the importance of advisors having accurate and timely information in preparation for student advising appointments. College personnel expressed concerns about the variation of GPA and course rigor across different high schools.

**Pre-Course Assessments**

As a way to fill the gap left behind by the, now optional, PERT, all of the institutions employed alternative, home-grown math and English assessments (usually called diagnostic tests) to explore students’ current levels of academic preparation and support advisors in making reasonable advising suggestions. If students performed poorly on the assessment, advisors recommended they complete a developmental-level course before attempting a college-level course. Indeed, at Starfish College, students were encouraged to “take it [the diagnostic test] before they even get advised, so that when they go to an advisor, an advisor can look at what their score is and then we have a placement chart built on that score.”

**Non-Cognitive Considerations**

During this period, advisors not only focused on multiple measures of student achievement, but also non-cognitive factors that might impact a student’s potential for success in a particular course or DE modality. For instance, advisors asked about students’ personal lives to make more relevant recommendations. These questions about the amount and timing of familial and work responsibilities led to “honest conversations” about college-level work and the commitment needed to achieve students’ academic and professional goals. As a result, advisors were better able to identify which classes, and how many, were most appropriate for a student to take. A Seagull College advisor recounted:
I ask them, are you working? Do you have kids at home? Can you take a morning class? Can you take an afternoon class? I mean, that's part of just talking to them when they come in, getting to know them. You get to know where they work and the hours that they work.

Some of these considerations were also useful when advisors looked to recommend specific developmental education course modalities. Advisors would inquire about a student’s comfort-level with technology before placing them in a modularized course or their time commitments to determine the appropriateness of a compressed course. An advisor at Sand Dollar College explained:

I make it part of that conversation of work-life balance too. And I like to explain to them too that when a class is compressed it's still supposed to be the same amount of contact and work expected from you in a lesser time.

Practically speaking, there was not always as much choice embedded in the process as the designers of SB 1720 may have hoped. According to a faculty member at Seahorse College:

Whether or not it's accelerated or modular like you were asking, I think a lot of it has to do with the conversation you're having with the student, and then just availabilities.... We're doing orientation this Friday for mini-term classes. There's not many classes available, so I mean, if they want a math class, they've got to get what's available.

A student at Seahorse College picked up on this reality as well. Because of registering late in the semester, there was only one developmental option for him - a compressed course:

I chose classes late, so [the compressed modality] was my only option. I was like, “Whatever. Let’s do it,” but it was really fast. You know, I think for people who don’t understand math, who have to put extra effort, you should go at a slower pace. However, I didn’t have more options so I just took it.

Advising through Convincing

Even with all of the additional information available to them, most advisors reported during the Execution phase that they were still very committed to the traditional model of using PERT scores to identify those in need of remediation. As such, advisors reported that they spent much of their time convincing all students about the value of placement testing and optional developmental education courses. According to one advisor at Sand Dollar College, “You still try to encourage the student to take the placement test just to see where they’re at because we have students that have been out of high school for a year or two.”

Advisors similarly continued to encourage students whom they deemed academically underprepared to enroll in developmental education, considering it the most effective way to shore up academic gaps. An advisor at Starfish College admitted that, “We were told not to be pushy [when recommending optional, developmental education courses]… We had to be very careful about the way we even had that conversation… We broke that rule quite a bit, though.”
Recommendations notwithstanding, exempt students ultimately made the final course enrollment decisions for themselves. Advisors at more than half of the colleges reported that they document their recommendations for future reference. As an example, in the “advisor’s comments” section of advising paperwork, one advisor at Seagull College reported that she provides the following information:

I've copied [my recommendation], wrote it out. ‘I strongly urge the [student], because it was their best interest based on their scores or based on their exemption status that they should take a developmental course.’ And then I've also put the student decided to go to – keep their exemption status. Something like that.

This documentation process also required students’ signatures to confirm their awareness of the recommendation and potential consequences. In the words of a student, speaking about her peers:

I know students that have opted out that really should not. But I know that [at Seahorse College] before they opt out they must speak to an advisor, a college advisor, to really go over the consequences and the benefits…, you know, if it's really right for you before you sign a paper that you're waiving the option to take a remedial and go straight into college-level.

Notably, advisors reported some distinction between their handling of English and math courses. Advisors and students were both under the impression during Execution that math remediation was more essential for future success than English remediation. Highlighting this, one advisor at Sand Dollar College shared, “I literally say, ‘How do you feel about math?’ Because that seems to be the big one for a lot of people. Do you feel comfortable with math? And I don't mean balancing your checkbook.”

**Curriculum and Instruction**

While the legislation required FCS institutions to offer developmental education courses in different instructional modalities, including modularized, compressed, contextualized, and co-requisite, institutions also revised college-level courses to provide clarity of math pathways and to distinguish developmental and college-level course objectives. As we described in the Preparation phase, institutional decisions were largely informed by previous or existing work on developmental education reform undertaken at the institution, while also being shaped by views on student preparedness and achievement.

In the Execution phase, institutions focused on implementing the redesigned developmental and college-level courses, with a particular focus on instructional strategies that included: (1) assessing student skills early in courses using diagnostic examinations and essays, (2) adjusting the pace of courses to allow for students’ varying levels of course mastery, (3) providing more faculty engagement in college-level courses through one-on-one contact with faculty, and (4) in some instances, providing no changes at all to their usual approach to instruction.

Institutions admitted some initial confusion on the definition and application of parameters for some modalities. Instead of the accepted modality designations, campus personnel often used
different terms to describe them. For example, some institutions labeled compressed courses *accelerated* and co-requisite courses as *combined* or *linked*. We previously reported that this lack of clarity created opportunities for institutions to innovate and focus on solutions that worked best with their campus context for student success (Hu, Bertrand Jones, et al, 2016).

Table 3 summarizes the different modalities offered in the 2014-2015 academic year by subject area. In comparing this table with the Table 2 presented in *Preparation*, it becomes apparent that colleges offered far fewer redesigned courses than originally anticipated. Where most colleges planned to give students the choice between two to three different modalities in each subject area, they ultimately reported giving only one, sometimes two, options in English and reading specifically.

**Table 3. Initial Course Offerings by Modality, 2014-2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sand Dollar College</td>
<td>Compressed</td>
<td>Modularized</td>
<td>Compressed</td>
<td>Compressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seagull College</td>
<td>Modularized</td>
<td>Compressed</td>
<td>Compressed</td>
<td>Compressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seahorse College</td>
<td>Co-requisite</td>
<td>Compressed</td>
<td>Modularized</td>
<td>Compressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seaside College</td>
<td>Compressed</td>
<td>Compressed</td>
<td>Compressed</td>
<td>Compressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Shore College</td>
<td>Compressed</td>
<td>Modularized</td>
<td>Compressed</td>
<td>Compressed</td>
</tr>
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<td>Starfish College</td>
<td>Compressed</td>
<td>Contextualized</td>
<td>Co-requisite</td>
<td>Contextualized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surfside College</td>
<td>Compressed</td>
<td>Co-requisite</td>
<td>Compressed</td>
<td>Co-requisite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The compressed strategy was the most popular choice across all subjects and institutions. Five out of seven institutions initially offered compressed developmental education courses. Participants at Surfside College explained their decision to offer compressed delivery method for math courses as being rooted in student preference. Other colleges made instructional modality decisions based on students’ success rates and feasibility. Modularized courses were the second most popular choice among the selected institutions. The majority of institutions who used the modularized strategy embedded it into math courses. The contextualized strategy was the least popular modality choice among the institutions. Only one institution, Starfish College, initially integrated a contextualized strategy in developmental math, reading, and writing courses.

While the co-requisite modality was one of the least initially implemented, this modality was one that allowed students to complete both developmental education and college level courses in one semester. Colleges assumed this strategy would be attractive to students who were primarily on the cusp of needing remediation but could also be successful in college-level instruction. For example, Seagull College offered co-requisite MAT 1033 and ENC 1101 courses where students
could earn 4 credit hours. These courses provided face-to-face instruction for the college level component of the course (3 credit hours) and used compressed modularization for the developmental portion of the course (1 credit hour). For these co-requisite courses, students had two different instructors, one for college level and another for developmental instruction.

Unfortunately, administrators at Seagull also identified a conundrum of co-requisite courses, questioning what happens when students pass one component of the course and fail the other portion? Ironically, some faculty reported that most students would pass the college-level course and fail the DE portion. Faculty at Seagull explained that students often “forgot” about the DE portion as evidenced by (1) not completing the requirements (online modules mostly), or (2) not attending the face-to-face portion of the course. Both actions resulted in students failing that portion of the course, and not receiving the developmental credit. Fortunately for students, the developmental course was not required to progress to the next level course.

**Student Views of Developmental Education**

When asked about their experience in developmental education, optional or not, numerous students expressed gratitude for remedial courses and the instructors who taught them. According to the experiences of one Seahorse student,

> Personally, when I first came to [college], I didn't have the option to opt out. That came a year after. I thank god it did because my young self at 18, I would've been like, ‘Where do I need to sign out to opt out on this class?’ But, personally I'm glad I didn't have that option because I really, really needed that course. I'm not going to lie. I really needed that course to get back where I needed to be before I got into a college class.

A Seaside College student pointed out that developmental education had helped to build competency and confidence before venturing into college-level coursework:

> So when it comes down to developmental math, it did start out a little bit easy. It started out with like things that I learned like starting out in a freshman year in high school type class. But now that I've actually been in there… I remember every rule, every shortcut, and actually I feel a lot more confident, a lot more ready for the college algebra class next semester instead of going there this semester feeling like, ‘Wait, I used to know this. How come I can't remember this at all?’

A South Shore College student added that developmental education instructors provided support beyond academic preparation in a way that college-level instructors may not have been prepared to do:

> My first semester I was juggling two jobs, I was living at a shelter… I just said, ‘Look, like, you know, I'm not a typical student, I need some extra help… They were more than willing. They would push back dates… I mean with quizzes and stuff. If they were late, I was able to take it, you know, the next day… They would always work out something and in a typical class you will not get that kind of help. But I think because the teachers knew, ‘Hey, this is developmental ed…. We need to be a little more understanding to begin with because people are actually bringing in baggage and experience… I didn't
give up and they didn't give up because I didn't give up and I was able to pass these classes with like a B versus a D where I was headed. So the teachers made all the world difference.

Student Life Skills Courses

Before the passage of SB 1720, general practice among the seven colleges was to require developmental education students, particularly those needing two or more remedial courses, to enroll in a Student Life Skills (SLS) course. When enrollment declined in optional developmental education courses amongst exempt students, so did enrollment in the affiliated SLS courses. A South Shore administrator explained:

While the decline occurred in developmental education enrollment, a decline also occurred in our… college success course. Prior to SB 1720, if a student tested into two or more dev. ed. classes, then they were limited in which classes they could take at the college, and the college success course, the Life and Career Development course, those were open and advisors encouraged students, these are the ones you should take. Well, with dev. ed. [reform], which said you can do what you want, there was a sharp decline in enrollment in [the college success course].”

To mitigate perceived risks of SB 1720 to student success, approximately half of the colleges made the move to require all incoming, FTIC students to enroll in SLS courses. An advisor at Starfish College noted:

Partly due to this legislation—not 100 percent due to it—but we now require College Success of all students. So that, in a sense, was to address, you know, the issues that were being raised by this legislation, and that has really done a number of good things for us. It's freed us up at orientation to not feel like we have to accomplish everything that everybody says you ought to do at orientation, because we know that every one of them are going to be in College Success class. And we now have eight full-time College Success teachers, which those are wonderful people…That's just an added resource for when the start to struggle.

While content varied from college to college, participants generally agreed that College Success courses, or first year experiences courses as some now called them, included a primer in study skills, an introduction to library services, help navigating campus technology, some financial literacy, and career exploration. For some colleges, this reflected an expansion of the former curriculum. According to a Seaside College advisor, SLS previously “focused on about a dozen study skills before—everything from memory to, of course, time management and how to do math problems or goal setting—all, all these very specific skills.” In the wake of SB 1720, the advisor further explained that the course had been redesigned around four pillars: “(1) educational planning, (2) career development, (3) academic skills, and (4) college culture. And they’re really focusing on those four. So academic skills is still one of the pillars, but it used to be a much bigger part.”

When students were asked about the value of these courses, they provided mixed responses, ranging from it being an easy A, to tremendous and amazing. Reflecting this tension, an advisor
at Seaside College also reported, “Some say, ‘I don’t want to have to do that. That’s a baby class. Whatever… But, it’s not horrible.’” This exchange from advisors at South Shore College highlight their support of the course being required for students.

Advisor 1: It’s a really great course… I wish it was required.
Advisor 2: Yes.
Advisor 3: I do too.
Advisor 4: I think a lot of people wish it was required.

Colleges without a required SLS course embedded course content into other, college-level classes. Illustrating this point, a faculty member at Sand Dollar College noted, “I build a lot of SLS into [ENC]1101C also.”

**Instructional Strategies**

In the *Preparation* phase, faculty and administrators assumed more students would opt-out of developmental education and enroll in college-level courses. They were correct. According to the 2016 Developmental Education Accountability Report published by the Florida Department of Education, full-time enrollments in developmental education decreased by 44% between the 2007-2008 and 2014-2015 academic years, even considering rising student enrollments in the FCS more broadly. While the decline cannot be entirely attributed to SB 1720, the legislation certainly played an important role.

During the *Execution* phase, faculty members noted a corresponding rise in the number of exempted students in their college-level courses, many of whom they felt were underprepared for their coursework. In response, they instituted a variety of teaching strategies to support student learning and success. Typically, classes began with a diagnostic assessment which identified students’ academic strengths and weaknesses to help students develop individualized learning plans.

**Early Diagnostic Examinations and Essays**

In the first few weeks of the semester, college-level faculty administered diagnostic examinations and essays to assess students’ performance. These diagnostics were usually expanded versions of the diagnostics shared during advising sessions. Likewise, faculty found themselves often convincing students, much like advisors, of the validity of the diagnostic results and the potential implications for students’ success in their courses. Faculty reported that few students took their advice to enroll in a lower level course. According to a faculty member at South Shore College, “not every student took advantage of it, not every student participated, but I would send them the e-mail, send them a message, or if I could, talk to them after class.” Despite what scores on the diagnostic might indicate, faculty and advisors found that students often disregarded their recommendations and enrolled/stayed in college-level courses.

A faculty member at another institution used the diagnostic as a tool to identify students who needed additional academic support services. They explained:
What I tried to do is just communicate with my students early on. So, you know, some type of diagnostic exercise, and then it would become really clear to me who needed remedial help or needed to go to the writing lab.

Some faculty members would also encourage students who needed remedial help to visit learning centers or labs. According to a Seahorse College faculty member, “instead of sending them back [to a lower level course] right now, we're sending a lot to a writing lab, a writing center, and sending a lot of – recommending a lot of students. So, we've had to beef up our writing center a lot.”

**Modified Course Pacing**

Additional instructional strategies implemented by faculty included breaking course material into smaller units, or accelerating coursework in some cases. Faculty at one institution discussed slowing down the course to accommodate students who may not have been as prepared for the MAT 1033 course pace. These adjustments included modifying college-level course content or revising academic standards to account for these students. One faculty member pointed out the ways to slow down the pace to assist students in achieving learning progress:

[I] add in more examples of the material, and try at the, you know, in the middle and kind of at the end of this hour and 45-minute class period, have them working more examples, so that it would be less of a lecture kind of thing and more of involvement. So, it gave me more time to do that, which I think has helped a lot of the [MAT]1033 students.

**Increased Faculty Engagement**

In the *Execution* phase, faculty reported a few ways they sought to increase their engagement and access to students overall. Simply being available to students by offering more one-on-one consultations, expanding office hours, including conducting office hours in campus learning centers, making themselves and the course content more relatable by connecting knowledge with real world context, and using applied exercises in class were approaches faculty took to support student success.

An English faculty member at Sand Dollar College described her approach to teaching gateway courses as being informed by her experience teaching developmental courses:

I actually treat 1101 students a lot like developmental students. And to the extent that I very much—as much as I can—individualize the instruction. And I actually have them do a lot of in-class writing, even the regular 1101s.

One math faculty member at Seagull College explained:

I try to get students to work with me outside of class. Students that are struggling in class with a full class, you don’t really have time to work with a student. And especially in math, you know, it's a subject where they really need to be doing the problems, which I cannot have 20 students up on the board, you know. I have tried to go more towards some worksheet things during class, where I walk around with them.
No Adjustments

Some faculty members at Seahorse College acknowledged that they struggled to adjust their teaching strategies and college-level course content to account for students who they felt were underprepared. As an example, one faculty member discussed that they tried to keep the standard for their courses:

With this new population in our classes, we've had a lotta talk about trying to maintain our standards and keep our standards high so that we're not passing people just because the direction of the class.

Academic Support

With developmental education now optional for a sizable portion of FCS students, colleges expected there would be some need for increased academic support services beyond the walls of the classroom. In response, they proactively launched various programs during the Execution phase, such as free tutoring/mentoring programs, career counseling services, bootcamps, and mental health services. Some of the support programs were offered in the labs or learning centers, some were moved online (e.g., Smarthinking), and others were embedded within the class. It is worth mentioning that institutions made these support changes with no additional funds.

Peer Tutoring

Many institutions increased peer tutoring services after the passage of the SB 1720. Peer tutoring is a model whereby students support their peers, either in a tutoring center or as teaching assistants within the classroom. According to a faculty member at Seahorse College, “every faculty who it was their first semester teaching in the redesign had what we called an embedded tutor.” A staff member from the same college continued discussing the importance of the embedded tutors, “having an embedded tutor or not or learning assistant doesn't really impact the grade, but it impacts how many times you go see the tutor, which impacts your grade.”

Learning assistants, also known as embedded tutors, were also used to better support students through the reform process. When faculty at Sand Dollar College taught classes, “there was often a student tutor in the room or in the lab seeing with the faculty member kind of increasing that instructor support to student ratio and providing individualized learning support.”

Seahorse College’s embedded tutors in classes and lab tutors also “made real difference to students’ grades.” For instance, an advisor explained:

We embedded a tutor in the classroom that works with the faculty. They actually have one hour within the class that is hands-on work on math. Not lecture, just hands-on. They also pair up with advisors and the faculty gave us lists, very primitive in a way because it was a cell list of students with their grades in attendance, homework, and exams up to that point. And we contacted them. So, each advisor kind of got a class and we did it through all the campuses.
At Sand Dollar College, peer supplemental instruction also increased. One staff member described a shift away from traditional didactic lecture instruction to mini lectures, and a strong emphasis on peer tutoring and supplemental instruction.

Seaside College’s Highway for Success and Supplemental Instruction (SI) programs both depended on tutoring support. In the Highway for Success program, a student was paired with a tutor twice a week for six or eight weeks. The SI program was a “peer assisted weekly study session” program which supported courses where a large number of students drop or receive D/F grades.

Opportunities for peer tutoring extended beyond the classroom. Seahorse College’s TRIO Student Support Service (SSS) program made math, reading, and science peer tutors available to participating students. Students were given the opportunity to meet with peer mentors to get career advising, financial aid advisement, and transfer assistance. As one administrator mentioned:

The majority of our TRIO students are students that are dev. ed. in some cases. Learning resources has done a great job, and this shows some of the data in terms of the amount of students that go there seeking help. And, of course, they have additional tutoring embedded, classroom, tutors in the lab, et cetera, to support the students that actually show a need for this. Some show a need, but they don't manifest it, but those who want, we have this.

**Online Support**

In addition to in-person learning assistance, many institutions also used technology to expand their academic resource offerings. For example, institutions like Seagull College provided Smarthinking – an online academic resource for tutoring. Institutions also created online labs or online career counseling services to support students whenever they needed help. As one South Shore College advisor mentioned, “I think initially the academic folks tried a lot of different ways of sort of giving students things that would support them to be prepared, extra labs, extra software, this and that.” As an example, a student at Seahorse College shared that, “when I took ENC1101 and 1102, the professors they had… the online, the Pearson programs as well that would provide, like, if you had an essay and you needed to proofread it.”

**Collaboration**

Many of the efforts institutions executed could not have been implemented if not for the collaboration and training colleges used to support student success inside and outside of the classroom. During the *Execution* phase, as many students chose to bypass developmental education courses and move into college-level courses, collaboration emerged amongst: developmental- and college-level faculty, faculty and advisors, and faculty and Learning Centers and other support departments.

**Collaboration between Different Groups of Faculty**
After the passage of the legislation, more collaboration happened amongst developmental education faculty and college level faculty. For example, at Starfish College, developmental education faculty met with college-level instructors to identify what students needed to know upon successfully completing developmental coursework. Administrators found that the faculty working together “helped all of us to make sure we had a little bit better alignment between all the programs too.”

**Early Alert**

Another way that colleges sought to support their students was through the expansion of early alert systems. These systems were put in place to help college personnel better identify students facing challenges and setbacks and intervene accordingly. As a part of the process, faculty would submit an electronic message, or alert, in some form or fashion that would be reviewed by other faculty and campus personnel in the academic support and advising offices. Ideally, students would then be connected with the appropriate services and supports for their situation.

While early alert systems were not present on every campus at this point in time, they were widespread. Participants at Seagull College, Seahorse College, Seaside College and Starfish College all explicitly discussed how faculty and advisors collaborated with each other under early alert system. As an example, Seahorse College used an early alert system with varying levels, or tiers, of alerts. According to an administrator, more general alerts included “things like simply financial aid alerts, registration alerts… ‘Your GPA has gone down, go see somebody.’ ‘We notice you didn’t register for the next term. You seem to be veering off your pathway.’” Other, higher level alerts pertained specifically to student progress in “15 courses that have very high dropout or withdrawal rates.” Students who struggled in these courses were connected with academic support services for additional assistance.

Across institutions that implemented early alert systems, a mix of communication methods were used. Some colleges had designated staff assigned to early alerts, while others believed that the responsibility should be shared. Illustrating the latter perspective, an administrator at Seahorse College noted that “it’s everybody’s job… to do alerts or interventions to drive student success longer-term.”

**Collaboration Present in Labs and Learning Centers**

Furthermore, faculty collaborated with writing/reading centers and labs more frequently. Faculty at Seahorse College teamed up with lab coordinators and held office hours in the labs. A collaboration between faculty members and the learning center at Seagull College also developed. For instance, the academic support center personnel noted that their understanding of instructor expectations for learning was crucial so that tutors could better assist students in their assignments. Some faculty used their time in the learning labs to work alongside tutors, so that they could communicate with tutors and outline their expectations about the course assignments. Since more collaboration was observed among campus personnel, related professional development and training which could better enhance the collaboration was important to the successful implementation of SB 1720.
Professional Development and Training

Professional development and training in the *Execution* phase was a continuation of that offered during the *Preparation* phase. Continued professional development and training was provided for advisors, faculty members, and other campus personnel, including learning resources personnel and lab managers. At the same time, professional development and training was viewed by participants as a way to minimize the negative impacts of the bill on student success.

Since each institution described a unique student population and institutional context, it is not surprising that they conducted different types of professional trainings following SB 1720 in order to help campus personnel understand collaborative advising, restructure instructional modalities, and comprehend the purpose and specific provisions of the legislation. Starfish College offered professional development and training for all full-time faculty and part-time faculty, to “introduce them to our own homegrown system.”

Seahorse College’s training taught staff members at the college how to “help students to take notes, how to avoid conflict with the students, how to ask the right questions…, how to attract students to lab, [and] how to communicate effectively with the students and with instructors.” Seahorse College participants viewed their professional development and training as unique because it “created a culture of trainers, so instead of having to bring people from the outside, you have people that know the culture, know the reality.”

Instructors at another institution—Sand Dollar College—identified the lack of training for gateway faculty as an opportunity for improvement, especially in light of their concern that students would be bypassing developmental education and opting-in to gateway courses. A faculty member explained:

I think it's not necessarily giving dev-ed instructors more professional development, though we're always open to know and learn new things, and go to conferences, and try to be better. But if students are going to skip dev-ed courses, we need that training for gateway courses.

Regarding the training among advisors, advisors at South Shore College “had lots of training that was done during the regular work hours.” In an advisor’s words, “we had all day like retreat/workshop, we've had several of those, staff meetings, you know, every week we would touch on a different thing.” South Shore College’s training taught advisors to create checklists to ensure they were providing a holistic picture to students when they provide advising service. Sand Dollar College provided professional development and training to advisors via webinars and in-person sessions about developmental and college-level course options, as well as academic and career advising.

**Perspectives on SB 1720**

In this phase, responses to SB 1720 reflected a continuum of views from perceptions of the legislation as a “terrible idea” to understanding legislator’s reasoning for the new policy. Participants described emotional reactions, including anger at legislators, for sadness students who might not be successful, and tears for adjunct faculty who may lose their jobs. The
uncertainty about the legislation seemed grounded in campus personnel’s on the ground view of students’ varying levels of academic preparedness for college-level coursework, for which developmental education is often meant to serve as an equalizer.

Some faculty and staff members took issue with the lack of consultation from faculty, or higher education administrators, those on the “front line.” One faculty member noted the lack of consultation even with FCS institution presidents.

The sponsor of that bill didn't go to the committee of the Florida College System presidents and say, what's going on, and what can we do for you, what do you need? He just imposed this. There was-- it's an absurd way to do things, is to not start with the grassroots and say, what is happening at your institutions and how can we address that?

In contrast, other participants expressed excitement and optimism at the possible benefits to students, noting the increased variety of courses and modalities that provided student options.

And yet many other administrators and faculty members shared attitudes of “wait and see” about the long-term effects of the legislation. Connecting all responses to the legislation was an underlying commitment to student success. There was a shared understanding among faculty and administrators that developmental education needed reworking, however, many remained unconvinced that SB 1720 was indeed the solution. One Starfish College administrator remarked, “We were already doing a lot of reform…We all recognized that there were problems with Dev Ed.”

An Seahorse College administrator admitted:

So we knew that we needed to do something different, which is why all of this redesign work was underway even before the legislation came down because everybody looked at that data and said this is not acceptable. So there was a cost. I mean, there was a – kids were getting stuck in dev ed and they weren't getting out and so, you know, the idea of thinking about instructing them differently or changing the way we teach them, or moving to a modular format as opposed to you start at the same place when you come back next semester that you started this semester. The faculty and the leadership team had already decided that that was something that needed to be done. I think we thought at the time we were gonna be able to do it gradually.

Many faculty and staff members also expressed the belief that legislators and those who crafted the legislation did not fully comprehend its likely impact. One Surfside College faculty member supported the legislation, but had misgivings about the consequences for students, commenting, “There is a rationale for it [the legislation], but …the problem stays on the students not knowing things, but that's the wrong issue.”

Summary

Overall, in the Execution phase, college personnel anticipated the needs for increasing academic support, advising service, and collaboration. Participants also began witnessing a shift in focus from developmental education courses to college-level courses. Different institutions reorganized advising systems, restructured academic resources, and launched various academic support
programs to help students persist and succeed. However, during this phase, challenges such as faculty and advisors’ increasing workload and the lack of student usage of academic support services arose, among others. These challenges influenced changes in policy and practice at the institutions we visited. We discuss these challenges and the ways that institutions responded to them in the Modification phase in the next section.
Modification: Learning from Experiences

Defining Modification

The previous phases of Preparation and Execution focused on how the selected seven institutions readied themselves for and implemented SB 1720. Their initial implementation efforts posed some challenges and opportunities for improvement, and institutions made changes accordingly. In the Modification phase of Florida’s developmental education reform, from fall 2015-spring 2018, we identify the challenges institutions faced after the initial implementation of SB 1720 and describe the ways they responded to those challenges.

Overall the implementation of SB 1720 brought about significant workload increases for advisors, faculty, and other campus personnel. Despite the increased workload for all involved, student enrollment and success data provided institutions with confirmation that their strategies were indeed facilitating success for many student groups, or highlighted areas for further improvement for other student populations. These data guided institutions’ approaches to resolving the challenges that arose. Changes in perspectives regarding SB 1720, and institutions’ focus shifting from first-time-in-college students and developmental education reform to college-level success led the seven colleges to innovate in many areas and make adjustments to advising, curriculum and instruction, and academic support.

Intake and Orientation

Implementation of new intake and orientation procedures was fairly front loaded in the Preparation and Execution phases. By the Modification phase, few campus personnel spoke about these topics in our focus groups. Generally, once systems were put into place in these areas, few modifications were needed. However, there was some discussion of refinement, particularly at colleges who started with manual sorting. By the second year of implementation, at least two institutions—Starfish and Sand Dollar Colleges—found a way to automate their manual sorting processes, although the new systems were not foolproof. As such, an advisor at Starfish College reported, “we're still eyeballing in making the exemption.”

Advising Modifications

During this period, colleges continued to refine advising processes and related materials to ensure advisors had the necessary information to make the best recommendations and students could make the best course-taking decisions. In this section, we call attention to institutions’ modifications to the advising process in response to the challenge of advisors’ increased workload that emerged during the Execution phase.

Managing an Increased Advising Workload

Numerous campus personnel acknowledged the increased workload of advisors following the initial implementation of SB 1720. A faculty member at Starfish College noted, “We only have eight [full time advisors] … So, there’s absolutely no way that eight people can touch 12,000 students in that meaningful way during [an advising] crunch, right?” The stressful workload continued to be a challenge to effective advising at Seaside College as well. In year five, one of
Seaside College’s advisors said “having a ratio of 600 to 1 advisor to students, that’s a barrier right there.”

Seagull College reported a similar challenge. Spending more time with students gave advisors “the opportunity to have a conversation about their strengths and weaknesses and mapping their plans for future semesters.” However, as the number of students increased and the required advising content expanded, advisors struggled with the limited amount of time they could dedicate to each appointment.

Students at multiple institutions discussed this challenge as well. Two Surfside college students noted that advising sessions required a long wait, particularly in the early years of implementation:

Student 1: It takes too long when you go to them. You sit for too long.
Student 2: It's terrible. You have to [wait for] two hours...

After waiting for two hours, the students were left dissatisfied with the level of attention they received and the accuracy of advisors’ recommendations. Because advisors “are seeing like 40 students in a day,” a Surfside College student felt that “it is a little too difficult for them to realize, ‘Let's see what you need specifically.’ They just generalize you… because they have so many.” For some, this resulted in their enrolling in the wrong class or a course that would not transfer to their desired four-year college. For others, this oversight resulted in signing up for a redesigned developmental education course that they did not fully understand. According to another Surfside College student, “My advisor, I went to him and he signed me up for this [compressed developmental] class. I wasn't even aware that it ended in like six weeks.”

To manage the increased workload of advising, institutions attempted to find other solutions to improve the advising process. A couple of colleges increased the number of dedicated advisors. Recognizing the need for more advisors, Surfside College used grant funds to hire more than 60 new advisors over a three-year period. Starfish College also hired new advisors, on a much smaller scale, by reallocating salary dollars previously allocated for an administrative position. According to an advisor:

I guess the initial impact of [SB 1720] was a huge backlog of transcripts, unacceptable turnaround time in terms of getting them evaluated. What we've done differently is we took an administrator's position, and we did not fill it, and we hired two more frontline people… The workload was just [unmanageable]… We were quickly training and roping in all kinds of people.

South Shore College turned to technology, which involved making advising video modules available to students online. An advisor at that college explained:

We always try to strike a really good balance, if we can, between sort of prescriptive and transactional models to a developmental advising model. It's hard to do that, though, in 20 minutes or less. So, we have tried to leverage technology so that... when [students]
come to advising, they're hearing actually about their choices the second time. Because they've at least heard it through the videos of the modules the first time.

Surfside College also leveraged technology by implementing a grant-funded, appointment-scheduling system to better manage the flow of students through the advising office. One advisor reported that the assignment of students to advisors happened once a term before, but the new system changed it to an overnight process. With the new appointment-scheduling system they “could have 303 people have an appointment scheduled [laughs]… That changes the student experience.” In year one, students were critical of advisors and the wait time required to meet with them. These comments disappeared entirely by years four and five, likely because the issue was resolved by the appointment-scheduling system.

**Emphasizing Student Options**

During *Execution*, campus personnel from several institutions expressed that placement tests and developmental education courses, for those students presumed to be academically underprepared, were critical to students’ success in college-level courses. Therefore, advisors spent much of their time persuading exempt students to take optional placement tests and developmental education courses, as appropriate.

In time, however, such opinions about placement tests and developmental education courses began to change at some colleges, largely in part due to initial data showing students’ success in college-level courses. For example, advisors at South Shore College no longer focused on persuading students to enroll in remedial courses; instead, their philosophy shifted to supporting students in collecting all the necessary information to make the best enrollment decisions possible. One advisor explained that:

> Advising isn’t paternalistic. It isn’t ... driving students towards a decision [that] they must make or trying to convince them of the merits of the prep courses, but giving students a really strong sort of ability to analyze where they're at.

Similarly, an advisor at Sand Dollar College noted, “I don't push them one way or the other, but I try to give them a lot of information and I share even some of my own experience of going to college and having to take the college placement test.”

It is worth noting that this philosophical shift was not universal. To demonstrate the importance of self-selecting into developmental education, colleges experimented with a number of tactics. One was to identify for students “worst case scenarios” or larger consequences of failure in college-level courses. For example, an advisor at Surfside College reported:

> Some of our advisors got kind of creative in how they might encourage a student to assess, you know. Students who are on financial aid, the stakes are higher than ever with financial aid about how much wiggle room you have and how quickly you can wind yourself up on financial aid suspension. So, they were trying the strategies of… ‘Considering this, you might want to see where you're at to make sure you are ready, ‘cause if you are unsuccessful this [financial aid suspension] could be the result of that.
Curriculum and Instruction Modifications

After continuous formative assessment of the strengths and challenges of initial execution, colleges identified relevant modifications to strengthen curriculum and instruction as part of the reform. Specifically, campus personnel emphasized that administrators used data to drive decisions regarding developmental education course modalities, college-level course adjustments, and other course policies. In this section, we explain the rationales for institutional decision-making and describe course changes in developmental and college-level courses. Institutions were challenged to respond to decreasing developmental education course enrollments, increased college-level course enrollments, and the resulting challenge that having students of mixed preparation in the same course posed for instruction.

Changing Developmental Education Course Modalities

Student enrollment and success data were used to guide institutions’ decisions on reducing or increasing course sections, and determining which modalities seemed to work best for students. Over time campus personnel commonly reported that the number of developmental courses were scaled back to reflect shrinking enrollment in developmental education. Illuminating this point, an administrator at Seagull College reported,

We are seeing – our developmental education enrollment numbers are… low. I know some of our development reading and writing class sections are low single digits. Which is great for the students, because they're almost getting one on one attention. But it creates some challenges fiscally for us to support classes with that low enrollment.

For this reason, another administrator at the same college noted, “We've significantly cut back developmental math classes. I don't think we have an in-person one here…It's online.” Faculty at this college also described responding to small enrollments by conducting directed individual study courses with students who needed specific courses, but there were not enough students to make a full class.

An administrator at Seahorse College explained how their college’s approach to necessary modifications was based on “trial and error based on students' success,” largely dependent on student preferences as reflected in the courses they chose:

And we noticed that students were not registering for the modular courses. That would be the last course that they would –‘No, I don't want to, don't put me in there.’ Especially the more traditional student, the – well, I would say the older student, the student who is returning, they don't – they want traditional, face-to-face courses. They don't want –. And some of the students wanted longer courses. They didn't want eight-week accelerated courses, which we could not offer 16-week courses, that was one of the things we couldn't do. They had to be accelerated or modular, or a co-requisite, which we discovered was not a good idea either because if you can't read and write, you really should not be in [ENC] 1101 with Reading [00]7. So that wasn't a good idea either.

An administrator at another institution—Starfish College—similarly noted that students “have got all of these choices, you know. They had this wonderful six hour course,” however “students
wouldn't sign up for it.” The few students who did take developmental education courses, either because they were non-exempt or opt-in, preferred specific some modalities over others. As a Starfish College administrator added:

> At this institution, we tried to create something for every mode because we wanted to give students all the different offerings. So a big change for us has been that we found that students don’t really want all those different offerings. So things like our modular classes, and our combined [co-requisite] courses haven't worked. So although they're still in our catalog and I even put them on the schedule every semester, they don’t make [due to low enrollment]. So what we're really down to is offering 16 weeks contextualized courses is pretty much what we do. We're still trying to get the other ones to work, but students, for whatever reasons, don’t want to take them.

An administrator at Surfside College admitted that the reform “forced” institutions to review their practices and “experiment” with new strategies. They explained:

> I also believe that it kind of forced us to look at modalities differently. When we started to roll out all the different types of way we were teaching the classes with the contextualized and the compressed and all those different things, it did, I believe, allowed us to experiment a little bit more on those different modalities to see how it would impact our students.

The following tables detail the developmental education strategies that the seven institutions provided during the Modification period for each subject. Although several colleges added new modalities between fall 2015 and spring 2018, course offerings were largely stable over time. Also worth noting is that compressed courses continued to be the most prevalent developmental strategy offered.

**Mathematics.** For developmental math (Table 4), two colleges added new strategies. Seahorse College added the compressed strategy, while Seaside College added the co-requisite strategy starting in 2016-2017. South Shore College implemented the modularized strategy for developmental math in 2016-2017, but dropped it in 2017-2018.

**Reading.** For developmental reading (Table 5), colleges showed significant variance regarding the modalities offered. Seagull College added the co-requisite strategy for developmental reading starting in 2016-2017, while Seahorse College dropped modularized reading in 2017-2018. South Shore College attempted the modularized strategy for DE reading in 2016-2017, but dropped it after a short one-year implementation in 2017-2018. At Seaside College, they replaced the compressed strategy with modularization, starting in 2016-2017.

At Seahorse College, faculty described their reasoning for modifying reading and writing courses, noting students’ dissatisfaction resulted in faculty discontinuing modularized courses and only offering compressed course. They noted:

> They stopped registering for them and it was only if that was the only class left would they pick it up. So we dropped the modularization and we just did the accelerated and that seemed to help a lot.
Table 4. Instructional Modalities 2015-2018, Math

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<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
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<th>2015-16</th>
<th>2016-17</th>
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Table 5. Instructional Modalities 2015-2018, Reading

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* Surfside College only offered reading as part of an Integrated Reading and Writing course

**Writing.** Regarding the developmental writing (Table 6), most colleges added new strategies: Seagull College and Seaside College added the co-requisite strategy starting in 2016-2017, and Seahorse College also began to implement co-requisite starting in 2017-2018. Additionally, South Shore College added modularization for developmental writing starting in 2016-2017.
Seaside College described their new co-requisite strategy as students completing the DE portion of the course for four weeks and using the remaining 12 weeks of the semester for the college-level composition course. According to an administrator at Seaside College, this new strategy was “giving the students exactly what they need in that amount of time so they can get more done.”

**Table 6. Instructional Modalities 2015-2018, Writing**

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<td>Surfside College</td>
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*Surfside College only offered writing as part of an Integrated Reading and Writing course*

Likewise, faculty at Seahorse College created options for students to complete both their developmental writing and college level English course in the same semester. Many institutions reported these courses as compressed courses in either the reading or writing category. A faculty member described the collaboration with developmental and college-level faculty required to institute this change:

> We totally redid our schedules so that if a student was in the lower level the first eight weeks, they could go to the upper level the next eight weeks, and if they were in reading they could go to here or here and it took a lot of stickies on a wall to make sure that everything worked out. We – at the time, the English and college prep departments were separate and we partnered with them to make sure we could offer an eight-week 1101 if a student finished everything development ed, they could move here for the next eight weeks. So it was a collaboration between the two departments to get everything done. And then as we furthered into it, is when we developed the combination [co-requisite] course, the upper level combination course.

**Concerns about Compression and Acceleration**

One of the most significant challenge to instruction, shared by faculty across institutions, was the decrease in instructional time to cover developmental education learning objectives in accelerated courses. Due to a compressed schedule, faculty reported that some course objectives
had to be sacrificed for the sake of others. At Surfside College, for instance, one faculty member lamented that there was no longer time to cover soft skills, like time management and note taking. A faculty member at Sand Dollar College expressed concern that she no longer has time to teach manual calculation skills and, as a result, now allows students to use calculating devices instead. This faculty member elaborated on her concerns, emphasizing the difficulty in finding time to cover all of the course objectives set by the college and the state:

We want to ask the state [of Florida]… ‘What are those [course] objectives that we're going to agree that [students] know? Because, right now we have all of these objectives on the table. So we would like to know, specifically, out of that bunch of objectives, what are the must-haves to go to the next course level…? Our concern was all of these objectives that are being crammed into a short amount of time, are they all needed? How are they taught? How much detail do you need?

To accommodate this new pace, faculty had to reallocate their classroom time. Illustrating this point, a different faculty member at the same college shared how in-class reading coursework has now become homework:

It's definitely a lot faster. Our curriculum has remained the same because students still need to reach those critical reading skills and strategies in order to be successful when they get to their humanities classes and their college-level classes. Work that was completed in class is now completed outside of class.

Changing College-Level Courses

Although SB 1720 focused on developmental education redesign, modifications in developmental courses, both curricular and delivery focused, had implications for college-level courses as well. As a Seaside faculty member explained:

 Basically, we have all the students coming to us. They are not prepared because of high school itself, the public school system and on top of that they were just given a piece of paper that says, ‘Okay leave.’ And because they have that high school paper that says, ‘Leave,’ that's a Florida high school diploma and now they can take college-level math, college-level English.

With more students bypassing developmental courses and enrolling in college-level course, institutions had to change several aspects in college-level courses to account for students’ varying levels of preparation. One administrator from Seahorse Community College reported that “I have faculty members who come in and are very frustrated because they believe that the students are not prepared to read the materials for that class.” Specifically, faculty members found it challenging to find ways to make their course material and activities appropriate for students of varying academic levels. In response, the colleges “tweaked” different components—student classwork loads, academic supports, and curricular strategies and content — to serve students better.

Faculty also noted the additional work they invested if they wanted students to be successful: spending more time on grading by giving students extensive feedback, providing one-on-one
tutoring in office hours, gathering additional resources and tools to support student learning, etc. An exchange between two faculty members illustrates this point.

Faculty One: …I think across all disciplines everyone's taking a little bit more – paying a little more attention to helping students with just little things, time management, organization, resources that are available to them, things like that.

Faculty Two: I think it's become more of when you're teaching, especially an entry level course or developmental course, you have to put those in there. You have to discuss is there a reading issue, is there a writing issue, is there a study habits issue or time management issue? I think it's – we've gone away from you just don't understand the content to it could be a plethora of reasons and let's connect you to resources and things that can help you…

Despite the intentional efforts at modifying curriculum and modalities to suit student learning, questions regarding rigor of college-level courses arose. One administrator at Surfside College admitted that due to increased academic supports, some exempt students could in fact be successful in college-level courses without developmental prerequisites. However, these students’ success did not override the concern for other students unable to meet the demands of the course.

My concern is still whether or not the rigor of our front-door courses has at all been impacted. I think it's hard to quantify that but it's also hard to have the conversations and see the lower level students in there and not wonder what can you do, 'cause faculty can only do so much.

Surfside College was an early implementer of the reform, and by January 2015 were making modifications to their courses. A faculty member at Surfside admitted having to “water down the curriculum” and also explained the additional labor faculty completed in their preparation for teaching.

…it's been extremely difficult because we have had to design the course so quickly. Even though we had training last year, we had to come up with a whole curriculum. We had to come up with the text book, and the Blackboard components, so it took lots and lots of extra hours after the teaching day to create all of this stuff. I know there was a committee that worked on that, but even after we had the shell each teacher has to put in their own components, so it was a lot of work. And, then we have revamped it a couple of times since January, so each time it's revamped it's like recreating the whole course again. It's been a wild ride. I have never experienced anything like this in my 40 years of teaching, but that's the way it's been.

Given the overall college-level course changes, institutions noted different modifications for certain subjects. In the next section we identify course adjustments and instructional strategies for mathematics and English.

**Mathematics**
At Seahorse College, one faculty administrator admitted the changes made were necessary improvements. They noted, “There's continuous change. I mean that's the thing of improvement. It's only been three years, so by no means will I say that when we first started we had the perfect product…” They went on to describe the revisions made to the MAT 1033 curriculum.

… I mean we have one syllabus and we revamped the syllabus completely. We tried to get it down to what we call mastery sessions. We try to get down to the correct amount of mastery sessions, which are basically in-class learning activities, what's the right amount to have in a 16-week period? So we definitely changed that amount.

They continued explaining the questions that guided their curricular changes:

How do we do an early intervention plan? We're still trying to correct that to the best of our abilities. How do we make the students aware in time of what things they need to do to be successful in the course? So things are constantly changing. How much work do we give the students? Was the homework too much? Do we give too much worksheets? Did we give too many reviews? What's the right size for the number of reviews – right size, the number of questions that should be on a review? How do we implement the lab into this strategy?

The faculty member described making small modifications at a time to identify which course components worked and which did not, and to determine the impact of these revisions on student success. Other interventions had been introduced in MAT 1033 at Seahorse College, including new course pathways, early diagnostics, embedded learning assistants, and Math Enrichment sections for failing students, and such changes rebounded the low passing rate in MAT 1033 after SB 1720.

Another institution, Seagull College, changed MAT1033 from three credits to four credits. An administrator highlighted this change as helpful because of the reduced lecture and added involvement, noting. “With the extra credit hour, students have additional time for to catch up.”

**Writing**

Faculty members at Starfish College proposed offering conference-intensive strategies for ENC 1101. In these classes, students would have “a certain number of conferences with the instructor so there can be some one-on-one time”. They were looking to improve the success rates in gateway courses, especially the ENC 1101, through the strategy of conference-intensive classes.

**Employing Instructional Strategies for Student Success**

Faculty identified a number of instructional strategies they employed in and outside of the classroom to support student success. Some of these strategies were also identified in the Execution phase as initially helpful. We found that both developmental education and college-level faculty implemented the following strategies in their teaching:

- One-on-one meetings with instructors
- Slowing the pace
• Using content management systems to disseminate additional course content and material
• Creating instructional videos
• Pencast lectures
• Worksheets
• Exam study guides
• Creating more practical written assignments (e.g., resume, scholarship essay)
• Flipped classrooms

As one faculty member at Starfish College explained, “I have completely flipped my classroom where there’s no formal instruction in the classroom. They watch a video, then they come to class and making posters.” They noted that the learning outcomes in her flipped classroom learning were promising: “The students like it. They were successful.” Even still, the faculty member felt that, “at the end of the day, there’s just not a bunch of [institutional] support” for instructional innovation like this.”

College-level course faculty embedded time management, notetaking, and other soft skills into their courses. Some institutions developed mindset-focused interventions to help students address psychosocial barriers like belongingness. One institution, South Shore College, used Title III funding to pay for their mindset focused interventions. Similarly, at Sand Dollar College administrators planned to use their Title III grant funds to focus on developmental education and college-level mathematics instruction.

Modifying Other College Programs

Developmental and college-level math and English faculty were not the only faculty responsive to the shifting composition of their courses. At Seagull College, one major changed their program plan to respond new student course-taking patterns. The program’s Department Chair described organizing the courses so that students who needed to complete developmental courses could do so and remain on pace with their cohort. They explained:

I consciously made the change because I think that the students do better if they're doing that cohort approach. And the problem also is when they don't have those placement test scores, I come up with an education plan, but half my students couldn't follow it because they didn't have the prerequisites to get into the initial – I think when I sort of inherited the program, the idea was they would take biology and English comp 1 and college algebra that first semester, but most of my students couldn't follow that plan, because they didn't have those placement test scores to put them there.

Similarly, Seaside College also added classes to serve lower-level English language learners better. As an administrator explained, “for a while we didn't really serve the population of the lower level English language learners so now, we're adding classes to better serve that population… [and] expanding our program for non-English speakers.” According to an administrator, “we're actually in the phase right now of adding more sections, adding actually more classes to our EAP offerings.”
Academic Support Modifications

In the Modification phase, we noted that colleges launched various academic supports to better meet the needs of students impacted by SB 1720. In examining their enrollment and success data, colleges identified specific student populations that required targeted academic support. In addition to generally supporting all students, the colleges paid special attention to those enrolled in college-level math courses, Black students, English language learners, and students with intellectual disabilities. They also worked to better advertise these resources after noticing that students were hesitant to engage in help-seeking behavior.

Supporting College-Level Math Courses

There were several participants who identified academic support innovation focusing on math. Looking at the institutional data and success rate, Sand Dollar College recognized that “math courses were the ones in which students did … the worst in terms of performance, and in particular the dev ed math and then the gateway MAT 1033 … those were some of the courses here that had among the lowest overall success rates.” Therefore, Sand Dollar College established a pilot program in 2017 to offer supplemental instruction (SI) for high-risk students in Intermediate Algebra (MAT 1033). Preliminary data collected by the college on SI appeared promising. As an administrator indicated, “it has definitely suggested that if students participated in our SI sessions that they performed better than non-SI participants.” The administrator continued,

Some of the feedback from the students was that they felt like the SI sessions offered them the opportunity to see the material through different lenses and perspectives, and to ask those questions that they didn't think about when they were in class. And so they liked the collaborative nature of an SI session and the opportunity to piggyback off of each other in terms of that interaction. So we're very hopeful about the possibility for SI at this institution.

Starfish College launched a center for college-level math courses. An administrator, describing the center, said that it offered students “workshops throughout the week that will be refresher tips for things that the students should already know, in addition to things that are currently going on and what they can expect following week in their class.” To facilitate this work, faculty members at Starfish College spent four hours per week engaged with students through the program.

Supporting Specific Student Populations

In the Execution phase, FCS institutions focused more on students directly impacted by the legislation, namely exempt students. In Modification, they shifted their sights to other under representative student groups: Black students, economically disadvantaged students, students with learning and intellectual disabilities, and English language learners. These student populations were not the intended target of the legislation, but were identified by institutions as differentially impacted by the bill. After the first year of implementation, colleges recognized unintended consequences in the form of challenges faced by these student groups, and made appropriate modifications and adjustments to address their emergent needs.
Black Students

Six out of seven institutions viewed Black students as significantly challenged by the developmental reform efforts. Institutions pointed out that Black students lagged behind their White, Latinx, and Asian counterparts in all disciplines of developmental education, especially in math. For example, data reported in the Developmental Education Accountability report by Seahorse College indicated that the success rate for Black students in developmental mathematics was 4.6% lower than for White students. At Sand Dollar College, Black students’ success rate in developmental mathematics was 55.1%, which was lower than that reported for White students (69.9%), Latinx Students (70.5%) and Asian students 76.7%.

In order to address the challenge, different institutions established or expanded targeted academic support programs. For instance, South Shore College’s program was designed specifically for Black males. According to a student, “it was made because the college [had] seen that there was a decline in Black males graduating, so they needed a program for black males specifically.” In the program, students conducted study sessions together and shared resources with one another (like rental books, etc.), in order to improve graduation rates. Similarly, Seahorse College initiated a similar Black male initiative which intended to increase support for this group of students by inspiring leadership, fostering community and promoting development through mentoring.

Economically Disadvantaged Students

Surfside College implemented a new STEM boot camp in year four, and they modified their college transition program. The program previously targeted Black students, but then Surfside College “expanded it and looked at it at low socio-economic, first generation, and so a lot of the students we have, it’s a very diverse population.” Advisors called this modification a “true intentional wrap-around service to students.”

In addition, Sand Dollar College partnered with local business and had a gear-up program and TRIO program for underrepresented racial/ethnic and economically disadvantaged student populations. Advisors worked with other department such as diversity and social change, in order to help these minority student populations to connect with resources. They also provided computer access and internet access for those students who did not have that at home.

English Language Learners

Regarding English language learners, administrators in Surfside College mentioned that academic support services did not serve non-native speakers well before, and so they made some adjustments and provided grammar boot camps and writing workshops for these students beginning in year four of data collection. Similarly, Seaside College added more classes to their “English for Academic Purposes” program.

Students with Intellectual/Learning Disabilities

Seagull College’s Project Access program was implemented for individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID), learning disabilities (LD), and autism. The Project Access program was initially
a non-credit program, but was later modified to a credit-bearing program which directly fed into a pathway for an associate’s degree in art or science. According to an administrator, “They have milestones and completion points along the way.” Students who enrolled in Project Access program were equipped with academic mentors in this program. In an administrator’s words, “I know at least in one class I'm aware of, there's an embedded tutor that is in the actual class with them [students with intellectual disabilities].”

**Improving Early Alert Systems to Better Support Student Learning**

The initial implementation of SB 1720 required an increase in the cooperation between advisors and faculty members. Some colleges accomplished this via early alerts systems, which continued into the *Modification* period.

Unfortunately, there were barriers to full cooperation between advisors and faculty members at several colleges, including South Shore College. With more seemingly underprepared students enrolled in college-level courses, faculty members reported a growing number of student names being submitted for additional support. Advisors then needed to spend more time than usual going through the reports and reaching out to individual students. Furthermore, students did not always follow up with the advisors’ initial outreach. For this reason, it was difficult for advisors to get back to all of the faculty’s concerns in time. One advisor said that “I feel that sometimes I'm not doing very well with the project support because I cannot get back to all of these faculty members on everything.” These circumstances generated some distrust between advisors and faculty at South Shore College. For example, faculty members were concerned about whether the feedback they wrote really got read by students or whether advisors really scheduled conversations with students. Advisors, on the other hand, believed that there was lacking communication between faculty member and students to solve some of the problems being submitted as early alerts in the classroom.

Another challenge was underuse of the system. At Starfish College, not all campus personnel used the early alert system to its fullest capacity. According to an administrator:

> We have instituted… an early alert system, but it also is a communications system, and every faculty member is expected to be giving frequent feedback to students on how they are doing, and they are expected to be taking attendance and recording it every day. I said ‘expected to’ because our data show that there are a lot of them still not doing it.

Students also failed to take advantage of the work being invested in them by faculty and advisors. Two advisors shared their struggles with the early alert system in this way:

**Advisor 1:** We would try to contact the students, and as you can imagine, the students that get early alerts aren't reading their e-mails, they're not responding to any of your efforts to get them in here.

**Advisor 2:** Or it's kind of out of the blue and they weren't really expecting it, so we would get – we would send out a couple different forms of communication with them and we'd get a, ‘What are you talking about?’
Starfish College implemented a new early alert system in year four of data collection to solve these various issues. The revised system allowed faculty members to submit different types of alerts for different campus personnel to manage—“academic affairs or counseling or whatever.” The new early alert system fostered better collaboration between faculty members and staff because updates were sent as the situation progressed. For example, when students at risk of failing a course were identified, the learning center staff would call them, and then report back about the interaction to faculty members.

**Encouraging Students to Use Academic Support Services**

Even though different institutions developed various academic support programs to support students, all of the institutions pointed out a common challenge - students did not consistently take advantage of those resources. Faculty and advisors alike complained that although they strongly suggested that students at risk for failure visit campus Learning Commons or Learning Centers, they reported that students did not go. One faculty member at Seagull College said, “They don't come, unless I force them to.” Participants at South Shore College described a similar struggle with motivating students to participate in different types of academic support programs/services. One advisor stressed, “They just flat out rejected it. There was free offerings, extra tutorials, this and that, students did not show up.” A Starfish College student, sharing her perspective, admitted:

I haven't really used a campus resource like I should… In my college success class, they're always like ‘There are some many resources here for you to pick and choose from. You can find help.’ But I've never really felt like I could. Like, I know I have the option to, but I never felt like I could just go and do it. Like I go to the library every once in a while to study because it's a nice and quiet place, but I've never felt like I could go up to the front desk and ask a question.

One reason behind this challenge, according to an advisors in South Shore College, is that students’ perception on learning were highly relied on their own efforts instead of seeking supplemental help. This advisor said:

I had a really enlightening conversation with a student just last week about using the writing lab for help, and her perception was that if she was a good enough student she wouldn't have needed that, she wouldn't need the writing labs for help…And it's – but I think that that sort of just reminded me that the perception that students have is they should be able to do it on their own.

Another barrier for students to use the academic supports is the stereotype that if a student is placed in a DE course, or if a student is recommended to go to seek tutoring, all the labels would made students’ self-perception negative. They would think they are “that” type of students as advisors/faculty told them they are not prepared or good enough. One advisor illustrated:

So I think coming to college they're, ‘Oh gosh, I tested into this lower course,’ or ‘Oh gosh, I have to get tutoring, that means I'm…,’ and all the labels that they place on, you know, the students that that happened to in high school...And so, you know, like they'd rather maintain kinda their self-perception I think sometimes than reach out and ask for
help or take this dev ed course or – my perception of myself is that I'm this type of student and you're telling me I'm not and I don't want to hear that. (SFC, Year 2, ADV)

In response to this challenge, South Shore College made the Learning Commons a more attractive place for everyone, “not just for students who are ‘not good’ or need additional help.” To ensure that students found academic supports more easily, Surfside College created a New Student Experience course to “make sure students understand the services that we [institutions] have available and where they are.” As one advisor noted:

They [students] have some co-curricular assignments where they are required to visit places in the college. And often students will go to the tutoring center or to the library and learn about those resources.

Moreover, Seahorse College boasted a peer-mentoring program that, among other things, connected new students with resources around campus. As a student mentor at Seahorse College explained, the peer mentoring program:

… just basically helps first-year students… navigate through college life. You give them tips and strategies, directing them to different resources. So, for example, a lot of people, they don't know about the math lab and the writing center. So, if they need help, we'll point them to the direction.

Many participants acknowledged the value of this program for increasing the visibility of support services. One advisor admitted, “we realize now that, often, the best conduit of messages [about available campus resources] are fellow students. We have so many students who – ‘Who told you that?’ ‘One of my friends.’”

Structural Changes

In addition to aforementioned challenges facing students and campus personnel, many participants reported significant changes in institutional leadership and were willing to share the struggles and opportunities which came as a result. Changes in leadership during this period often resulted in colleges experiencing a corresponding shift in direction and priorities, as new administrators sought to make their mark.

As an example, an administrator explained that Sand Dollar College had several new presidents in just a few years’ time, which made it “difficult to have a sustained focus and institution-wide initiatives on student success.” The constant move from one set of priorities to another evoked feelings of “change fatigue” among some. In the words of an administrator at Seaside College said,

New president, new initiative, new focus, and we have a new strategic plan that goes to 2023. And so, we are trying to work through that process as well. So when you talk about change, I mean there’s like change fatigue that’s actually going on right now.”

In addition to new priorities, a change in leadership also caused a change to staffing and organization. Participants at one campus reflected on how structural changes, including new
leadership and a new campus, had impacted their work. Most notably, a new president made extensive changes to several key leadership roles. According to one administrator at Seaside College, “the president, I believe, reorganized the provost positions and [created] a lot of new positions… positions that were never, as long as I was here, around.”

Collectively, these changes elicited a number of emotions and responses from participants. Some administrators, for example, felt that changing leadership had slowed the pace of reform. According to administrator at Seaside College:

  We have to change things, but we also have to wait because this other thing is coming down the pipeline. And we’re waiting for the new VP to come in and step in this role so, you know, we don’t want to work on anything until they come here because they might have a different vision of what they want to see happen… . . . [All these changes result in] pumping the brakes and putting things on hold rather than moving forward. . . . And that ends up slowing down what we need to accomplish.

Others shared a more positive outcome of leadership change, as related to reform efforts. A faculty member at Surfside College described this perspective of her new president’s leadership style within the context of SB 1720 in this way:

  When [SB]1720 came around, the first thing we did is, ‘How are we going to form a team of faculty to address the situation?’ It wasn't like, ‘Here's what we're going to do and everyone's going to do it this way.’ . . . There was sort of a sea change when [the new president] came aboard, in terms of shared governance and collaborative learning, not just among students but also amongst the institution.

In this case, a change in leadership allowed the college to approach implementation of reform more collaboratively and productively.

Developmental education reform at Seagull College was also positively impacted by structural change. The college previously had two academic deans but, during the process of reform, they created a third academic dean position “that was necessary to handle not just our current programmatic offerings, but where we're going to go in the next five years.” In addition, Seagull College created a student success services department and the learning center, an administrator explained, “moving all the resources for the writing center, math center, the library, all the tutoring services, and putting them in one central location.” The number of disciplines that Seagull College is providing tutors for has been expanded under such reorganization.

**Changing Perspectives**

Notably, perspectives of the legislation began to change during **Modification** among campus stakeholders. An advisor at Seahorse College explained how their perspective on the legislation had changed over time, after first thinking “it was going to be disastrous.” They continued, crediting advising efforts, saying, “I think it's kind of played out differently only because I give a plus to our advisors, that we don't just say, ‘Oh, you can bypass us.’ They're given the pros and cons. [Now] I wouldn't use so strong a term, but I still think that there's a place for developmental education, especially for the students that we serve.”
Similarly, at South Shore College, perspectives changed as a result of successful student outcomes. An advisor explained this perspective change, “When it first happened, [I thought], ‘Oh my gosh, this is going to be horrible,’ but there's some students that have stepped up to the plate and done what they needed to do to be successful.”

While some colleges began to acknowledge the benefits of the legislation, others continued to focus on the challenges of SB 1720. A staff member at Seahorse College explained that their thoughts on the legislation were initially negative and remained that way, noting, “[My initial reaction was] that it was going to be against the students, and like, now it’s that I was right.” Other concerns about the long-term impact of the legislation for certain student populations persisted, as well. For example, a faculty member at Sand Dollar College described the lasting consequences of developmental education:

> But my thing is that this is going to be a detriment to our society if we don't figure out what we're going to do with this underserved population and just keep cutting the budget. Because it's not our fault, as dev. ed. educators that they spent too much money in this area and it became an elephant. Because it's been here for years.

One instructor (also Sand Dollar College) even compared student success amid the reform to the “Ford Pinto disaster years ago,” saying, “They’re so many that are going to crash and burn, but that’s okay, as long as it makes sense on the bottom line.”

**Summary**

Following the *Execution*, college personnel identified challenges of increasing workload in both advising process and instructional strategies. Colleges hired more advisors to release advisors’ workload and adjusted instructional strategies to improve the effectiveness of teaching. While providing additional academic supports for under representative students, colleges also modified these resources to be more attracting for students. Meanwhile, with the availability of early evidence that the new round of developmental education reform seemed to lead to increased student success and equity, the perspectives on SB 1720 have been shifting among constituents in FCS institutions. Although there remain issues on workload and cross-unit communications, there was a sense of optimism that developmental education reform could pave a new way to increase student success.
Expansion: Moving Beyond Developmental Education Reform

Defining Expansion

In the time since Florida College System institutions implemented developmental education reform in 2014, institutions learned many lessons along the way and modified their practices and policies to further support student success. In the Execution phase, institutions were primarily concerned with first-time-in-college students and those directly impacted by the legislation. They responded accordingly by mainly overhauling advising, developmental education curriculum and instruction, and academic support for increasingly larger populations of exempt students. In the Modification phase, institutions discovered challenges of their initial implementation and explored solutions to these challenges that were intended to refine institutional practice and improve student outcomes.

While the seven colleges continued to make refinements and troubleshoot persistent challenges of developmental education reform in 2018-2019, this was no longer their primary preoccupation. Rather, modifications to developmental education courses slowed and institutions settled into a new way of educating and supporting students more broadly. During Expansion, college personnel have found themselves asking difficult questions about the future of developmental education and what continues to be optimal for students. At the same time, they also had the opportunity to turn their sights towards student success for all students and future initiatives, like an emphasis on co-requisite instruction.

Notably, we found that perceptions of SB 1720 had continued to improve by this point in time. Although the bill was still not universally accepted, campus personnel were generally more inclined to acknowledge the benefits of reform. An advisor from Surfside College noted:

When this was all announced, 2013, I think there was an immediate response from just [about] everyone that worked in this industry, at state-college level: it was immediately – it was a bad thing… As we've gone through it…, I think the accelerated dev. ed. courses are a good thing. I think having students having to go through three dev. ed. courses before they can enter a college-level course is too long.

Some concern still existed about particular features of the bill, like optional placement testing. The same advisor continued, “However… I think we do have to set some parameters on what college-ready is or isn't… Not being able to require testing… has limited us in being able to help these students.” Whether they agreed or disagreed with the requirements of SB 1720, college personnel were proud of the work they had accomplished in supporting students through reform, and were ready for whatever new initiatives were yet to come.

Intake, Orientation, and Advising

In the Expansion phase, campus personnel no longer spoke about the specific changes to policies and procedures produced by SB 1720 within the areas of intake, orientation, and advising. Instead, some participants spent time in focus groups sessions reflecting on how their colleges, and the FCS more broadly, could use what they had learned through the implementation of SB 1720 to grow student support in the areas of admissions and advising even further. To this point,
a South Shore College administrator pondered how the benefits of SB 1720 might be extended to include “non-eligible” (i.e., non-exempt) students moving forward:

I find it interesting that… we used to have two different classes of students—those who were college ready [and] those who weren't—and we treated them very differently. We still have two classifications of students, but they're different. One are 1720 eligible and one are not, and we treat them differently. Their intake process is different, their path to registration is different, how advisors might interact with them is different, and the classes we allow them to take are different... I'm not sure if we're, if the lessons we've learned about the 1720 eligible students should be perhaps more broadened to the student body as a whole, and what institutional policies may need to shift, what state laws might need to shift to allow us to make those changes that we might think are needed, but I do think that we are at an opportunity now to look back at what we've learned over five years and say, ‘How do we apply these lessons more broadly so that perhaps we're treating more students the same?’

Curriculum and Instruction

In terms of curricular course offerings, the Expansion phase saw colleges scale back their developmental education offerings (Table 7). Reading and writing courses continued to be combined into one “Integrated Reading Writing” course at additional institutions and reading was phased out of Surfside College entirely. Notably, only one college—Starfish College—offered contextualized courses.

Table 7. Initial Course Offerings by Modality, 2018-2019

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<td>Math</td>
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<td>Sand Dollar College</td>
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<td>Seagull College</td>
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<td>Seahorse College</td>
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<td>Seaside College</td>
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<td>South Shore College</td>
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<td>Starfish College</td>
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<td>Surfside College</td>
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*Integrated Reading and Writing course

Starfish College and Surfside College further merged standalone reading and writing classes to create integrated reading and writing (IRW) sequences. For math, Starfish College mainly focus on two delivery methods: compressed and contextualized. Among these two modalities in English and Math, compressed was the most successful delivery method as the Starfish College focus groups shared:
Per the data, the most successful delivery method for reading is compressed…the most successful delivery method in developmental writing is compressed… Even though this data indicates slightly higher success, we still see the value in providing students with accelerated pathways, such as compressed eight-week courses.

According to the Developmental Education Accountability reports institutions submitted to the Office of the Chancellor of the Florida College System, compressed was the most widely used modality in instruction at Surfside College and Sand Dollar College. For math, Surfside College focus groups shared that, “we had tried co-requisite and modularized formats, but students were not registering for the courses.” In 2018-2019, Surfside College used the compressed delivery format as “students seem to prefer shorter terms in progressing through their developmental math courses.” And for Writing, Surfside college used a hyper-compressed modality for instruction and their developmental English courses “include a combined reading component and is done in a compressed time frame.” At Sand Dollar College, as student enrollment was very low in modular courses throughout the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 academic years, compressed became the primary delivery method in math, reading, and writing courses since the 2016-2017 academic year.

However, at Seaside College, modularized course delivery is the most successful. Focus groups at Seaside College noted that, “in fact, the modularized courses not only yield the highest success rates but also had the lowest withdrawal rates.” Slightly different within Seagull College, student success varied by discipline in delivery strategies. Specifically, “for developmental mathematics, the delivery strategy with the highest success rate was modularized. For both developmental reading and writing,… [it] was compressed courses.” Overall, Compressed and Modularized were the two most stabilized delivery methods in SB 1720 reform across FCS institutions.

Looking ahead, some participants anticipated that co-requisite education would be the next reform to implement. According to a faculty member, “I hear the conversation on the state level. I’m at that meeting, and I hear their new thing is co-requisite and get rid of intermediate.” Faculty at Sand Dollar College expressed some concern about this change, despite positive, preliminary findings disseminated by other states. In the words of one participant:

I cannot believe that you're just going to think that co-requisite is the end-all of everything. And I understand that some of the data is good, but you see, the data can be deceiving because you're not really measuring my lower-level students in that co-requisite model yet.

**Academic Support Services and Programs**

Previously, faculty members stated that students did not know how to ask for academic help and commonly missed out on the benefits of academic support services (Hu et al., 2015). More recently, FCS institutions have observed an “uptick” in the number of students who access academic supports as colleges increase offerings and reconceptualize how best to deliver services (Hu et al., 2018, p. 20). During Expansion, academic support services continued to be important, with almost all institutions mentioning the effectiveness of utilizing writing centers, math labs, and academic tutoring in supporting student learning.
Students echoed these sentiments, saying that they had benefited from increased academic support. In the words of a South Shore College student, “the only way you're going to fail is if you fail yourself, because [campus personnel] will do everything they can to make sure that you succeed.” Some students praised the accessibility of such support, with one at Seaside College saying, “You can actually walk in and say, ‘I need help with this paper,’ and there is usually someone on standby that can assist you right then and there.” Another student from Seagull College communicated the usefulness of “employing tutors and just generally having different options and – for students to go to, either during class time or after class time.” Students expressed particular gratitude for peer tutoring, which they said met students’ needs in ways that traditional academic support could not.

During this phase, colleges began to focus on helping students in ways beyond traditional academic support. Recognizing the growing presence of food and housing insecurity among college students, the colleges increased availability food banks, mental health counselling, and “one stop” service centers. According to an administrator at Seahorse College, the “one stop” center at her institution “connects [students] to benefits and services to ensure that that aspect is not preventing them from dropping out of school.” Such services encompass needs ranging from healthcare and childcare to financial support:

We have a lot of support, and these are just a few highlights… Food assistance, Medicaid, healthcare, childcare, emergency cash assistance… We have counseling, we have some other things, and then we also help them prepare taxes as well. We do financial counseling, tax assistance and then legal counseling referrals as well.

Colleges also continued to research best practices and anticipate upcoming reforms. As an example, in year five, a South Shore College administrator described a grant-funded, mindset-focused, intervention program that had been developed in collaboration with the Stanford Intervention Lab. The purpose of this program was to “develop focused interventions for our students to address some of their psychosocial barriers such as sense of belongingness and mindset growth versus fixed mindset… [A consultant] was here already in the spring and he did a survey and a focus group with some of our students.”

In looking towards the future, an administrator at South Shore College, reflected on the continued responsibility of the college to support students of all backgrounds:

Within the last five years, the college has done a lot to kind of reconceptualize what pre-1720 was called College Readiness, and I think we've largely, we continue to reconceptualize the question of college readiness or reframe it. The question is no longer ‘Are students ready for college?’ The question is now, ‘Is the college ready for the students we're gonna get?’ We know that secondary and post-secondary articulation is not perfect. We know that students come from a variety of different secondary experiences, rural, urban, suburban, home school, charter school, all with different levels of academic and social readiness for college life, and increasingly our focus is to kind of be prepared for students wherever they're gonna join us, wherever they're gonna enter the academic river, and try to be ready for them wherever they are.
Continued Commitment to Collaboration

Campus personnel highlighted collaboration and coordination as one of the most positive outcomes of SB 1720 during Preparation, Execution, and Modification, both here and in previous publications (Hu et al., 2015; Hu et al., 2017). One administrator at South Shore College was surprised at the level of collaboration at his current institution, in comparison to the university at which he used to work. He explained the differences in this way:

I came from [a four-year university], so it's a huge, huge difference, and the openness, the ability to collaborate, the ability to communicate, all those things are far, far better. There doesn't seem to be the barriers to those sorts of things here. The open door policies and the ability to communicate with anybody at any time about anything, providing the schedule is open, is always there, which is really, really welcoming. It's something that I cherish a lot being here, experiencing the complete opposite of that at other places.

Participants frequently described the ways in which their institutions fostered internal cultures of collaboration and engagement. One faculty member at Surfside College attributed successful collaboration to frequent, college-wide meetings. She noted that these meetings were integral for fostering a sense of “one unified college, rather than individual campuses,” even though “each campus is quite different, actually.” An administrator, also at Surfside College, further described how important student learning was to the collaborative culture of that campus: “Whenever we're dealing with an issue, initiative, whatever it may be…, our culture is to always ask the questions, ‘How does this impact student learning?’ … and ‘How do we know?’ … We're also very collaborative as our culture.”

At another institution, changing leadership was described as an impetus for greater collaboration and communication. An advisor at Starfish College provided an example of how changing leadership had impacted the environment of the institution’s advising center: “There was less communication [before]. People were… a little bit in their own little bubbles. But we’ve had leadership come and, you know, ‘You get with this person, you get with this person,’ in a sense.”

That being said, at least two of the institutions—Starfish and Seaside Colleges—had not achieved comparable levels of collaboration by year five of data collection. For example, Starfish College’s advisors spoke about desiring more collaboration between academic and student affairs, as well as collaboration at the leadership level. However, a faculty member reported that “there was a lack of shared governance and decisions were being made on their behalf.” Similarly, faculty participants at Seaside College described the institution’s top-down culture and the associated barriers to implementing change. One mentioned, “I don’t know what it’s like at other universities and colleges, but it’s very difficult to get changes here, especially if it doesn’t come from the top, and say you have to do this.”

Collaborating Through Campus-community Partnerships

Many participants also emphasized the importance of FCS institutions collaborating with and supporting their local communities. Indeed, participants at Seahorse College called fellow community members “neighbors” because of the physical proximity of the college to the rest of the city. In their estimation, proximity contributed to a close-knit culture that has emerged
between the faculty, staff, and community members. As one professor explained, the campus engages with students “from kindergarten all the way up” by bringing “experiences… to this part of town.” Participants shared countless examples of how their institution opens up events and opportunities to the low-income individuals in the surrounding community, events that community members would not typically be able to experience. One instructor highlighted a “Get out the Vote” event as another example:

We do understand our community and we make sure that they know we're here to help, from offering education to all the little activities we have. The other day… we had the event encouraging people to vote, which for this part of the county is extremely important… Whatever we do, it's with the community in mind.

Perspectives on SB 1720

During the Expansion phase, many colleges considered SB1720 no longer a priority and focused on expanding their student success efforts. An advisor from Surfside College told us, “… I think any decision we make we always keep the student in mind in whatever we do, and so any kind of change, whether it be legislatively, or something we are dealing with from an administrative perspective, we always try and keep in mind what’s best for the student and try and leave, I guess, the politics out of it if you will.” Despite this shift, a remnant of administrators and faculty maintain that SB1720 does not serve the students’ best interest and prohibits institutions from doing what they know best. One administrator from South Shore College explained:

We’ve been put in a kind of adversarial relational with our own students, trying to help them, because we’re the people who know what’s best. Sorry, that’s why we got our education, so that we can take people who don’t know what is best for them, and not be paternalistic, and not be dictators, but say, “Look, we understand that you’re at high risk of failure. We need you to do this so that you improve your chances to succeed. I think our interest and the students’ interests were exactly the same.

Faculty and administrators noted increasing impact of other legislative mandates like performance-based funding on Florida’s state colleges.

Summary

The Expansion phase represents a departure from colleges’ preoccupation with exempt students that existed in the prior phases of Preparation, Execution, and Modification. Instead, this phase was characterized by future-oriented thoughts about opportunities for continued support of all students, college-ready or not. Within individual institutions and across the FCS, various new approaches have been explored to continue the momentum to promote success for all students.
Conclusions

Even though this report is only based on evidence from seven FCS institutions where we made repeated site visits, a few themes emerged from our analyses. The phases of implementation that we identified align with institutional philosophies and practices we observed in our site visits to FCS institutions. These

First, there seem to be discernable phases in the ways FCS institutions implemented developmental education resulting from SB 1720. These phases, Preparation, Execution, Modification, and Expansion represent the life cycle of the reform implementation process in Florida. In each phase, institutions paid attention to different student populations, and reexamined institutional programs and practices as compared to the stipulations of the developmental education legislation.

Second, the philosophy guiding the rearrangement of institutional programs and practices appeared to change over time. Although there was a heightened sense of needing to meet the requirements of SB 1720 in the early phases, FCS institutions seem to have taken advantage of the flexibility provided in the legislation to rework institutional programs and practices driven by institutional contexts and needs on the ground. For instance, the developmental education offerings have been noticeably changed and scaled back, while institutions have now shifted attention to college-level courses as a part of comprehensive strategies to promote student success.

Third, the reform on the ground appears to be comprehensive and generated cross-unit collaboration among different constituents. Florida’s new round of developmental education reform was not simply about the reform of developmental education placement and instruction alone, it also addressed academic advising, student support services, and many other key arenas, and institutions have taken all those key areas seriously in implementation. Campus personnel have come together to implement change in academic affairs, student affairs, information technology, institutional finance, and institutional research.

Fourth, the attitudes of different constituents toward the developmental education legislation have been evolving over time. Even though there were strong and negative reactions toward the legislation during the early phases, the sentiments toward the legislation became more positive and favorable in the later phases as evidence and data seemed to indicate that the reform had not produced negative student outcomes. On the contrary, more and more evidence suggested that the reform has led to positive outcomes in overall student success and equity in student performance.

The results reported here were grounded in the data from the seven sample institutions. Although we focus our efforts here on the ways in which institutions moved through a similar process of implementation, future work will be dedicated to the differences in implementation by institutional type. Additional future research we will examine data from the other FCS institutions we visited to further contextualize developmental education reform implementation throughout the state. In addition, we will combine quantitative data on student outcomes with site visit implementation data to identify which strategies impact student success, and how the variation of implementation supports student outcomes across different institutions.
As more states look to participate more fully in developmental education reform, the findings produced in all four phases provide valuable insights into the benefits, challenges, and unintended consequences of implementation. Learning from Florida’s successes and roadblocks will allow other states to address issues upfront in the preparation stage, rather than later in the modification stage. The work can also be extended and applied to the implementation of other reform efforts.
References


Appendix: Sample Institution Profiles

The seven sample institutions represent a variety of FCS institutions. They are a diverse group of institutions given their geographical location in the state, and size and type of student populations enrolled at the institution. Each institutional context has contributed to the institutional response to developmental education reform. In the sections below, we describe relevant characteristics of each institution. In order to maintain the anonymity of each institution, we assigned pseudonyms and omitted identifying information from institutions’ profiles.

Sand Dollar College
Sand Dollar College is a large, urban institution with multiple campuses and centers. Once operating under a decentralized structure, the institution moved to a centralized, shared governance model in the past a few years. This transition, as well as changes in leadership, has spurred conversations about the “future of [the] institution.” The college strives to be “equity minded” as a result of the disparities of the students in the surrounding community. According to faculty at the institution, the purpose of developmental education became more ambiguous after SB 1720 despite the state providing developmental education curriculum objectives.

Seagull College
Seagull College is a small rural coastal institution with multiple campuses. This college offers unique degree programs not available at other institutions in the state and prides itself on its diverse population of students that reflects the diversity of the surrounding community. Partially due to the smaller size of the school, the organizational structure is one that promotes a “tight-knit” culture and collaboration among staff and the community in which it is located. Their size has been described as one of their “strengths” and allowed the institution to be “nimble and flexible” in approaching the implementation of SB 1720. Representatives of the college did not see much change in developmental education in light of SB 1720 aside from the changes to methods of delivery.

Seahorse College
Seahorse College is a large urban institution with multiple, unique campuses and a diverse student body. With close ties to the community, the institution keeps “the community in mind” and refers to community members as “neighbors.” Throughout the implementation of SB 1720, the college has changed its structure to streamline departments and processes across its multiple campuses. The initial perspectives of the legislation among focus group participants were mostly negative, however, many individuals acknowledged that developmental education needed to be reformed in some way. Over time, participants become more accustomed to the legislation, which spurred redesigned curricula that many were pleased with, such as the institution’s new mathematics course for liberal arts majors.

Seaside College
Seaside College is a large institution with multiple campuses. Many students attend the institution with the intention of transferring, which has contributed to its culture as a “launching point.” However, the growing diversity at the college has resulted in a heightened awareness of the needs of students who may have plans other than transferring to a four-year institution. In the midst of the implementation of SB 1720, a new President was appointed, and changes were made to several key leadership roles. This “change in players” reflected the “top-down” culture of the
college, shifting institutional priorities, and slowing progress of the implementation process. However, institutional efforts, including advising and instruction, have adapted to meet student needs in light of the reform, which initially had mixed perspectives from focus group participants, but has become more accepted over time.

**South Shore College**
South Shore College is a mid-size institution with multiple campuses. The institution’s culture has evolved over time, with considerable change resulting from developmental education reform, such as the dissolution of the Developmental Education department. This change also stemmed, in part, from the college’s focus on “continuous improvement” and desire to be collaborative and responsive to the changing needs of students. Over time, perspectives of the legislation have informed the college’s conceptualization of college readiness, encouraging them to embrace the reform and “be responsive to students,” which includes being “prepared for students wherever they're going to join us, wherever they're going to enter the academic river.”

**Starfish College**
Starfish College is a mid-size institution with multiple campuses. Representatives at the institution emphasize its open-access mission and service to traditional and non-traditional students alike. Changes at the leadership level have been ongoing, which have influenced various aspects of the institution such as advising and developmental education. Specifically, developmental education was structurally renamed and a new department created. Though initial perspectives on the legislation included concern and worry, these perspectives evolved over time. For example, with a decrease of enrollment in developmental education coursework, positive sentiments were eventually expressed about new teaching opportunities for developmental education faculty that came from the reform, as well as the ability for all faculty to be more innovative and creative with curricula.

**Surfside College**
Surfside College is a large institution with multiple campuses. In addition to enrolling a high number of international students, the college is also a minority majority institution, which enrolls a high percentage of minority, or non-White, students. While there is still room for improvement, representatives from this institution explain the intent to hire staff that “mirrors” the student population. The initial perspectives on the legislation at this institution acknowledged that developmental education needed to be improved, however, there was a fear of consequences for students and a belief that the legislation was focusing on the wrong issue. The governance model of the institution helped with the implementation of the reform and is one that seeks to promote collaboration with the use of leadership councils to guide decision making. Changes to this model have been ongoing for the last decade.