

*Oklahoma State System  
of  
Higher Education*



**ANNUAL  
STUDENT  
REMEDICATION  
REPORT**

February 17, 2006

# OKLAHOMA STATE REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

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Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education

**ANNUAL STUDENT REMEDIATION REPORT**

2004-2005

**Executive Summary**

**BACKGROUND:**

- In 1991, the State Regents adopted the Student Assessment Policy that required each institution to develop and implement a comprehensive assessment program with mandatory student placement in fall 1994. This is the 14<sup>th</sup> annual student remediation report.
- Remedial education is not a recent phenomenon in higher education. As early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Harvard College provided remedial instruction for inadequately prepared students. In 1849, the University of Wisconsin established the first preparatory program for students with inadequate preparation. Remedial education was needed when World War II veterans came to college, and for first-generation college students who gained access to higher education due to the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
- Societal, demographic, and technological changes have contributed to increased demands for access to higher education with minorities and immigrants overrepresented among those who need remediation.
- The widespread need for college remediation has brought about efforts to prepare students while still in high school. National and regional studies report approximately one-third of new freshmen enroll in remedial courses, and states with mandatory assessment and placement programs, such as Oklahoma, report higher remediation rates.
- Nationally, little change in the number of students enrolled in remedial courses has taken place in the last few years. Community colleges report the greatest percentage of remediation, with mathematics being the most cited area of deficiency.
- Current debate about remedial education incorrectly assumes that remediation is proportionately taught among all colleges and universities. In fact, 60 percent of all remediation is conducted by community colleges nationally. Oklahoma community colleges have over 79 percent of the State System's remedial enrollments.
- Financial costs of remediation are being addressed in different ways by various states, with some requiring additional fees from the remediated student. Others have proposed that the remediation costs be borne by the secondary schools that graduated the student needing remediation. Nationally, remediation costs are less than 1 percent of the total public higher education budget.
- Oklahoma students pay more for remedial courses at State System institutions. Those remedial fees, set by the individual institution, generated \$2.4 million in 2004-05.

**OKLAHOMA INITIATIVES:**

- The State Regents, in addition to managing the costs of remedial education, have taken multiple initiatives to reduce remediation, among them: 1) enhancing teacher preparation, 2) increasing standards for college preparation, 3) establishing better communication with and feedback to Oklahoma high schools, and 4) facilitating cooperation between various state education entities to increase the number of students who go to college directly from high school.
- Reports by *Education Week* and the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education cited

Oklahoma for efforts to improve teacher quality, standards and accountability, and resource equity.

- Oklahoma public institutions report that remediation has resulted in significant improvement in student success.

#### **FINDINGS:**

- 44,608 students enrolled in remedial courses in 2004-05: 2.8 percent (1,246 students) at the research universities 18.5 percent (8,244 students) at the regional universities 78.7 percent (35,118 students) at the community colleges.
- Of fall 2004 first-time freshmen, 38.7 percent enrolled in remedial courses.
- Of fall 2004 first-time freshmen who did not meet the State Regents' 15-unit high school core curriculum, 51.3 percent enrolled in remedial courses, compared to 23.7 percent of freshmen who completed the high school core curriculum.
- Remediation by subject for fall 2004 first-time freshmen was as follows: 32.9 percent mathematics, 17.7 percent English, 5.5 percent reading, 2.0 percent science.
- From fall 1996 to fall 2004, the percentage of freshmen with an ACT score below 19 decreased in English, from 22.4 to 21.1 percent, in Science, from 17.3 to 16.3 percent, and in Reading, from 18.6 to 18.1 percent.
- From fall 1996 to fall 2004, the percentage of freshmen with an ACT score below 19 increased in mathematics, from 26.7 to 27.9 percent.
- From 1996-97 to 2004-05, the remediation rate for first-time freshmen direct from Oklahoma high schools decreased from 37.3 percent to 36.2 percent. The 2004-05 rate of 36.2 percent is lower than the 38.7 percent for all first-time freshmen.
- Older freshmen require more remediation. During the 2004-05 academic year, a higher percentage of first-time freshmen 21 years of age and older (46.7 percent) enrolled in remedial courses than freshmen less than 21 years of age (35.8 percent).
- A study of three cohorts of first-time freshmen indicates that math remediation increases the chances of success in college algebra.
- In 2004-05, Oklahoma State System institutions generated \$2.4 million from student-paid remedial course fees.

#### **CONCLUSIONS:**

- While remediation rates for the state system have increased for both direct-from-high-school and older freshmen, most institutions report lower rates. Colleges and universities that show increased remediation from 2003-04 to 2004-05 cite improved data coding for much of the increase, and, in one case where remediation responsibility is in transition between institutions, over-reporting.
- Community colleges continue to be the primary source of remediation in the State System. This is consistent with the community college's mission.
- Students enrolling directly from high school (17 to 20 year-olds) are less likely to need remediation than older students (35.8 and 46.7 percent, respectively). Those students graduating directly from Oklahoma high schools have a remediation rate of 36.2 percent.
- The financial costs associated with remediation are small in comparison to total higher education budgets and are negligible when compared to the alternatives, which can range from falling levels of degree attainment to employment in low paying jobs.
- Remedial coursework enables underprepared high school students to learn the value of achievement while acquiring the skills necessary to succeed in college-level work, and benefits adult students who seek retraining at colleges and universities in their local communities.

## Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education

# ANNUAL STUDENT REMEDIATION REPORT 2004-05

### INTRODUCTION

In 1991, the State Regents adopted and implemented the “*Policy Statement on the Assessment of Students for Purposes of Instructional Improvement and State System Accountability*,” which requires Oklahoma’s public higher education institutions to administer comprehensive assessment programs. The policy was modified in 1993, with remediation made mandatory for under-prepared students and requires institutions to use an ACT score of 19 in the subject areas of English, mathematics, science reasoning, and reading as the “first cut” in determining whether a student needs remediation. Students scoring below 19 in an ACT subject area must either enroll in a remedial course or undergo secondary assessment. Students who score below the designated levels on these secondary tests must successfully complete remedial courses.

This is the 14<sup>th</sup> annual student remediation report. This report describes remedial activity during the 2004-05 academic year and provides comparisons to previous years.

### BACKGROUND

Remedial education is not a recent phenomenon in higher education. As early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Harvard College provided remedial instruction for inadequately prepared students. In 1849, the University of Wisconsin established the first preparatory program for students with inadequate preparation in reading, writing, and arithmetic. The program remediated students so they could succeed in the university’s agricultural and mechanical science degree programs. The generation of World War II veterans who entered colleges and universities on the G.I. Bill required remedial coursework to refresh their skills. Students, who for the first time gained access to higher education because of the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Higher Education Act of 1965, created increased demands for remedial coursework (Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP), 1998). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reports that, in fall 2000, 98 percent of public two-year and 80 percent of public four-year institutions offered remedial reading, writing, or mathematics courses (NCES, 2003).

Quick Facts

### Nationally, who is taking remedial classes?

- Over 80 percent are U.S. citizens.
- Majority are white; however, minority groups are overrepresented.
- One in five is married.
- Two in five receive some form of financial aid.
- One in 10 is a veteran.
- One in three works 35 hours or more per week.
- Three in five are 24 years old or younger.
- Despite an increase in student enrollment from 1989 to 1995, the number of incoming freshmen requiring remediation remained roughly the same.
- 66 percent completed their remedial course.
- 45 percent who took two remedial courses achieved at least an associate degree.
- 35 percent who took five or more remedial courses earned at least an associate degree.

-NCES, 1996

- The percentage of students needing remediation in two-year colleges has not changed significantly across the United States in at least two decades.

-Roueche and Roueche, 1999

- Students with a reading deficiency are at a greater disadvantage than those with a math deficiency.

-McCabe, 2000

*“As higher education continues to educate an ever-growing proportion of the population, including older students returning to college, there is every reason to conclude that remediation will continue to be a function of colleges and universities” (IHEP, 1998.p. vi).*

Burgeoning technologies and changing populations are playing roles in the number of students needing remediation. Rapidly changing job needs drive the demand for workers with more education. Computer skills are being required for jobs that previously called for no education beyond high school. Almost half of all workers report that as job skills change, they are forced to acquire more training to keep the jobs they have. According to the NCES, 31 percent of all entering freshmen who took a remedial class in 1992-93 were 19 years or younger, while 46 percent were over 22 years of age (NCES, 1996). A combination of higher birthrates among minorities and immigrants plus expanded opportunities are creating increased enrollments in higher education for first-generation students. These students tend to be less prepared. Minorities and immigrants are overrepresented among those who need remediation (McCabe, 2000).

Quick Facts

The apparent widespread need for college remediation of recent high school graduates concerns policymakers, business leaders, and educators. A survey of professors, college officials, and business leaders found that all three groups agreed “*that too many students are taking remedial classes in college because of poor preparation*” (Trombley, 1999). Four studies by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) (1991, 1997, 1998, 2000) and three NCES studies (1991, 1996, and 2003) reported that approximately one-third of new freshmen in public institutions enroll in remedial courses. However, the SREB studies found that states with mandatory assessment and placement programs, such as Oklahoma, reported higher percentages of students enrolled in remedial courses. “*As standards are established, remedial rates rise initially - sometimes substantially*” (SREB, 2000, p. 9). These standards and their application vary from state to state. A State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) policy study reported that at least seven states (Arkansas, Georgia, Nevada, New York, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and West Virginia) require placement of all freshmen (Crowe, 1998). Oklahoma has established statewide standards and requires a minimum ACT score of 19 before students can enroll in college-level courses.

Quick Facts

### What are the deficiencies?

- Of those students requiring remedial work:
  - 62 percent of remedial education students are deficient in mathematics
  - 37.7 percent in reading
  - 44.6 percent in writing
- In community colleges nationally, 41 percent of entering students are underprepared in at least one of the basic skills:
  - reading, 20 percent
  - writing, 25 percent
  - mathematics, 34 percent

-McCabe, 2000

### Summary of State Remediation Policies

- 27 states have mandated remediation policies.
- 49 states fund remediation through student contributions.
- 23 states use ACT/SAT exams for placement.
- 27 states use institutional exams for placement.
- 41 states permit remedial courses concurrent with college-level courses.
- 39 states permit financial aid to be used for remedial courses.
- 14 states have a time limit for completion of remedial coursework.
- 29 states track the percentage of students who enroll in remedial courses.

-ECS, 2002

- Nationally, of the two-year public institutions, 97 percent offer remedial courses in mathematics, 96 percent in remedial writing, and 96 percent in remedial reading.
- Of the four-year public institutions, 78 percent offer remedial courses in mathematics, 67 percent in remedial writing and 49 percent in reading.
- Of the two-year institutions that offered at least one remedial course in fall 2000, 37 percent offered remedial courses in academic subject areas other than reading, writing, or mathematics, compared to 15 percent of four-year public institutions. These courses include science, English as a second language, study skills, and basic computer skills.

-NCES, 2003

Remediation is not proportionately spread out among all levels of institutions. The SREB reports that, nationally, 60 percent of remediation enrollments are at the community college level (SREB, 2000). In Oklahoma, the percentage is over 79 percent. Nationally, 95 percent of community colleges offered remedial education compared with 80 percent of public four-year institutions (NCES, 2003).

In their latest national survey on remediation, the NCES also reports that remedial course delivery methods are changing. In fall 1995, 6 percent of public two-year institutions and 4 percent of public four-year institutions offered remedial courses through distance education. These percentages increased to 25 percent for public two-year institutions and 8 percent for public four-year institutions in fall 2000.

Nationally, of the types of distance education used by public and private institutions to deliver remedial courses, 64 percent used email and Web-based courses, 26 percent used two-way interactive video, 27 percent used one-way prerecorded video, and 25 percent used internet-based computer conferencing or relay chat (NCES, 2003). In Oklahoma for fall 2005, a total of 311 remedial courses were offered via distance education: 9.6 percent by interactive video, 85.9 percent were computer-based, and 4.5 percent through correspondence. Ninety-eight percent of these courses originated from two-year colleges.

Quick Facts

### Remedial Course Delivery By Distance Education

#### Nationally

- delivered by 25 percent of public two-year colleges
- delivered by 8 percent of public four-year institutions

-NCES, 2003

#### In Oklahoma

- delivered by 98 percent of public community colleges
- delivered by 2 percent of public four-year institutions
- 10.2 percent of remedial classes

-Oklahoma State Regents, 2004

Financial cost of remedial education continues to be a concern. Policymakers in New Jersey, Montana, Florida, and Oregon, among others, have proposed making public secondary schools pay the cost of college remedial courses taken by their graduates (Merisotis and Phipps, 2000). In some states, students must pay a remedial course fee in addition to their tuition.

There is a growing body of research showing that the costs of providing remedial education are not as great as once believed. A Government Accounting Office (GAO) study determined that no more than 4 percent of the federal financial aid granted to freshmen and sophomores in the fall of 1995 paid for remedial courses (GAO, 1997). The most recent accounting of remediation costs suggests that remediation consumes approximately \$1 billion annually out of a public higher education budget of \$115 billion – less than 1 percent of expenditures (Breneman and Haarlow, 1999).

In a study prepared for the League for Innovation in the Community College, it was found that in cases where there are revenues generated by remedial education, the revenue fully covered the costs of delivering the service. There were no reports of remedial programs that operated at a loss. It was concluded that remedial courses seldom cost more than they received in revenues, especially at community colleges (Saxon & Boylan, 1999).

- Onondaga Community College in New York reported that each \$1 million spent on remediation generated \$1.3 million in revenue for the college (Testone, 1997).
- The state of Kentucky reported that remediation at its universities was fully covered by tuition revenue (Breneman & Haarlow, 1998).

The SREB asserts that, "Some remedial assistance and courses are essentially unavoidable and are a wise investment" (SREB, 2000, p. 3). Both for societal and economic reasons, the SREB recommends that higher education support adult students who return to education after an interval and recent high school graduates who either did not prepare for college and changed their minds or did poorly in high school and deserve a second chance.

- A moderate-sized midwestern community college reported that tuition revenue generated significantly more than the salary costs of remedial instruction. When combined with state aid revenue, the program generated \$580,000 in revenue over and above remedial instruction salaries (McGinley, 1999).
- In a proposal on financing remediation at City University of New York, the average revenue per full-time equivalent (FTE) generated at community colleges was reported to be \$9,130 in 1997. Compared to an average cost of remediation per FTE of \$4,660, it was inferred that remedial education was generating as much as \$4,500 in net revenues (Hauptman, 1999).

Oklahoma public colleges and universities charge additional fees for remediation. Those remedial course fees, set by the individual institution, generated \$2.4 million in 2004-05 to offset costs of providing remedial courses.

## **OKLAHOMA INITIATIVES**

In addition to managing the costs of remedial education, The Oklahoma State System for Higher Education has undertaken multiple initiatives to reduce remediation.

Since 1991, the State Regents have aggressively pursued remediation reduction on several fronts: 1) improving teacher preparation, 2) increasing standards for college preparation, 3) establishing better communication with and feedback to Oklahoma high schools, 4) initiating programs that enhance cooperation between various state education entities to increase the number of students who go to college directly from high school, and 5) improving Oklahoma college and university graduation rates.

*Education Week*, in their annual report *Quality Counts 2006*, lauded Oklahoma for secondary school improvement in three of four categories. The state scored above average in standards and accountability, efforts to improve teacher quality, and resource equity. Among the areas earning full credit were school accountability; professional support and training for teachers; and “wealth-neutrality,” meaning that poorer districts in the state tend to have higher per-pupil funding levels than do wealthier districts. Only 10 states exhibit this equity in funding.

In the third national higher education report card, *Measuring Up 2004*, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education reported that while Oklahoma still lags behind the top states in student preparation, in the last decade, the proportion of Oklahoma high school students taking upper-level math courses increased from 39 percent to 49 percent. Those students taking at least one upper-level science course increased from 22 percent to 28 percent. The National Center also reported that the percent of seventh to twelfth graders who were taught by teachers with a major in their subject grew from 53 percent to 62 percent over the last ten years.

Sound educational practice demands mandatory assessment and mandatory course placement. John and Suanne Roueche found that:

*“information from . . . colleges that make assessment and placement mandatory, together with data reporting the performance of all students taking remedial work, suggest that remediation correlates with improved performance over the rest of the college experience.”* In addition,

Hunter Boylan, who has studied remediation at length, concluded that “*Those who place in remedial courses in only one subject area...are as likely as anyone else to graduate*” (Boylan, 1999). The U.S. Department of Education concluded that, “*Increasingly, state and local policy seeks to constrict -if not eliminate -the amount of remedial work that takes place in 4-year colleges. But there is a class of students whose deficiencies in preparation are minor and can be remediated quickly*” (Adelman, 1999, p. ix) without driving up costs or damaging degree completion rates. The majority of students with academic deficiencies require only one remedial course: 78.9 percent at the comprehensive universities, 53.8 percent at the regional universities, and 56.8 percent at the two-year colleges. These percentages have increased slightly.

## State Regents' Initiatives

- Educational Planning and Assessment System (EPAS) -is a voluntary student assessment and instructional support program that provides feedback to middle and high schools about their performance in preparing students for college. EPAS also provides individual students with information about the probability of the scores they would make on their ACT based on their EXPLORE and PLAN performance. Currently, 85 percent (460) of all public school districts and 37 private schools participate in EPAS, reaching more than 98 percent of the state's eighth and tenth graders. EPAS reports that, from 1993 to 2005, the number and percent of Oklahoma students taking the ACT has increased as has the average score.
- High School Indicators Project -annually distributed to school boards, superintendents, and high school principals; reports on ACT scores, college-going rates, first-year college performance, and remediation.
- The State Regents in 2001, also joined with the Oklahoma Business and Education Coalition, the Oklahoma State Department of Education, and the Governor's Office to sponsor an external review of the state's efforts to establish a standards-based system of education goals. The report, issued in August, 2002 by Achieve, Inc., found that standards, assessments, and accountability were central in Oklahoma's efforts in improve its schools.
- Brain Gain 2010: Building Oklahoma Through Intellectual Power -a comprehensive plan to increase the proportion of Oklahoma's population with a college degree from 25 to 35 percent by 2010. This initiative contains specific recommendations for enhancing student preparation for college. Using Brain Gain Improvement Grants, the State Regents support campus-based initiatives designed to increase retention. Connors State College is using one of those grants for a pilot project to improve student success in remedial math courses.
- Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) -a federal program designed to better prepare middle and high school students for college through mentoring programs, scholarships, and new academic preparation and awareness programs for students and parents.
- ACT Standards for Transition -a feedback tool allowing school districts to see as early as the eighth and tenth grades, a clear picture of core academic skills that students need to succeed in postsecondary education. Additionally, individual students will be informed of specific areas that will enhance preparation for college.
- 15-unit high school core curriculum -In 1997, the State Regents increased the number of academic high school courses required for admission from 11 to 15.
- Assessment Policy Reports -Since 1991, the State Regents require institutions to systematically collect, interpret, and use information about student learning and achievement to improve instruction.
- Oklahoma Higher Education Task Force on Student Retention -Recommendations of this group, appointed in February 2000, included strengthening the intensity and quality of the secondary school curriculum and adding a fourth mathematics course equal to or above Algebra II. It also called for increased collaboration between higher education institutions and secondary schools, and for continued recognition by the State Regents of individual schools that demonstrate improvement in ACT scores, high school-to-college going rates, and low college remediation rates.
- Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program (OHLAP) -Since 1996, in a program administered by the State Regents, Oklahoma high school students have been able to earn scholarships to attend state public institutions by taking rigorous courses in high school. The remediation rates of OHLAP students are consistently lower than for all high school graduates.
- The State Regents strongly support the State Scholars Program, sponsored by the Oklahoma Business and Education Coalition. This program is an affiliated national strategy to encourage high school students to take a more rigorous core curriculum.
- The State Regents also supported legislation passed in 2005 that strengthened the requirements for high school graduation and the creation of a task force for further improvements in secondary schools.

*“colleges in states that require assessment and placement report that student retention and success levels improved when mandatory policies were enforced” (Roueche and Roueche, 1999, p. 47).*

Mandatory assessment and placement have been policy in Oklahoma since 1993.

In the latest Annual Student Assessment Report (2003-04), Oklahoma public institutions report that remediation has resulted in significant improvement in student success. Institutions tracking student performance in their first college level course after remediation report success rates between 54 and 89 percent. Several schools indicated that remediated students performed as well in their first college-level course as did those not requiring remediation.

New to this report is an analysis of student performance in college algebra, commonly the first college-level math course. Using data collected from the State Regents’ Unitized Data System (UDS), comparisons were made between college algebra students who took and passed a mathematics remediation course with those who did not take such a course prior to enrolling in college algebra. Grades earned in

and percentage passing college algebra as well as the number of each group of first-time freshmen students were examined for the cohort years of 1998-99, 1999-00, and 2000-01.

According to a recent report by ACT, Inc., only 40 percent of 2004 high school graduates are ready for their first course in college algebra, and only 68 percent are ready for college-level English composition. They assert that taking the core courses recommended for two decades (four years of English and three years each of math, science, and social studies) is not enough. The nature and quality of the courses determine whether students are adequately prepared for college and work.

Taking rigorous mathematics coursework beyond the core greatly increases students' success in meeting the benchmark for college algebra. Students taking the core plus trigonometry and calculus outscored core-takers by 6.9 points. Taking more social studies increases reading test scores and more science courses increased the likelihood of readiness for college biology.

Despite ACT's long-standing recommendations on the minimum coursework needed for college readiness and ample proof that preparation results in success in college, only 56 percent of ACT-tested high school graduates took the core curriculum. -*Crisis at the Core*, 2004

## METHODOLOGY

In 1991, the State Regents began collecting remediation data from institutions via annual “paper and pencil” surveys. In 1997-98, data collection was automated to reduce the number of staff hours needed to complete the surveys and to improve the reporting and tracking of remediation data. Most of the data for this report were collected from the UDS. Institutions separately provided information about secondary assessment for placement in college-level courses because this information is not available in the UDS.

Quick Facts

### The High School Transcript Study

High School Graduates earned an average of  
23.6 credits in 1990  
26.2 credits in 2000

In the core academic subject fields of mathematics, science, English, and social studies they earned  
13.7 credits in 1990  
15.0 credits in 2000

Their Grade Point Average (on a 4.00 scale) was  
2.68 in 1990  
2.94 in 2000

#### Educational Achievement

High school graduates in the High School Transcript Study who earned mathematics course credits during the 12th grade earned higher scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 2000 mathematics assessment than graduates who last earned mathematics course credits before the 12th grade.

-NAEP, 2004

## **FINDINGS**

### **Number of Students Enrolled in Remedial Courses**

- During the 2004-05 academic year, 44,608 students enrolled in remedial courses: 1,246 (2.8 percent) at research universities, 8,244 (18.5 percent) at regional universities, and 35,118 (78.7 percent) at community colleges.
- Because some students enrolled in more than one course, these students generated 58,668 remedial enrollments: 1,304 (2.2 percent) at research universities, 10,887 (18.6 percent) at regional universities, and 46,477 (79.2 percent) at community colleges.
- About half (50.9 percent) of the students enrolled in remedial courses in the fall, 38.8 percent in the spring, and 10.3 percent in the summer.

### **First-Time Freshmen Enrolled in Remedial Courses**

- Of the 32,022 fall 2004 first-time freshmen, 12,385 (38.7 percent) enrolled in remedial courses sometime during the 2004-05 academic year: 472 (6.9 percent) of research university freshmen, 2,883 (36.1 percent) of regional university freshmen, and 9,030 (52.5 percent) of community college freshmen.
- From 1996-97 to 2004-05, the percentage of first-time freshmen enrolled in remedial courses decreased from 40.3 percent to 38.7 percent for the State System. The percentage dropped from 21.3 to 6.9 percent at research universities. The percentage increased from 34.0 to 36.1 percent at regional universities and from 49.8 to 52.5 percent at community colleges.
- From 2003-04 to 2004-05, the percentage of first-time freshmen enrolled in remedial courses increased from 37.4 percent to 38.7 percent for the State System. The percentage increased from 6.8 to 6.9 percent at research universities and from 50.9 to 52.5 percent at community colleges and decreased from 36.5 to 36.1 percent at regional universities.

### **Remediation and High School Core Curriculum**

When taking the ACT, students are asked to respond to a series of questions pertaining to their high school curriculum. This information was combined with UDS data on remedial courses to determine whether completing the State Regents' 15-unit high school core curriculum affects remedial enrollments. ACT data were not available for out-of-state applicants and many special non-degree-seeking, adult, and international students.

- A smaller percentage of fall 2004 first-time freshmen who met the high school core curriculum (23.7 percent) enrolled in remedial courses than freshmen who did not meet the core curriculum (51.3 percent).
- At research universities, 8.3 percent of those students who met the core curriculum enrolled in remediation compared to 19.5 percent of those who did not meet the core. At regional universities, 19.3 percent who met the core curriculum enrolled in remediation compared to 43.1 percent who did not meet the core. At community colleges, 43.5 percent who met the core curriculum enrolled in remediation compared to 63.4 percent who did not meet the core.

### **First-Time Freshmen Enrolled in Remedial Courses by Subject Area**

- Of the 32,022 fall 2004 first-time freshmen, 32.9 percent enrolled in at least one remedial mathematics course, 17.7 percent in a remedial English course, 5.5 percent in a remedial reading course, and 2.0 percent in a remedial science course sometime during the 2004-05 academic year.
- At research universities, 6.5 percent enrolled in a remedial mathematics course, 0.7 percent in a remedial English course, 0.6 percent in a remedial reading course. No enrollments in a remedial science course were reported at the research level.

- At regional universities, 27.7 percent enrolled in a remedial mathematics course, 16.1 percent in a remedial English course, 8.4 percent in a remedial reading course, and 3.8 percent in a remedial science course.
- At community colleges, 45.9 percent enrolled in a remedial mathematics course, 25.2 percent in a remedial English course, 6.1 percent in a remedial reading course, and 1.9 percent in a remedial science course.
- From 1996-97 to 2004-05, the percentage of first-time freshmen enrolled in remedial courses declined from 33.8 to 32.9 percent in mathematics and from 3.9 to 2.0 percent in science. The remediation rates increased from 13.4 to 17.7 in English and from 0.4 percent to 5.5 percent in reading.
- From 2003-04 to 2004-05, the percentage of first-time freshman remedial enrollments increased for mathematics, science, and English, and decreased for reading.

### **First-Time Freshmen Scoring Below 19 on ACT Subject Tests and Passing Secondary Tests**

- From fall 1996 to fall 2004, the percentage of State System first-time freshmen with an ACT subject score below 19 decreased from 22.4 to 21.1 percent in English, from 17.3 to 16.3 percent in science, from 18.6 to 18.1 percent in reading; and increased from 26.7 to 27.9 percent in mathematics.
- From fall 1996 to fall 2004, the percentage of students scoring below 19 on ACT and passing secondary tests increased from 31.6 to 34.8 percent in English, from 15.0 to 16.1 percent in science, from 16.5 to 16.7 percent in mathematics; and decreased from 31.8 to 29.7 percent in reading.

### **First-Time Freshmen Direct from Oklahoma High Schools**

- The remediation rate for first-time freshmen direct from Oklahoma high schools decreased from 37.3 percent in fall 1996 to 36.2 percent in fall 2004. This is lower than the 38.7 percent of all fall first-time freshmen. From 1996-97 to 2004-05, the remediation rate for first-time freshmen direct from Oklahoma high schools decreased 12.5 percentage points at research universities and 1.8 percentage points at regional universities. The remediation rate increased 6.1 percentage points at the community colleges.
- From 2003-04 to 2004-05 the remediation rate for first-time freshmen direct from Oklahoma high schools increased from 35.0 percent to 36.2 percent. At research universities the rate increased 1.6 percentage points from 6.9 percent to 8.5 percent. The rate decreased at regional universities, from 31.8 percent to 30.7 percent; and at community colleges, from 57.6 percent to 57.0 percent.

### **First-Time Freshmen by Age**

- From 1997-98 to 2004-05, the remediation rate for first-time freshmen less than 21 years of age decreased from 39.1 percent to 35.8 percent.
- From 2003-04 to 2004-05, the percentage of freshmen less than 21 years of age enrolled in remedial courses increased from 34.8 to 35.8 percent for the State System. Although the percentages remained the same for all tiers, large increases in enrollment and the relatively higher remediation rates at the community colleges resulted in an increase in the remediation rate for this age group for the system .
- From 1997-98 to 2004-05 the remediation rate for first-time freshmen 21 years of age and older increased from 42.3 to 46.7 percent.
- From 2003-04 to 2004-05, the percentage of first-time freshmen 21 years of age and older enrolled in remedial courses increased from 44.5 to 46.7 percent for the State System, from 12.5 to 20.7 percent at research universities and from 43.3 percent to 45.8 percent at community colleges; and decreased from 57.7 to 54.1 percent at regional universities.

## **Comparison of Remedial Math and Non-remedial Math Student Success in College Algebra**

College algebra grades of three first-time freshmen cohorts, 1998-99, 1999-00, and 2000-01, were examined to compare those earned by students who were first required to complete a mathematics remediation course before enrolling in a college-level math course and those earned by students who were not. A comparison was also made of their respective pass rates. Passing was defined as earning a grade of “A,” “B,” “C,” “D,” or “P” in the course.

- Non-remedial students earned between 0.44 and 0.47 of a percentage point higher grade average than those required to take a remedial math course before enrolling in college-level math.
- Average grades for both groups increased slightly between successive cohort years.
- The percentage of non-remedial students who passed college algebra averaged between 3.2 and 6.8 percentage points higher than those required to take a remedial math course first.
- Approximately one-third of students taking college algebra had first completed a remedial math course.

## **CONCLUSION**

The remediation rate of fall 2004 first-time freshmen increased 1.2 percentage points from the previous year. However, both the number of adults (students 21 and over) is at an all time high and their remediation rate is the highest in eight years, many needing help brushing up on their academic skills. While remediation rates for the state system have increased for both direct from high school and older freshmen, most institutions report lower rates. The colleges and universities that have increased remediation from 2003-04 to 2004-05, report improved data coding and, in one case where remediation responsibility is in transition between institutions, over-reporting.

The percentage of State System students enrolling in remedial courses is consistent with national reports. Other remediation studies show what is also true in Oklahoma, that students enrolling directly from any high school (17 to 20 year-olds) are less likely to need remediation than older students (36.6 and 46.7 percent, respectively). Those students graduating directly from Oklahoma high schools have a remediation rate of 36.2 percent, an increase of 1.2 percentage points from 2003-04.

Remedial coursework enables underprepared high school students to learn the value of achievement while acquiring the skills necessary to succeed in college-level work. One way of measuring the effectiveness of remediation is to compare the success rate of students who have completed a remediation course in a certain subject with those who were allowed to enroll directly in a college-level course in that subject. It is clear that, while remedial students perform at a slightly lower level than non-remedial students, the results of this study demonstrates that math remediation increases the chances of success in college algebra.

Remediation has always been and remains a function of all higher education institutions; however, most (78.7 percent) students are taught in community colleges, consistent with their missions. Some students will continue to need remedial courses, so they may succeed in college-level coursework; as higher education attracts more first-generation and adult students, the need may increase. Although critics of remediation complain that the costs drain valuable state resources, such costs are negligible when compared to the alternatives, which can range from falling levels of degree attainment to employment in low paying jobs. In Oklahoma, remedial education at two-and four-year institutions currently serves students needing remedial courses without placing a financial drain on state appropriated funding of higher education.

Remedial education benefits place-bound, adult students who seek retraining at colleges and universities in their local communities. The availability of remediation also provides the immigrant and the first-generation college student the opportunity to overcome obstacles of circumstance. *“The fact that it is never too late to*

*go to college is one of the greatest strengths of American higher education” (Walda, 1999, p. 5). Continuing to “provide effective remedial education would do more to alleviate our most serious social and economic problems than any other action we could take” (Astin, 1998).*

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**Appendix**

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## **POLICY STATEMENT ON THE ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS FOR PURPOSES OF INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT AND STATE SYSTEM ACCOUNTABILITY**

The Constitution of Oklahoma charges the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education with responsibility for prescribing standards for admission, retention, and graduation applicable to each institution in The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education. The State Regents also have the responsibility to provide leadership in the coordination of the orderly transfer of students between and among institutions of the State System. Inherent in such responsibilities is the prescribing of mechanisms to monitor and facilitate the assessment of students for purposes of instructional improvement and State System accountability.

### **Statement of Accountability:**

Accountability to the citizens of Oklahoma within a tax-supported educational system is of paramount importance. The public has both the need and right to know that their tax dollars are being used wisely, and most importantly, producing tangible, measurable outcomes of learning for individual students enrolled within the State System. Improvement in student learning and on-going faculty development, measurable through assessment programs, are achievable and essential outcomes, and the responsibility of the State System to the public.

### **Definition and Purpose:**

Assess: The original definition of assess was to sit down beside. The term has evolved to mean careful evaluation based on the kind of close observation that comes from sitting down beside.<sup>1</sup> Such a definition captures the desired relationship between teacher and student and the spirit of the following policy statement.

For purposes of this policy, student assessment in The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education is defined as a multi-dimensional evaluative process that measures the overall educational impact of the college/university experience on students and provides information for making program improvements.

Assessment is not an end in and of itself. Similarly, to document performance is not necessarily to improve performance. Thus the purpose of assessment is to **maximize student success** through the assessment process by the systematic gathering, interpretation, and use of information about student learning/achievement to improve instruction. The results of assessment contribute to and are an integral part of the institution's strategic planning and program review process to improve teaching and learning. As previously noted, it also is one mechanism to monitor the effectiveness of the State's System of Higher Education. Finally, student assessment is designed to contribute to assuring the integrity of college degrees, and other educational activities/goals, to increasing the retention and graduate rates of college students, to enhancing the quality of campus life in general, and to encouraging high school students to improve their academic preparation for college.

### **Institutional Requirements**

Each college and university shall assess individual student performance in achieving its programmatic objectives. Specifically, each institution will develop criteria, subject to State Regents' approval, for the evaluation of students at college entry to determine academic preparation and course placement; mid-level

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<sup>1</sup>Assessment at Alverno College by the Alverno College Faculty, page 1.

assessment to determine basic skill competencies; exit assessment to evaluate the outcomes in the student's major; and student perception of program quality including satisfaction with support services, academic curriculum, and the faculty. Such evaluation criteria must be tied to stated program outcomes and learner competencies.

In recognition of varying institutional missions and clientele served, such assessment components will be campus based under the leadership of the local faculty and administrators providing that the procedures meet the requirements detailed in the following sections. Assessment programs should consider the needs of special populations in the development of policies and procedures. Finally, as institutions develop criteria and select assessment mechanisms, each program component should be coordinated and complement the whole.

### Entry Level Assessment and Placement

The purpose of entry-level assessment is to assist institutional faculties and counselors in making decisions that will give students the best possible chance of success in attaining their academic goals. Each institution will use an established ACT score in the four subject areas of science reasoning, mathematics, reading, and English as the "first cut" in determining individual student readiness for college level course work.<sup>2</sup> Should a student score below the level, s/he will be required to remediate in the discipline area or, consistent with institution's approved assessment plan, undergo additional testing to determine his/her level of readiness for college level work. Similarly, institutions may, within their approved assessment plans, establish higher standards by requiring additional testing of those students meeting or exceeding the minimum ACT subject test score requirement. These subject test score requirements will be communicated to college bound students, parents, and common schools for the purpose of informing them of the levels of proficiency in the basic skills areas needed to be adequately prepared for college level work. Additionally, these ACT subscores provide a standard yardstick for measuring student readiness across the State System.

For high school students wishing to enroll concurrently in college courses the established ACT score<sup>2</sup> in the four subject areas will apply as follows: A high school student not meeting the designated score in science reasoning, mathematics, and English will not be permitted enrollment in the corresponding college subject area. A student scoring below the established ACT score in reading will not be permitted enrollment in any other collegiate course (outside the subjects of science, mathematics, and English).

Institutional entry level assessment programs should include an evaluation of past academic performance, educational readiness (such as mental, physical, and emotional), educational goals, study skills, values, self-concept and motivation. Student assessment results will be utilized in the placement and advisement process to ensure that students enroll in courses appropriate for their skill levels. Tracking systems should be implemented to ensure that information from assessment and completion of course work is used to evaluate and strengthen programs in order to further enhance student achievement and development. The data collection activities should be clearly linked to instructional improvement efforts.

### Annual Reporting Requirements

Aggregate data will be reported annually to the State Regents in the following format:

1. the number of students participating in entry-level assessment and the assessment results including a frequency distribution;
2. the number of students requiring additional basic skills development by area;
3. a summary and explanation of the assessment results; and

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<sup>2</sup>The appropriate subject tests level for each subject area (one system score for each subject area) will be set by the State Regents following staff work with ACT staff and the Council on Instruction. Implementation of this requirement will be fall 1994. Students admitted under the Special Adult Admission provision may be exempt from this requirement.

4. the methodologies (courses, tutoring, etc.) by which students were required to participate in the improvement of basic skills.

The tracking of these students in future semesters is expected.

### Mid-Level Assessment

Generally, mid-level assessment competencies are gained through the student's general education program. Thus, the results of mid-level assessment should be used to improve the institution's program of general education. Assessment at mid-level is designed to assess the student's academic progress and learning competencies in the areas of reading, writing, mathematics, and critical thinking.

Mid-level assessments will normally occur after the student has completed forty-five semester hours and prior to the completion of seventy semester hours for students in baccalaureate programs. For associate degree programs assessments may occur at mid-level or at the end of the degree program.

Examples of appropriate measures include academic standing, GPA, standardized and institutionally developed instruments, portfolios, etc.

### Annual Reporting Requirements

Aggregate data will be reported annually to the State Regents as follows:

1. the number of students assessed and the assessment results including a frequency distribution;
2. a summary and explanation of the assessment results; and
3. detailed plans for any instructional changes due to the assessment results.

The tracking of these students in future semesters is expected.

### Program Outcomes Assessment

Program Outcomes Assessment, or major field of study assessment, is the third component of the State Regents' policy. Such assessments should be designed to measure how well students are meeting institutionally stated program goals and objectives.

As with other levels of assessment, selection of the assessment instruments and other parameters (such as target groups, when testing occurs, etc.) is the responsibility of the institution subject to State Regents' approval as previously specified. Preference should be given to nationally standardized instruments. The following criteria are guidelines for the selection of assessment methodologies:

- a) Instrument(s) should reflect the curriculum for the major and measure skills and abilities identified in the program goals and objectives;
- b) Instrument(s) should assess higher level thinking skills in applying learned information; and
- c) Instrument(s) should be demonstrated to be reliable and valid.

Nationally normed instruments required for graduate or professional study, or those that serve as prerequisites to practice in the profession, may be included as appropriate assessment devices. Examples are the GRE (Graduate Record Exam), NTE (National Teacher Exam), and various licensing examinations.

### Annual Reporting Requirements

Aggregate data will be reported annually to the State Regents as follows:

1. the number of students assessed and the assessment results including a frequency distribution;
2. a summary and explanation of the assessment results; and
3. detailed plans for any instructional changes due to the assessment results.

### Graduate Student Assessment

Higher education institutions that charge their graduate students the student assessment fee must perform assessment beyond the standard requirements for admission to and graduation from a graduate program. An institution that charges the assessment fee will include a description of graduate student assessment and assessment fee usage in its institutional assessment plan. Graduate student assessment results will be included in the institution's annual assessment report to the State Regents. In addition to the annual reporting requirements described above, graduate programs should attempt to present instrument data that compare graduate student performance with statewide or national norms.

The institution's plan for graduate student assessment will explain each graduate program's assessment process, including stages of assessment, descriptions of instruments used, methods of data collection, the relationship of data analysis to program improvement, and the administrative organization used to develop and review the assessment plan. Emphasis should be placed on assessing student learning and evaluating student satisfaction with instruction and services. The institution will adopt or develop assessment instruments that augment pre-assessment fee instruments (i.e. grade transcripts, Graduate Record Exams, course grades, and comprehensive exams). Departmental pre-tests, capstone experiences, cohort tracking, portfolios, interviews, and postgraduate surveys are some commonly used assessment methods.

## **POLICY ON REMEDIATION AND REMOVAL OF HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULAR DEFICIENCIES**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The State Regents' admission policy lists 11 high school curricular requirements for programs leading to an Associate in Arts, Associate in Science, and Baccalaureate Degrees (Effective fall 1997, there will be a 15-unit high school curricular requirement.) As defined in the policy, students must meet all curricular requirements to be admitted to the comprehensive or regional institutions. The only exceptions are noted in I.D. Special Admissions and summer term enrollment prior to the regular semester of desired entry. The policy requires institutions admitting students with one or more curricular deficiencies in the special admission categories to provide the means to satisfy those deficiencies. Students must successfully remediate basic skills course requirements within the first 24 hours attempted or have all subsequent enrollments restricted to deficiency removal courses until the deficiencies are removed.<sup>1</sup> Students lacking curricular requirements are admissible into Associate of Science or Associate of Arts programs but must remove the basic skills deficiencies at the earliest possible time but within the first 24 hours attempted or have all subsequent enrollments restricted to deficiency removal courses until the deficiencies are removed. Finally, students must remove curricular deficiencies in a discipline area before taking collegiate level work in that discipline.

The high school curricular admission requirements were adopted by the State Regents to help ensure adequate high school academic preparation. Such preparation is the first step toward maximizing student success. It is the expectation of the State Regents that students applying for college entry will have successfully completed, at a minimum, the required high school course work. Indeed, research indicates that the academic preparation a student receives in high school correlates with success in college. Specifically, students who take more high school core subjects generally score higher on the ACT and earn better grades in college than students who take a minimal number of core courses. High school students should consider the prescribed 11 unit high school core curriculum (15 units in the fall of 1997) a minimum standard. Students are encouraged to take additional core courses.

The adoption of this policy reaffirms the State Regents' commitment to adequate student academic preparation, and the State Regents' goal that students achieve such preparation prior to applying for college entry.

This policy specifies how students who lack the high school curricular requirements may satisfy them within the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education.

Nonfulfillment of high school requirements is referred to in this policy as curricular deficiencies.

### **II. PRINCIPLES**

The high school curricular requirements were established to maximize student success by ensuring, as much as possible, that students entering the comprehensive and regional universities are prepared for college level work through adequate high school academic preparation. Inevitably, however,

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<sup>1</sup>The president or his/her designee may allow a deserving student who failed to remediate a basic skills deficiency in a single subject to continue to enroll in collegiate level courses in addition to remedial course work beyond the 24-hour limit providing the student has demonstrated success in collegiate courses to date. Such exceptions must be appropriately documented.

some students will lack these requirements upon entering Oklahoma colleges and universities; others will have taken the required courses but will remain unskilled in the disciplines. The following principles are the foundation for this policy:

- A. Certain disciplines, most notably mathematics, English, and science, build on requisite knowledge. College courses in such disciplines assume a student knowledge base gained in high school or other previous academic experiences. It is therefore imperative that students not enter collegiate courses in these fields lacking that knowledge.
- B. History and other guided elective courses build on reading and writing skills. Students should not enroll in collegiate courses in history or other guided elective courses without a necessary foundation in those skills relevant to the discipline.
- C. Students who can demonstrate competency in an academic field even though they did not take the required course(s) in high school will have the curricular deficiency waived for purposes of remediation. Such students will be allowed to enter the respective discipline's collegiate courses.
- D. Students with unwaived deficiencies will be required to have educational experiences that will enable them to develop those skills requisite to success at the college level.
- E. Within the State System, the community college tier is officially designated as responsible for the remedial/developmental education function. While institutions in other tiers, with the exception of regional universities with assigned community college functions, do not have this remedial/development responsibility, such schools may offer remedial courses if fully supported through student fees.

### III. STUDENT DEMONSTRATION OF CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES<sup>2</sup>

- A. **Systemwide Procedures** Student competency may be demonstrated and deficiencies removed in the nine required units of basic skills courses -science, English, and mathematics -through the use of system ACT subscores in the three subject areas of science reasoning, English, and mathematics respectively.<sup>3</sup> Institutions may, within their approved assessment plans, establish higher standards by requiring additional testing of those students meeting or exceeding the minimum ACT subject test score requirement.
- B. **Institutional Procedures**<sup>4</sup> Student competencies may be demonstrated and deficiencies removed by an entry-level, institutionally developed or adopted assessment procedure in the appropriate discipline area consistent with the institution's approved assessment plan. Such an assessment procedure/instrument must be uniformly applied, have demonstrated content validity, and be a reliable measure of student competence. Students would be required to score at a level which equates to the systemwide ACT score requirement for the basic skills subjects.

### IV. READING COMPETENCY

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<sup>2</sup>

Students who are successful in demonstrating curricular competencies in all deficiency areas and who meet the required institutional performance criteria may be regularly admitted and will not count against the Alternative Admission Category's enrollment limit.

<sup>3</sup>

The system ACT subscores are set by the State Regents and will be communicated annually.

<sup>4</sup>

Institutional procedures for demonstration of student competencies and for removing curricular deficiencies do not apply to concurrently enrolled high school students (see the *Policy Statement on the Assessment of Students for Purposes of Instructional Improvement and State System Accountability: Institutional Requirements for Entry Level Assessment and Placement*).

To successfully complete college courses, students must be able to read at a minimum level. While high school reading courses are not specifically required, student reading competency is expected and assessed. Refer to the Policy Statement on the Assessment of Students for Purposes of Instructional Improvement and State System Accountability for the State Regents' assessment requirements in the area of reading.

**V. STUDENT REMEDIATION OF CURRICULAR DEFICIENCIES IN BASIC SKILLS COURSES**

Students with curricular deficiencies who fail to demonstrate adequate curricular competence will be required to complete developmental courses as described below: Students with mathematics, English, or science deficiencies will be required to enroll in developmental courses designed to remedy the deficiency. Students must receive a grade equivalent to a "C" or better to remove the deficiency.

**VI. STUDENT PROCEDURES FOR REMOVAL OF CURRICULAR DEFICIENCIES IN HISTORY AND/OR THE FOUR GUIDED ELECTIVE COURSES<sup>5</sup>**

Students with a deficiency in history who present an ACT reading subscore at or above the specified level<sup>5</sup> or who score at the designated level on any approved secondary institutional reading assessment instrument may be admitted as regular admission students. These students will be required to complete an additional three-hour collegiate history course to make up the high school deficiency.

Students with a guided elective deficiency may also be admitted as regular admission students as specified in the *Policy Statement on Admission To, Retention In, and Transfer Among Colleges and Universities in the State System*, but will be required to take an additional three-hour collegiate course in the guided elective subject area(s).

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<sup>5</sup>The four guided elective courses will not be required for first-time-entering students until the fall of 1997.