Developmental Education (Dev Ed) Reform Taskforce  
December 17, 2012

Attendees: John Cech, Montana University System; Mark Cracolice, University of Montana; Joe Crepeau, Missoula College; Doug Downs, Montana State University; Leanne Frost, Great Falls College; David Hall, Montana University System; Karen Henderson, Helena College; Bob Hietala, Gallatin College; Karin Janssen, Montana University System; Sue Jones, Montana University System; Jan Lombardi, Montana University System; Neil Moisey, Montana University System; Tom Moore, Great Falls Public Schools; Sharon O'Hare, University of Montana; Dennis Parman, Office of Public Instruction; Heidi Pasek, Great Falls College; Sarah Pett, Miles Community College; Richard Pierce, Montana State University Billings; Anneliese Ripley, University of Montana Western; Joe Thiel, Board of Regents (BOR); and Bruce Vandal, Complete College America (CCA).

Absent: Bob Currie, Montana Digital Academy; Carole Pinnell, Flathead Valley Community College; and Amy Verlanic, Montana Tech.

Introduction
John welcomed the group on behalf of himself, Co-Chair Neil Moisey, and Regent Joseph Thiel and said this is a historic time for the future of Developmental Education.

Those present introduced themselves and shared their connection with and/or interest in Developmental Education. Taskforce members’ connections and interests include:
- Overseeing their campus Developmental Education courses.
- Being a representative for students who are trying to make higher education a better system.
- Helping families in their first-generation experience with college through programs like GEAR UP.
- Identifying barriers that students face getting to the postsecondary level.
- Reducing remediation numbers.
- Streamlining gateway classes.
- Creating pathways.
- Making colleges workforce-ready.
- Fitting common course numbering into this process.
- Redesigning curricula.
- Tying in Office of Public Instruction (OPI) initiatives; common core standards that raise the bar.
- Working on the access to the ACT test which will be provided to all of the state’s high school juniors over the next seven years.
- Writing TRIO grants, creating opportunities for non-traditional students.

Dev Ed Reform Taskforce Background
John, Neil, and Joe offered a short history of the creation of the Dev Ed Reform Taskforce:

Y:\Two Year\College\NOW\Workgroups Meetings\2012 Meetings Con Calls\Developmental Ed Reform Taskforce
Approximately 100 individuals wanted to serve; 30 names went to Commissioner of Higher Education Clayton Christian, who requested the number of members be further reduced.

In October 2012, the BOR had a planning session and considered ideas for Developmental Education reform.

Agreement exists that Developmental Education is a priority, an exciting opportunity for meaningful change.

Two-and four-year commissioners are at the taskforce table because Developmental Education reform is so important.

The charge to the Taskforce is to produce a large set of recommendations for remedial education by May 2013.

All elements of Developmental Education are open to change if different interventions will work better.

- As currently designed, remedial education does not lead to credentials for the majority of remedial students:
  - 70% of postsecondary students taking math need remediation.
  - 50% of postsecondary students taking English need remediation.
  - Only 10% of 2-year and 35% of 4-year students graduate with credentials after taking remedial courses.
  - Too few students in remedial courses pass gateway college-level courses.
  - Minority and low-income students are disproportionately placed in remedial education, raising the question of equity.

- The English and math Common Core State Standards (CCSS) by themselves will not solve the problems.

A big part of the problem has been lack of alignment with what the Montana University System (MUS) communicates back to K-12 about expectations.

- K-12 needs to be included, especially in the CCSS.
- Smarter Balanced Assessments will be developed in time for the 2014-15 school year
- Early indications show fewer students will be college and career ready.

Montana legislators need to know these numbers; as a state, we need to respond.

**Developmental Education Interventions**

Complete College America (CCA) Vice President Bruce Vandal presented examples of interventions.

- Developmental education has been his focus for a number of years, currently with CCA, which is funded by the Gates, Carnegie, Ford, Lumina, and Kellogg Foundations.
- CCA founder and president, Stan Jones of Indiana, leads CCA’s efforts to provide the 32-state alliance with a high level of technical assistance as states progress in improving their postsecondary completion rates.
  - States track progress measures as an organizing framework, but the data currently being gathered does not provide the full picture.
  - Key metrics.
  - One key measure is increasing student success in gateways.
    - What are states doing to “move the needle” on underprepared students’ progress?
Other organizations besides CCA are also focusing on this.
We have a better idea today than ever before regarding why students are not more successful.
How do we do this to scale?

• It is exciting that Montana is doing this at the system level, consistent with the work of many other states, like New Mexico; the focus can no longer be at the level of individual campuses.

Core Principles for Transforming Remedial Education: A Joint Statement handout
CCA collaborated with the Charles A. Dana Center, Education Commission of the States, and Jobs for the Future to make a clear statement of what should be done to ensure students are ready for college-level work and can obtain postsecondary credentials.

• Many states still use a piecemeal approach, focusing on only one component of college readiness, without having the larger conversation.
  o E.g., what does the assessment piece have to do with how curriculum is delivered?
• The Joint Statement encourages starting with instructional design, followed by the other pieces that support that.
• Presently, students may walk on campus and take an assessment—a single exam at one point in time—with little preparation, few resources, and limited understanding of its implications for their academic future.
  o Students are placed either in a college-level or remedial class based on the assessment.
  o The cutoff score for placement varies.
  o Remedial placement involves one to three semesters of remedial classes taken sequentially.
  o Remedial success is defined as completion of the remedial classes with little consideration of what happens with those students’ enrollment afterward.
• As a result, there has been much research and innovation the last several years to arrive at a different model.

Principle 1. Completion of a set of gateway courses for a program of study is a critical measure of success toward college completion.
Using English coursework as an example, Bruce said the system is designed as multiple semesters of concurrent courses.

• Some students may pass one remedial sequence but not the next.
  o Increasing numbers of these students are lost each semester.
  o Few who start three levels below college finish.
  o These students fail to enroll in subsequent remedial and fail to enroll in gateways.
• The focus is to get students through the remedial quickly and into gateway courses that carry the academic credit.

Neil asked how these students will be successful in college in an open-enrollment system.
• Bruce responded that the old thinking was, “Some students are just not college material.”
• However, we are learning students are failing because of the system itself: students are filtered out rather than funneled into the correct direction for them.
• We need to meet students where they are.

Principle 2. The content of required gateway courses should align with a student’s academic program of study—particularly in math. 

Presently, students have to take college algebra, even when their chosen fields do not require the level of knowledge that the class provides.

• The Carnegie Foundation Data Center is working hard with systems to design sequences and curriculum for the content that students need to be successful, making sure students learn the appropriate set of skills.
  o Every institution decides this.
  o Differentiate, do not “dummy down,” the curriculum.

This raises philosophical questions: what message does Carnegie’s approach send to high schools?

• Bruce suggests engagement with K-12.
• A better metaphor is the CCSS are a beacon for students to aim for, not a bar they need to jump over.
• Developmental Education reform needs to be pragmatic:
  o Keeping to a generic Common Core will produce the same “you’re not doing well” message that some students get today.
  o Prepare students for other pathways, not just one narrow path.
  o Decide on the pathways and design the system accordingly.
  o Use the high school senior year as students’ on-ramp into college.

Enlightenment: we now recognize students learn differently.

• E.g., in Montana, geometry is being taught for the construction field, putting it into the context of something relevant to those students.

This year, all Montana high school juniors are taking the ACT test.

• Bruce - early assessment will let schools gauge student readiness.
• The ACT score has been used as a single test to place students.
  o Use it for triage or as a component instead.
• Now is the time to develop nuanced intervention strategies, like senior-year courses.
  o Joe - How do we communicate to students what their senior year in high school will look like?

The single COMPASS score has also been used for assessment, even though students do not receive preparation for taking the test.

Other tools can help make placements.

• The CCSS will provide more information.
• OPI Deputy Superintendent Dennis Parman said it is the alignment of all these pieces (G.P.A., test scores) that is critical; there are students who will not take the ACT but still meet college admission standards.
  o What is needed is an integrated solution of what to consider.
Principle 3. Enrollment in a gateway college-level course should be the default placement for many more students. 
The question to ask is, “Why aren’t you ready?”

Students should be in gateways immediately unless there is a compelling reason not to place them there; and we have to change our thinking when we design these gateways to make them more successful.
- E.g., Community College Resource Center data: students were assessed and then placed in one of three “buckets.”
  - Gateway success was the same for all three groups, even among students who should have taken remedial courses but skipped them.
  - The assessment is unreliable.
  - Other factors than what is being assessed are at play.

Principle 4. Additional academic support should be integrated with gateway college-level course content—as a co-requisite, not a pre-requisite.
Model: Austin Peay State University, Tennessee, has a structured assistance program with two levels of remedial math and English.
- Tennessee state policy stated four-years had to eliminate remedial programming.
- The problem is Peay is not located close to a community college.
- So, Peay developed a co-requisite with two hours per week of “just in time” support.

Model: Community College of Baltimore County placed remedial students in a co-requisite while simultaneously enrolling them in a gateway course; students’ success rate tripled.

Model: The Charles Data Center recognized some students cannot be immediately successful in gateways, so gateways were extended across two semesters.

Model: The state of Washington has an Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) model of embedded instruction for the most profoundly unprepared students.

GEAR UP Director Jan Lombardi asked whether CCA considered cost when choosing these models as examples.

Bruce:
- If we can reduce the amount of time a student has to pay tuition, it is a win-win for them regarding their debt load.
- Generally speaking, some of these programs need resource investment, but the payoff is enormous in terms of student retention.

Principle 5. Students who are significantly underprepared for college-level academic work need accelerated routes into programs of study. 
We cannot keep the system as currently designed.
- Long sequences do not work; reduce their length.
  - E.g., California’s acceleration program redesigned its remedial math.
Students are allowed access into college-level courses, regardless of their assessment scores.
Single-semester learning has been created for a wide range of students; all students increased their level of success.

- Find ways to eliminate all the attrition points.

The Common Course State Standards show promise: they may help reduce the achievement gaps between college-ready students and those who are profoundly unprepared.

- A key strategy for the students who are farthest behind: use their remaining high school years to get them ready.
  - E.g., In California's early assessment program, students who were not ready did not reduce their rate of college applications.

Principle 6. Multiple measures should be used to provide guidance in the placement of students in gateway courses and programs of study.

Bruce presented a table created by Community College Research Center with placement math exam scores on one axis and gateway success on the second axis. Results show:

- A continuum with no major cut-offs.
- Single cut-offs are being used arbitrarily.
- The single assessment both over- and under-places students, more likely under-placing them.
- Many students who benefit from gateways are not there.
- The gateways themselves could be better designed.

Different measures are needed.

- One of the more powerful measures that can be put into the equation is high school G.P.A.
  - G.P.A. is a good proxy of motivation.
  - G.P.A. also accounts for some of the variance.
- Connect the assessment with the delivery system.
  - Use assessment as an advising and guidance tool, not as a sorting tool; and let students know this.
- Understand what it takes to be successful in school and add the CCSS; this should increase confidence, even for students who do not test well.
- We need to change our mindset.

Jan asked about the possibility of high school remedial course work.

- Bruce said he is seeing remedial coursework being offered in high school, in partnership with colleges, and using technology as an aide through dual enrollment.
  - The hope is that is the only assessment. Do not then re-assess and re-place those students.

Principle 7. Students should enter a meta-major when they enroll in college and start a program of study in their first year in order to maximize their prospects of earning a college credential.

Research results are emerging: the longer a student is in higher education without clear identification of what they want, the less likely they are to succeed.

- How can we design an experience to make this process faster?
• When students enter a program of study, earlier is better for them to earn that credential.
  o Get students into an academic program within their first year.
  o If remediation occurs, it should be as a co-requisite or at least accelerated.
• Provide the right amount of time and spend it in the right way.

Another factor: sometimes, students are just faced with too many choices and feel overwhelmed.
• Many students crave structure and guidance along the way: create it for them.
• Design the student experience “right out of the gate,” design the pathways.
• For students who want to change their majors: create the transition points.

CCA is creating a Guided Pathways for Students (GPS).

Gallatin College Dean Bob Hietala asked whether there is any differentiation between the two-year and four-year freshman populations.
• Bruce responded the country trend is that four-year institutions are not the place for remedial education. However, the four-years are doing this, even if they are not calling those courses remedial.

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Next Steps
John thanked Bruce for his presentation on the seven Principles.

John and Neil facilitated afternoon discussion about the Principles.
• Should the Dev Ed Reform Taskforce use them for guidance?
• The Principles are based on certain issues and are a good goal; but we also need to remain concerned with learning.
• We need to be cognizant as we speak about metrics: how to capture the data we need.
• One of the principles of success in a gateway is to not re-evaluate how faculty defines success in that course.
• How do the Principles fit Montana’s rural, tiered system?
  o Much of the presented data came from the Community College Center.
• Should we not focus on K-12 to get students ready?
  o The Taskforce needs to remember K-12 has limited resources.
• Principles will need to be shifted for non-traditional students and those with a GED.

Co-requisites are easy to do in Helena but more difficult in four-4-years, where departments are completely separate.

Cut-off scores and the definitions of remediation vary by campus.
• Some institutions use ALEX; others use COMPASS.
• Presently, campuses differ on how they deal with students scoring above the cut-offs.
• At MSU, issues include:
  o What is the core?
When will students find the time to take those courses with a full academic program of study already in place?

Parents of high school students have a very confusing time navigating the system. Dennis concurs the message is unclear.

- The ACT score overrides the placement exam.
- High school counselors are the communicators of information to students, but OPI has a hard time communicating with high school counselors. This is a barrier.
- OPI hopes the target is clearly defined and communicated to K-12.
  - If high schools knew the target, they would aim at it.
  - Re-tool the courses already delivered; clarify the target for Montana high schools.
- In implementing the CCSS, OPI has raised the beacon; through policy, OPI can raise the standard.
- Dennis has spoken with UM President Royce Engstrom about having a more rigorous math program.

Neil discussed the Smarter Balanced Assessments.

- The directive from the Department of Education is to develop assessment tools.
- Montana is one of 32 states doing this.
- Montana defines its own cut-off scores.
  - The Commissioner of Higher Education, OPI Superintendent, and two-year leadership signed an agreement that the state will use those scores.
    - E.g., students who score below the cut point receive remediation; students who score above it take other courses.
  - This needs to be in place by the fall of 2015.
  - Fall 2014 – high school juniors will take the exam.

Joe asked how the Taskforce can structure the complex conversation around defining “college ready.”

- Dennis replied OPI is finalizing the definition.
  - If the Taskforce tells OPI its needs, OPI will turn around and tell K-12.
  - Internally developed math: what to do with a single score, especially for math that is high level or abstract?

Data Issues
John asked if the system is working for students going into remediation.

- Are those students being tracked?
- Are they making it into gateways?
  - Helena and Great Falls Colleges are tracking success rates through gateways.
- The number of remedial courses also varies by institution.

Bruce said data is needed for the point at which students start and should also be gathered semester by semester.

- A critical variable: what is the Developmental Education course?
The entire culture of college is incorporated into the Developmental Education course.

Is a novice or an expert designing it?

- Look at data at the point where students are not successful.
- Some students never took ACT so we need another way to place them.
- One campus is doing late-start shifts of students two weeks into a semester, moving them into a more appropriate class.

Who sets the COMPASS cut-off score?

Montana adult basic education is free.

One campus has two levels of writing; at the lowest level, the student has choices.

Neil asked where the data goes.

- One campus just hired an institutional researcher to put together numbers on hybrid, self-pace, and online courses.
- MSU-Billings is furthest along in data collection.
  - Is data communicated beyond the individual campus?
  - Richard Pierce, City College Department Chair of General Education, Transfer, and Learner Support, said the Developmental Education branch is not tied to general education; and it is understaffed, so the data is not seen on the faculty side.
  - Multi-element testing - look at a student’s highest level of a course at high school graduation and at the high school transcript.
    - There may not be much correlation between a score in a pre-calculus class and another class.
    - Bruce said this is why it is good to also consider a student’s G.P.A.: because of what it is measuring.

Montana Digital Academy

- Scores are not separated.
- The Digital Academy is a content provider; local schools decide on their provider.
  - What is the efficacy of those students moving forward?

John asked whether we as a system are aiming for consistent guidelines, for reporting success.

- Bruce said success should be measured at initial placement and then also at subsequent periods.
  - E.g., if a student is placed two levels below, how many levels does that student complete within two years?

How to establish a baseline?

- Many versions of reform can be measured over time.
- Bruce – The present system is designed with long sequences.
- Joe – Add G.P.A. and placement exams to the data.
- Also track data on whether a student is:
  - In two- or four-year education.
• A resident or non-resident.
• In-dorm or off-campus.

- Conduct qualitative assessments, like exit assessments; self-disclosure is helpful to consider.
  - When walk-outs or non-returning students are contacted, their reasons for leaving are across the board.
  - One reason non-returners give are the significant, new, financial aid regulations.
    - If a student is not making good progress, their funding might be done in one semester.
    - PELL discussion:
      ✓ How to better leverage it for better completion rates.
      ✓ A student has to have a high school diploma or GED to access it.
      ✓ PELL access may decrease further for Developmental Education students.
      ✓ Every semester, there are students who do not show up for class because they use the loan to live on temporarily; these are the defaulters.
      ✓ Bruce - CCA has a data framework: each state is requested to gather data on PELL eligibility, age …

There was agreement among Taskforce members that common elements are needed, to know where we are as a system.

- Associate Commissioner for Planning and Analysis Tyler Trevor’s voluntary accountability.
- Tracking data:
  - Who will do the tracking at the colleges?
  - How much energy to put into tracking?
  - What is the return on this tracking?
- Admissions policies are directed by more than one test result:
  - Create a picture.
  - Develop courses for co-requisites.
  - Bruce has provided good ideas for moving things along.

John said the Taskforce needs some baselines.

- Campus offices of institutional research.
- The same data needs to be collect across campuses, centrally at the system level.
  - Can the MUS office coordinate this?
- Tyler’s data does not include progression into gateways.
- Some sequences would be interesting to track.

Neil – the Taskforce:

- May choose to pilot different models, not just co-requisites.
- Should help identify these data elements.
- Decides how the data will be used.

The power of data lies in actually looking at it to answer questions.
Jan asked if this data will get to the high school counselors. Will it be what they need to know?
- How will the data help first-generation college families navigate the complicated system?
- Bruce said having high school feedback reports from states can be useful:
  - Accompany data with an action plan; do not just throw the data back at high schools.
  - Early assessment data is valuable to K-12 and higher education.
  - Start broad and then focus on key metrics to measure their impact on the larger system.

Joe asked the Taskforce whether it wanted to discuss additional focuses to address, outside the seven Principles:
- Wrap-around services.
- Student support systems:
  - Child care facilities.
  - Addiction facilities.
  - Student support services that are more tightly entwined with academic services need to be developed.

John said there is support to pull together a data framework.
- John and Neil will work with Tyler and email a sample framework to the other Taskforce members to get the conversation going.
- Get baseline data pulled together.
- Contact each campus for their data inventories.
  - Gather the campus-by-campus data to compile with data metrics on success.
- Find the common themes: what does college readiness mean?
  - This links back to K-12 and helps in a systemic way.

**Appointment of Dev Ed Reform Taskforce Workgroups**

1. Define and Get A Better Handle on College Readiness
   Chair Heidi Pasek
   Members: Tom Moore, Sharon O’Hare, and Dennis Parman

2. Assessment/Placement Models and Tools (include data like G.P.A., number of years out of college)
   Chair Doug Downs
   Leanne Frost and Karen Henderson

   Chair Joe Crepeau
   Mark Cracolice, Leanne Frost, Karen Henderson, Sarah Pett, and Richard Pierce

4. Standards Consistency across the System, Acknowledging One Size Will Not Fit All
   Chair Sharon O’Hare
   Karin Janssen and Jan Lombardi
John said MUS has kept the names of the other persons interested in serving on the Dev Ed Reform Taskforce.

- These other individuals can serve on the workgroups.
- A Taskforce member chairs each workgroup so the workgroups connect back to this Taskforce.
- John’s two-year staff will staff the workgroups.

Reminder: The BOR has convened this group; its recommendations are due to the BOR in May 2013.

**Development of Workgroup Timelines**

The work of some workgroups needs to occur first—and those questions answered—before the work of the other workgroups can occur.

- Which tasks need to happen first?
- Which tasks can be concurrent?

Neil asked whether the assessment/placement data (Workgroup #2) piece needs to be in place before having the readiness conversation (Workgroup #1).

- Perhaps the data and readiness work can be concurrent.

Standards consistency (Workgroup #4) is about policy.

- Work on this overarching piece can commence immediately.
- How to accommodate the tension between setting consistent, system-wide standards and the specific needs of individual campuses.

Readiness (Workgroup #1), assessment/placement models and tools (Workgroup #2), and consistent standards (Workgroup #4) can begin.

- Or should assessment/placement (Workgroup #2), consistent standards (Workgroup #4), and non-academic student support (Workgroup #5) work come afterward?

Should the Taskforce preplan for differences between math and English courses or let the workgroups handle these?

- John said the workgroups should take both math and English into consideration.

Perhaps all five workgroups can start their tasks simultaneously, with the understanding some results will then inform conversations held by the other workgroups.

**Meeting Conclusion**

John asked everyone present to share up to five words or a phrase to describe this first meeting of the Dev Ed Reform Taskforce:
• Good
• Multifaceted problem
• Eager
• Productive
• Intriguing
• Collaboration
• More success in Montana
• Ways to work with colleagues
• Optimistic in unexpected ways
• Start hopeful
• Great group, plenty to do
• Important task
• Very productive
• Great start, good luck
• It’s all about students

MUS Transfer Coordinator Karin Janssen asked if there is a limit to the amount of change that the Taskforce can recommend.
• What are the constraints; or is “the sky the limit”?

John replied the regents want the best thinking in the state involved in Developmental Education reform.
• Obviously, the work of the Taskforce and workgroups in the next five months will not be conducted in a vacuum.
• Many conversations will occur within and outside the meetings.

Joe concluded the meeting with these thoughts:
• The BOR is very excited with Developmental Education reform and supports the Taskforce.
• Taskforce members need to go back to their campuses and build the momentum there.
• This is the area where Montana has the most ability.
• National research is supporting us.
• What kind of buy-in do we need?
• Set broad strategies: we will make it happen.