



STRATEGIES OTHER STATES USE TO REDUCE COSTS AND IMPROVE OUTCOMES

HIGHER EDUCATION

ISSUE BRIEF

SUMMARY

According to “Good Policy, Good Practice II – Improving Outcomes and Productivity in Higher Education: A Guide for Policymakers” a joint report from the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, higher education should look to move students through the system more effectively and increasing the number of student educated. Other efficiencies include strategies related to educational productivity and administrative ones.

I. The first strategy is to improve preparation for post-secondary education by increasing college-readiness.

The four identified ways to achieve this goal include increasing *the rigor of the high school curriculum, college readiness, acceleration programs, and dual enrollment.*

States that have adopted a college and career-ready track include South Dakota, New York, and Indiana.

South Dakota has its state universities offer advanced high school courses through distance delivery methods to all high school students. The state is creating a virtual high school to provide accelerated learning courses.

New York’s LaGuardia Community College houses a charter high school and has a graduation rate of 80% with 75% enrolling in college. Many of the students take college courses while still in high school.

Indiana’s Core 40 is a rigorous sequence of high school classes in the core subjects of English, mathematics, science, social studies, physical education, world languages, career and technical, and fine arts. The Core 40 is part of the graduation requirements.

Texas has moved to improve students’ readiness for college through higher standards, assessments, curriculum, professional development, and accountability. The Legislature revised college readiness legislation with a strong enough emphasis that it did not adopt the national Common Core Standards.

California has developed an Early Assessment Program through collaboration between the Department of Education, the State Board of Education, and the California State University. The voluntary assessment combines high school standards with CSU placement exams. The assessment determines the readiness of students in English and math.

North Dakota uses ACT test scores to determine a student’s readiness. The scores often point to deficiencies in a particular subject, which can be remedied by the student taking an additional course in that subject. College-readiness scores have increased following the additional course work.

Six states, (**Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maine, Nevada, and Wisconsin**) received funding sponsored by the National Governors Association, to expand Advanced Placement courses to minority and low-income students. In addition, **Michigan, Minnesota, and New Mexico** require every student to have a college-level learning experience while in high school.

Students taking part in **Florida's** dual enrollment received higher college GPAs and more college credit than student who did not participate in the program. Students in **New York's** program were more likely to pursue a bachelor's degree.

Washington has a program which allows high school students to enroll in community colleges or four-year institutions. Students who participated in this program completed a bachelor's degree with an average of 33 fewer credits than other students, resulting in lower costs to both the state and the student.

Early College High Schools also help a student reduce his/her time to complete their first two years of college. Four-year college graduation rates were over 90%.

For adult students re-entering higher education, preparation and completion require more specialized efforts.

Rhode Island uses grant funding to allow adult students to take courses needed to attain a GED at no cost. The targeted coursework includes math, science, Spanish, and English.

New Mexico identified nearly 5,000 former University of New Mexico students from 1997 to 2009 who had not graduated and encouraged them into a program to help them finish their degree. Of the 5,000 students, approximately 2,600 have returned and 71% have graduated.

Outreach programs are utilized in several states to identify adults who did not graduate from high school and provide them with targeted coursework, challenge exams (to verify prior learning achievement) , and provide other assistance to help them prepare for college.

- II. The second strategy is to *improve educational productivity*. The objective of this strategy is to provide more learning for the dollars spent. The eight identified ways to achieve this goal include *learning communities, three-year degrees, course redesign, online learning, competency-based learning, "no frills" colleges, on-time college completion, and transfer from two- to four- year institutions*.

Kingsborough Community College (New York) assigns groups of up to 25 freshman students to take "linked" courses: English, student development; and a general education course. Retention rates for the learning community groups averaged nearly 75%, compared to 67% for other first-time freshmen.

Hartwick College, a private college in New York, implemented a three-year degree program in 2009. Students take 40 credits each year for three years instead of 30 credits each year for four years. Lipscomb University, a private institution in Nashville, also offers a three- year program, which requires students to enroll in summer school. Manchester College in Indiana is in its first year of the three-year degree program, utilizing accelerated options and online summer courses. All three point to tuition savings as well as an earlier completion date.

The National Center for Academic Transformation (NCAT) has redesigned courses to improve student outcomes and reduce costs. From 1994 to 2004, NCAT worked with 30 colleges in a Program Course Redesign. Of the 30, 25 reported learning outcomes equivalent or better than traditional formats. Of the 24 that measured retention, 18 reported a decrease in drop/failure/withdrawal rates and higher completion rates. Costs were reduced by an average 37 percent per course. Other institutions and systems have been added since the original 30.

Virginia Tech adopted a Math Emporium model, utilizing media technology, which is open 24 hours per day and is staffed 60 hours per week. Approximately 5,000 students utilize this service each year; costs are reduced by approximately 75%. Cleveland State Community College (Tennessee) also adopted a Math Emporium, with outcome measurements increasing from the 70 percentiles to the 80 percentiles.

Rio Salado College, part of the Maricopa Community College system (Arizona) which serves 60,000 students annually, offers online courses, beginning every Monday.

Western Governors University serves over 17,000 students across the country. It offers online, competency-based degrees to working adults. Degrees are awarded to students when they demonstrate mastery of competencies through assessments including projects, portfolios, and performance tasks.

In high-demand majors, such as teacher education, students in **Arizona** are admitted to Arizona State University, University of Arizona, or Northern Arizona University, but attend a community college for their first three years. The courses at the community colleges are controlled by the universities. Students save nearly 60% by only paying university tuition for one year.

Students who drop courses late in the semester, students who repeat courses to get a higher grade, and students who need to repeat an entire failed course instead of just those portions that resulted in the failure are examples of areas that have the potential of reducing rework. If some policies were tightened, rework could be reduced. Tightening policies could come in the form of counting all credits against the maximum number for which the state provides a subsidy, reducing the time period when no-penalty drops are allowed, and limiting the number of times a student can take the same course.

The **University of North Carolina** prohibits four-year bachelor's degree programs from exceeding 128 credit hours. Students taking more than 140 credit hours (less than 10% over the 128 credit hour level), pay a 25 percent tuition surcharge.

Florida estimated that in 2004-2005, students earning excess credit hours resulted in a state cost of \$62 million. Students repeating a course more than two times are required to pay the out-of-state tuition rate for that course and no state support is provided.

Texas has policies in place similar to Florida's. Students completing an undergraduate degree with a minimum number of credits can earn a tuition rebate of up to \$1,000.

Virginia charges out-of-state tuition rates to students with 125 percent of the credit hours required for graduation.

Some first-time freshmen students at the **University of Maryland** must earn at least 12 credit hours before arriving on campus, through independent study, undergraduate research, study abroad, service learning, internships, or credit by exam, including AP.

Providing a simple and standardized transfer process for students has proven effective.

Most students in **Florida** achieve an Associate's degree before entering the state universities.

Arizona students who meet the Arizona General Education Curriculum are more likely to graduate within a specified time period. In addition, a collaboration between the Maricopa Community Colleges and Arizona State University, the Maricopa-ASU Pathways Program (MAPP), outlines a prescribed sequence of classes at the

community college level. Participants in the MAPP are eligible for a tuition program during the third and fourth year where tuition increases are capped at 5 percent annually.

Washington emphasizes science and engineering with an Associate of Science-Transfer Degree pathway. Students utilizing this pathway are more likely to transfer, are more likely to complete their degree, and complete fewer hours in graduating.

III. The third strategy is to achieve *administrative efficiencies*.

The **Ohio Board of Regents** established a committee to look at efficiency. Items identified include sharing and streamlining processes such as financial services and human resources, consolidating network operations, data centers and servers, and outsourcing software applications.

The **University of Maryland** adopted a plan in 2004 to increase effectiveness and efficiency. It reports that students have increased by six percent, while cutting operating costs by three percent, and tuition increases being held under two percent. This has been achieved through increasing instructional workload, decreasing time to graduation, increasing graduation rates, and improving transfer programs from community colleges to the university system.

Students who are residents of **WICHE** states may enroll at participating institutions at reduced tuition rates.

The **Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC)** has utilized cost savings programs including the Computing Hardware Program, the Computing Software Program, the Master Property Program (for insurance), and the Midwestern Student Exchange Program.

The **New England Regional Student Program** offers tuition breaks to residents who enroll in other New England public institutions in a major not available in their own state.