

Policy Perspective

The Cost of Remedial Education

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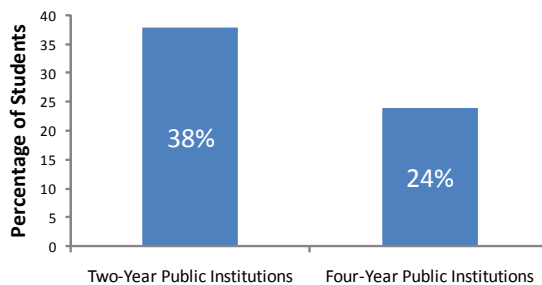
RECOMMENDATIONS

- High schools need to focus on teaching the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic.
- The Texas Education Agency or the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board should determine which high schools typically send the most students to college needing remedial education and publish a list of those schools annually.

UNPREPARED FOR COLLEGE-LEVEL WORK

Many high school graduates are not academically prepared for the rigors of college-level work. According to the latest data from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 35 percent of all freshmen at Texas public higher education institutions were not prepared for college-level work in at least one area. During the fall of 2006, 38 percent of students at public two-year colleges had to take remedial coursework as did 24 percent of students at public four-year colleges.¹ Nationwide, the trend is similar with 42 percent of community college freshmen and 20 percent of freshmen at four-year institutions having to enroll in at least one remedial course.²

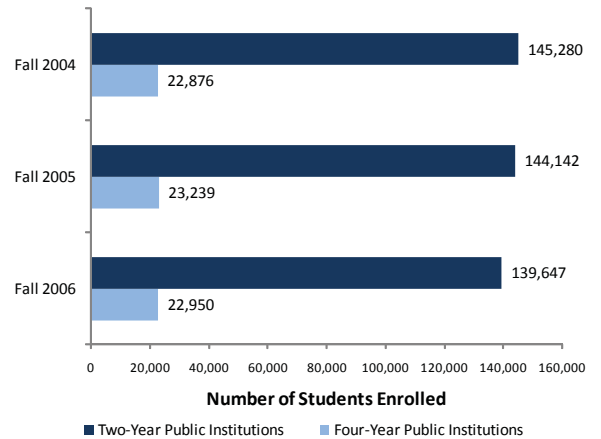
Percent of Students Taking Remedial Education Courses Statewide



Source: The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Fall 2006

During the 2006 fall semester, 162,597 students were enrolled in remedial classes at public higher education institutions including 139,647 students at public two-year colleges and 22,950 students at public four-year colleges.³

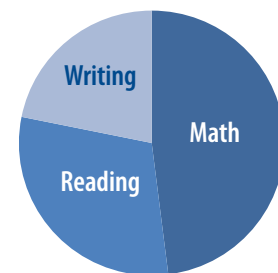
Student Enrollment in Remedial Education Courses Statewide



Source: The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

Many higher education institutions offer remedial coursework in math, reading and writing skills for students who are not prepared for college-level work in those areas. Remedial math courses have the highest student enrollment numbers of the three core areas. For example, during the fall of 2003, Texas community colleges had 53,057 students enrolled in remedial math, 33,334 students enrolled in remedial reading, and 24,145 enrolled in remedial writing courses.

Remedial Education by Subject at Texas Community Colleges



Source: The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Fall 2003

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Four-year universities had 9,047 students enrolled in remedial math, 6,318 students enrolled in remedial reading and 4,864 students enrolled in remedial writing courses. At Texas state technical colleges, 2,923 students were enrolled in remedial math courses, 1,978 students were enrolled in remedial reading, and 1,594 students were enrolled in remedial writing courses.

Even students at Texas' flagship university, the University of Texas at Austin, needed remedial coursework in the basics. During the 2006-2007 school year, 113 students needed help with basic math and algebra skills, 29 students needed help with basic reading skills and 23 students needed help with basic writing skills. See below for a list of higher education institutions and the number of students taking remedial courses by subject.

Student Enrollment by Subject in Remedial Education at Public Four-Year Institutions, Fall 2003

Institution	Math	Reading	Writing
Angelo State	245	168	119
Lamar University	482	276	219
Prairie View A&M University	946	688	620
Sam Houston State	135	64	37
Stephen F. Austin	382	215	102
Tarleton State University	324	239	151
Texas A&M University	85	62	35
Texas State University	183	112	85
Texas Southern University	1,277	1,036	870
Texas Tech University	134	78	67
Texas Women's University	137	67	41
University of Houston	216	108	175
University of North Texas	263	107	71
University of Texas- Austin	35	34	20

Source: The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

ARE STUDENTS COLLEGE-READY?

ACT, a national college entrance testing company, found that only 19 percent of Texas high school graduates in 2007 were "college ready" for math, science, reading, and English.* In

other words, only 19 percent of all Texas high school graduates had a 75 percent probability of making a C or better in a corresponding freshman-level college course in all four subjects. Since the national average was only slightly higher at 23 percent, it is obvious that the disconnect between high school preparation and college expectations is nationwide.

REMIATION MAKES DEGREE ATTAINMENT LESS LIKELY

A lack of adequate preparation in grade school can prolong the timeline and make the attainment of a college degree less likely. As students spend time and energy on necessary remedial coursework that does not count toward their degree, it delays the attainment of the degree.

While less than 50 percent of students who enter a public university in Texas will graduate with a bachelor's degree in six years, only 20 percent of students who complete remedial education programs will earn a bachelor's degree in six years.⁴

Research demonstrates that the leading predictor that a student will drop out and not finish their college education is the need for remedial reading coursework.⁵ According to data from the National Center for Education Statistics, students who enroll in a remedial reading course are 41 percent more likely to drop out of college.⁶ This same data shows that only 17 percent of students who enroll in a remedial reading course receive a college degree (Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science) within eight years as compared to 58 percent of students who took no remedial courses.⁷

THE HIGH COST OF REMEDIATION

When students take remedial courses in college, taxpayers are charged for the same education twice. Taxpayers finance coursework and skill development in high school with local property taxes and state funds. Then taxpayers finance it a second time with federal income taxes and state and local taxes when entering freshman college students take the same high school courses over again at two-year and four-year public colleges.

For the 2006-2007 biennium, the Texas Legislature appropriated approximately \$206 million in General Revenue Funds for the instructional cost of developmental education

* ACT's College Readiness Benchmark Scores suggest the student has a 50 percent chance of scoring at least a B and a 75 percent chance of scoring at least a C in English Composition, Algebra, Social Science, and Biology.

at all public higher education institutions.⁸ This number does not include the cost of remedial courses at private colleges and universities.

The Legislative Budget Board (LBB), in a collaborative effort with Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and The Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas, calculated the cost of remedial education per credit hour by surveying Texas public higher education institutions. The LBB determined that in fiscal year 2005, the average total cost per semester credit hour for remedial or developmental education was \$164 statewide. Broken down by type of institution, the average cost per semester credit hour was \$256 at Texas public universities, \$152 at Texas public community colleges, and \$189 at Texas State Technical Colleges.⁹

In addition to the direct costs of teaching and administering remedial education courses, there are many indirect costs to students, families and the economy. The Alliance for Excellent Education estimates the nation loses \$3.7 billion a year as a result of remedial education. Their estimate includes \$1.4 billion to provide the remedial education on college campuses and a \$2.3 billion loss to the economy from lost earnings.¹⁰ Dr. Christopher Hammons puts the figure even higher; he estimates that Texas loses over \$13.6 billion a year in lower earning potential, poor productivity of work-

ers, increased spending on social programs and direct costs of remediation.¹¹

Not only does remedial education have a financial cost to the taxpayer, it also has a negative impact on workers' potential earnings. Students who drop out of college and don't finish their degree forfeit future earnings. In fact, the National Center for Education Statistics reports that college graduates will make \$1.2 million more in total salary over their lifetime than non-graduates.¹²

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **High schools need to focus on teaching the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic.** High school graduates should not need remedial coursework in college. It is costly to students and to higher education institutions.
- **The Texas Education Agency or the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board should determine which high schools typically send the most students to college needing remedial education and annually publish a list of the schools.** Parents should know if their high school has a bad track record in teaching the basics. Transparency encourages schools to be more accountable to students and their parents. ★

ENDNOTES

¹ Author calculations. Sources: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, "Students Enrolled in Developmental Education: Texas Public Universities and Texas Community, Technical, and State Colleges," provided to author on 29 Aug. 2007; and Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Texas Higher Education Data, "Enrollment—Statewide by Institution Type, Classification," <http://www.txhighereddata.org/approot/dwprodprnt/enrmenu.htm>. Accessed on 4 Sept. 2007.

² National Center for Education Statistics, "The condition of education 2004, indicator 31: Remedial course taking," Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Education (2004).

³ Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, "Students Enrolled in Developmental Education: Texas Public Universities and Texas Community, Technical, and State Colleges," provided to author on 29 Aug. 2007.

⁴ "Closing the Gaps by 2015: A Texas Higher Education Plan," The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (Oct. 2000) 2, <http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/reports/PDF/0379.PDF>; and "The Cost of Developmental Education in Texas," Higher Education Performance Review, Legislative Budget Board, The Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin (Mar 2007) 1, http://www.lbb.state.tx.us/Higher_Education/Cost_Developmental_Ed_TX_0407.pdf.

⁵ "Paying Double: Inadequate High Schools and Community College Remediation," Alliance for Excellent Education, IssueBrief (Aug. 2006) 3, <http://www.all4ed.org/publications/remediation.pdf>.

⁶ National Center for Education Statistics, "The condition of education 2004, indicator 18: Remediation and degree completion," Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Education (2004).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ "The Cost of Developmental Education in Texas," Higher Education Performance Review, Legislative Budget Board, The Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin (Mar 2007) 1, http://www.lbb.state.tx.us/Higher_Education/Cost_Developmental_Ed_TX_0407.pdf.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ "Paying Double: Inadequate High Schools and Community College Remediation," Alliance for Excellent Education, IssueBrief (Aug. 2006) 1, <http://www.all4ed.org/publications/remediation.pdf>.

¹¹ Christopher Hammons, Ph.D., "The Education Deficit in the Lone Star State: The Financial Impact on Texas When Students Fail to Learn Basic Skills," Texas Public Policy Foundation (Mar. 2005) 3, <http://www.texaspolicy.com/pdf/2005-03-remedial-ed.pdf>.

¹² "Closing the Gaps by 2015: A Texas Higher Education Plan," The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (Oct. 2000) 4, <http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/reports/PDF/0379.PDF>.

About the Author

Brooke Dollens Terry is an education policy analyst at the Texas Public Policy Foundation's Center for Education Policy.

Before joining the Foundation, she worked at the Texas Workforce Commission in government relations and as a policy analyst for Commissioner Diane Rath. At the Workforce Commission, Brooke researched and analyzed child care, welfare, foster care, food stamps and a host of other workforce policy issues.

Prior to working in state government, Brooke worked in Washington D.C. for U.S. Senator Phil Gramm for two and a half years analyzing federal legislation and policy in the areas of banking, housing, education, welfare, judiciary and social issues. Upon Senator Gramm's retirement, Brooke worked for U.S. Senators John Cornyn and Richard Lugar as a legislative assistant. In Senator Lugar's office, she specialized in children nutrition issues.

During college, Brooke interned in U.S. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison's press office in Washington D.C., and in then-Governor George W. Bush's criminal justice division in Austin. Brooke graduated cum laude from Baylor University with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. During her time at Baylor University, Brooke was actively involved with Baylor Ambassadors, student government, and Pi Beta Phi.

A fifth generation Texan, Brooke grew up in Houston and now resides in Austin with her husband.

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