

Testimony to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

Re: SB40  
Dr. Leon Brin  
Professor, Dept. of Mathematics  
Southern Connecticut State University  
BrinL1@southernct.edu

Senator Bye, Representative Willis, and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify about SB 40, AN ACT CONCERNING OPEN ACCESS TO COLLEGE LEVEL COURSES.

I accept the notion that students who are required to take remedial courses are less likely to complete a degree than are other students. However, the root cause is not that they are required to take remedial courses. It's that they come to college less well prepared than other students. Removing public institutions' right to require remedial classes would actually have an effect opposite the one desired. If this bill passes, students will be thrust into classes they are not prepared to take and instructors will be charged with the simultaneous tasks of bringing poorly prepared students up to speed and covering new material.

To see why that is a problem, let's look at the numbers at SCSU. In Fall 2011, SCSU had a freshman cohort of 1319 students. 503 (38%) of them scored less than 450 on their math SAT. History shows students who score this low are not ready for college mathematics. Consequently, they were placed into MAT 095 Elementary Algebra, a course that by any reasonable definition is remedial. It's hard to imagine what we are to do with nearly 40% of our freshman enrollment if we are not allowed to require remedial work. That population is simply too large to be properly accommodated in college math classes. Instructors do not have the resources to provide remedial training to 38% of their students during the course of teaching new material. Students in this 38% do not have the background to be successful in college math classes on their own. Forcing either of these scenarios practically guarantees that these 38% of incoming students will not be successful. Resources for a new way to provide remedial help are needed before a bill like this passes. To make the situation more alarming, one might argue that MAT 100 and MAT 102 (both of which are entitled Intermediate Algebra) are also remedial. They are not calculus. They are not pre-calculus. They are prerequisite for registering to take the University requirement in mathematics. In essence, they cover high school algebra. Counting these courses as remedial too, in Fall 2011 we required 1078 students (81%) to take remedial math.

In the absence of a new, fully supported, method of providing remedial training, we could be forced to turn away the roughly 40% to 80% of students who are not ready for college math classes. However, that practice is not consistent with our mission of access, part of which means accepting students who may not otherwise have the opportunity to go to college. And it is not consistent with the pressure to increase enrollments.

In conclusion, if this bill passes, at SCSU we are looking at the dilemma of how to bring roughly 40% to 80% of our incoming freshmen up to speed without remedial classes. The bill is in direct conflict with our missions of access and academic excellence.

Freshman Cohort Fall 2011

Math Placement	
Course	Students
95	503
100	279
102	296
122	223
150	9
no placement	9
total	1319

SAT scores	
Math SAT	Students
0-240	3
250-290	6
300-340	41
350-390	131
400-440	324
450-490	342
500-540	245
550-590	111
600-640	56
650-690	13
700-800	3
no score	44
total	1319

**SCSU Mission Statement:** Southern Connecticut State University provides exemplary graduate and undergraduate education in the liberal arts and professional disciplines. As an intentionally diverse and comprehensive university, Southern is committed to academic excellence, access, social justice, and service for the public good.