
From: Yawin, Marguerite <MYawin@txcc.commnet.edu>
Sent: Monday, February 24, 2014 12:50 PM
To:
Cc: Mahmood, Carol M; Terrell, Sally A; Cassidy, Terry P; DeNegre, Peter; Gentry, Susan; Keifer, Elizabeth A; Wittke, Jennifer L; Yawin, Marguerite
Subject: Testimony Regarding PA 12-40

We are writing on behalf of the Academic Strategies Department at Tunxis Community College. Our department was created eight years ago specifically to focus on the reading and writing needs of students not yet ready for college-level work. We are professionals in developmental education who take pride in the work we do to create an environment where students can be successful

When SB-40 was introduced, we were vocal in our opposition to the bill, seeing it as a shortsighted and poorly-thought-out solution to a complex problem. However, once PA 12-40 was passed, we began working vigorously to create the one course we would be legally allowed to offer for students who were truly not ready for college-level reading and writing. We made the decision to open the course to all students placing below a certain level on the placement test rather than having a bottom score below which we wouldn't allow students to take courses at the college. We piloted two sections of the new course in the fall and we're currently piloting three sections.

Based on last semester, mixing our formerly two distinct levels together can have some positive results. Some students, when pushed and encouraged, rise to the challenge. However, some students were not successful. They needed more time to develop their skills. To give a failing grade to students who improved their skills over the semester but who did not improve to the point where they have the ability to do college-level work is not good pedagogy, but is the only option allowed to us under the new law.

We propose that the colleges keep multiple levels of developmental courses and be more flexible with where students are placed. Rather than looking only at placement test scores and high school GPA, we would need to do a thorough job advising students to see who will be best served by doing two semesters of developmental work and who can get to college-level in one semester of developmental work. This will be a labor-intensive undertaking and colleges will need funding to provide enough advisors to do the in-depth advising our students deserve.

The bottom line, if community colleges keep their mission, is that students of all ages and backgrounds have access to college. Many of our weakest students end up finding a strength or passion--and they do this by taking a variety of courses. They can also join clubs, make friends and get excited about being on a college campus. Sometimes this excitement turns into the motivation to complete their education. Jobs in Connecticut in the future will require college degrees, so we want more students to see college as part of their future. However, this is not what Adult Ed is about, so relegating our weakest students to Adult Basic Education is to limit the future of those students.

Test scores and GPA simply don't reveal passion or motivation--these are revealed over time, and we are asking that we go back to allowing some weaker students the time they need to flourish.

Sincerely,
Dr. Terry Cassidy, Peter DeNegre, Susan Gentry, Elizabeth Keifer, Jen Wittke, Marguerite Yawin

Submitted by