



HITTING THEIR STRIDE:

THE NEXT CHAPTER OF
DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION REFORM

PART 1: FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Developmental education has long been a critical issue in higher education. Historical approaches required students to take a multi-semester sequence of non-credit-bearing courses. The year or more spent in developmental education left many students discouraged and financially strapped. Those who dropped out left with high levels of debt and no college credit to show for it.

Schools have responded to this cycle by adopting new policies and practices aimed at reducing the amount of time students spend in developmental education courses. Changes vary but largely fall into two categories: policies that impact placement practices, and policies that impact curriculum models.

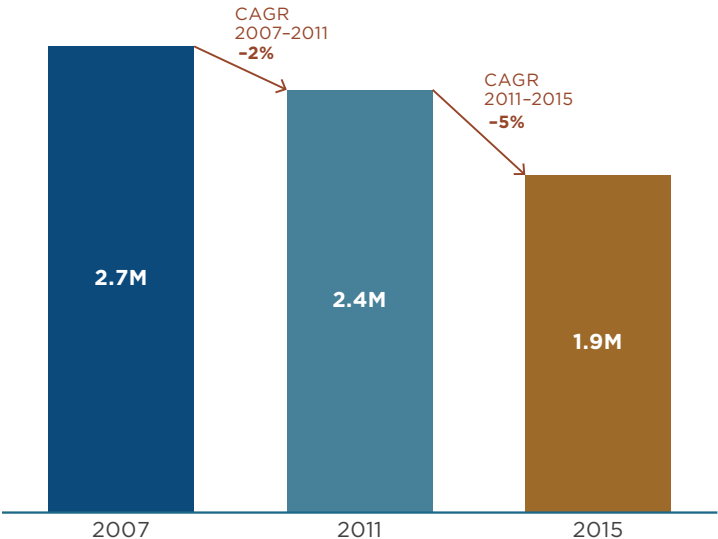
- A multiple measures placement practice uses many different inputs rather than one test score to more accurately place a student in a course. Institutions may use high-stakes exams in conjunction with other measures such as high school grades, extracurricular activities, recommendations, and non-school-based test scores.
- Changes to curriculum practices have wide variation. One of the better-known approaches is the corequisite model, where students are co-enrolled in a credit-bearing gateway course at the same time as they are going through developmental education.

Some curriculum models are strongly connected to schools' implementation of Guided Pathways, while others are more narrowly focused on ensuring that students progress successfully through college-level math and English courses. In either case, both curriculum models are discussed in this series, which examines the policies, practices, and products most closely connected to developmental education.

From 2007 to 2015, there was a 3.8% annual reduction in the number of students taking developmental education courses.

Figure 1

DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION ENROLLMENTS HAVE DECLINED OVER THE PAST DECADE

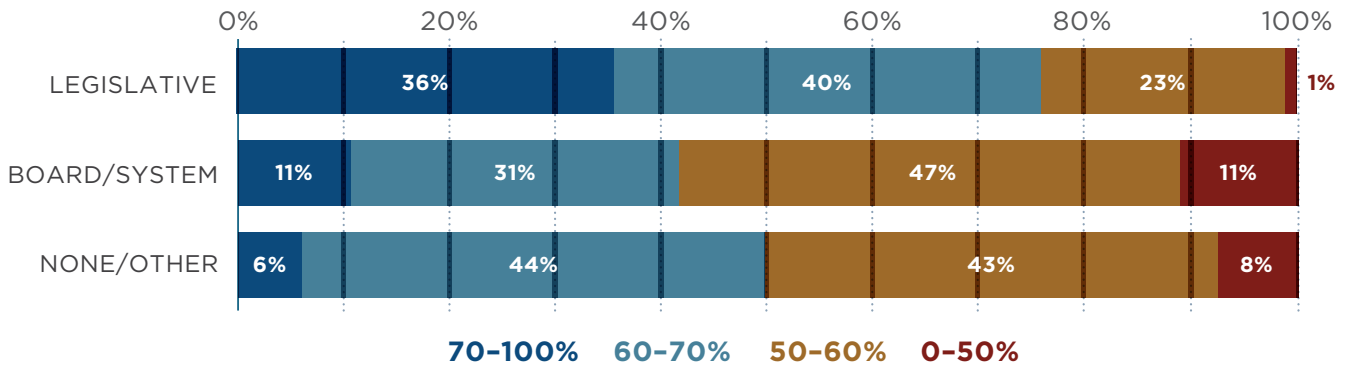


Note: "CAGR" is compound annual growth rate

Furthermore, in states where there have been corequisite or multiple measures policy reforms enacted at the legislative level, retention rates at both two-year and four-year schools have improved.

Figure 2

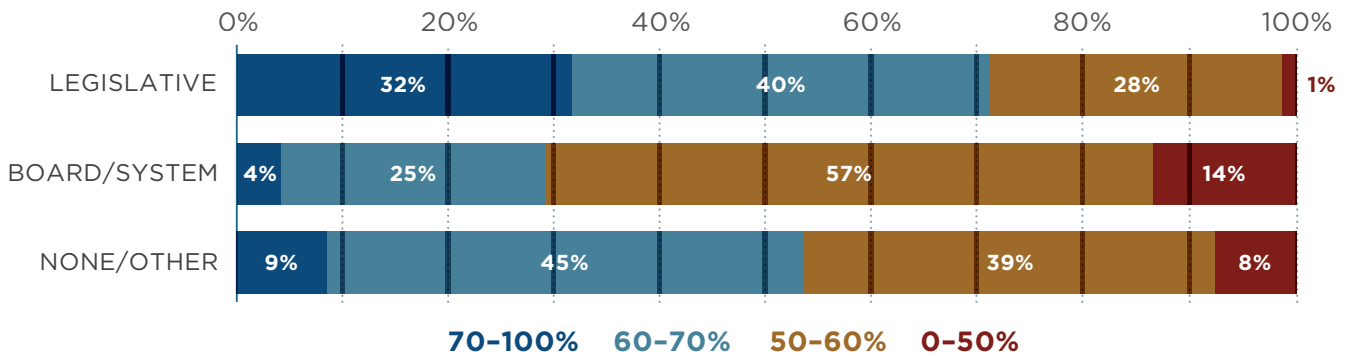
LEGISLATIVE-DRIVEN POLICIES ON MULTIPLE MEASURES ARE CORRELATED WITH HIGHER RETENTION RATES*



* Retention rates refer to first-year, full-time students in two-year institutions.
 Note: Legislative, Board/System, and None/Other define at what level a multiple measure policy is enacted.

Figure 3

LEGISLATIVE-DRIVEN POLICIES ON COREQUISITE MODELS ARE CORRELATED WITH HIGHER RETENTION RATES*



* Retention rates refer to first-year, full-time students in two-year institutions.
 Note: Legislative, Board/System, and None/Other define at what level a corequisite policy is enacted.

Developmental education reforms have come a long way in the past decade. However, with close to 2 million students still taking at least one developmental education course, and the majority of two-year schools still reporting less than 70% retention rates, the question of how best to identify, remediate, and support these students to degree completion remains a significant challenge.

The title of this paper – *Hitting Their Stride: The Next Chapter of Developmental Education Reform* – recognizes this important moment in time. The phrase “hitting their stride” typically means building proficiency and speed with the task at hand: things start to come together, and there are smaller obstacles to slow progress. This is exactly where the developmental education reform movement needs to find itself if it is to get to the next phase of impact at scale.

This report is the first installment of what will be an annual state-of-the-field study authored by Tyton Partners and Babson Survey Research Group in partnership with the Strong Start to Finish network. The goal of this annual initiative is to illuminate the progress of the developmental education reform movement and to examine its evolution from the policy, practice, and market perspectives. The analysis that follows evaluates how that transition from early stage to growth stage is faring and how policymakers, institutional leaders, and faculty can efficiently and effectively further that progress.

PART I: FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS

Part I evaluates administrator and faculty attitudes toward recent policy implementation in developmental education, while also highlighting key areas that have either driven success on campus or require greater attention. 309 administrators and 1,765 faculty members participated in the *2019 Hitting Their Stride* survey, with titles ranging from professors of math, English, and college success to deans and department chairs nationwide. Survey results paint a picture of similarities and differences between faculty and administrators and provide a snapshot of the current landscape of developmental education policy implementation on campus.

Specifically, Part I addresses three key themes:

- 1. High focus on policy implementation drives change and impact.**
Survey data points to a strong positive correlation between a legislative approach to policy implementation and student retention rates. With most institutions adopting, or in the process of adopting, multiple measures policies, developmental education reform is well underway.
- 2. A perception gap exists, despite policy implementation.**
While strides have been made in policy adoption, a perception gap exists with 56% of faculty and 38% of administrators reporting that they feel their campus is achieving an “ideal state” for developmental education student outcomes. Attitudes toward implementation, faculty perception of the effectiveness of changes, and faculty skepticism may be contributing to the gap.
- 3. Faculty and administrator alignment, meaningful professional development, and course materials are important to addressing the perception gap.** Faculty and administrators alike point to the value of alignment between faculty and administrators when implementing reforms. Faculty attitude toward their institution’s developmental education changes can also be improved with meaningful professional development as well as course materials that align with the chosen classroom curriculum model.

PART II: SUPPLIER LANDSCAPE

Part II distills insights from the same survey as well as from more than 10 interviews with suppliers, vendors, and thought leaders within the developmental education field. In Part II, we analyze the health of each market within developmental education and provide insight into the reach, adoption, and awareness of the tools and services that shape the product landscape.

We identify three key themes on the state of the supplier markets:

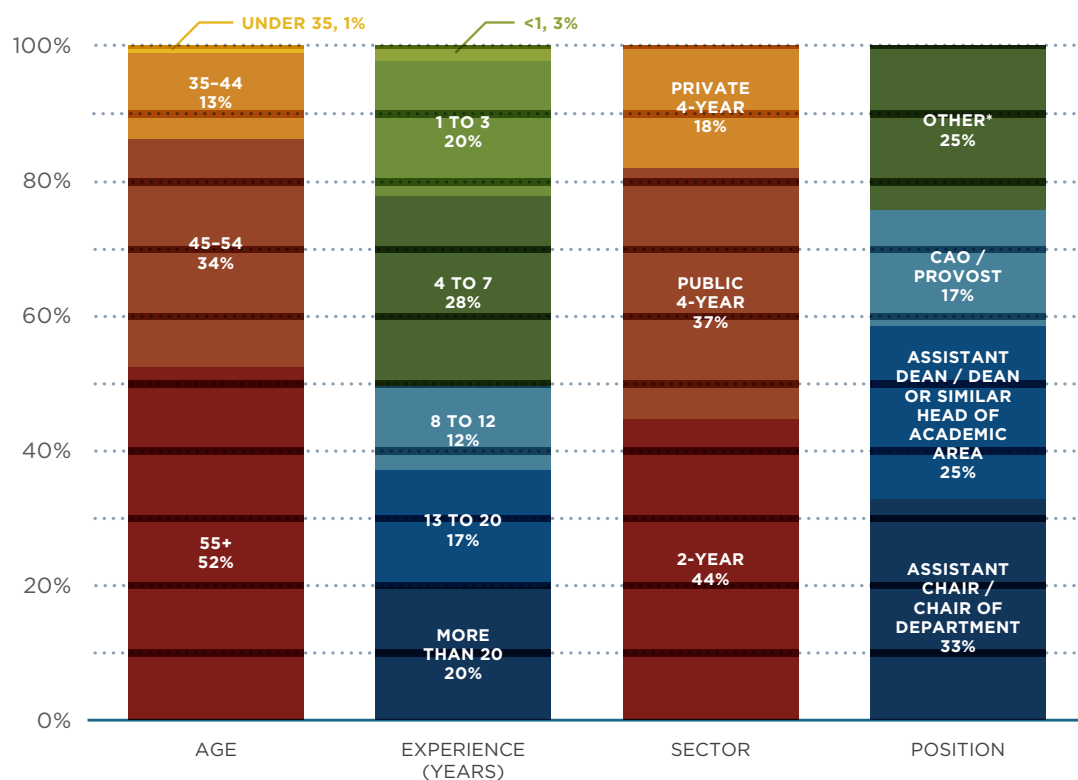
- 1. Need gaps in the market may impact the ability to scale the reform movement.** Corequisite and other curriculum innovations are changing the frontline needs of teachers and students. Many developmental education markets are highly consolidated, making adaptation to changes slow and creating gaps between market needs and supplier offerings. Survey research shows that faculty are less likely to feel that changes to developmental education on their campus are valuable, and less likely to feel that their institution is closer to an “ideal state” for student outcomes, if they report low satisfaction with their curriculum or course materials providers. These findings have implications for how administrators and policymakers think about and engage the supplier markets in the reform movement.
- 2. The assessment market is potentially being disrupted by multiple measures policies.** Survey research indicates that close to 60% of faculty are dissatisfied with their school’s assessment instrument, and 30% of administrators are considering switching providers. Faculty in states that have widespread implementation of multiple measures policies are also less likely to report using any assessment instruments. These high rates of dissatisfaction, coupled with reports of lower use of assessments, may indicate that schools in a multiple measures environment are simply forgoing assessments altogether.
- 3. Developmental education support organizations are challenged to deliver support at scale.** The market for service providers that deliver technical assistance and professional development is small, highly fragmented, and largely financed by philanthropic dollars. In a market that is not consumer or client funded, the challenge is how to bring support and best practices to scale quickly and efficiently.

SURVEY APPROACH

The 2019 *Hitting Their Stride* survey elicited responses from administrators and faculty at public two-year institutions and public and private four-year institutions. The administrator survey was in the field from March 5, 2019 to March 19, 2019 and had 309 respondents. Administrator titles consisted of department chairs of math, English, and interdisciplinary studies, and deans/associate deans of developmental education, first-year students, humanities, and STEM. 44% of administrators were from public two-year institutions, 37% of administrators were from public four-year institutions, and 18% of administrators were from private four-year institutions.

Figure 4

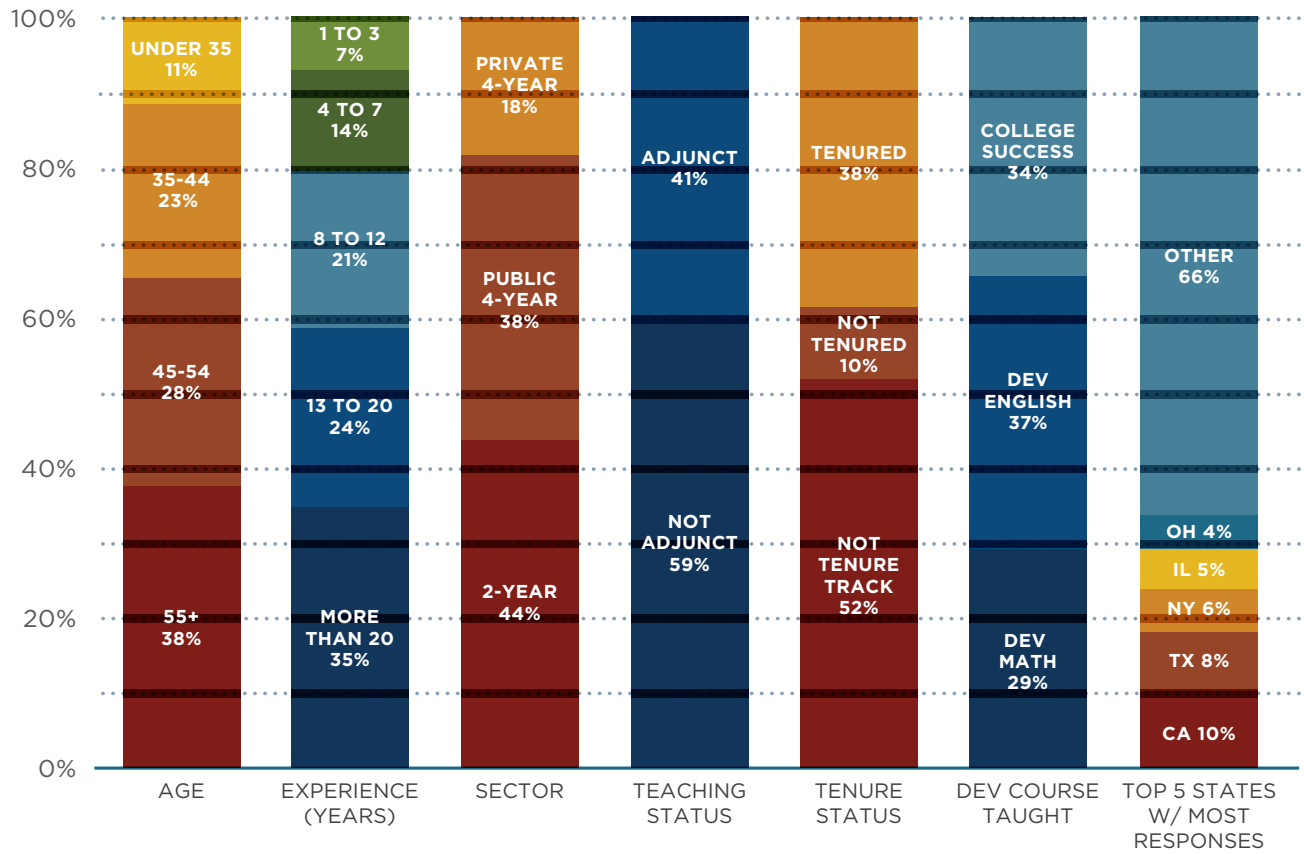
OVERVIEW OF ADMINISTRATOR SURVEY RESPONDENTS



The faculty survey was in the field from February 19, 2019 to March 8, 2019 and had 1,765 respondents. Faculty member respondents were approximately evenly distributed across the areas of College Success (34%), Developmental English (37%), and Developmental Math (29%). 41% of faculty respondents were adjunct, while 59% were not adjunct. 44% of faculty were from public two-year institutions, 38% were from public four-year institutions, and 18% were from private four-year institutions. Respondents were from across the country, with California, Texas, New York, Illinois, and Ohio being the top states within which faculty taught.

Figure 5

OVERVIEW OF FACULTY SURVEY RESPONDENTS



HIGH FOCUS ON POLICY IMPLEMENTATION DRIVES CHANGE AND IMPACT

To date, the developmental education reform movement has had a significant focus on policy implementation, and the *2019 Hitting Their Stride* survey points to the successful fruits of that labor, with faculty and administrators reporting high rates of awareness and adoption of reform policies and practices. Most importantly, as show in the executive summary, we see evidence that these policies, especially when initiated at the legislative level, are associated with positive student outcomes like increased retention.

We can't necessarily attribute the increase in retention to legislative policy reforms, as there are numerous factors that impact these numbers. However, the data shows a stronger positive correlation between a legislative approach to policy enactment. This trend is encouraging and suggests that comprehensive implementation of policy reforms can help move the needle on student retention.

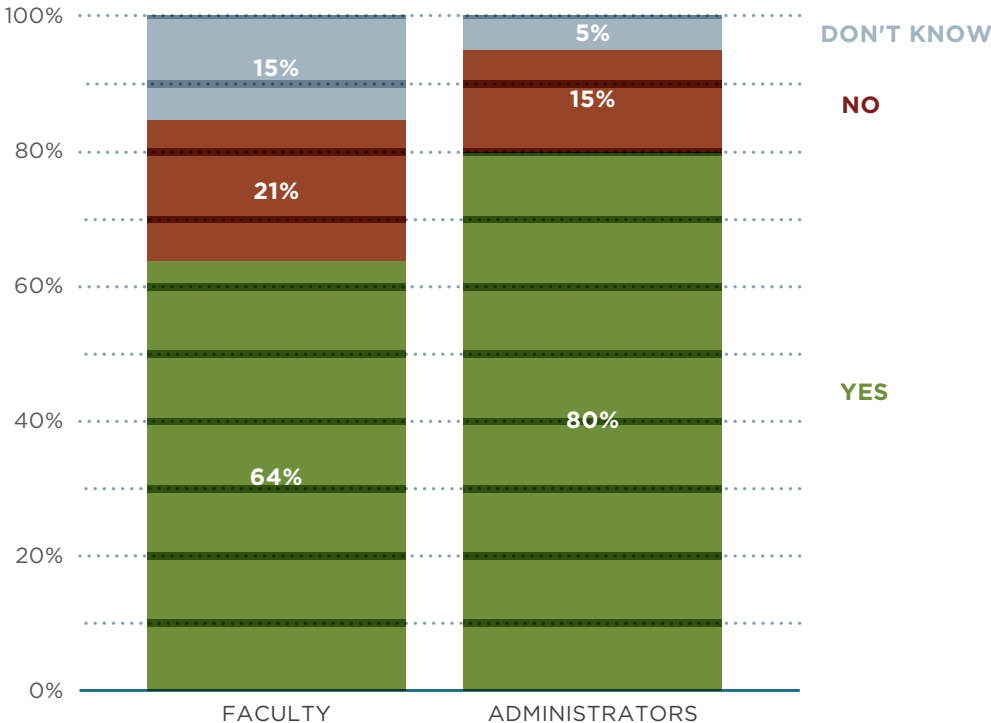
ADOPTION AND AWARENESS RATES ARE HIGH

Over half of institutions have adopted, or have begun to adopt, new practices for developmental education. 64% of faculty and 80% of administrators reported that their institution has undertaken significant changes in the past three years, and 50% of faculty and 58% of administrators reported that they have adopted a multiple measures policy at their institution.

Figure 6

FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATORS REPORT HIGH LEVELS OF DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION CHANGE ON CAMPUS

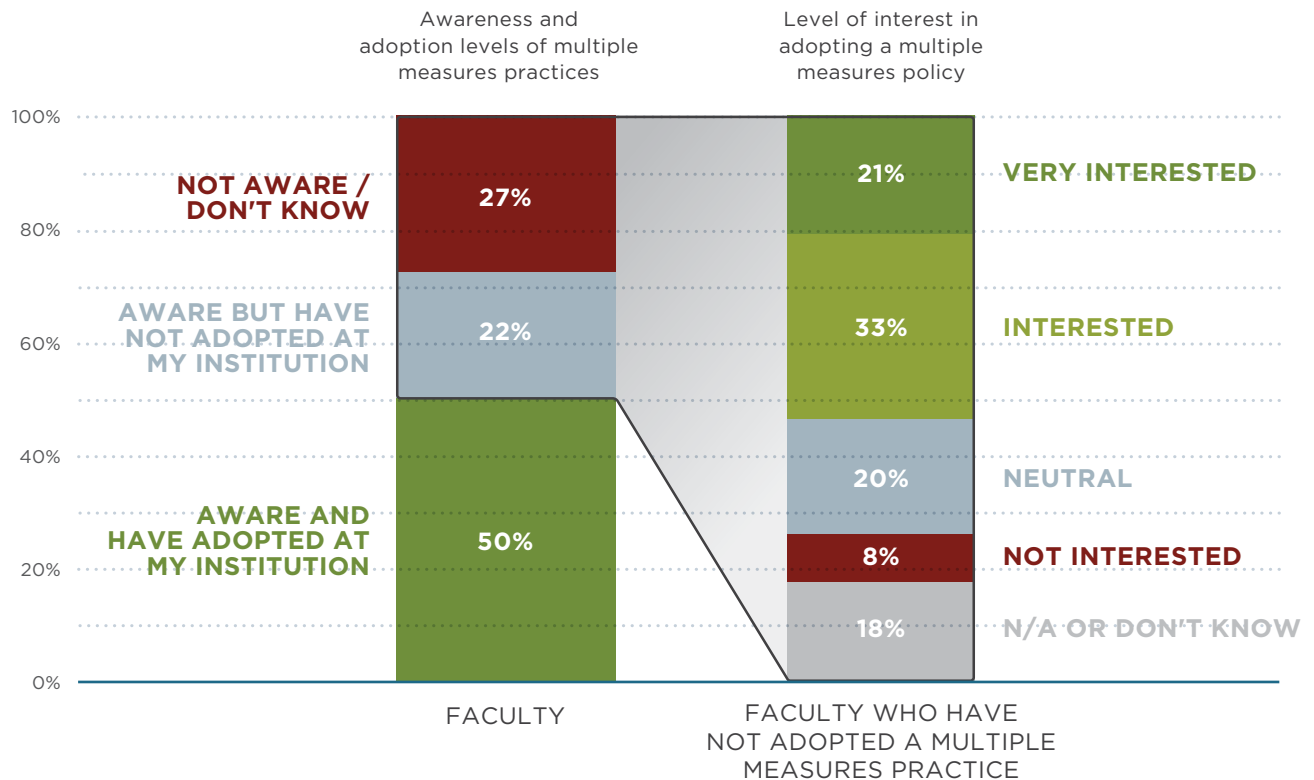
Is your institution implementing - or has your institution recently completed implementing - changes to the developmental education program at your institution?



Of those faculty who haven't adopted a multiple measures policy, 54% are "interested" or "very interested" in adopting one in the future, even though they might not be the final decision-makers. Over half of those who reported a multiple measures policy at their institution indicated that their institution selects its own measurements. However, the next two most adopted practices - exemption for students from placement tests if they meet the cutoff score on one or more other measures, and having the state identify measurements and cutoff scores with the institution - are still being used by 30% to 38% of faculty, indicating that there is diversity in how multiple measures policies get implemented.

Figure 7

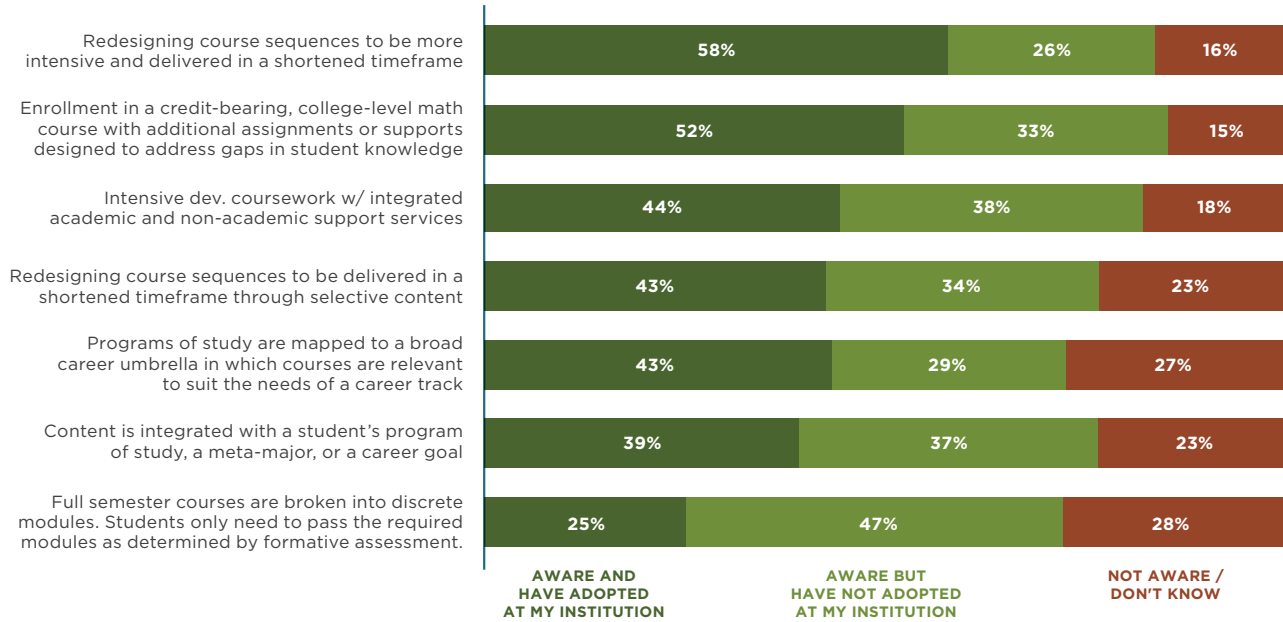
FACULTY ARE INTERESTED IN EMPLOYING MULTIPLE MEASURES PRACTICES



We also surveyed faculty and administrators on the adoption of seven different types of curricular reforms for developmental math instruction and found that 40% to 50% of faculty reported using five of the seven models. All of the models had high awareness rates, even if they were not being used on campus. These high adoption and awareness rates show that developmental education reform is well underway, but schools are implementing a diversity of different practices, likely in different combinations with one another.

Figure 8

HIGH AWARENESS AND MODERATE ADOPTION ACROSS SEVEN MATH CURRICULUM MODELS



LEGISLATIVE POLICY DRIVES IMPACT

Not only is the corequisite model one of the most utilized curriculum models, but it also contributes to significant increases in retention rates for first-year, full-time students in both four-year and two-year institutions. States that have enacted legislation requiring a corequisite approach show 13% more institutions in the highest brackets for retention of first-time, first-year students at two-year public institutions. A similar pattern occurs with multiple measures policies, with a 30% increase in the number of institutions reporting first-time, first-year retention rates higher than 70% at two-year public schools. See graphics on [page 4](#).

DESPITE IMPACT, A PERCEPTION GAP EXISTS

While the trend showing the potential impact of legislative-initiated policy reform is promising, close to 70% of two-year institutions are still reporting lower than a 70% retention rate, indicating there is still much work to be done. If comprehensive policy reform helps shift retention rates in the right direction, what are the actions that will lead to the next phase of impact? A good place to start looking for the answer to this question is in the classroom itself and the ways in which these policies impact faculty and classroom instruction.

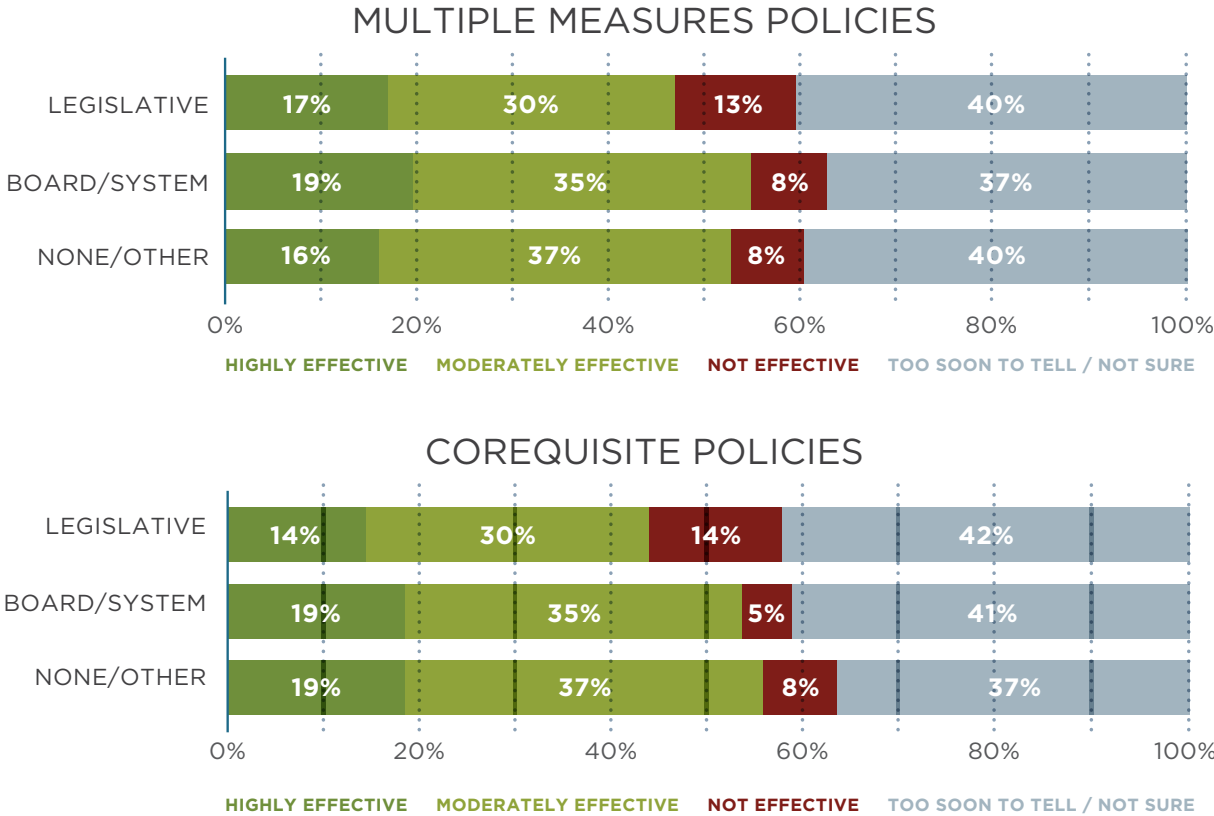
LEGISLATIVE POLICIES HAVE HIGHER FACULTY SKEPTICISM

Our survey research indicates a perception gap between faculty beliefs and actual impact on student outcomes. Faculty who teach at institutions impacted by developmental education changes initiated at the legislative level are less likely to believe these changes have been effective. For multiple measures policy adoption, 5% more faculty believed changes were not effective when policies were passed at the legislative level compared to when there were no policies or when policies were passed at the board/system level. Corequisite policy adoption had a similar effect, with 6% to 9% more faculty believing legislative-initiated changes were not effective than when there were no policies, or when reform was adopted at the board/system level. Ultimately, corequisite and multiple measures policies are useful for improving student outcomes, but depending on where they originate from, they are not being interpreted in the same way in terms of effectiveness by faculty on an attitudinal level.

Figure 9 & 10

FACULTY ARE MORE SKEPTICAL OF LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

In general, how effective do you think the changes at your institution have been?

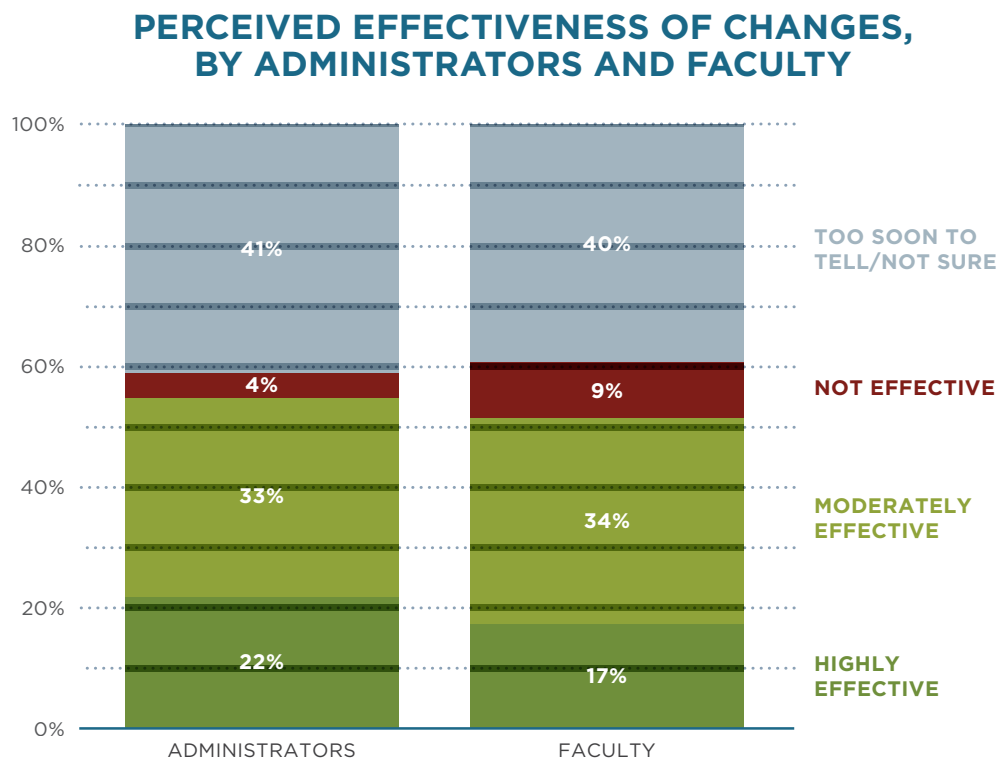


Notes: Legislative, Board/System, and None/Other define at what level multiple measure or corequisite policies are enacted.

IMPACT OF CHANGES IS “TOO SOON TO TELL”

Outside of a specific legislative policy approach, perceptions of the impact of developmental education reforms at the faculty and administrative levels are largely neutral. While changes have been plentiful and a large body of evidence from various demonstration projects reflects positive student impact, the majority of faculty and administrators are reporting that it's too soon to tell if reforms in the past three years have made a significant impact at their institution. With upwards of 40% of faculty and administrators reporting that the effectiveness of developmental education reforms is “too soon to tell,” the data indicates that outcomes related to changes in developmental education have yet to be directly translated into greater confidence in the effectiveness of these changes at the institutional and classroom levels. The responses may also indicate that institutions have room to improve on monitoring data for effectiveness of implementation.

Figure 11

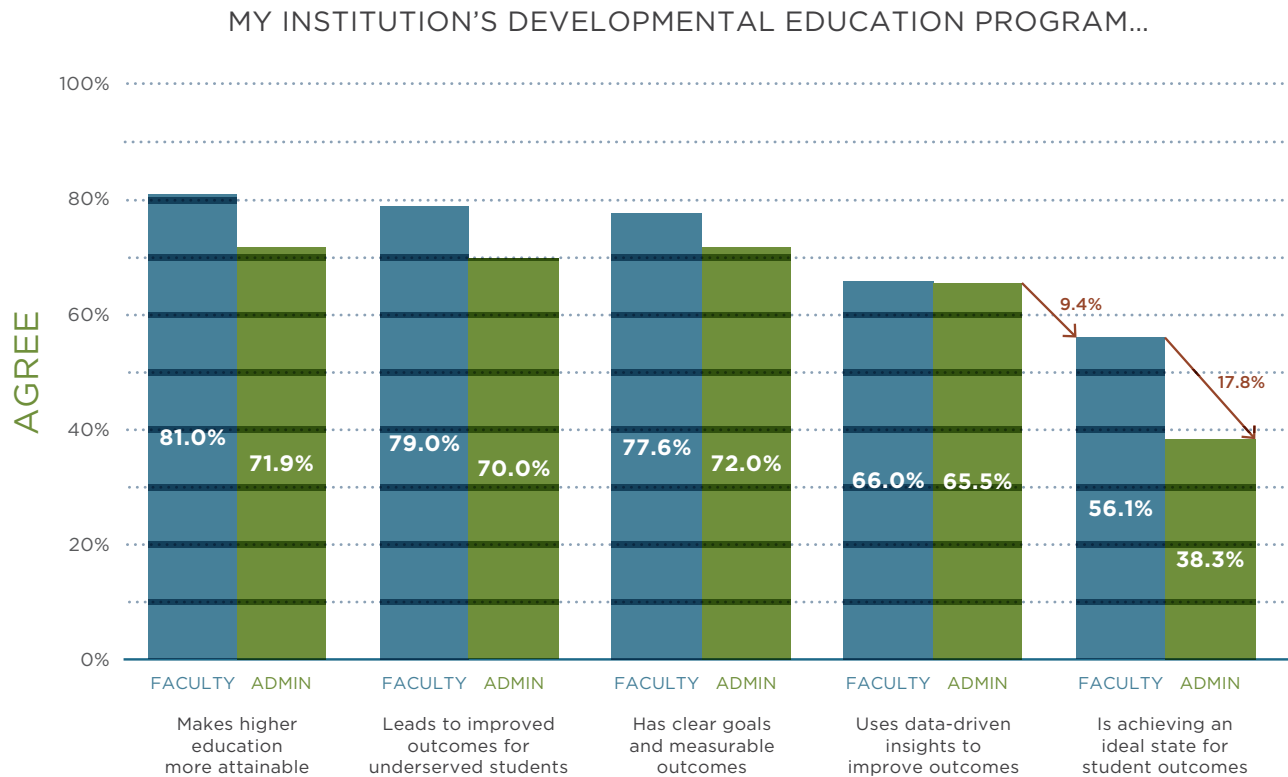


BELIEF IN THE IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION IS HIGH... BUT THERE IS AN IMPLEMENTATION GAP

Despite their ambivalence about the changes underway, when attitudes are measured based on an institution's developmental education program, faculty and administrators generally give their institution's approach to developmental education high marks. Upwards of 66% faculty and 65% of administrators believe that their institution is making higher education more attainable, is leading to improved outcomes for underserved students, has clear goals and measurable outcomes, and is using data-driven insights to improve outcomes. However, faculty and administrators alike are less sure that their campus is achieving an “ideal state” for student outcomes. Only a little over a third of administrators and about half of faculty believe that their institution's developmental education program is achieving an ideal state for student outcomes. This gap between the current and ideal state for developmental education may be driven by suboptimal implementation on campus.

Figure 12

FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATORS ARE MORE PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THEIR INSTITUTION'S PROGRAM ACHIEVING AN IDEAL STATE FOR DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION

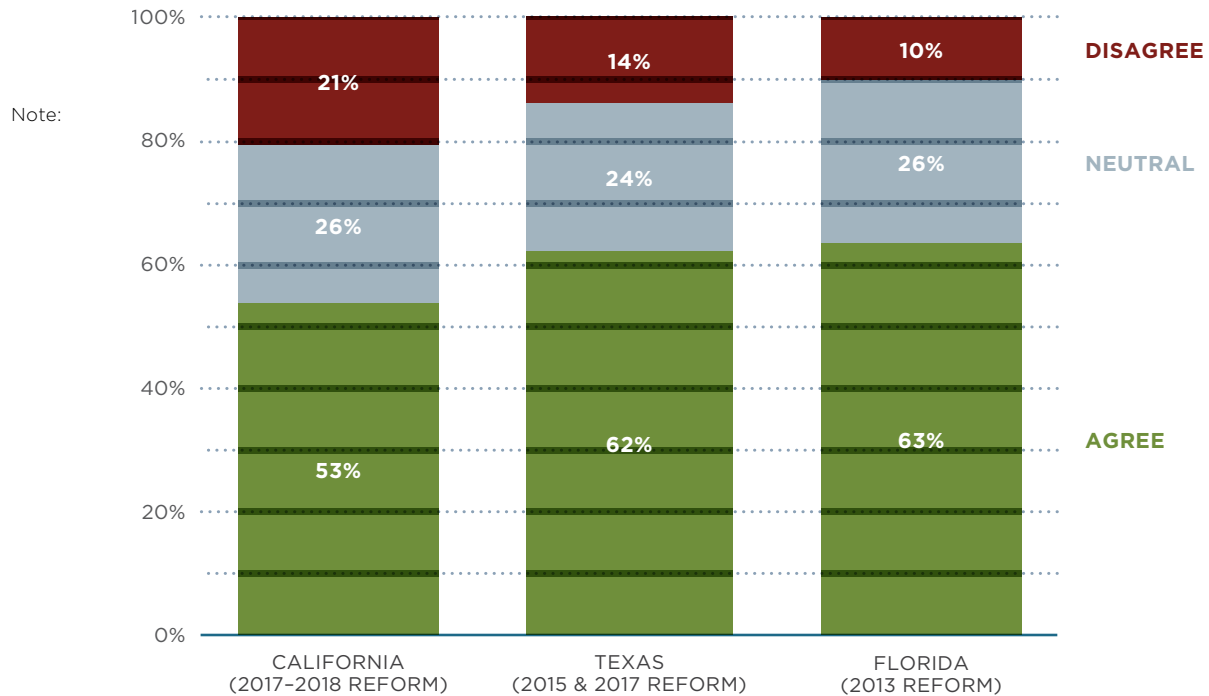


CLOSING THE IMPLEMENTATION GAP AND DRIVING TOWARD THE IDEAL AT SCALE

While the lack of confidence surrounding an ideal state for student outcomes within developmental education is a cause for concern, faculty and administrator perceptions do shift to a more decisive and positive stance as time goes on – especially when looking at states where large statewide policy changes have been in place for longer amounts of time. In Florida, where statewide reforms occurred in 2013, 63.2% of faculty respondents reported being in a “high ideal state” and only 10% in the least ideal state. In comparison, in California – which only implemented statewide reforms in 2017–2018 – 10% fewer faculty reported an ideal state and double the number reported the least ideal state. Faculty and administrators residing in Texas – where reforms were implemented in 2015 and 2017 – fall between Florida and California in terms of attitudes toward achieving an ideal state for student outcomes at their institution.

Figure 13

HOW STRONGLY DO YOU AGREE THAT YOUR INSTITUTION'S DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAM IS ACHIEVING AN IDEAL STATE FOR STUDENT OUTCOMES?



"Agree" = score of 67-100 "Disagree" = score of 0-33. All on a scale of 0-100.

While it's good to see that perceptions change over time, finding ways to more swiftly impact faculty and administrator perceptions may help bring reform efforts to scale faster and with even greater impact. Consequently, if the first chapter of the developmental education reform movement was about institutional policy and building consensus about how to respond through a variety of rigorously evaluated demonstration projects, the next chapter will be defined by the science of effective implementation in more classrooms at more institutions. Engaging and supporting faculty in this large-scale implementation effort is about connecting with hearts and minds in the change process, and the current ambivalence of the survey sample suggests ample room for improvement in how the field approaches implementation. All stakeholders should have the opportunity to provide input and help with the implementation process to foster a culture of collaboration.

SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

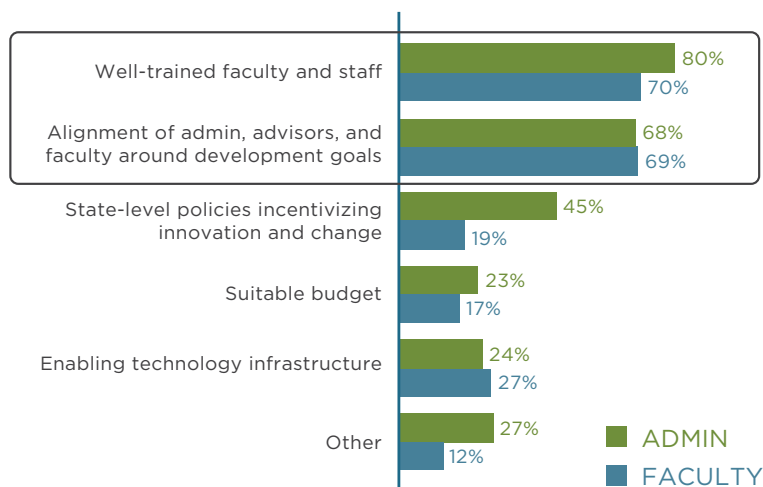
IMPROVED ALIGNMENT LEADS TO IMPROVED PERCEPTIONS

Increasing alignment between faculty and administrators is one of the most straightforward ways to address the perception gap. Of those faculty and administrators who reported that the developmental education changes at their institution were highly effective, nearly 70% believe that alignment of administrators, advisors, and faculty contributed to this outcome. When asked about additional supports to make changes more effective, a majority of faculty and administrators who felt changes were moderately effective selected greater coordination between faculty and advisors. This finding may be unsurprising, but alignment in many ways is a proxy for other aspects that are critical to change: communication, information sharing, and a clear vision of what needs to change and why.

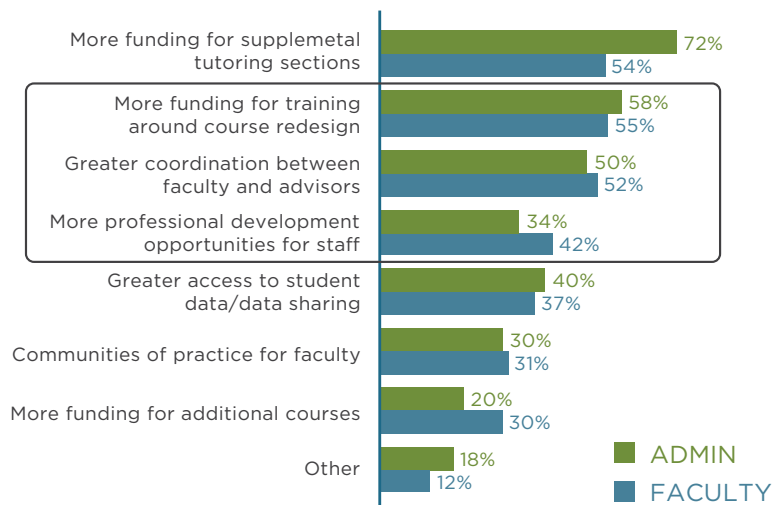
Figures 14 and 15

IMPROVED ALIGNMENT LEADS TO GREATER EFFECTIVENESS

What do you think has contributed to these changes being highly effective?*



What additional support or resources do you think would help you make the changes more effective?*



* Only respondents who selected that changes in their institution have been highly effective received this question.



The State University
of New York

SUNY BUILDS SCALE THROUGH HIGH FACULTY ENGAGEMENT

Less than five years ago, SUNY decided to overhaul its developmental education program across all of its community college campuses. Administrators knew that sustainable transformation required deep faculty engagement.

“Faculty engagement is everything to us. ‘Buy-in’ to faculty means you’ve made your decision and you want to them to buy into your concept. What we do is completely by faculty, for faculty.”

—Johanna Duncan-Poitier, *Senior Vice Chancellor of Community Colleges and the Education Pipeline*

Today, SUNY has achieved long term sustainability and scale by empowering faculty to be decision-makers. The redesigned math programs can be found at 28 colleges and serve more than 3,000 students each semester. More than 475 administrators, faculty, and advisors have participated in faculty-led professional development programs. The trust built with faculty and staff is now supporting expansion of additional reform efforts.

Duncan-Poitier credits this success to three principles:

Bring faculty to the decision-making table early

Two core faculty members were involved in the initial decision to support this curriculum approach and implementation for the scale-up design. They became the champions for engagement of fellow faculty on their campus, recruiting their colleagues to attend the next curriculum model convening. Faculty were leading the approach through sustained engagement with each other and the SUNY System Office.

Change gears if needed

After the initial launch of the new courses, SUNY discovered that even though faculty were supportive of the new curriculum, enrollment was low. They realized that advisors were not recommending the courses to incoming students because they were unaware of the approach and its advantages. At faculty recommendation, advisors are now an integral part of professional development activities and the decision-making process.

Leadership support of faculty agency is crucial

SUNY administrators made a conscious effort to make faculty the decision-makers for changes in their classrooms. To support initial interest SUNY offered a 2-day professional development institute where faculty could explore the new model. Most faculty were intrigued by the evidence and support of the math and English innovations they were learning. Word spread, building a strong cadre of innovative faculty leaders across the system.

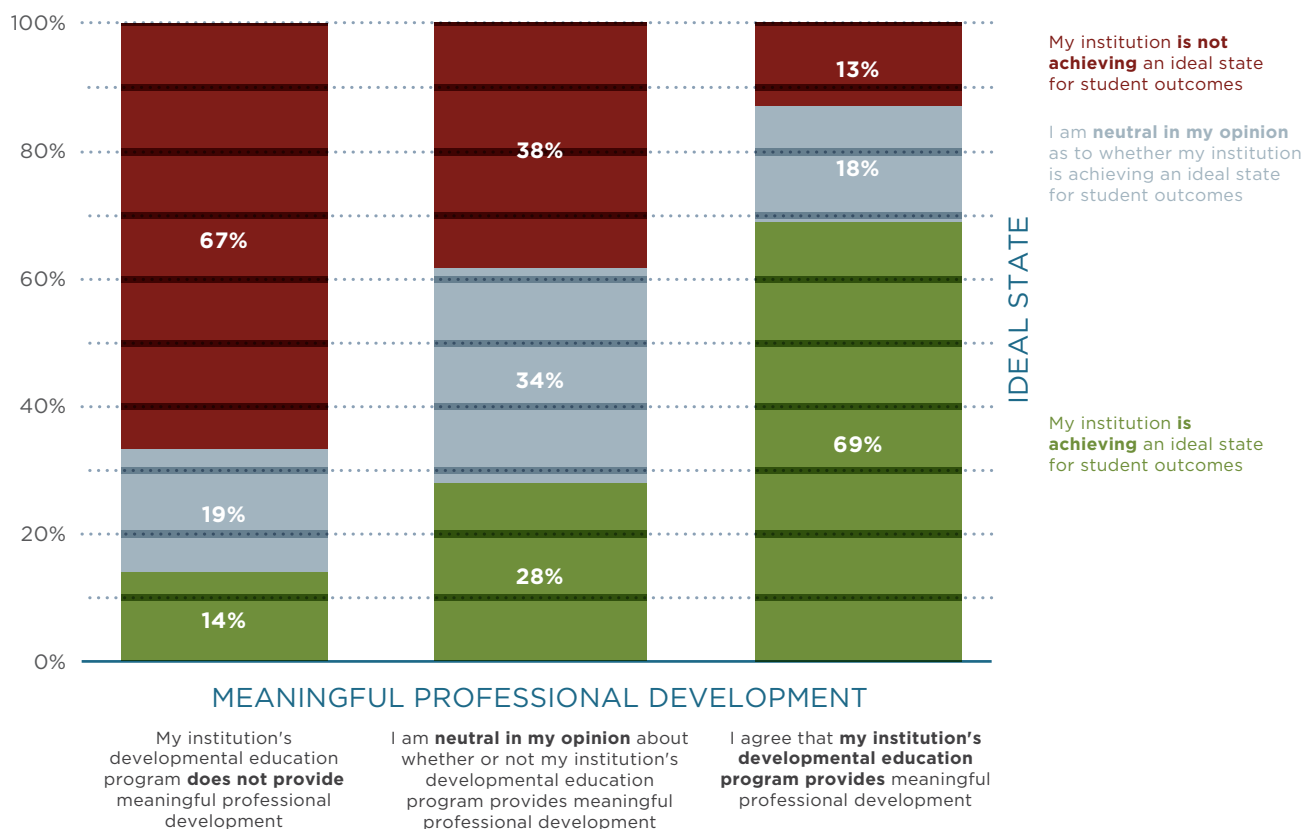
MEANINGFUL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IS CRITICAL

One of the biggest drivers of positive perceptions of an institution's changes to developmental education is the satisfaction faculty have with professional development. Those who believe they received meaningful professional development were over 40% more likely to believe that their institution was achieving an ideal state than those who were of a neutral opinion regarding professional development.

Those who reported receiving meaningful professional development were most likely to be engaged in short, campus-based workshops using content from a variety of resources – such as best practices from state agencies and the school – combined with webinars and online faculty communities. These combinations of activities highlight the gathering of best practices and ideas inside and outside of the university and offer a chance to discuss and contextualize ideas and make them relevant to that specific campus through the workshops.

Figure 16

SATISFACTION WITH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT POSITIVELY IMPACTS PERCEPTIONS



Note: "Agree" = score of 67-100 "Disagree" = score of 0-33. All on a scale of 0-100.

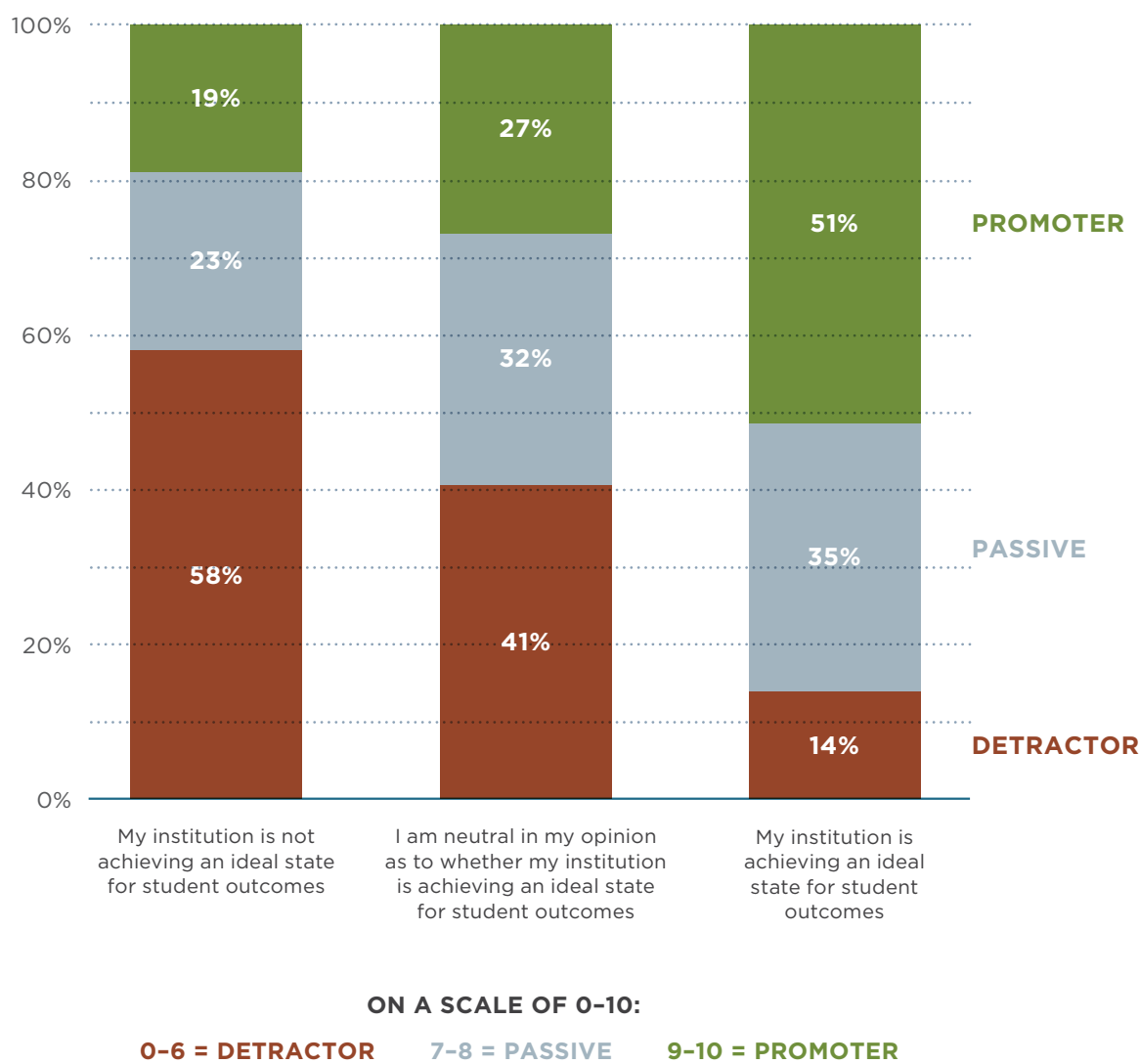
CURRICULUM AND COURSE MATERIALS MATTER

The last driver of effective implementation is good curriculum that supports the chosen curricular model. Faculty members who gave their provider of curriculum or course materials the highest marks – who were effectively “promoters” – were more likely to agree that their institution’s developmental education program is achieving an ideal state for student outcomes. Whereas 58% of faculty members who do not believe their institution is achieving an ideal state are also detractors of their curriculum provider.

Students, faculty, publisher’s content, and curriculum models all come together in the classroom. Well aligned curriculum is the linchpin for this interaction, but the variety of curricular models being implemented creates a highly complex environment. To be successful in the classroom and have a high-quality of implementation, alignment is necessary. As discussed in Part II of this paper, strong alignment is not always the case.

Figure 8

HOW LIKELY ARE YOU TO RECOMMEND THE SAME CURRICULUM PROVIDER TO A COLLEAGUE?



CALL TO ACTION

Supporting implementation at scale is the key to getting to the next phase of impact with developmental education reforms, and to do that requires full faculty and administrator support. Bringing best practices for developmental education reforms to greater scale requires continued effort along multiple vectors.

INSTITUTIONS

FACULTY

- Faculty should consider whether they have a thorough understanding of publisher offerings, as well as how to leverage them and how to access the professional development necessary to ensure that reforms are translated correctly in the classroom.

INSTITUTIONAL LEADERS/ADMINISTRATORS

- Institutional leaders need to examine the level of alignment and implementation support available for faculty and administrators when implementing developmental education reforms.
- Administrators can consider partnering with publishers and other curriculum providers to ensure alignment to classroom needs by offering greater training and discovery workshop opportunities for faculty, equipping them with a full set of knowledge about the tools available to them.

POLICYMAKERS

- Policymakers should keep in mind that certain legislation, such as legislation regarding multiple measures and corequisites, can be particularly effective for improving developmental education.
- While some policies have been shown to be more effective than others, implementation still matters. Legislation should equip states and institutions with policies that align with the state's or institution's current developmental education landscape and offer enough flexibility, tools, and resources for effective implementation.

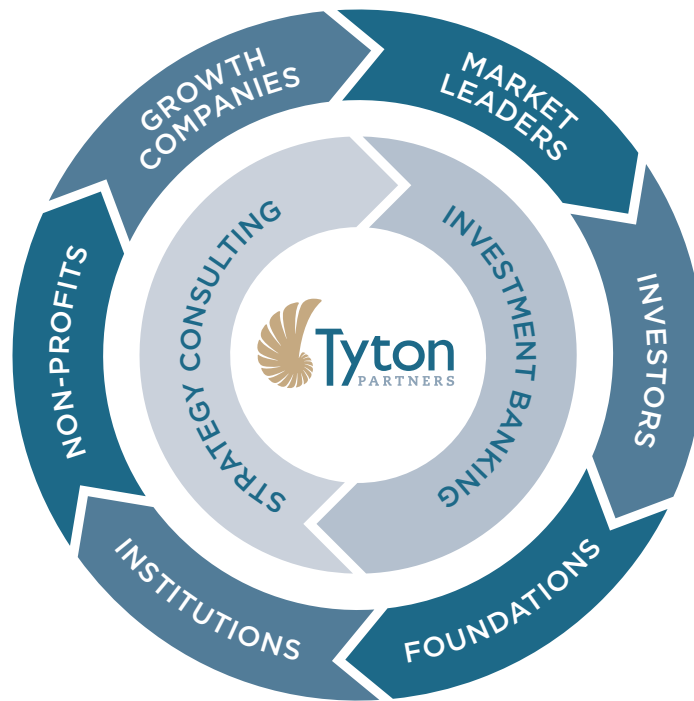
The developmental education landscape has greatly progressed across all levels – classroom, institution, and state – and with additional support for classroom-level changes at more institutions, more students are poised to hit their stride in pursuit of college and career success.

ABOUT TYTON PARTNERS

Tyton Partners is the leading provider of investment banking and strategy consulting services to the education sector and leverages its deep transactional and advisory experience to support a range of clients, including companies, foundations, institutions, and investors.

In higher education, Tyton Partners' consulting practice offers a unique spectrum of services to support institutions, foundations, non-profit organizations, and companies in developing and implementing strategies for revenue diversification and growth, student persistence and success, and innovations in teaching and learning.

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We also would like to thank the more than 10 suppliers that we interviewed for this two-part publication. We greatly appreciate the input of all our interviewees and the 1,765 survey respondents across both four-year and two-year institutions, as well as their overall contribution to advancing the field's knowledge of developmental learning in higher education.

The team at *Can of Creative* was notably patient and understanding as we moved from ideas to drafts to professional execution of this publication, and we thank them for their efforts.

Tyton Partners supports the work of both institutions and suppliers in the developmental education market. Any mentions of particular institutions or suppliers in this publication serve to illustrate our observations on the evolution of this market. They do not represent an endorsement in any way. Finally, any errors, omissions, or inconsistencies in this publication are the responsibility of Tyton Partners alone.

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